The Life and Writings of C. S. Lewis

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Louis Markos received his B.A. in English and History from Colgate University (Hamilton, NY) and his M.A. and Ph.D. in English from the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, MI). While at the University of Michigan, he specialized in British romantic poetry (his dissertation was on Wordsworth), literary theory, and the classics. At Houston Baptist University (where he has taught since 1991), he offers courses in all three of these areas, as well as in Victorian poetry and prose, seventeenth-century poetry and prose, mythology, epic, and film.

Professor Markos is a member of Phi Beta Kappa and has won teaching awards at both the University of Michigan and Houston Baptist University. In 1994, he was selected to attend an NEH Summer Institute on Virgil’s Aeneid. In addition to presenting several papers at scholarly conferences, Dr. Markos has become a popular speaker in Houston. He has presented seven lectures at the Museum of Printing History Lyceum (three on film, two on ancient Greece, one on the Victorian spirit of progress, and one on Dante’s pre-Copernican universe), a three-lecture series on the Universal horror films for the Houston Public Library, a class on film for Leisure Learning Unlimited, a class on the Odyssey for a retirement center, a lecture on Homer and the oral tradition for a seniors group, and several talks on Greek mythology for AHEPA (a Greek-American organization) and Mensa. His audiences for all these lectures and classes are identical in their makeup to the typical student or client of the Teaching Company. Although a devoted professor who works closely with his students, Dr. Markos is also dedicated to the concept of the professor as public educator. He firmly believes that knowledge must not be walled up in the academy but freely and enthusiastically disseminated to all those “who have ears to hear.” He has produced with the Teaching Company a series of twenty-four lectures on literary theory (From Plato to Postmodernism: Understanding the Essence of Literature and the Role of the Author) and has contributed several lectures to the Great Minds of the Western Intellectual Tradition.

Dr. Markos lives in Houston with his wife, Donna; his son, Alex; and his daughter, Stacey.
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The Life and Writings of C. S. Lewis

Scope:

In the twelve lectures that follow, we shall explore the life and writings of C. S. Lewis and consider why Lewis’s works have continued to gain in power and popularity over the last half-century. After an introductory lecture that considers Lewis’s remarkable range as a writer and surveys some of the events and people that shaped his thought and his works, we jump headlong into a four-lecture consideration of his key apologetical works.

We begin in Lecture Two with a close analysis of both his fictional and nonfictional autobiographies (The Pilgrim’s Regress and Surprised by Joy, respectively) that will explore not only the nature of Lewis’s own conversion to Christianity but also the nature of his most powerful and persistent apologetic: the argument by desire. In Lecture Three, we shift from this desire-based apologetic to one grounded in ethics and morality. Through a close look at Mere Christianity and The Abolition of Man, we explore Lewis’s belief that the code of ethics by which Christians live is not a manmade construct but constitutes a set of divinely revealed standards, the truth and relevance of which is universal, absolute, and cross-cultural (a set of standards that Lewis dubbed the Tao). With Lectures Four and Five, we move away from the more general apologetics of Lectures Two and Three to study closely Lewis’s answers to such perennial spiritual questions as: why (and whether) miracles happen; why, if God is good, there is so much pain in our world; whether heaven and hell exist and what role our choices play in determining our final destination; what exactly is the nature of sin and evil and how does it separate us from God and salvation? Our texts for these two lectures will include Miracles, The Problem of Pain, The Screwtape Letters, and The Great Divorce.

Lecture Six functions as a transitional lecture that takes up Lewis’s role as scholar and academic. Through a look at such critical classics as The Discarded Image and A Preface to Paradise Lost, we will explore how Lewis, in his scholarly works, sought to break down modern prejudices concerning the past and replace them with a vivid, accessible view of the medieval and Renaissance world that is true to those who lived in those oft-misunderstood ages.

With Lecture Seven, we turn to Lewis the novelist. Lectures Seven and Eight will consider his Space Trilogy: Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra, and That Hideous Strength. Lectures Nine, Ten, and Eleven will focus on his best-known and loved works, The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe; Prince Caspian; The Voyage of the Dawn Treader; The Silver Chair; The Horse and His Boy; The Magician’s Nephew; and The Last Battle. All five of these lectures will offer synopses of the key plot elements in each work and explore the rich, often profound, Christian allegories that lurk just below the surface of each tale.

The final lecture will take up Lewis’s last and strangest novel, Till We Have Faces, a mature and profound reworking of the classical myth of Cupid and Psyche. The heroine of this work was patterned after Lewis’s wife, Joy Gresham. The lecture, and the series, will conclude with a poignant look at A Grief Observed, Lewis’s personal and moving account of his despair over the death of Joy and his long, painful road back to faith.
Lecture One
The Legacy of C. S. Lewis

Scope: This introductory lecture considers the enduring legacy of C. S. Lewis and assesses why he has had such a profound impact on twentieth-century readers.

Outline

I. C. S. Lewis is one of the greatest writers and thinkers of the twentieth century.
   A. In the midst of a post-Christian age, Lewis dared to advocate a genial return to orthodox Christian doctrine.
      1. Like a modern-day Galileo, he had the courage to question the key assumptions of his day and to criticize entrenched ideologies.
      2. He sought to free his age from that progressivist “chronological snobbery” that accepts as established, nonnegotiable facts our modernist (post-Enlightenment, post-Darwinian, post-Freudian) views of man, God, and the universe.
      3. Without ever becoming “puritanical” or judgmental, he challenged his readers and listeners to reassess the claims of Christ, the church, and the Bible.
      4. And he did so in a nonpartisan, nondenominational fashion that spoke with equal power to the Catholic and the Protestant, the high-church Lutheran and the low-church Baptist, the rational Calvinist and the emotional Charismatic.
      5. His concern was with “mere” Christianity, that is, the central doctrines of the Apostles’ Creed that all believing Christians share in common.
      6. Thus, he asserted the metaphysical truth of the Trinity and Incarnation; the historical truth of the virgin birth, the miracles, and the Resurrection; the theological truth of the Atonement; and the “geographical” truth of heaven and hell.
      7. But he left open such peripheral issues as baptism, the Lord’s Supper, purgatory, end-of-the-world prophecy, and the exact nature of the Atonement.
   B. Lewis did not seek the praise and approval of the literati, but wrote for the common man, the educated nonspecialist and the sincere layman.
   C. In contrast to the growing specialization of our century, Lewis produced a body of work that is as prolific in its length as it is wide ranging in its breadth.
      1. It includes not only apologetics (apologetics = a logical defense of the Christian faith), but also theology and philosophy, science fiction and fantasy, children’s literature and poetry, literary theory and aesthetic history, Christian allegory and spiritual autobiography, fictional letters, and devotional meditations.
      2. Unlike his contemporaries, Lewis did not look down on such genres as children’s fiction and science fiction but felt that they could bear as much intellectual meaning and spiritual import as any “serious” or academic work.
      3. Like Wordsworth, he did not consider it a mean or low duty to entertain his audience and invoke their childlike wonder and imagination.
   D. More than a great writer, Lewis was a man who truly lived out his faith.
      1. Though few people knew it, Lewis donated over fifty percent of the royalties he received on his books to various charitable organizations.
      2. He lived a very modest lifestyle and never adopted the mannerisms or attitudes of a successful and respected author.
      3. Despite his busy schedule of writing and teaching, Lewis took the time to personally answer innumerable letters from his fans (including children).

II. The first six lectures of this series will be devoted to Lewis’s nonfiction works; the latter six, to his fiction (both on its own and as informed by his nonfiction).
   A. Lectures Two to Five will focus on his apologetical and theological works.
   B. Lecture Six will consider briefly his literary theory and will highlight his Preface to Paradise Lost and The Discarded Image.
C. Lectures Seven to Twelve will look closely at his seven Chronicles of Narnia, his Space Trilogy, and Till We Have Faces and will conclude with a consideration of A Grief Observed.

III. Let us take a brief look at the life of Clive Staples Lewis.

A. Lewis (Jack to his friends) was an Irish Protestant, born in Belfast in 1898.
   1. He was raised by a passionate father and a somewhat reserved mother.
   2. His happy childhood ended with the death of his mother in 1908 (Lewis was only nine) and his father’s decision to send him to several boarding schools that he despised.
   3. The worst of these was Malvern College, where he endured the fagging system.
   4. Relief came in 1914 when Lewis began to study under Kirkpatrick, an obsessively rational thinker who taught Lewis how to think and reason clearly.
   5. Kirkpatrick’s tutelage helped get Lewis accepted to Oxford University.

B. Highlights of Lewis’s Oxford years include the following:
   1. Though a confirmed atheist, Lewis was challenged by two friends he made at Oxford, J. R. R. Tolkien (a Catholic) and Owen Barfield (a new Christian convert).
   2. Through their encouragement (and that of others), Lewis became a theist in 1929 (one year after his father’s death) and a Christian two years later.
   3. His newfound faith changed him completely, and he quickly composed a fictional account of his conversion: The Pilgrim’s Regress (1933).
   4. Over the next fifteen years, he wrote prolifically.
   5. Everything he wrote (whether sacred or secular) was guided and invigorated by his Christian faith. During World War II, he agreed to deliver a series of broadcast talks on the Christian religion (later collected as Mere Christianity).
   6. He honed his apologetical skills even more as president of the Oxford Socratic Club.
   7. His style was further honed by the Inklings, a group founded by Lewis and Tolkien, that provided a forum for the recitation of works-in-progress.

C. In 1954, Lewis was elected Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature, Cambridge, but continued to spend his weekends at his Oxford home, the Kilns.
   1. About this time, Lewis befriended and later married Joy Gresham, a divorced American Jew whose youthful flirtations with atheism and communism had given way (partly through Lewis’s apologetical works) to a firm Christian faith.
   2. After three years of marriage, however, Joy died of cancer. Lewis was devastated and wrote a moving account of his grief: A Grief Observed.
   3. Lewis died on November 22, 1963, just one week shy of his sixty-fifth birthday.

For readings, see bibliography.
Lecture Two

Argument by Desire: *Surprised by Joy* and
*The Pilgrim’s Regress*

**Scope:** In this second lecture, we again consider the biography of C. S. Lewis but from a radically different perspective: that of his inner spiritual journey.

**Outline**

I. In his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis explains that throughout his childhood, he experienced brief but profound moments of longing.

   A. The word he used to describe these strange yearnings was **joy**.

      1. For Lewis, joy signified an intense, overwhelming desire for an indefinable, numinous “something” that was just beyond his grasp.
      2. Joy, that is, was a feeling, but a feeling that pointed beyond itself.
      3. If one tried to hold on to the feeling and enjoy it as an end in itself, it would quickly vanish (as did Eurydice when Orpheus turned and looked at her).
      4. Likewise, if one tried (greedily) to reproduce the feeling, it would never come; joy comes only when the mind forgets itself and seeks something else.
      5. Lewis used the German **sehnsucht** (“longing”) as a synonym for joy.

   B. Before considering the philosophical and theological import of **sehnsucht**, let us examine some specific examples of joy in the life of C. S. Lewis.

      1. Lewis’s first encounter with joy occurred when his brother Warren showed him a toy garden made of moss and twigs arranged on the lid of a biscuit tin.
      2. His glimpse of that garden (and his later recollection of that glimpse) transported the young Lewis to an Eden of moist and fertile greenness.
      3. The next encounter came when he read Beatrix Potter’s *Squirrel Nutkin*, an experience that troubled him with “the Idea of Autumn.”
      4. A third encounter, also literary, came when his eyes caught suddenly the words: “I heard a voice that cried/Balder the beautiful/Is dead, is dead.”
      5. With a flash of desire, the words filled him with a sense of cold, remote northern regions, a sense that later became attached to his love of Wagner.
      6. Lewis’s joy bears comparison with a phrase that Wordsworth uses in his autobiography (*The Prelude*), “spots of time”: childhood encounters with the power of nature that yield visionary power and insight when recollected in later years.
      7. Whereas Wordsworth’s “spots” point back nostalgically to something lost, Lewis’s joy is a signpost that points to a richer world.

   C. This feeling of joy leads us to what is perhaps Lewis’s most original contribution to the study of apologetics: the argument by desire.

      1. The fact that we experience thirst is proof that we are creatures for whom drinking water is natural. In the same way, the fact that we desire an object that our natural world cannot supply suggests the existence of another, supernatural world.
      2. The desire does not guarantee that we will achieve that other world (if stranded in the desert, we will die of thirst), but it does suggest that we are creatures who are capable of achieving it and who were in some sense made to achieve it.
      3. In the conclusion of his *Reflections on the Psalms*, Lewis notes how odd it is that we are continually surprised by the passage of time.
      4. Of course, the modernists (especially the Freudians) will tell us that our spiritual longings are merely products of displaced sexual desire, that love is only a sublimation of lust, that heaven is but an illusion, a superstitious wish fulfillment.
      5. But moderns only arrive at this conclusion, argues Lewis, because they accept a priori that the supernatural does not exist, that matter is all there is.
6. Approaching reality from the bottom up, they insist that the higher must always copy the lower; they refuse to consider that the lower might be the copy.

7. In a characteristic move, Lewis inverts the modern view: human desire is not a projection from below but an incarnation from above.

II. In his fictional account of his conversion, *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, Lewis develops his argument by desire by allegorizing the many false lures that disguise themselves as the true objects of joy and, thus, drive us off course.

A. Lewis’s work is patterned after John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, based on a protagonist (John) who embarks on a journey of faith.

1. Whereas Christian’s journey begins with a clear vision of the gospel of Christ, John’s journey begins with a nameless desire, a flash of joy.

2. Reared in the repressive, hypocritical town of Puritania, John’s only intimation of spiritual truth comes through a mystical glimpse of a distant island.

3. The sight of that island fills him with a “sweetness and a pang,” and he abandons home and family to seek the object of his desire.

4. Like Dante, however, he soon loses his way and is sidetracked by a number of counterfeit objects that promise to fulfill his desire.

5. The first such object, a “brown girl,” represents lust.

6. John soon abandons the brown girls in favor of a soft romanticism that promises fulfillment through aesthetic beauty but discovers that the arts, far from refining desire, often act as pimps that lure us back into the laps of the brown girls.

7. Worse yet, John finds that the first time he listens to a beautiful piece of music it inspires in him a pang of joy; however, with each successive hearing, the joy recedes and a formal, critical interest in the music as music takes its place.

B. As John continues his journey, he encounters more false lures, all of which serve, temporarily, as idols blocking his vision of the true object he seeks.

1. Again and again, he confuses the means with the end; he thinks the beauty lies in the music or the ideas or the forms, when it merely shines through it.

2. At times, he turns the desire itself into an idol and loses all interest in its fulfillment.

3. For a while, John is accompanied by Vertue, a figure who, like Virgil in the *Divine Comedy*, represents the best of classical learning and discipline.

4. But Vertue, for all his discipline, lacks both joy and purpose (*telos*); like Dante’s Virtuous Pagans (Limbo), he is fixed forever in a state of desire without hope.

5. The dryness and rigidity of this cold idolatry Lewis identifies with the northern (Apollonian) regions of his allegory; in the south, desire is not so much frozen and systematized as it is over-indulged and perverted (Dionysian).

6. In *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis must not only resist the lure of cold stoicism and materialism (Lucretius) but also the ravenous, erotic lust for occult wisdom (Yeats).

C. Throughout his writings, Lewis emphasizes four elements of desire.

1. First, the good and noble things (not the low, evil, petty ones) most often serve as idols, as roadblocks and detours on our journey to true joy.

2. Second, an individual can respond to *sehnsucht* in two wrong ways: to move restlessly (like an ultra-romantic) from one natural object to the next in search of fulfillment or to reject (like an old stoic or a modern cynic) all desire as “moonshine.”

3. Third, when it comes to the fulfillment of our deepest, God-implanted desires, so many of us are willing to settle for a pale shadow of what God offers us.

4. Fourth, many fear to receive and accept the very thing they desire.
Lecture Three

Ethics and the Tao: *Mere Christianity* and *The Abolition of Man*

**Scope:** In this lecture, we shift from an apologetic based on desire to one grounded in ethics and morality.

**Outline**

I. Just as Lewis believed that true desire has its origin in the divine and is not a product of natural instincts (see Lecture Two), so did he believe that the base of all human ethics and morality is supernatural: it proceeds from above, not from below.

   A. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis resists and rebuts modern notions of ethics that began with the Enlightenment and were accelerated by Nietzsche.
      1. That is to say that Lewis denies both that ethics are a human product and that they can only be founded on rational, a posteriori grounds.
      2. For Lewis, morality rests on a divine, a priori code that must be accepted as a given: a gift of revelation and conscience, not a product of reason and will.
      3. Though one can (and should) be trained in ethical thinking and moral behavior, the teacher does not make up the code; he or she merely receives and passes it on.
      4. Indeed, the role of prophets and moral teachers (from Moses to Buddha, from Socrates to Christ) is not to introduce new laws but to remind us of the old ones.
      5. In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis calls this code the Tao and asserts, in opposition to entrenched modernist thought, that the Tao is universal and absolute.
      6. Unlike some apologists, Lewis is willing to find aspects of truth in all religions and cultures: Christianity, that is, is not the only truth in the world, but it is the only complete truth.

   B. His full defense of the universality of the Tao, however, is more complex.
      1. Lewis begins *Mere Christianity* by noting something peculiar about human beings: we constantly appeal, in our statements, to standards of behavior.
      2. Even a professed relativist, if someone cuts in front of him in line, will feel indignation at the rogue’s violation of a clear code of gentlemanly conduct.
      3. Of course, the modernist will argue that so-called ethical behavior is merely the acting out of a natural instinct (for survival, for procreation, and so on).
      4. But, replies Lewis, what of moral dilemmas in which two instincts are at odds with each other; what do we do then?
      5. We appeal to a third thing (*tertium quid*), some standard or touchstone that will allow us to choose which instinct we will obey.
      6. If this third thing allows us to choose between instincts, then it cannot itself be an instinct; the ruler we use to tell us which piece of wood is the right length for the room we are building cannot be itself one of the pieces of wood.
      7. Even the most radical relativists will assert that democratic ethics are superior to Nazi ethics, but to do so, they must appeal to a standard that transcends both.

   C. Lewis’s main apologetic for Christianity rests, in great part, on the Tao.
      1. Having shown that the existence of the Tao requires a supernatural guide or director (God), Lewis proceeds to contrast the different conceptions of God.
      2. Either we say that God transcends nature and is perfectly good (theism), or we say that he is immanent in nature and, therefore, neither good nor evil (pantheism).
      3. Pantheism is flawed, because if God is neither good nor evil, then what can be the source of our idea of good, an idea that allows us to discern good from evil.
      4. Thus, in a paradoxical, counterintuitive flash typical of its author, Lewis uses the strongest argument against God (the world is unjust) as an argument in favor of God (to call a thing unjust I must judge it by another thing called just): “a man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line.”
5. We are left with theism, but may that good God not be pitted in a war with an equal and opposite bad God (dualism).

6. This at first sounds like a rational option, but it runs into the problem of the tertium quid: if the good and evil powers are equally strong, then what allows us to say which of them is the good one (if we can’t say, it’s “might makes right” again).

7. No, the most rational option is that the world was created by a good God but that evil has entered it, just as man was made in God’s image but is fallen.

8. Ethically (and theologically) speaking, evil is not a positive entity; it is a parasite, a cancer, a perversion of goodness, but it is a powerful perversion.

D. If, as most moderns believe, Jesus Christ was only a good moral teacher and nothing more, then he really has little to offer a fallen humanity. As we saw earlier, Christ, inasmuch as he was a prophet and teacher, merely restated the universal Tao.

1. But the solution to our ethical dilemma cannot come via a restatement of the Tao (albeit a perfect one); it is clear that we have not and never can keep it.

2. The main mission of Christ was not to teach but to invade; our world, writes Lewis, is enemy-occupied territory and “Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed . . . in disguise” and is calling us to join his cause.

3. In contrast to the modern belief (initiated by Rousseau and first acted on by the Victorians) that men are perfectible creatures who lack only the proper education and diet, Lewis asserts that we are “rebels who must lay down [our] arms.”

4. Christianity begins with a humble confession that we cannot satisfy the requirements of the law (the Tao) and a surrender of our whole self to Christ.

5. Christ is God himself in human form; through his suffering and death on the cross, he brought us back into a right relationship with God (and the Tao).

6. Though he resists defining the exact nature of the Atonement, Lewis makes it clear that salvation rests not in the Tao but in sharing in the life of Christ.

7. In what is surely his most famous apologetical statement, Lewis gives another compelling reason why we must not dismiss Christ as simply a good man: Christ claimed to be the Son of God and to have the power to forgive sins. If he was not, in fact, what he claimed to be, then he was either a raving lunatic or the greatest liar (and blasphemer) that ever lived.

8. Christ, that is, is a liar, or a lunatic, or Lord (Lewis’s trilemma); the one thing we cannot say about him is that he was a good man but not the Son of God.

II. In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis explores (via a nonsatirical reductio ad absurdum) the ultimate, dystopic end of a society that tries to eradicate the Tao.

A. The work begins, innocuously enough, with a critique of an elementary school textbook that claims that all aesthetic judgments are finally subjective.

1. Lewis resists this modernist (a priori) assumption that all sentiment is not to be trusted, that it has nothing to do with factual, objective reality.

2. Proper education, for Lewis, includes an education in virtue (training children to take pleasure in beauty and virtue and to feel disgust for vice), an education that presupposes the reality of the Tao and the reality of the sentiments attached to it.

3. If we fail to pass on these sentiments to our children or, worse, foster in them a cynical attitude toward Tao-based virtue, we are courting disaster.

4. In a powerful Platonic metaphor, Lewis says that although our reason (head) lifts us to the angels and our appetites (belly) drags us to the beasts, it is that tertium quid, virtuous sentiment (chest) that mediates between the two and, thus, most clearly defines our status as volitional human beings (neither angels nor beasts).

5. Unfortunately, modern education, with its rejection of the Tao, has left our chest to atrophy; this is an ironic situation, because, as our chest continues to shrink, our leaders call more loudly for those very virtues that the chest alone can produce.

B. The upshot of such an education is to move our children (and our leaders) outside of that Tao-shaped circle that defines us as human beings. Rather than fulfilling the Tao within ourselves, as Jesus does, we abolish it altogether, as Nietzsche does.
1. Once outside this circle, we begin to fashion new moralities, often by extracting a single virtue from the Tao and using it to justify breaking the rest.

2. In the name of an isolated virtue (the conquest of nature, the purification of the gene pool, the survival of the race), we will be willing to commit the most horrible and inhumane acts; apart from the Tao, what is to stop us?

3. As we saw in Lecture Two, when we make any earthly thing (even a good thing) into a god, it quickly becomes a demon; of course, in the absence of any set standard or touchstone (the Tao), who is to say what is good or evil?

4. In the end, we may build a utopia, but it will be ruled by conditioners who will have no fixed measure to tell them what is best and most proper for man.

5. Apart from that measure, they will base their decisions not on a sense of duty, but on how they feel at the moment: on digestion and the weather.

6. Like Plato’s tyrants, who put themselves above ethics and the law, the base desires (belly) of these conditioners will control them, rather than their reason (head).
Lecture Four

Nature and Supernature: Miracles and The Problem of Pain

Scope: In this lecture, we consider Lewis’s views on miracles and pain. Although these two subjects may seem unrelated, they both arise out of Lewis’s views of nature, supernature, and the relationship between the two.

Outline

I. Just as Lewis believed that in the absence of the Tao, all moral judgments are meaningless (see Lecture Three), so did he believe that if nature is all there is, the scientific and philosophical statements of the naturalists are equally meaningless.

A. For the naturalist, writes Lewis, nature is the whole show, a total system that can account for everything that is; no other explanation is needed.
   1. Therefore, reasons Lewis (Miracles), if anything can be shown to exist apart from nature (to rely, that is, on some other reality), naturalism will be refuted.
   2. Lewis discovers that all-important “anything” in human reason.
   3. Our thoughts about nature (our theories and proofs and laws) are linked to nature but cannot be a part of nature itself; indeed, our thoughts can alter nature.
   4. Though our feelings of pleasure and pain may be seen as the natural byproducts of evolution, reason could not have been evolved by natural selection alone.
   5. Reason rests on abstract principles that lie outside the system of nature; it is not the result of mere physical experiences and observations.
   6. This idea is obviously true of deductive reasoning, but it is equally the case with inductive reasoning.
   7. Induction, if it is to offer inferences rather than mere expectations, must step outside the natural realm of temporal sensations and enter a supernatural realm of eternal “oughts,” a realm where the laws and axioms of science (including those of naturalism!) can assert their “musts” about the natural world.
   8. Within each of us lies a supernatural entity called reason; yet that supernatural reason must have itself a greater supernatural source, because our reason often sleeps and can be impaired by such physical substances as alcohol.
   9. Lewis’s answer is that behind and above our limited, individual self-consciousness (“I”) there must lie a greater, eternal Self-Consciousness (I AM: God).

B. For Lewis, neither ethics (Lecture Three) nor reason could have evolved; in The Problem of Pain, he extends this argument to take in religion itself.
   1. It is ludicrous, argues Lewis, that primitive man, gazing around himself at the pain and suffering in the world, would have inferred, on the basis of these data, that the universe was created and run by a loving and perfect God.
   2. No, he asserts, religion must have sprung from some different source, from an inner sense of awe and wonder, what Lewis calls the uncanny.
   3. Our fear of the unknown, of ghosts, of the numinous, is wholly unlike our fear of wild animals; the former could not have evolved from the latter.
   4. Though both men and animals can be frightened, only men dread the skeletons of their own kind. The source of this dread cannot be simply natural; it must have its final source in revelation from above.
   5. But Lewis does not stop here. “Advanced” religions, such as Christianity, do not come into being until that supernatural leap that made us aware of the numinous is followed by a second leap that links that numinous to the moral law (or Tao).
   6. There is no natural reason that we should consider the presence that dwells in the mountains to be the creator and enforcer of the Tao. Indeed, history offers us both “non-moral religion” (Kali worship) and “non-religious morality” (stoicism).
   7. It is easy to be a pantheist, to encounter God in every tree and hill while feeling no sense of moral responsibility or accountability in his presence.
   8. It is equally easy to muse about duty and the higher good while resting smugly secure in the knowledge that if you shirk that duty, the universe won’t care.
9. But the God who reveals himself in the Bible and in Christ is an eternal yet “personal” being.

II. Having logically posited the existence of a transcendent, self-existent God who is the source of both nature and reason, Lewis goes on to show that pain and miracles, far from being anomalies, are consistent with God’s overall plan for us and our world.

A. The Bible tells us that God is all-powerful and all-loving; yet the presence of pain suggests that he lacks either the power or the desire to end our suffering.
   1. Lewis’s short answer to the problem of pain is free will; however, his fuller theodicy (his meditation, that is, on the justice of God) is far more complex.
   2. Most Christians (strict Calvinists aside) will agree that God chose to give us free will, but few meditate on the greater ramifications of God’s decision.
   3. If we as human beings are to exercise our free will, then we must have a neutral, stable playing field (that is, the earth or nature) in which to do so.
   4. Had I the power to shift that playing field in accordance with my every whim and desire, I would be robbing my neighbor of his free will.
   5. Likewise, were God to shift nature every minute to prevent the pain and discomfort of each of his creatures, his whole free-will experiment would fall apart.
   6. Even God cannot do the impossible: he either grants us free will or he does not; maybe, writes Lewis, this is not the best of all possible worlds, but it just may be the only possible kind of world for the experiment God chose to carry out.
   7. In his discussion of the world God created, we catch a glimpse of Lewis the fantasy writer (or sub-creator, to borrow a phrase Lewis learned from Tolkien).

B. As for miracles, people do not see them so much as violations of the power or goodness of God as violations of his dignity and of the integrity of his universe.
   1. Indeed, writes Lewis, most moderns (including much of the clergy!) take for granted that miracles don’t occur: a position they claim to have arrived at through scientific analysis of the facts.
   2. Our disbelief in miracles forces us to come up with a natural explanation for, say, the parting of the Red Sea, but after we have done so, we use our explanation as further “proof” that miracles don’t happen.
   3. The modern man, says Lewis, will often resort to the most improbable “rational” explanation rather than accept a far more probable miracle.
   4. This situation arises in part from our misunderstanding of the laws of nature: we think these laws define events when they really define a sequence or process.
   5. If I drop a vase, gravity will pull it to the ground, but if my other hand rushes down to catch it before it smashes, the law of gravity has not been broken.
   6. I have merely added another factor that suspends (but does not destroy) the sequence of events; if I drop the vase again, gravity will take its course.
   7. Indeed, miracles do not violate the laws of nature, and only the believer in miracles can really see nature at all.

III. Both pain and miracles have a greater purpose; they are the very theme, the “stuff,” of what God is doing in our lives and our world.

A. Far from revealing an uncaring or contemptuous God, human pain reveals an involved God who pays “us the intolerable compliment of loving us.”
   1. A good father would rather see his son unhappy than triumphant and evil. In the same way, God’s desire is not that we have a good time but that we become true children.
   2. Because of our disobedience and pride (sin), because we have, of our own free will, chosen ourselves and our own wills over that of God, we have fallen.
   3. The only way back is through self-surrender, but our rebelliousness will make us deaf to God’s call; pain is God’s “megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”
   4. Pain demolishes our self-sufficiency, our illusions of earthly security; pain makes us drop what we are holding that we might embrace the love of God.

B. As for miracles, only those who have eyes to see will grasp their centrality.
   1. Older critics of Shakespeare generally considered his plays to be great in parts but inconsistent on the whole; critics since Coleridge have learned to see that the “inconsistencies” actually reveal the greater, organic harmony of the play.
2. In the same way, the naturalist sees in miracles a break in that artificial decorum that he has imposed on the universe, but the supernaturalist sees the fuller design, the deeper unity of which God’s greatest miracle is both theme and motif.

3. And that grand miracle is the Incarnation; all the greatest themes of mankind (the dying God, the seed that must be buried to grow, the need to reconcile body and soul) find their fullest (and historical) expression in Christ, the God-Man.

4. In a beautiful metaphor, Lewis compares Christ to a diver who must descend to the murky depths of the sea before he can recover the hidden pearl.

C. Lewis distinguishes between miracles of the old creation (feeding the 5,000, water into wine) and miracles of the new creation (walking on water, resurrection).
   1. In the former, we see Christ do quickly and on a small scale what God does everyday on a large scale; thus, through “natural” processes, God is continually transforming water into wine, but the miracle is so “slow” we miss it.
   2. But when God does it suddenly at a wedding in Cana, the truth is plain; the miracle embodies what we always knew to be (as those of Ovid, gratefully, do not).
Lecture Five

Heaven and Hell: The Screwtape Letters and The Great Divorce

Scope: This lecture considers Lewis’s often controversial views of heaven and hell.

Outline

I. If there is one element in Lewis’s work that causes the most consternation among modernists (both Christian and non-), it is his belief in a real, actual hell.

A. Indeed, his meditations on hell and the nature of damnation are at the core of two of his most popular works, The Screwtape Letters and The Great Divorce.
   1. In the former, a senior devil (Screwtape) writes a series of letters in which he instructs a junior devil (his nephew Wormwood) in the art of temptation.
   2. In the latter, Lewis takes us on a fanciful bus ride from hell to heaven, allowing us to eavesdrop as the souls of the blessed attempt (mostly unsuccessfully) to convince the souls of the damned to forsake their sin and pride and enter heaven.
   3. In both works, Lewis adopts an almost case-study approach to sin that uncovers the insidious process by which human souls are reduced to mere shades.
   4. For Lewis, hell is not so much a pit that we are thrown into on account of some heinous, mortal sin as a marsh that we slide into one peccadillo at a time.
   5. Each time we choose ourselves or our sins over God and others, each time we close another inner door on the life-giving (but also revealing) light of Christ, we surrender another spark of our humanity. We (literally) dehumanize ourselves.

B. At the core of Lewis’s “apology” for hell is the assertion that hell is always something we choose; no one who truly desires and seeks heaven will be left out.
   1. The unredeemed sinners in Lewis’s works, like those in Dante’s Inferno, are utterly narcissistic.
   2. One of the saddest “case studies” in The Great Divorce is a mother who has taken the bus to heaven to see her son; upon arrival, she insists on seeing him but is told that she must learn to desire God first before she can have her son back.
   3. Her son, or, more exactly, her smothering, manipulative love for her son, is her God. If God gets in the way of that, he must go; if God won’t step aside, then she’s ready to drag her son down with her to hell where she can really care for him.
   4. One of Lewis’s greatest contributions as an ethicist was his insight that it is more often the nobler emotions (mother love, religion, and so on) that keep us from God, because they can more effectively masquerade as the real thing (see Lecture Two).
   5. Satan is not a murderer and fornicator who made it big; he is a fallen angel.
   6. Lewis is so helpful (and convincing), because he clarifies for us the nature of the choice.
   7. The great irony here is that those who choose the former will find themselves growing more and more real, more and more substantial, while those who choose the latter will slowly deteriorate into insubstantial, person-less ghosts.

C. The modern balks against the idea of hell, but Lewis shows its necessity.
   1. If God’s gift of free will is a real one, then he must allow us to reject his love; hell is the only place in the universe that lies outside his omnipresent being, a place never intended to house humanity, but to which God will let us go if we choose.
   2. If we wish to be left alone, he will ignore us; if we choose ourselves and our idols over him, he will leave us to our terrible, self-enslaving freedom.
   3. Yet even here, there is some mercy; the “walls” of hell (suggests Lewis in Pilgrim’s Regress) are as much a barrier as they are a tourniquet.
   4. God allows evil to have its way in the sinner, but he gracefully contains the spread of that evil. Hell is a kind of quarantine that not only protects the damned soul from further degradation but isolates its evil lest it taint the joys of heaven.
5. We must never, warns Lewis, fall into that fine-sounding liberal plea that none should be happy until all are; that kind of logic only spreads misery.
6. On earth, a willful child, by refusing to enjoy his trip to the park, has the power to spoil the day for his entire family; in heaven, that power is denied him.
7. The manipulation that parades as unselfishness, the pity that binds, the love that smothers, all are strictly confined to hell; heaven is free of such pettiness.

D. A note on the “theology” of *The Great Divorce*.
1. Some Christians have been troubled by this book, because it seems to suggest that we will have a “second chance” after death to be saved.
2. The problem here (one Lewis addresses in many of his works) is that we don’t really understand what eternity means.
3. To say that God lives outside of time is to say that he experiences all time as a single unity: God does not foresee the future; he sees it as we see the present.
4. Although Lewis’s theology is fully congruent with evangelical thought, he is not a Calvinist. In contrast to Calvinism, Lewis argues (after Boethius) that God’s foreknowledge of an event does not necessitate his predestining of that event.
5. My seeing of a present event does not determine it; why then should God’s eternally present seeing of a future event (future to us) determine its outcome?
6. Because God’s knowledge is ever and always a present knowledge of our present choice, our freedom is not violated; past and future don’t exist in heaven.
7. Just so, the choices the damned souls make are eternal ones that surpass (and, thus, include) the past; as eternal states, heaven and hell work backwards.
8. The souls that reject the offer to stay will find that they have always been in hell, while those that choose to stay will feel that heaven alone has been their home.

II. Let us turn our attention now from hell to heaven, from misery to joy.

A. If hell is a closing up, a shrinking of the human personality and its god-given potential, heaven is a blossoming, a consummation of our deepest desires.
1. As Screwtape admits with disgust in his final letter, when the saved soul dies, it strips off all the sin and temptation of our world like so much dirty clothing.
2. Heaven for Lewis (as it is for Dante) means final and absolute freedom.
3. Yes, we must die to our old narcissistic, disobedient self, but only to be reborn into greater glory, as the hard seed must die before it can flower into the tree.
4. Heaven is beyond selfhood, but it does not annihilate the self. Lewis strongly rejects any notion of a one soul as a violation of our individual integrity.
5. God’s final purpose is not (like Satan’s) to efface our personality, but to fashion a redeemed humanity, fit to be clothed in glorious resurrection bodies.
6. In heaven, we shall still use our talents to praise God, but we shall do so free from the egocentrism of both pride and humility; we shall simply rejoice in the beauty and truth that are made, unconscious of whether we or others were their makers.

B. Heaven is our true home, the natural, logical end to our earthly longings.
1. We must not be bothered by those who claim we are mercenary because we desire heaven as our final reward, as a compensatory pie in the sky.
2. The true lover is not a mercenary because he seeks marriage, neither is the noble general a mercenary because he seeks a victory in battle.
3. Marriage and victory are the proper, fitting reward of love and battle; it is as right for one to give way to the other as it is for the caterpillar to become a butterfly.
4. The child who feels a rush of joy when his parents applaud his attempts at song is not proud; if anything, his delight reveals the humble heart of a servant.
5. Even so, the redeemed soul longs to hear its father’s praise.

C. In *The Great Divorce*, the bus does not move from hell to heaven—it grows! Indeed, we discover that hell is so small and heaven so vast that if the smallest bird in heaven were to swallow all of hell, it would not even notice it.
Lecture Six
Lewis the Scholar: Apologist for the Past

Scope: Although best known to the general public as a Christian apologist and as the author of the beloved Chronicles of Narnia, Lewis is also considered a major literary scholar. His critical studies of Spenser, Dante, and Milton are still hailed as classics in their field and are avidly read by college students.

Outline

I. In addition to gaining fame through his fiction and his apologetics, Lewis was a respected teacher and scholar whose academic work is still read today.

   A. Lewis’s lectures at Oxford and Cambridge were always well attended by students.
      1. In his first great critical work, The Allegory of Love, Lewis offered the public an in-depth, somewhat arcane study of the medieval romance that proved to be both scholarly and accessible.
      2. In it, Lewis demonstrates a unique ability to dive into a veritable sea of primary material and come up with a handful of aesthetic and philosophical pearls.
      3. For the reader who desires to understand the background to and import of such formidable romances as Spenser’s Faerie Queene but does not have the desire (or patience) to sift through the pedantry, Lewis is an invaluable resource.
      4. His other two major critical works, A Preface to Paradise Lost and The Discarded Image, both began as lecture series.
      5. Indeed, Lewis’s gift for rendering older literary forms accessible earned him the commission to write English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama, volume 3 of the prestigious Oxford History of English Literature.

   B. These four works (and the numerous literary essays that Lewis also wrote) do far more than merely explain the traditions of the past.
      1. In all his academic work, Lewis strove valiantly to break what he called chronological snobbery.
      2. When he first arrived at Oxford as an undergraduate, the cocky, still-atheist Lewis shared this prejudice; his friend Owen Barfield helped break him of it.
      3. As he read more deeply in the literature of the past, and as his growing faith freed him from the snare of that most twentieth-century of mantras, “newer is better,” Lewis came to see that though progress is the rule for evolution, technology, and consumerism, neither literature, nor culture, nor religion can be so measured.
      4. Thus, after describing in detail (in The Discarded Image) the medieval, pre-Copernican concept of the universe, with its geocentric orientation, its perfect spheres, and its primum mobile, Lewis cautions us not to jump to the conclusion that our modern cosmic model is all true and theirs all false.
      5. After all, our modern cosmological model is just that, a model, one that can, at any moment, be wiped away by some new scientific discovery.
      6. We laugh at the medievals for their quaint metaphorical notion that heavenly bodies move through celestial influence, but is such a view any more metaphorical than our notion that all objects obey (like citizens) the laws of gravity?
      7. When it comes to models, Lewis argues, we find what we’re looking for. The same is true in court; the lawyer’s questions often determine the shape of the testimony.

   C. Let us consider some additional examples of chronological snobbery.
      1. Perhaps the best and widest known case of the modern disparagement of the Middle Ages is the view, propagated in all our schools, that everyone before the Renaissance believed that the earth was flat.
      2. This view is nonsense, as Lewis proved by quoting numerous scholars from before 1500, from Aristotle to Ptolemy to Aquinas, all of whom knew that the earth was round.
      3. Less well known, but perhaps more significant, is the entrenched modernist belief that only recently has man realized the vastness of space.
      4. Here, too, Lewis exposes the propaganda by quoting ancient writers (like Boethius) who display a keen understanding of both the vastness of space and the comparative insignificance (spatially speaking) of earth.
5. Why, Lewis asks, is this misinformation so prevalent? The oft-unstated answer is that modernists would have us believe that the medieval faith in a personal God and in the dignity of man was predicated on a false view of the universe.

6. But they miss the point: the reality of the Christian faith rests precisely on its ability to assert these beliefs in the face of a vast, seemingly uncaring cosmos.

7. In a similar vein, Lewis (in *Miracles*) rebuts the modernist notion that the ancients believed in miracles because they did not understand the laws of nature. Lewis’s simple but logical argument is that it was only because they knew the laws of nature that they recognized miracles as such.

8. Thus, the early Church’s lack of gynecological knowledge was not the source of its belief in the virgin birth. Joseph knew where babies came from; that’s why he planned to put Mary aside when she told him of her pregnancy.

D. Linked to the many modernist misperceptions of the Middle Ages is a more subtle bit of propaganda that Lewis spent much of his academic career fighting.

1. That subtle bit is the widely disseminated view that around 1500, a sharp break occurred in the intellectual life of Europe.

2. Lewis’s response to this was simple: the Renaissance never happened.

3. What Lewis meant by this blunt but “packed” statement was that man’s view of himself, of God, and of his place and role in the universe did not change radically when the old Greek texts (especially Plato’s) were rediscovered.

4. On the contrary, the major pagan and Christian thinkers from Plato to Samuel Johnson shared a common ethical, philosophical, and humanist outlook.

5. The real break comes not in 1500 but in 1800 (just after Jane Austen) when Europe as a whole rejected her classical and Christian heritage in favor of both a radically subjective view of art (that privileges self-expression and novelty) and a radically objective view of nature (as something to be studied apart from man).

6. In contrast to this Enlightenment-inspired view, Lewis presents us, in both his scholarly work and his fiction, with a vision of an older kind of art that knows how to sing the glories of a meaningful, sympathetic, vital universe.

7. To honor his “reactionary-revisionist” historical viewpoint, Cambridge created a special position just for Lewis: Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature.

E. He did not merely explain the past; he defended it with apocalyptic force.

1. In *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, he argues forcefully that our modern loss of the traditional (or stock) responses to such things as pride, treachery, love, death, virtue, sex, and even life itself may, in time, threaten our very survival as a species.

2. The fact that many critics since Blake and Shelley have thought that Milton was really on Satan’s side not only reveals a rampant chronological snobbery that cannot even begin to understand the value system out of which Milton wrote, but also a fracturing of that internal censor that discerns good from evil, light from dark.

3. Given this fracturing, it is no wonder that great masses of Europeans have rallied to the demagoguery of dictators who promise to create a brave new world free from the restrictions of old medieval values and “superstitions.”

4. Likewise, our refusal (and, worse, inability) to understand and enjoy the beauty of hierarchy and submission has led to a negatively democratized, lowest-common-denominator society built not on a belief in the innate dignity of all men but on the envy-based creed of “I’m just as good as you are.”

5. By “rehabilitating” (in his work) the values of “Old Western” poetry, by creating (in his fiction) worlds where these values still exist, and by fighting (at Oxford) for the traditional, medieval curriculum, Lewis hoped to revive some of these stock responses and stem the tide of moral (and humanistic) decay.

II. Just as he fought for fairness in our assessment of the medieval heritage, so did Lewis fight for fairness in the criticism of individual works and genres.

A. Using what I call (after Coleridge) “genial criticism,” Lewis insisted that critics who despise a certain genre should not judge works in that genre.
1. Only a critic who reads, say, science fiction novels with pleasure and who understands and appreciates the conventions of such novels can say with any authority when a certain author has used these conventions effectively.

2. What good is a critic who ridicules *Alice in Wonderland* for the two-dimensionality of its heroine, when such heroines are part of the stock-and-trade of fantasy; it’s not *Alice* the critic hates, but the genre of fantasy to which it belongs.

3. To help rectify the un-genial criticism of children’s literature that was rampant in his age, Lewis wrote many essays (collected in *On Stories*) that helped establish criteria for judging such works and for grouping them into sub-genres.

B. As a sort of corollary to his genial criticism, Lewis also fought against what American “new critics” (like Cleanth Brooks) called the “intentional fallacy”: the tendency to evaluate a work of art solely on the basis of the personality of its author.
Lecture Seven

Paradise Regained: The Space Trilogy I

Scope: In *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra*, Lewis takes us on a journey through a living universe to two planets that still exist in an edenic state. We shall see how he uses these journeys to critique modern man’s arrogant lust for immortality.

Outline

I. *Out of the Silent Planet*, the first installment in Lewis’s Space Trilogy, tells the tale of a philologist, Ransom, who is kidnapped by two evil men and taken to Mars.

A. On landing, Ransom escapes from his abductors (Devine and Weston) and seeks refuge with an intelligent, beaver-like race of warriors known as the Hross.
   1. He soon learns the language and discovers that Mars (or Malacandra) is inhabited by three rational races (or hnau): the warrior Hross; the tall, thin, abstract-thinking Sorns; and the frog-like, blue-collar craftsmen, the Pfiiltriggi.
   2. All three races live together in utopic harmony and equality, but all obey the Oyarsa, an angelic guardian spirit who also rules the lesser angels (eldila).
   3. After Devine and Weston show up and savagely kill several Hross, Ransom is forced to flee to the mountains; from there, a Sorn carries him to the Oyarsa.
   4. The Oyarsa explains that he had asked Devine and Weston to bring another human to Mars so that he could meet with him, but the evil-minded Devine and Weston thought that the Oyarsa was demanding a human sacrifice.
   5. The reason for the Oyarsa’s lack of knowledge about Ransom’s abduction is that from the point of view of Mars, the earth is the silent planet (or Thulcandra).
   6. Many ages ago, the Oyarsa of Earth rebelled against Maleldil (the Creator), seized the earth, and tried to corrupt Malacandra; in response, Maleldil declared the earth “enemy-occupied territory” and placed a cosmic quarantine on it.
   7. In the finale of the book, Devine and Weston appear on the scene and explain that they intend to seize and colonize Mars as a way to perpetuate and preserve the human race, a right due them by dint of their advanced civilization.
   8. The Oyarsa neutralizes their threats and orders them to return home.
   9. After an arduous, near-fatal journey, the three men return to earth; soon after, their spaceship disintegrates, preventing further trips to Mars.

B. Ransom, whose character is based partly on Tolkien and partly on Lewis, begins the tale as a modern, scientific-minded, myth-exploding skeptic.
   1. During the course of the tale, however, his eyes (like those of the young Lewis in *Surprised by Joy*) are opened to greater spiritual realities.
   2. Ransom’s “education” begins on his journey to Mars. He expects space to be dead, cold, and dark, but is shocked to find, when he looks out the window of the spaceship, a warm, dazzling field throbbing with life (cf. *The Discarded Image*).
   3. Once on Mars, Ransom’s “chronological snobbery” is shattered as he encounters a medieval (even Homeric) type of society with virtues that surpass our own.
   4. Indeed, he discovers that the innocent Hross can conceive of evil only as being bent (just as the utopian Houyhnhnms in *Gulliver’s Travels* IV can conceive of a lie only as saying the “thing that was not”).
   5. At first, Ransom, entrenched in a biased, modernist view of politics and religion, can understand the relationship between the three Malacandrian races only in terms of force and can think of the Oyarsa only as a cold, arbitrary deity.
   6. As his prejudices are shattered by the nobility of the Hross and the reality of the Oyarsa, and as he begins to nurture in himself the medieval, chivalric virtues of courage and loyalty, his perspective begins to shift.

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C. No such change occurs in Devine and Weston; surrounded by the beauty and wonder of Mars, they experience only the lust for gold and conquest.
   1. Indeed, they are never able to view the Malacandrians as anything but ignorant savages; their lack of technological advances proves their barbarism.
   2. Devine is the less dangerous of the two villains because his evil is spurred merely by avarice (gold is plentiful on Mars); the broken, mercenary Devine has sunk below humanity to become an animal and, in so doing, has become a beast.
   3. Weston (who is not broken but bent) has sought to rise above humanity to become an angel and, in so doing, has become a demon (cf. Lecture Two).
   4. Weston’s more dangerous evil is built on an ideal (the survival and evolution of the species) that, when viewed in the context of traditional morality (the Tao, cf. Lecture Three), is noble. When twisted out of that context and enshrined as an inexorable command to be obeyed and worshipped, however, the ideal becomes an idol.
   5. Thus, in the name of humanity (the propagation of the race), Weston is quite prepared to kill any human being who gets in his way. To be the Prometheus who brings us knowledge, he is ready to become the Satan who destroys our peace.
   6. His forerunners are Thrasymachus, who tried to convince Socrates that might makes right; Machiavelli, who taught that the ends justify the means; and Nietzsche, who sought human perfection not in religion but in the will to power.
   7. Weston’s faith lies finally not in a personal God or even in a band of heroes, but in that vital force (élan vital) that philosophers, such as Henri Bergson, and artists, such as George Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, and Nikos Kazantzakis, believed was slowly realizing itself in our world through a spiritual but impersonal evolution.
   8. In a brilliant scene, Lewis has Weston expound his philosophy in English, then has Ransom translate it into the language of the Oyarsa; when he does so, all Weston’s “noble” ideals are exposed for the shallow claptrap they are.

D. The anti-humanistic, anti-life philosophy of Weston is finally that of the devil himself, a key element to the novel that is not just figurative but literal.
   1. The terrestrial Oyarsa who rebelled is none other than Satan; our world really is “enemy-occupied territory,” and we who dwell on it are marred by the same pride and disobedience that motivated Satan.
   2. Our main problem, Ransom learns, is not that we lack a good Oyarsa to obey, but that each of us has become his own Oyarsa!
   3. The Oyarsa of Mars has heard rumors of Maleldil’s (God’s) struggles with the Bent One (Satan) and longs to look into these things (see 1 Peter 1:12). Near the end of the book, Ransom (it appears) tells him of Christ, and the Oyarsa wonders at it.
   4. The novel ends with apocalyptic intimations of spiritual warfare to come.

II. In Perelandra, Ransom is carried, by eldila, to Venus, where he encounters a pre-fallen world (replete with an Adam and Eve) and engages in a titanic struggle to prevent the demon-possessed Weston from tempting the innocent Queen of Venus.

A. In this lecture, we shall focus on the edenic state of Venus and its queen; in the next, we shall explore the Miltonic dimensions of Ransom’s struggle with evil.

B. Lewis marshals his finest prose to conjure up the landscapes of Venus.
   1. Much of Venus is covered by ocean and, skimming the surface of that pristine water, are floating islands that move and fluctuate and dance with the waves.
   2. Ransom rides and sleeps on the islands, and their gentle undulations fill him with a pleasure he has never known. This pleasure is neither sexual nor asexual but trans-sexual; a pleasure our earthly bodies are too weak to enjoy (cf. Lectures Two and Five).
   3. The “excessive pleasure” of Venus, its “exuberance” and “prodigality,” overwhelm Ransom’s senses but without bringing any feelings of guilt.
   4. As we saw in Lecture Two, for Lewis, joy ceases to be joy when it is sought as an end in itself; indeed, the avaricious, lustful desire to “own” a pleasure, to cling to it even after it has gone sour, is at the core of Satan’s evil.
5. The Queen of Perelandra, who is innocently free of this desire, receives with joy whatever Maleldil gives her; she is above the need for ownership.

C. The Queen of Perelandra lives in direct communion with Maleldil, partly because of her innocent state, partly because, ever since Maleldil’s son took human form on Thulcandra, no intermediaries are needed between human and divine.

1. In the eschatological framework of Perelandra, the incarnation of Christ marks a turning point in the universe; human history since the Fall has been one long false start, but on Venus, Ransom glimpses the true state man was made for.

2. The novel ends with Lewis’s favorite image of the Great Dance (Lecture Five). This hierarchical dance has a center that ever shifts, because its center is always God. Its participants get their turn at the center only because they remain in the hierarchy; only hell, by seeking itself to be the center, lies outside the dance.

3. The Oyarsa of Malacandra and Perelandra attend the festivities as participants; in their exalted state, the king and queen no longer need them.

4. Ransom recognizes the king and queen as the mythic archetypes of father and mother, but on Venus, the mythic is also the real.

5. Indeed, when he gazes fully on the two Oyarsa he recognizes them, as well as the final, mythic-historic origin of masculine (Mars) and feminine (Venus).

6. Contra modern feminism, Lewis asserts that it is not just our bodies but also our souls that are masculine and feminine.
Lecture Eight
Temptation, Struggle, and Choice:
The Space Trilogy II

Scope: In this lecture, we watch as Lewis reenacts the full emotional, psychological, and theological dimensions of temptation and choice as they are played out first on the unfallen world of Perelandra, then in a small corner of our own fallen earth.

Outline
I. Lewis’s lush descriptions of Perelandra are Miltonic in their beauty; yet in his exploration of the many dimensions of temptation, he truly waxes epic.

A. Just as in Eden God used the “apple” to test our obedience, so on Venus, Maleldil tests the obedience (and trust) of the king and queen by issuing a single, strange command: though they may walk on it, they may never sleep on fixed land.

1. As in Genesis 3, the woman is tempted, but this time, she has a defender (Ransom) who helps to counter the arguments of the enemy (Weston).

2. Throughout the three rounds of temptation that the (literally) demon-possessed Weston puts her through, the queen is encouraged to take her gaze off of Maleldil and put it on herself, to focus on her own unfulfilled needs and desires.

3. At one point, Weston tries to turn her into a type of woman that Lewis always said he detested, the tragedy queen; that is, the type who is always bewailing her own suffering and sacrifice, who sees herself as a martyr, a “tragic pioneer.”

4. As in Screwtape Letters and The Great Divorce, Lewis shows himself here to be one of the few theological writers to understand and expound the full and exact nature of feminine (as opposed to masculine) sin.

5. Misogynistic theologians falsely argue that the key female sin is carnality. Lewis, feminist criticism aside, was not a misogynist but an advocate for femininity in an unchivalrous age. He saw the real temptation of Eve: to use pity and unselfishness as a tool for manipulation and vain egoism.

6. Weston tries to convince the queen that the king is stupid and sluggish, that any real initiative must come from her. Indeed, God wants her to assert herself by sleeping on fixed land; only thus can she force the king (for his own good) to be free.

7. Lewis the moralist often satirized women who “nobly” suffered for their families when they knew their families neither needed nor desired such suffering.

B. In his Preface to Paradise Lost, Lewis argues that the romantic tendency to heroize Milton’s Satan is a gross misreading (cf. Lecture Six). Here he embodies his argument by depicting Satan not as noble and grand but as spiteful and petty.

1. Weston is not a Promethean sufferer who sacrificed personal comfort for knowledge, but an empty shell of a man (Lewis calls him the Un-Man) who has surrendered his will to a force that seeks not to empower, but to devour, his ego.

2. At one point, Weston (who is, essentially, Satan) methodically rips open the bellies of frogs. At another, he torments Ransom by calling out his name over and over; each time Ransom asks, “what,” he answers, “nothing.”

3. Lewis’s Satan is more dead than alive, more pathetic than tragic. He has no secret knowledge that can make the queen wise; he can only extend his misery.

4. In the most unexpected twist in the plot, Ransom realizes that Weston will go on tempting the queen no matter how often she rebuffs him, that if he is not stopped, physically, he will rattle on his cold, anti-life logic for all eternity.

5. Yes, it becomes permissible (nay, imperative) that Ransom kill Weston. The Christian injunction to hate the sin but love the sinner is here abrogated, because Weston embodies pure corruption; he is no longer a sinner, just a sin.

6. Oddly, the struggle between good and evil reduces itself to two middle-aged men boxing for their lives on a distant planet. Yet the situation is not so strange, because, as Lewis tells us in Mere Christianity,
God’s great plan of redemption, all the miracles and covenants and kingdoms, narrows itself finally to a girl (Mary) at her prayers.

II. Here, in the final chapter of his Space Trilogy, Lewis offers an apocalyptic battle between angels and demons disguised not as a sci-fi fantasy (Out of the Silent Planet), nor as a Miltonic theodicy (Perelandra), but as a realistic, domestic novel.

A. The protagonists of That Hideous Strength are neither priests nor prophets, but an average, rather unhappy petite bourgeois couple: Mark and Jane Studdock.

B. Mark’s journey carries him into the inner ring of N.I.C.E. (the National Institute of Co-ordinated Experiments), a secret society that uses Machiavellian tactics to establish an efficient, “scientific,” omni-competent state.
   1. In N.I.C.E, we get the embodiment of the fears Lewis expressed in The Abolition of Man (Lecture Three), a totalitarian, dystopic state run by controllers. Here, Lewis, freed by his genre, invests his nightmare vision with a touch of horror.
   2. At the core of N.I.C.E. is not just a desire to conquer nature but a disgust for the physical itself; indeed, the crowning achievement of this anti-humanistic science is the artificial preservation of the bodiless human head of a criminal.
   3. The evil inherent in N.I.C.E. would not be possible, however, were it not for an equal evil that Mark falls prey to: the desire to be part of an inner ring.
   4. Indeed, Mark is so seduced by the chance of joining N.I.C.E.’s inner ring (and, thus, being one of the controllers) that he perverts his journalistic skills (and language itself) to write propaganda defending N.I.C.E.’s illicit activities.
   5. The great irony is that Mark’s individualistic desire to join N.I.C.E., if successful, will rob him of his individuality.

C. In stark contrast to the anthill-like Belbury (the headquarters of N.I.C.E.) is the Society of St. Anne’s (the opposition).
   1. If Belbury’s model is the organism, then St. Anne’s is the family.
   2. In the former, all are equal and, therefore, equally insignificant; in the latter, where there is hierarchy, all are equally vital in their positions and roles.
   3. The Director of Belbury offers no leadership, which results in constant infighting between its members; the Director of St. Anne’s (Ransom, returned from Perelandra) is a true Biblical patriarch whose members know their place and worth.
   4. Jane, who discovers that she possesses special visionary powers given her by Maleldil to help combat the growing evil, is invited to join St. Anne’s.
   5. Mark’s initiation rite at Belbury is quite different; to prepare him to reject Christ and accept the Head, he is thrown into a lopsided room that functions to disrupt all normal standards and, thus, pervert Mark’s natural human reactions.
   6. St. Anne’s invites Jane into a world of love, beauty, and purpose; Belbury seduces Mark to embrace a nihilistic, surreal, atonal world free of all absolutes.

D. In human terms, Belbury’s strength is immense, but St. Anne’s has Ransom.
   1. Gone is the physical, martial Ransom of the first two novels; the man who leads Belbury is a sedate figure who rules by spiritual strength of character.
   2. He is in intermittent pain from a wound in his heel that he received in his struggle with the Un-Man (in Perelandra), a wound that links him both to Christ (cf. Genesis 3:15) and to the Fisher-King of Arthurian legend.
   3. Indeed, in the person of Ransom, Lewis pulls together the full mythic weight of the Scapegoat King and invests it with a historical reality.
   4. In Perelandra, Ransom becomes, quite literally, the Christ of Venus; in That Hideous Strength, he is Arthur the Pendragon, the great Christian King whose court of Camelot (or Logres) is the one shining light in a dark world.
   5. In fact, we see two Englands: the unheroic nation of shopkeepers (Britain) and the heroic nation of poets (Logres); the first exists within the second, ever waiting to break through and redeem it from its “drunken sleep.”
6. This redemption is heralded in the novel by the physical awakening and return of Merlin, whose dark, earthy magic is channeled for good by Ransom.

7. The novel’s title refers to the arrogance of the builders of the Tower of Babel; in the climax, Ransom, by the power of Merlin (and the Oyarsa of Mercury), literally babbles the tongues of Belbury, ushering in their swift, bloody destruction.
Lecture Nine
Smuggled Theology: The Chronicles of Narnia I

Scope: Lewis is perhaps best known and loved for his seven Chronicles of Narnia, fantasy tales for children of all ages that catapult the reader into a world of magic and wonder. In this lecture, we consider the first two chronicles: *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and *Prince Caspian*.

Outline

I. Though generally referred to as Christian allegories, the Chronicles of Narnia are not, technically, allegories and did not begin as Christian tales.
   A. According to Lewis, the chronicles first came to him in a series of scattered images: “a faun carrying an umbrella, a queen on a sledge, a magnificent lion.”
   B. To embody these images, Lewis chose a form (or genre) that he felt most suited what he wanted to say, a form that excluded the romantic and psychological interests of the modern novel and demanded brevity, simplicity, and clarity.
   C. The genre he chose was the fairy tale.

II. The first of the chronicles, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, introduces us to Narnia and offers parallels to Christian theology.
   A. In the tale, four children (Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy), enter, through the back of an old wardrobe, into the land of Narnia, a magical land replete with talking animals, mythic fauns, living trees, an evil White Witch, and a Lion King.
   B. In fashioning his world of Narnia, Lewis consciously wove together characters from different mythological traditions.
   C. The children discover that Narnia is under the spell of the White Witch and, as a result, it is “always winter and never Christmas.”
      1. They also learn that the Lion Aslan (Persian for “lion”), the true King of Narnia and the son of the great Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea, is “on the move.”
      2. A friendly family of talking beavers guides Peter, Susan, and Lucy to a meeting with Aslan, but Edmund, who had earlier had a secret meeting with the White Witch and been tempted by her Turkish delight candies, turns traitor.
      3. Eventually, a battle ensues between the forces of Aslan and the witch; Aslan wins, but he learns that the witch is planning to execute Edmund.
      4. Though Aslan loves Edmund, he cannot violate the Deep Magic instituted by the Great Emperor; instead, he offers himself as victim in place of Edmund.
      5. The witch gleefully agrees to the trade and Aslan is humiliated, shaved, and murdered on the Stone Table. The girls watch the scene with helpless terror.
      6. After tending lovingly to the shorn body of Aslan, the girls begin to walk back to the camp. As the sun rises in the east, they hear a resounding crack and turn to find the table broken and the body gone.
      7. Aslan, alive and fully restored, appears to them and tells them that though the witch knew the Deep Magic, she did not know the Deeper Magic: “that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor’s stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards.”
      8. Atop Aslan’s back, the girls ride first to the witch’s castle (where, by the power of his breath, Aslan restores a menagerie of animals that had been turned to stone by the witch’s wand), then to a final victory against the witch’s legions.
      9. The four children stay on to rule Narnia jointly for many years, until, while chasing a White Stag through a wood, they stumble into the wardrobe and emerge back into England, not decades, but mere minutes after they had entered it.
   D. The parallels between Aslan and Christ are quite clear, yet many children (and adults) have read it without making the connection.
E. *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, in addition to embodying the nature of life, joy, and goodness, also has much to teach about evil.

1. In the character of the White Witch, we discover the true nature of the enemy, whose name (Satan in Hebrew; Devil in Greek) means accuser or slanderer.
2. Like Weston of *Perelandra* (or old Screwtape himself), the witch is anti-life and anti-joy; she seeks to devour and enslave, not to empower and free.
3. At one point, the witch comes upon a group of animals celebrating the coming spring (initiated by Aslan’s return) with a feast.
4. In a line heavy with theological insight, the witch, eyeing their food, cries out: “What is the meaning of all this gluttony, this waste, this self indulgence?”
5. Lewis understood (as many believers do not) that Satan, not Christ, hates the physical appetites and the proper joy linked to them.

III. *Prince Caspian* begins one year later, when Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy are whisked back to Narnia, only to find that Narnia is now many centuries older.

A. In the interim, Narnia has fallen on bad times. Aslan’s sacrifice and the reigns of the four children have been forgotten, or reduced to myths.

1. Worse yet, the talking animals have been driven underground by a race of men (the Telmarines) who rule Narnia despotically.
2. Out of this cruel race arises a noble prince, Caspian, whose governess secretly tells him about Aslan, the witch, and the four kings and queens.
3. She is dismissed by Caspian’s usurper uncle-king, Miraz, but is replaced by a disguised dwarf who counsels Caspian to flee.
4. Caspian meets with an army of talking animals and engages in battle with the Telmarines. They are routed and face destruction.
5. Caspian then blows a horn that had been given to Susan as a gift in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. The magic horn has the power to summon help.
6. The horn pulls the children into Narnia and, after much trouble (and a few good plot twists), the children are united with Caspian’s army—just in time to prevent Caspian’s amoral advisor from calling back the witch to help them. Finally, order is restored.

B. By setting *Prince Caspian* so far in the future, Lewis gives Narnia a history.

1. Narnia is very much a medieval place, with a love for hierarchy, pageantry, and chivalric codes that, when broken, lead to evil.
2.Linked to this vital theme of the loss of belief, Lewis weaves a subplot in which Aslan appears to Lucy (but not the others) and tells her to bring them to him.
3. Lucy fails to convince them and is too scared to go alone.
4. Aslan later admonishes, then forgives her; Lucy learns that she will never know what would have happened had she first been obedient.
5. This theme of never knowing what would have happened runs throughout the chronicles, a reminder of the eternal significance of our choices.

C. Another scene in the novel, more powerful in its Christian implications, is often misunderstood or passed over by critics.

1. In the final battle between Caspian’s forces and those of Miraz, Aslan calls back to life the forests and the rivers.
2. Along with this revival of the natural world comes Bacchus, Greek god of wine, who helps to destroy the forces of evil.
3. On seeing these pagan revelers, Susan says that she would fear them if Aslan weren’t there, perhaps Lewis’s way of suggesting that when viewed through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, the pagan myths are not only tamed but also come true.
Lecture Ten
Journeys of Faith: The Chronicles of Narnia II

Scope: In this lecture, we consider the middle three Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, The Silver Chair, and The Horse and His Boy.

Outline

I. The Voyage of the Dawn Treader is the most episodic of the chronicles, a fabulous sea journey through uncharted lands and mysterious islands undertaken by Prince Caspian and his crew, who are searching for the seven lost lords of Narnia.

   A. Because Peter and Susan have grown too old for Narnia, only Edmund and Lucy return there. They are accompanied by a new child, Eustace Scrubb, a spoiled brat who has no imagination or courage and was raised by modern, free-thinking parents.
      1. The group enters Narnia by being sucked into a painting of a ship (the Dawn Treader). The children join the crew, which includes Reepicheep, a chivalrous talking mouse who first appears in Prince Caspian and was one of Lewis’s favorite characters.
      2. Reepicheep has his own reason for joining the crew: he hopes the ship will sail to the end of the world and that there he will find Aslan’s country.
      3. Reepicheep’s desire adds a mystical aura to the journey; indeed, Aslan’s country is heaven: a beautiful land with doors that open out to all the worlds.
      4. The children wish to stay, but Aslan tells them that their time has not yet come; then, in the most overt Christian reference in the chronicles, he instructs them to return home, where they must learn to know him by another name (Jesus).

   B. Among the many adventures of the Dawn Treader is one that powerfully sums up Lewis’s understanding of repentance and change.
      1. While on a deserted island, Eustace, whose modern, scientific education has left him ignorant of magic and myth, sees a dying dragon. He enters the dragon’s cave and, not knowing the origin of dragons, sleeps on top of his hidden treasure.
      2. He wakes up the next morning to discover he has been transformed into a dragon, a horrible but healing experience that convinces the selfish Eustace of his egocentric behavior and impels him to use his new dragon powers to help the crew.
      3. After many weeks as a dragon, Eustace is visited by Aslan, who tells him to undress. More obedient now, Eustace pulls off his scaly exterior (like a snake shrugging off its skin), only to find a second, deeper layer of scales.
      4. After several unsuccessful attempts to “undragon” himself, Aslan tells Eustace that he must let him rip off the dragon skin; Eustace humbly agrees.
      5. The process is painful, because Aslan’s claws pierce deep, but when it is over, Eustace feels clean and refreshed; his physical and spiritual rebirth (John 3:3) is followed by a literal baptism in a river and a redressing by Aslan himself.

   C. In a second episode rich with meaning, the crew lands on an island inhabited by strange creatures who have been rendered invisible by a magician.
      1. They threaten to kill the crew unless Lucy bravely ascends the stairs of the magician’s house, finds his magic book, and says the spell to restore visibility.
      2. As she skims the book, Lucy finds a spell that will make her beautiful (so beautiful that men will fight wars for her hand, as they did for Helen’s). She is tempted to say the spell, but Aslan’s face appears in the book and stops her.
      3. Her vanity tweaked, she flips the pages and rashly says a spell that will allow her to eavesdrop on her friends. The book then reveals a scene back on earth, and Lucy must watch silently as one of her friends, egged on by a bully, teases her.
      4. Finally, she says the spell to make invisible things visible and is shocked to see Aslan who, honoring the laws of magic he made, also becomes visible. When she sees him, Lewis tells us, her face looks as beautiful as it did in the book!
5. Aslan scolds her for eavesdropping and tells her, sadly, that now her friendship will never be the same. As before, in Narnia, choices have consequences.
6. Lucy’s consolation is that Aslan promises to one day sing to her a wonderful story that she had read in the book but can no longer remember.

II. *The Silver Chair* takes us on another marvelous journey, not, this time, over the sea, but up into the northern climes and down into the hidden caves of Narnia.

A. Eustace and a new child, Jill Pole, are called into Narnia by Aslan to rescue Prince Rilian, the son of King Caspian, from the clutches of the evil Witch.
   1. In contrast to the earlier tales, in this story, the children do not arrive in Narnia but on one of the tall cliffs of Aslan’s country. In an act of vanity, Jill stands too close to the mountain’s edge and, when Eustace reaches out to grab her, he falls into the gorge.
   2. Aslan arrives and blows the falling Eustace into Narnia. He then vanishes, only to reappear by a river that the thirsty Jill wishes to drink from.
   3. In a densely theological scene, Aslan invites Jill to drink from the river. She balks, but Aslan tells her that there is no other river; if she doesn’t drink, she will die.
   4. After she drinks, Aslan makes her memorize four signs that will guide her in her journey to rescue Rilian. He instructs her to repeat the signs constantly, because once she leaves the mountain, things will no longer be so clear.
   5. The signs are a metaphor for the Bible (both the Torah and the words of Jesus). Their revelatory power is often adulterated by our traffic in the world. Again and again, Jill forgets the signs, which causes her much grief.
   6. In the end, Jill and Eustace, helped by another of Lewis’s favorites (a tall, lanky, eternally pessimistic yet doggedly optimistic Marshwiggle named Puddleglum) rescue Rilian and return to Aslan’s Mountain.
   7. In the river from which Jill had drunk, Jill and Eustace see the dead body of the aged Prince Caspian. Aslan weeps over the body (John 11:35), then instructs Eustace to pierce his paw with a thorn.
   8. A drop of Aslan’s blood falls on the corpse, and Caspian is instantly restored to his youthful appearance.

B. *The Silver Chair* is rich with scenes of enchantment, but the most profound occurs after Rilian is released from the Silver Chair to which he is bound.
   1. Having untied him, Jill, Eustace, and Puddleglum prepare to lead him out of the underground caverns of the Emerald Witch, but she catches them.
   2. Rather than stop them by force, the witch throws some magic dust into the fire and strums her mandolin in a hypnotic song.
   3. Slowly, seductively she tries to convince them that the world of Narnia does not exist, that it is just a dream. Neither the sun nor Aslan really exists; they are just illusions the children made up, mythic copies of real, mundane torches and cats.
   4. The children almost give in, when Puddleglum, in an act of desperation, shoves his foot in the fire. The pain brings him back to his senses, and he boldly proclaims that even if Narnia and Aslan are myths, he prefers them to the witch’s dark world.
   5. We find here a key concern of Lewis’s: that our modern, anti-supernatural world has confused the copy with the original (cf. Lecture Two).
   6. Material things are not the source of our religious yearnings: heaven is the true original.

III. *The Horse and His Boy* is the oddest of the chronicles, a tale of high adventure reminiscent of the Arabian Nights, the *Odyssey*, and the romances of Shakespeare.

A. The story occurs simultaneously with the reign of King Peter and his three siblings, but the focus is on two Narnian characters, Shasta and Aravis.
   1. Though a well-drawn character, Shasta is finally an archetype. The son of a Narnian prince, Shasta was separated at birth from his twin brother by an evil advisor and set adrift in a boat, from which he was rescued and raised by a fisherman.
   2. He grows up in a country due south of Narnia (Calormen) that Lewis surely patterned on the Muslim Empire of the Middle Ages. The “heathen” Calormenes consider Aslan a false deity and plan during the novel to invade and conquer Narnia.
3. In accordance with a prophecy, Shasta, aided by a talking Narnian horse named Bree, escapes from Calormen and saves Narnia from invasion.
4. He is joined by Princess Aravis (and her horse, Hwin), another archetypal figure who flees Calormen rather than submit to an arranged marriage.
5. In their dual search for freedom, both become homeless sojourners, blue-blooded pilgrims disguised as beggars (rather like Dickens’s Oliver Twist).
6. After Narnia is saved, Lewis offers a serio-comic denouement in which the captured Calormen general, the vain Rabadash, is given the chance to repent.
7. He arrogantly rejects the mercy of the Narnians and, after many futile appeals, Aslan transforms him into a donkey (cf. Nebuchadnezzar’s fate in Dan. 5:33).

B. The most powerful scene of the novel occurs when a lost Shasta comes face to face with Aslan: a theophany reminiscent of Genesis 32 and Exodus 3.
1. At first, Shasta is terrified by the invisible, numinous presence he feels at his side; like the Lewis of Surprised by Joy, he does not want to meet Aslan.
2. Aslan “hunts” Shasta down and explains that he has been at his side from the beginning. When Shasta, like St. Paul (Acts 9:5), asks, “who are you?” Aslan says, three times, “myself”: a conflation of the Trinity and the I AM claims of Jesus.
3. In the presence of Aslan, Shasta feels both terror and beauty. Perhaps to allay his sense of awe, Shasta asks Aslan to explain his actions toward Aravis.
4. But Aslan refuses; he will tell Shasta only his own story: a recurring theme in the chronicles that reflects Jesus’s words to Peter in John 21:22.
Lecture Eleven
The Beginning and the End:
The Chronicles of Narnia III

Scope: In this lecture, we examine the final two chronicles, The Magician's Nephew and The Last Battle, stories that relate the creation and destruction of Narnia.

Outline

I. The Magician’s Nephew tells the thrilling story of the creation of Narnia.
   A. Although it comes sixth in the chronicles, this story actually precedes, chronologically speaking, The Lion, the Witch, and The Wardrobe.
   B. The Magician’s Nephew begins in the early 1900s when two children, Digory and Polly, stumble on the hidden room of Digory’s Uncle Andrew.
      1. Andrew is a magician who has a set of yellow and green rings with the power to transport those who touch them to another world.
      2. Andrew, who desires knowledge of these other worlds but is too afraid to risk the journey himself, manipulates Polly and Digory into grabbing the rings.
      3. The two are transported, not to another world, but to a way station, a magical wood dotted with ponds, each of which is the doorway to a different world.
      4. Polly and Digory jump into one of the pools and end up in a dead world called Charn. After some exploring, they come upon a great hall filled with statues.
      5. Near the statue of a beautiful but cruel-looking woman, they find a bell with an inscription that tempts them to ring it; impulsively, Digory rings the bell.
      6. Immediately, the statue comes to life, and the children learn, to their horror, that she (Queen Jadis) was responsible for the destruction of Charn.
      7. They try to escape, first to the wood, then back to the earth, but both times Jadis grabs hold of them and is pulled in with them.
      8. Back in London, Jadis makes Andrew her apprentice-slave and sets out to take over the city. Polly and Digory use their rings to spirit her away, but by accident, they also drag in Andrew, a cabby (Frank), and his horse (Strawberry).
      9. The rings carry them not to the wood, nor to Charn, but to a new world.
   C. Let us pause a moment to consider the characters of Andrew and Jadis.
      1. In these two ruthless, Machiavellian villains, Lewis offers a powerful portrait of the Nietzschean Superman: one whose Satanic will to power and Faustian lust for knowledge is both boundless and unquenchable.
      2. Andrew and Jadis care nothing for those that they use to achieve their ends; indeed, they consider themselves above bourgeois standards of good and evil.
      3. Both, of course, feel totally justified in their actions. Jadis argues that the people of Charn belonged to her to do with as she pleased and that after all, it was the pride of her sister who “forced” her to speak the word.
      4. The “Deplorable Word” is certainly meant as a reference to the atom bomb. In fact, at the end of the novel, Aslan warns Polly and Digory that the coming earth century will be one of treachery, Deplorable Words, and Jadis-like tyranny.
      5. His words mark the only overtly political statement in the chronicles.
   D. Our travelers find themselves in the about-to-be-born world of Narnia, and Lewis, in a reworking of Genesis 1, conjures up a breathtakingly beautiful creation.
      1. The Creator is, of course, Aslan, and he literally sings Narnia into birth. His song causes the stars to appear, and the stars themselves soon join in the song.
      2. Digory, Polly, Frank, and Strawberry are captivated by the song, but Jadis and Andrew, whose hearts are insensitive to love and joy, hate the sound.
3. So deep is their hatred, in fact, that Jadis takes a piece of a lamppost she had ripped off in London for a weapon and throws it at Aslan’s forehead.
4. It bounces off harmlessly and falls in the ground, where, miraculously, it grows into a lamppost that will appear in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*!
5. As the others marvel at the fertility of Narnia’s new soil, Andrew thinks only of the weapons he could grow. He would turn Paradise into a munitions factory.
6. As the song changes, the earth begins to swell and bubble; the bubbles burst, and out of each, emerges a different animal.
7. To a chosen portion of the animals, Aslan grants the gift of speech. To these, he entrusts Narnia, but warns them not to do evil lest they forfeit their gift.
8. Narnia is now complete, but alas, Aslan reveals, evil has already entered it in the form of Jadis. To combat that evil, Aslan sets two remedies in motion.
9. He elects Frank and his wife (whom Aslan summons to Narnia) to be the first King and Queen of Narnia, decreeing that Narnia shall ever be ruled by sons of Adam. He sends Digory on a quest for a magic apple that will protect Narnia.

E. The quest turns out to be, as in *Perelandra*, a replay of the temptation of Eve.
1. Digory is accompanied by Polly and Strawberry, whom Aslan turns into a flying horse named Fledge. Atop Fledge, the children soar to a high, walled, edenic garden.
2. In the garden, Digory meets Jadis, who has just eaten one of the apples and, by so doing, gained eternal youth. She tempts Digory to ignore Aslan and keep the apple for himself, but he answers boldly that he has no desire to live forever.
3. Jadis then reminds Digory that back in London his mother is deathly ill. She coaxes him to steal the apple, take it back home, and use it to heal his mother.
4. The temptation is a hard one for Digory (as it is for Lewis, whose mother died when he was Digory’s age), but he resists it and carries the apple back to Aslan.
5. With the apple, Aslan plants a tree of protection, from which he awards Digory a new apple that will heal his mother. Then, breaking a cardinal rule of the chronicles, Aslan tells Digory what would have happened had he stolen the first apple.
6. Had he done so, the apple would have healed his mother (its power is real), but they would both have lived to regret her recovery. In the same way, Jadis now has immortality, but it will bring her neither joy nor rest. She will remain fixed in her evil and become the witch of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.
7. After his mother is restored to health, Digory plants a seed from the apple that grows into a tree. Many years later, when the tree is blown down by a storm, he cuts it up and uses the wood to build a wardrobe, which . . . (you guessed it!).

II. If *The Magician’s Nephew* is Narnia’s Genesis, *The Last Battle* is its Revelation.

A. Using the most esoteric, apocalyptic language of the chronicles, Lewis describes the End-Times Tribulation, Last Judgment, and Final Destruction of Narnia.
1. Narnia’s last days are set in motion when a Machiavellian ape named Shift convinces a donkey (Puzzle) to dress up like a lion and pretend to be Aslan.
2. This false Messiah (or anti-Christ) fools many of the Narnians and ushers in a new relativistic faith that teaches that Aslan is actually the same as Tash, the pagan deity of the heathen Calormenes; indeed, they dub this new god Tashlan.
3. Rishda Tarkaan, a tyrannical Calormene, uses the growing moral confusion to seize control of Narnia and set up Shift and Puzzle as figureheads.
4. Rishda claims to be serving Tashlan, but he is in truth an atheist.
5. An underground resistance that is loyal to Aslan and led by Tirian, the last Prince of Narnia, springs up, but its members are martyred one by one. Even the return of Eustace and Jill cannot stem the tide of moral and political disintegration.

B. At the climax of the struggle, Rishda, mimicking the fascist and communist propaganda rallies of Lewis’s day, stages a grand meeting by a stable door.
1. He claims that Tashlan waits within the stable and sends Ginger the cat (his Goebbels-like crony) inside as proof that he (Rishda) speaks for Tashlan.
2. Only moments after entering, the smooth-talking Ginger lets out a screech and rushes out. The crowd questions him, but all he can do is meow.
3. As Aslan had warned in *The Magician’s Nephew*, Ginger’s evil misuse of his gift of speech causes him to lose his status as a talking animal.
4. Shortly thereafter, Rishda enters the stable, where he is seized by the real, vulture-headed Tash. Beware, warns Lewis, if you call on the devil, he will come!
5. Tash then turns to devour Tirian (whom Rishda had had thrown in the stable), but he is rebuked in the name of Aslan and disappears.
6. The rebuke comes from the seven kings and queens of Narnia (Peter, Edmund, Lucy, Eustace, Jill, Digory, and Polly), all of whom have just died in a train crash and have been transported (in the final seconds of life) to witness the end of Narnia. (Susan, whose vanity has caused her to “backslide,” is not among them.)
7. As darkness descends, all the animals parade before the stable door, where they are judged by Aslan and go off to his right or left.
8. Lewis’s awe-inspiring account of Narnia’s end includes forests devoured by dragons, a mighty deluge, and a giant who squeezes out the sun like an orange.

C. Of Lewis’s description of heaven two things need be said.
1. The heavenly Narnia (like the heavenly earth) is like Narnia but far more glorious.
2. Though we meet in heaven all the heroes from the other chronicles, we also meet Emeth, a noble Calormene who enters the stable door in search of Tash.
3. When he enters, he meets not Tash but Aslan, who tells Emeth that the good he did for Tash was actually done for him and that his search for truth (*Emeth*=truth in Hebrew) has led him to Aslan.
Lecture Twelve

Suffering unto Wisdom: Till We Have Faces and

A Grief Observed

Scope: In our final lecture, we look at Lewis’s last novel, Till We Have Faces, a mature and profound reworking of the classical myth of Cupid and Psyche. The heroine of this novel was patterned after Lewis’s wife, Joy Gresham. We then shift our focus to A Grief Observed, an equally mature and profound study of Lewis’s own despair over the death of Joy, and his long, painful road back to faith.

Outline

I. Lewis’s final novel, Till We Have Faces, is his strangest and most mature work of fiction, a retelling of the classical myth of Cupid and Psyche.

A. It offers both an apocalyptic uncovering of the deeper spiritual truths that lie behind the veil of paganism and an in-depth, psychological study of love.
   1. As such, it embodies in fiction ideas that Lewis had already explored in his earlier apologetical works (such as Mere Christianity and Miracles) and that he would go on to express, four years later, in The Four Loves.
   2. In the former works, Lewis argues that Christianity is a myth come true. Indeed, in Till We Have Faces (which takes place several centuries before Christ), we encounter seeds of spiritual truth that await fulfillment in the person of Jesus.
   3. In The Four Loves, Lewis argues that when the natural loves (affection, friendship, and eros) are divorced from supernatural charity, they eventually become warped, false idols that use love as a shield for envy, selfishness, and hate.

B. Orual is the eldest daughter of the cruel King of Glome; she is not, however, the favored of her family, because, unlike her pretty sister Redival, Orual is ugly. Through a series of adventures, Orual is set on the track of “rescuing” her stepsister Istra, or “Psyche” in Greek.

C. Those familiar with the original tale of Cupid and Psyche (from The Golden Ass of Apuleius) will note that Lewis here has radically reinterpreted the myth.
   1. In the original, Psyche’s sister (actually both sisters) sees the palace and sets out to destroy Psyche’s newfound happiness out of sheer envy. Lewis’s reading is both spiritually and psychologically more profound.
   2. Spiritually speaking, Orual cannot see the palace, because she does not have eyes to see. She blinds herself to spiritual truths that if accepted and, hence, “seen,” would disrupt all that the Fox had taught her about the rational laws of nature.
   3. Orual goes to visit Psyche in prison on the night before her sacrifice, but she refuses to listen to Psyche when she tells Orual that she is excited about the Great Offering. Since she was a girl, Psyche has yearned to be the bride of the spirit that dwells on the Grey Mountain (cf. Lecture Two on desire).
   4. Even worse, shortly after her talk with Psyche on the mountain, Orual is actually vouchsafed a vision of the palace itself: she sees it, yet refuses really to see.
   5. Like the damned souls in The Great Divorce, Orual rejects, again and again, the only thing that can bring her joy; she prefers her “enlightened” misery.
   6. On the psychological level, Lewis’s re-mythologizing is just as effective as the original, because it allows Orual to justify her destruction of Psyche’s happiness in terms of love.
   7. But especially in Lewis’s version, it is not true love (agape or charity) that motivates Orual, but a twisted, idolatrous form of affection that smothers rather than edifies, manipulates rather than gives, binds rather than sets free.
   8. Orual would rather see Psyche unhappy with her than happy with another.

D. Just as she perverts affection-love, so Orual perverts friendship and eros.
   1. She claims friendship with the Fox and yet, to serve her own insatiable need for friendship, she manipulates the Fox into sacrificing his freedom for her.
2. Likewise her feelings of erotic love (never consummated) for Bardia, the Chief of the Guards, cause her to work him to death. Unwilling to let Bardia return to his wife, Orual continually thinks up duties to keep him by her side.

3. The shock of this revelation, that what Orual had thought was love (affection, friendship, eros) is actually a kind of hatred, is rendered more powerful by the fact that the tale is told in first-person from the point of view of Orual.

4. That is to say, throughout the novel, we are complicit in all her choices and rationalizations.

E. Returning to the plot, Orual destroys Psyche’s marriage by persuading her to break her husband’s trust by using a lamp to look on him while he sleeps. When a drop of oil falls on him, he wakes in anger, rebukes Psyche, and casts her out.

1. This part of the plot is true to the original tale, but Lewis adds a chilling scene in which the incensed god appears to Orual and tells her that she, too, will suffer.

2. And suffer she does, but not in the physical sense; indeed, Orual goes on to become Queen of Glome and to rule her kingdom with justice and efficiency.

3. Her suffering comes in the form of tragic knowledge; she writes a Job-like theodicy (*Till We Have Faces*) in which she blames the gods for Psyche’s exile.

4. In the haunting finale, Orual (literally) gets her day in court. She brings her accusation before the gods themselves, only to learn the truth: she did know that Psyche was happy, but her wounded affection drove her to murder Psyche’s joy.

II. Orual, Lewis’s most fully conceived character, was modeled after Joy Gresham.

A. As noted in Lecture One, Joy Gresham was a Jewish-American who, after years of atheism and communism, came to faith in Christ partly through Lewis’s works.

1. After corresponding for two years, Joy met Lewis in 1952. Two years later, she was divorced and living in England with her two sons, David and Douglas.

2. To help her secure British citizenship, Lewis agreed to marry her in a civil ceremony in 1956; after the wedding, they continued to live apart.

3. Soon after, however, Joy developed cancer and Lewis, realizing his love for her, committed himself to an ecclesiastical ceremony in her hospital room. All present expected Joy to die shortly, but miraculously, her cancer went into remission.

4. Sadly, most of Lewis’s friends did not approve of this American divorcée, but Lewis was fully devoted to her, and the two spent three marvelously happy years together, years that sounded the depths of affection, friendship, eros, and charity.

5. Though not particularly beautiful or even refined, Joy (like Orual) had a quick wit that delighted the verbally combative Lewis; “her mind,” he wrote, “was lithe and quick and muscular as a leopard,” ever ready to crush sloppy thinking.

6. When the cancer returned and claimed Joy’s life in 1960, Lewis was devastated. As a way of dealing with his grief, he began to keep a journal, published the next year under the title *A Grief Observed*.

B. Perhaps no other work has dealt so honestly and directly with the doubts and fears that assail the griever, even (and especially) if he is a strong Christian.

1. Most modern Christian writers would have gone back and edited their work for publication, making the early passages seem less despairing and more “Christ-like,” but Lewis chose not to alter the entries.

2. Indeed, many Christians who read this work are at first confused: is this Lewis the great apologist? How can a man like that suffer from such terrible doubts?

3. But suffer he does, doubting not whether God exists, but more terribly, whether he is not a cosmic sadist or an eternal vivisector, playing with his human rats.

4. Gone is the cool logic of *The Problem of Pain*; why, he cries out, did you pull me out of my long bachelordom only to send me back into my shell again? Is our marriage to be just a brief, forgotten episode? And why can’t I remember her face?

C. The answers come slowly, painfully, anecdotally rather than logically.

1. To a sick animal, a vet would appear like a vivisector; God hurts to heal.

2. Was it not Lewis who slammed the door, like a drowning man who clutches in fear at his rescuer? Yes, God told him to knock, but not to bang and batter.
3. Does he really understand his situation? Is he not, perhaps, like a man who thinks he is locked in a
dungeon but then finds he is outside in the dark?
4. Then deeper: did I really love Joy or just my image of her? Did not God have to shatter that image lest
I make it into an idol (similar to Orual’s love for Psyche)?
5. And what of my prayers of grief? Do I seek God now only as a means of getting her back? Do I desire
heaven only because I hope for a reunion with Joy?
6. That will not do: God must be loved for himself; only then shall we receive back what we lost. Those
who lose their lives (and loves) will gain them.
7. We end up back where we began in Lecture Two, with the argument by desire: the longing, the joy,
only comes when we stop seeking it as an end.
Timeline

All entries in this timeline (unless otherwise noted) refer to the life and writings of C. S. Lewis. I have chosen to be brief and to the point. Further information on people, places, and works can be found in the glossary, biographical notes, and bibliography. Dates given for works signify the original year of publication.

1895................................................ Birth of Warren Lewis, brother of Clive Staples Lewis
Nov. 29, 1898 ................................. Lewis himself born in Belfast, Ireland
1905................................................ Lewis family moves to Little Lea
1908................................................ Death of Lewis’s mother
1908–1910...................................... Attends Wynyard School
1910................................................ Spends a term at Campbell College
1911–1913...................................... Attends Cherbourg Preparatory School
1913–1914...................................... Attends Malvern College
1914–1916...................................... Studies under Kirkpatrick (at Great Bookham)
1917–1923...................................... Student at Oxford University
1917–1918...................................... Serves (and is wounded) in World War I
1919................................................ *Spirits in Bondage*
1925................................................ Becomes fellow of Magdalen College
1926................................................ *Dymer*
1927................................................ Joins Coalbiters
1929................................................ Death of Father
1929................................................ Converts to Theism
1930................................................ Moves into the Kilns
1931................................................ Converts to Christianity
1933................................................ *The Pilgrim’s Regress*
1933................................................ Lewis and Tolkien form the Inklings
1936................................................ *The Allegory of Love*
1938................................................ *Out of the Silent Planet*
1939................................................ *Rehabilitations and Other Essays*
1939................................................ *The Personal Heresy*
1940–1945...................................... Glory years of the Inklings
1940................................................ *The Problem of Pain*
1941–1944...................................... Broadcast talks; later collected as *Mere Christianity*
1942–1954...................................... President of Oxford Socratic Club
1942................................................ *The Screwtape Letters*
1942................................................ *A Preface to Paradise Lost*
1943................................................ *Perelandra*
1943 .................................................. *The Abolition of Man*
1945 .................................................. *That Hideous Strength*
1945 .................................................. Death of Charles Williams
1946 .................................................. *The Great Divorce*
1947 .................................................. *Miracles*
Sept. 8, 1947 ................................. Appears on cover of Time
1950 .................................................. *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*
1950 .................................................. Begins correspondence with Joy Gresham
1951 .................................................. Death of Mrs. Moore
1951 .................................................. *Prince Caspian*
1952 .................................................. First meets Joy
1952 .................................................. *Mere Christianity*
1952 .................................................. *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*
1953 .................................................. *The Silver Chair*
1954 .................................................. *The Horse and His Boy*
1954 .................................................. *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*
1954 .................................................. Elected Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature, Cambridge
1954 .................................................. Joy moves permanently to England with her sons
1955 .................................................. *The Magician’s Nephew*
1955 .................................................. *Surprised by Joy*
1956 .................................................. *The Last Battle*
1956 .................................................. Marries Joy in a civil ceremony
1956 .................................................. *Till We Have Faces*
1957 .................................................. Marries Joy in an ecclesiastical ceremony
1958 .................................................. *Reflections on the Psalms*
1960 .................................................. *The Four Loves*
1960 .................................................. *Studies in Words*
1960 .................................................. *The World’s Last Night and Other Essays*
1960 .................................................. Death of Joy Lewis
1961 .................................................. *A Grief Observed*
1961 .................................................. *An Experiment in Criticism*
Nov. 22, 1963 ................................. Dies at the Kilns, aged 64
1964 .................................................. *Letters to Malcolm*
1964 .................................................. *The Discarded Image*
**Glossary**

**Anthroposophy**: A mystical doctrine or philosophy, founded and propagated by Rudolph Steiner (1861–1925). Anthroposophy is at once scientific and anti-scientific in its approach and, although quite distinct from Christianity, is not necessarily incompatible with it (today we would call it vaguely “new age” or, better, “holistic”). Owen Barfield, one of the great academic and spiritual influences on C. S. Lewis, was both a believing Christian and a committed anthroposophist. Central to anthroposophy is the belief that man has, since the fourth century A.D. (when Christianity became institutionalized), increasingly cut himself off from the universe around him.

**The Bloods**: See Malvern.

**Boxen**: A complex fantasy world (replete with its own history and geography) that was created by Lewis and his brother during their childhood years at Little Lea. The world combined Lewis’s fascination with dressed animals and Warnie’s love of India, but it lacks the magic of Lewis’s Chronicles of Narnia.

**Calvinism**: Lewis was nondenominational in his Christian beliefs; had great respect for all traditions (Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant); and believed in the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith as taught by the Protestant reformers. He disagreed, however, with many of the tenets of doctrinaire Calvinism, including the belief that mankind is not just fallen but totally depraved and that God predestined all our actions and choices before the world was made.

**The Coalbiters**: A society founded by J. R. R. Tolkien for the purpose of reading aloud the Sagas and Eddas in Old Norse. Lewis, who shared Tolkien’s love for all things northern, joined the group in 1927. Eventually, the Coalbiters gave way to the Inklings, but the linguistic impact of the former group can be seen throughout Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* and in many of Lewis’s works as well.

**The Inklings**: An Oxford group started by Lewis and Tolkien (c. 1933) that soon expanded to include Warnie, Charles Williams, Owen Barfield, Hugo Dyson (1896–1975), R. E. Havard, Nevill Coghill (1899–1980), Adam Fox (1883–1977), Colin Hardie (b. 1906), George Sayer, Christopher Tolkien (b. 1924), and several others. The purpose of the Inklings was to allow an open forum in which members could discuss various topics and Lewis, Tolkien, Williams, and others could read aloud works in progress.

**The Kilns**: House where Lewis resided with his brother, Mrs. Moore, Maureen Moore, and, later, his wife from 1930 until his death in 1963. The house was quite spacious and possessed fairly extensive gardens. Lewis was at heart a simple man and loved the down-to-earth domesticity of the Kilns.

**Little Lea**: The house that the upwardly mobile Albert Lewis bought for his family in 1905 (when Lewis was seven). The house was large and spacious but was oddly and rather inefficiently built. Reflecting, in *Surprised by Joy*, on the peculiar architecture of Little Lea (at the time, Lewis and his brother called it the “New House”), Lewis admits: “I am a product of long corridors, empty sunlit rooms, upstairs indoor silences, attics explored in solitude, distant noises of gurgling cisterns and pipes, and the noise of wind under the tiles.”

**Malvern**: A beautiful English town (famous for its spas) that housed both a Boy’s College (Malvern, or the “coll”) and a preparatory school (Cherbourg). It was here that he first met the "Bloods," the upper-class athletes who formed the aristocratic elite of the school and who ruled over under-classmen (like Lewis) with absolute power. After surviving three wretched years at Wynyard school (followed by a brief hiatus at Campbell College), Lewis was enrolled first in Cherbourg (1911–13), then in Malvern (1913–14). Ironically, although Lewis’s sojourn at Malvern College was a negative and oppressive one to him, the town of Malvern would, many years later, prove a favorite vacation spot and place of refuge from his busy life at the Kilns.

**The Oxford Socratic Club**: A near-legendary group that was founded by Stella Aldwinckle but that quickly took on the personality of its first president, C. S. Lewis (who held the honor from 1942 until his move to Cambridge in 1954). The purpose of the group was to allow an open forum for the discussion of the relevance, integrity, and intellectual soundness of Christianity in a modernist, naturalistic world.

**Sehnsucht**: A German word that means “longing” or “yearning.” Lewis often used it to signify moments in his life when he felt an intense, overwhelming desire for an indefinable, numinous “something” that was just beyond his grasp. For Lewis, the reality of these moments of longing (he more often called them, simply, “joy”) and the stubborn fact that he could find no object for them, either within himself or the natural world, proved to him that
their ultimate source must be supernatural (a “proof” of the existence of God and heaven that is generally referred to as the “argument by desire”).

Wynyard: A public boarding school (located in Hertfordshire, England) that Lewis attended from 1908 to 1910. (Warnie attended from 1905 to 1909.) The Irish Albert sent his sons there in hopes of securing for them an English education, but he could not have made a worse choice. Wynyard was a horrid school, equally deficient in proper food and sanitation as it was in effective teaching. Lewis’s experiences at Wynyard scarred him deeply, scars made all the deeper by the fact that Albert had shipped the nine-year-old Lewis off to school only a month after the traumatic death of his mother.
Biographical Notes

All phrases that appear below in quotation marks are taken from Lewis’s autobiography, Surprised by Joy. These notes should be read in conjunction with the glossary. I have grouped them chronologically rather than alphabetically.

Family

Albert Lewis (1863–1929). Father of C. S. Lewis. Born of Welsh descent, Albert was a successful solicitor who ran his own private practice in Belfast. He was an intelligent, well-read man (Lewis grew up in a house full of books) and blessed with “a fine presence, a resonant voice, great quickness of mind, eloquence, and memory.” He was particularly famous for his skill at telling comic stories (he called them “wheezes”); Lewis claimed he was the best raconteur he ever heard. The great tragedy of Albert’s life was the death of his wife in 1908. Her loss devastated him and seriously affected his relationship with his boys.

Florence Hamilton Lewis (1862–1908). Mother of C. S. Lewis; a clergymen’s daughter whose blood was far bluer than Albert’s and whose logical, disciplined mind earned her a B.A. in math. In contrast to her passionate, sentimental husband, Florence possessed a cooler, more equitable temperament. Her death from cancer in 1908 destroyed Lewis’s once happy home life and resulted in his lifelong estrangement from his father. (Lewis often referred to himself as an orphan.)

Major Warren (“Warnie”) Hamilton Lewis (1895–1973). Elder brother of C. S. Lewis. From Lewis’s birth to his death, Warnie remained one of his dearest friends and companions. After the death of their mother, the two boys grew inseparable (indeed, the farther away they drew from their father, the closer they drew together), and they co-inhabited a make-believe world that combined Lewis’s love of dressed animals with Warnie’s fascination for India. Warnie never married and spent his retirement years living with his brother at the Kilns, an arrangement that continued even after Lewis married.

(Helen) Joy Davidman (1915–1960). Wife of C. S. Lewis. As unlikely as it may seem, the future Mrs. Lewis was a divorced, nonpracticing Jew from the Bronx who spent many years as a self-avowed atheist and communist and who was not averse to vulgar language and antisocial behavior. Joy proved the perfect soul mate for Lewis, inspiring him to write Reflections on the Psalms and The Four Loves and serving as the archetype for Lewis’s most fully-realized fictional character, Orual (Till We Have Faces). Her death from cancer in 1960, though expected, devastated Lewis; his subsequent struggles with grief, doubt, and despair are memorialized in A Grief Observed.

Early Friends and Mentors

Henri Bergson (1859–1941). French philosopher of a mystical, anti-rational bent who theorized the existence of a vital spirit (élan vital) that moved through all things and impelled them forward. The young, pre-Christian Lewis was greatly attracted to the idealistic philosophies of Bergson and his school (as allegorized in The Pilgrim’s Regress), as he was to the occult knowledge of such mystical personages as the Irish poet William Butler Yeats (1865–1939). When he embraced Christianity, however, Lewis moved away from both idealism and the occult.

Arthur Greeves (1895–1966). After Warnie, Greeves was Lewis’s closest friend, one to whom he confided his innermost feelings and struggles (their numerous letters have been anthologized and are well worth reading; see the bibliography). Arthur (a Christian) was instrumental in Lewis’s long, slow journey to faith, and Lewis’s letters to the invalid Greeves document much of that journey.

William T. Kirkpatrick (1848–1941). Kirkpatrick (or Kirk or the Great Knock, as he was referred to by the Lewis family) was Lewis’s private tutor from 1914 to 1916 and was instrumental in preparing Lewis for the exams that would eventually gain him entrance to Oxford. Indeed, though Kirk was an atheist, he was, ironically, partly responsible for shaping the critical faculties of our century’s greatest Christian apologist (the whole style and argumentative approach of Mere Christianity is strongly indebted to the Great Knock).

Mrs. Janie King Askins Moore (1872–1951). One of the most controversial figures in the life of C. S. Lewis, Mrs. Moore (or “Minto,” as Lewis called her) has been called everything from a domestic tyrant to a warm-hearted, generous hostess. Lewis first met her during his service in World War I; she was the mother of one of his barrack-
mates, Edward Francis Courtenay (”Paddy”) Moore. Paddy was killed in 1918; shortly thereafter, Mrs. Moore (along with her daughter Maureen) moved in with Lewis. This arrangement continued until Mrs. Moore’s death.

G. K. Chesterton (1874–1936). Best known for his Father Brown detective series and his incisive works of Christian apologetics (Orthodoxy, The Everlasting Man), Chesterton (or rather his works) exerted a powerful influence on Lewis. While still an avowed atheist, Lewis stumbled on The Everlasting Man and thought it one of the best books he had ever read. After his conversion, Chesterton’s influence continued, and readers of both Chesterton and Lewis will not fail to notice many similarities in their styles and approaches. These similarities include a heavy use of irony to deflate modern arrogance, sudden twists of thought that take the reader by surprise and force him to rethink accepted social norms and opinions, and a relentless logic that traces every claim back to its presuppositions.

George MacDonald (1824–1905). Like Chesterton, MacDonald (and his works) made their first appeal to Lewis long before he converted to Christianity. The difference between the two was that Chesterton appealed to the logical, rational side of Lewis, while MacDonald spoke to his more intuitive, childlike love of fantasy.

Samuel Alexander (1859–1938). Australian-born philosopher who, though little known, had a profound influence on Lewis’s thought. In his book Space, Time, and Deity, Alexander posits a distinction between enjoying a thing directly and contemplating one’s own enjoyment of that thing. Lewis accepted this distinction and worked it into his theories of such things as love and joy.

The Inklings

J. R. R. (John Ronald Reuel) Tolkien (1892–1973). This Oxford professor of Anglo-Saxon and author of the much-loved and critically acclaimed Lord of the Rings trilogy was a close friend of Lewis (they met at Oxford and remained lifelong friends), one whose frequent encouragement and even more frequent criticism caused Lewis both great joy and great distress. Though Tolkien had grounds for most of his criticism, an element of envy certainly played a role; indeed, most of the professors at Oxford were jealous of Lewis’s popular fame and embarrassed by the overt nature of his evangelism.

Owen Barfield (b. 1898). If Arthur Greeves was Lewis’s “alter ego, the man who reveals to you that you are not alone in the world by turning out (beyond hope) to share all your most secret delights,” then Barfield was his “antiself,” the type who “shares your interests… but has approached them all at a different angle.” Barfield and Lewis met at Oxford and spent long nights discussing (and debating) all aspects of language and literature. Lewis’s Studies of Words was, in part, an offspring of his many talks with Barfield. Lewis dedicated The Allegory of Love to Barfield and The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe and The Voyage of the Dawn Treader to Barfield’s daughter (Lucy) and son (Geoffrey), respectively.

Charles Williams (1886–1945). One of Lewis’s closest friends and a man whom he often considered his spiritual and intellectual superior, Williams was a strongly charismatic, powerfully imaginative, deeply mystical Christian who, in addition to a series of esoteric, spiritual fantasy novels, wrote drama, theology, and criticism. Williams’s sudden death came as a great blow to Lewis, but after a time, it strengthened his faith, and Lewis often claimed partial “contact” with the spirit of Williams.

R. E. Havard (1901–1985). Havard, whom his fellow Inklings referred to by the nickname “Humphrey,” was Lewis’s (and Tolkien’s) personal doctor. A strong Christian, Humphrey represented for Lewis a man who appreciated (and took into account) the needs of both the body and soul and who understood the intimate links between the two.

Pupils and Disciples

Sir John Betjeman (1906–1984). This well-known poet laureate of Britain (1972) was one of Lewis’s first pupils. The two, however, did not get along well. Betjeman was something of a dandy and a sluggard, and Lewis, still new to his position as tutor, was a bit stern and out of touch. One suspects that they refined each other somewhat.

Alan Griffiths (1906–1993). Another early pupil of Lewis who quickly became a friend and who, like Lewis, grew slowly into the Christian faith (egged on, in both cases, by Barfield). Griffiths eventually became a Catholic monk, taking the name Dom Bede Griffiths. Although he celebrated Lewis’s apologetical works, he often criticized Lewis for not emphasizing enough the doctrine of the atonement. The Golden String, Griffiths’s autobiography, contains some reflections on Lewis.
George Sayer (b. 1914). A former pupil who grew into a lifelong friend, vacation partner, and frequent correspondent of Lewis and his brother. When many of Lewis’s other friends scorned him for his marriage with Joy, Sayer and his wife remained committed friends. Sayer’s biography of Lewis is excellent and is filled with priceless reminiscences.

Roger Lancelyn Green (1918–1987). Yet another pupil who grew into a close and lifelong friend, Green, like Sayer, would one day write (along with Walter Hooper) an excellent biography of his friend and mentor.

Rev. Walter Hooper (b. 1931). The American Hooper was Lewis’s personal secretary during the final months of his life. Hooper’s time with Lewis was brief but intense, and Hooper has gone on to edit nearly all of Lewis’s essays, poetry, and juvenilia.
Bibliography

*Denotes Essential Reading

Apologetical and Fictional Works

*The Abolition of Man or Reflections on Education with Special Reference to the Teaching of English in the Upper Forms of School (1943). This is one of Lewis’s most difficult works but is absolutely essential reading, both for those interested (or involved) in teaching and for all who are concerned about the direction that Western civilization has been heading in for the last century. The book predicts what the outcome will be for a society that trains its youth in accordance with the principles of relativism and ethical subjectivism.

*The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, Prince Caspian, The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, The Silver Chair, The Horse and His Boy, The Magician’s Nephew, and The Last Battle (one per year from 1950 to 1956). These are probably Lewis’s most well known and well loved works, magical tales for children and adults of all ages that exist somewhere between the worlds of legend, myth, and fairy tale. They work equally well as pure fantasy or as Christian allegory.

The Four Loves (1960). A unique and wholly original work in which Lewis compares and contrasts the nature of affection, friendship, eros, and charity. The work offers deep Christian insight into our emotional lives and presents a much-needed argument in defense of friendship as a bond that may be unnecessary (in a practical sense) to the community, but is rich and distinctly human.

*The Great Divorce: A Dream (1946). Though I have read and loved all of Lewis’s books and essays, this is by far my favorite; indeed, I invariably read it over again each year. In this fantastical work, Lewis describes a magical bus ride from hell to heaven in which the inhabitants of hell may, if they wish, travel to heaven (or, rather, to a sort of Elysian field just outside of heaven proper) on holiday.

*A Grief Observed (1961; originally published under the pseudonym of N. W. Clerk). After the death of his wife, Joy, the distraught Lewis began to keep a journal as an emotional outlet for his grief. He soon discovered that he had filled several notebooks and eventually published them. I consider this one of the finest and most powerful books on grieving ever written (surpassed only by Tennyson’s In Memoriam).

Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer (1964). A personal and searching look at the later, more mature, more chastened Lewis. It records his views on prayer and other theological issues, such as purgatory. Though you may find it hard to believe when you read the letters, Malcolm is a fictional person.

*Mere Christianity (1952). Lewis’s most popular and forthright apologetical work. It is actually a compilation of three shorter works (Broadcast Talks, Christian Behaviour, and Beyond Personality), most of which were first delivered by Lewis over the air during the dark days of World War II. Here Lewis sets forth his reasons for why embracing Christianity need not be a “leap of faith” that has no rational or logical grounds.

Miracles: A Preliminary Study (1947). In this popular work, Lewis carries his rational apologetical into the field of miracles. Through a series of arguments (some lucid and powerful, others a bit vague and scholastic), Lewis attempts to topple modern naturalism and to pave the way for a reasonable faith in the possibility and reality of the supernatural (and the miracles that follow from it).

The Pilgrim’s Regress: An Allegorical Apology for Christianity, Reason, and Romanticism (1933). This is Lewis’s third published book and the first he wrote after his conversion to Christianity in 1931. It is modeled after Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress but is one hundred percent Lewis in conception and execution. It follows Lewis’s persona (John) as he travels from the legalistic Puritania to true Christianity. He is led on his journey by an unaccountable sense of joy (or desire) for which he can find no true fulfillment.

The Problem of Pain (1940). An early work (his first Christian writing since The Pilgrim’s Regress) in which the young Lewis may be a bit too sure of himself, but in which he offers some incisive and thought-provoking answers to this age-old question. Concerned not just with pain but with the origin of evil, Lewis propounds an intriguing thesis that God had to make the world the way he did (with all its potential for pain and sorrow) to ensure the reality of our freedom of will.

Reflections on the Psalms (1958). Written at the suggestion of his wife, this lovely, slightly eccentric study of the Psalms is filled with deep insights and a profound understanding of the meeting ground between poetic beauty and divine truth.
*The Screwtape Letters* (1942). Perhaps the greatest analysis of sin and temptation since Dante’s *Inferno*. In a style that is as witty as it is somber, entertaining as it is uncomfortably convincing, Lewis cuts to the heart of both sin itself and what might be called the “psychology” of sin.

The Space Trilogy: *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938), *Perelandra* (1943), and *That Hideous Strength* (1945). Lewis’s attempt to bring together science fiction and Christian allegory; based on the fascinating assumption that journeys into space are best handled in spiritual (rather than scientific) terms. Though not as enduring, successful, or widely read as the Chronicles of Narnia, the trilogy has its loyal fans and merits close reading.

*Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (1955). This is Lewis’s spiritual autobiography, a work that follows (in personal, autobiographical form) the same journey that John takes (allegorically) in *The Pilgrim’s Regress*. That is to say, it traces how Lewis, in seeking a final object for his epiphanic experiences of joy, eventually found his way into the harbor of orthodox Christianity.

*Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* (1956). Lewis’s most well written and conceived novel; Lewis himself considered it his finest work of fiction. It retells the myth of Cupid and Psyche (cf. Apuleius’s *Golden Ass* IV–VI for the original story) in such a way as to weave together Greek myth and Christian allegory. The tale is told in the first person by one of the “ugly sisters” of the lovely Psyche and contains all the psychological depth and insight into human nature (both its virtuous and sinful sides) that readers of the *Screwtape Letters* and *The Great Divorce* have come to expect in Lewis.

**Academic Works and Essays**

In this section are listed all of Lewis’s academic works and the many collections of essays that have appeared since his death; unless otherwise noted, all collections listed below were edited by Walter Hooper.

*The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (Oxford UP, 1985). This was Lewis’s first academic work to be published (1936), and it offers a seminal study both of the nature of courtly love and of the origins, methods, and “worldview” of medieval allegory from *The Romance of the Rose* to *The Faerie Queene*. This is Lewis’s most well known and most famous academic work and is still highly respected by experts in the field.

*Arthurian Torso* (1948). This work, cowritten with Charles Williams, has been reprinted by Eerdmans (1974) in a collection that also includes Williams’s (poetic) Arthurian Cycle, *Taliessen through Logres, The Region of the Summer Stars*, and *Arthurian Torso*, and an introduction by Mary McDermott Shideler. The *Torso* is Lewis’s attempt to provide a key for understanding the at-times cryptic Arthurian Cycle of one of his closest friends (Williams died suddenly in 1945).

*Christian Reflections* (Eerdmans, 1967). A sort of companion volume to *God in the Dock*, this collection contains seminal essays on the relationship among culture, literature, and Christianity; ethics and the dangers of subjectivism; and prayer.

*The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge UP, 1994). Lewis’s last book (originally published in 1964) offers a fascinating study of the medieval and Renaissance worldview that takes up that era’s conception of the entire cosmos, from the heavens to the earth, from man to nature, from the body to the soul. A bit technical at points but far more readable than most attempts to elucidate and bring to life a type of thinking that is alien to our century.

*English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (Clarendon Press, 1954). This work is volume 3 of the prestigious *Oxford History of English Literature* and is a standard in its field. It will probably not interest the average reader, but it demonstrates how highly Lewis the academic was esteemed by his colleagues.

*An Experiment in Criticism* (Cambridge UP, 1961). Lewis sets forth his own eclectic, anti-theoretical theories of criticism and considers what impels people to read literature in the first place. A minor work but intriguing. Most of the ideas in this volume are covered, in a slightly different form, in the essays collected in *On Stories*.

*Fern-Seed and Elephants and Other Essays on Christianity* (Collins, 1975). A nice potpourri though less interesting than *God in the Dock* or *Christian Reflections*.

*George MacDonald: An Anthology* (Collins, 1946). This little devotional, edited by C. S. Lewis himself, offers 365 carefully selected readings from the collected works of George MacDonald. As many readers will be aware, Lewis considered MacDonald to be one of the strongest influences on his life and to be the one who “baptized” his imagination. This is his tribute to the master.
God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics (Eerdmans, 1970). I think this is the best and most challenging of the essay collections. It contains a brilliant essay on miracles and several more that sound the full depth of the ongoing debate between science and religion, naturalism and supernaturalism.

On Stories and Other Essays on Literature (HBJ, 1982). If you want to hear what the author of the Chronicles of Narnia and the Space Trilogy thought about literature, this is the collection for you. It contains several seminal essays in which Lewis discusses the origin of the chronicles, insisting that they did not begin with the intent to write a Christian apologia but with a set of mental images of a faun carrying packages and a mighty lion.

The Personal Heresy: A Controversy (Oxford UP, 1939). This is one of Lewis’s earliest works of criticism. It documents a debate with E. M. W. Tillyard in which Lewis takes the position (one shared by such American “new critics” as John Crowe Ransom, W. K. Wimsatt, and Cleanth Brooks) that works of art should not be evaluated on the basis of the personality of their creator. In later life, Lewis became somewhat less doctrinaire about this issue.

A Preface to Paradise Lost (Oxford UP, 1961; originally published 1942). I think this is the best and most accessible of Lewis’s academic works. Even readers who have not read Milton’s Paradise Lost will find Lewis’s comments on God and Satan, Adam and Eve, and Eden and the Fall to be challenging and thought-provoking.

Present Concerns (HBJ, 1986). Some intriguing essays on chivalry, the atomic age, and sex in literature, but not as incisive as God in the Dock or Christian Reflections.

Rehabilitations and Other Essays (Oxford UP, 1939). One of Lewis’s first attempts at literary criticism; see Selected Literary Essays directly below.


Spenser’s Image of Life (Cambridge UP, 1978; edited by Alistair Fowler). A book-length study, unfinished at the time of Lewis’s death and subsequently pieced together by Fowler; it takes a critical look at the work of one of Lewis’s favorite authors.

Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature (Cambridge UP, 1966). A good companion to Selected Literary Essays that narrows its scope to the period indicated. Best to start with Selected Literary Essays; it offers more variety (though of course the former collection is closer to Lewis’s primary field of study).

Studies in Words (Cambridge UP, 1960). A fascinating book for anyone interested in the origins of words and in how words change their meanings over time. Offers a rare glimpse into the mind of Lewis the etymologist, though fans of Lewis’s works should not be surprised to see what close attention he paid to words and how alert he was to their cultural usage (and appropriation).

They Asked for a Paper: Paper and Addresses. Lewis published this collection in 1962; it is now out of print, but all the essays appear in various editions by Hooper.

The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses (Macmillan, 1980). This is a revised and expanded edition (by Walter Hooper) of a collection initially published by Lewis in 1949. It contains what is surely Lewis’s greatest sermon and what may be the finest single essay on the subject of heaven: “The Weight of Glory” (an essay that should be read in conjunction with The Great Divorce).

The World’s Last Night and Other Essays (HBJ, 1960). This was one of the few collections published during Lewis’s lifetime. It contains a few seminal essays on the “efficacy of prayer” and on “obstinacy in belief,” but on the whole, it is less interesting than later collections.

Anthologies

Two collections of Lewis are currently available that make great gifts and will help you boost your own personal library of Lewis’s key works:

The Inspirational Writings of C. S. Lewis offers complete texts of Surprised by Joy, Reflections on the Psalms, The Four Loves, and The Business of Heaven (a devotional that offers 365 carefully selected passages from the books and essays).

The Collected Works of C. S. Lewis offers complete texts of The Pilgrim’s Regress (the illustrated edition recommended above), God in the Dock, and Christian Reflections.

In addition to these two collections, anthologies abound that offer select passages from Lewis grouped together under such thematic headings as God, Hell, Prayer, and Man. Three of the best are A Mind Awake: An Anthology of

**Juvenilia, Poetry, and Stories**

Hooper, Walter, ed. *Boxen: The Imaginary World of the Young C. S. Lewis*. New York: HBJ, 1985. If, like me, you’re determined to own everything that Lewis ever wrote, you’ll want to purchase this edition of his first attempts at fiction. This nicely produced edition includes an introduction by Hooper and illustrations by Lewis himself. Lewis’s first fantasy world is a rather dull, quotidian one, but it offers a rare glimpse into the mind of the young author.

After *Boxen*, Lewis’s first real efforts at writing turned toward poetry. Lovers of Lewis will want to at least browse through some of his poetry. Lewis’s first collection of poems (and his first published work) is *Spirits in Bondage: A Cycle of Lyrics* (reprinted by HBJ, 1985). The rest of his pre-Christian (pre-1931) poetry, including *Dymer*, is collected in *Narrative Poems* (HBJ, 1978); the post-Christian poems (beginning with those included in *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, his first work as a believer) are collected in *Poems* (HBJ, 1977). All three books are edited and include introductions by Walter Hooper.

The few stories written by Lewis are anthologized in *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories* (HBJ, 1966) and *The Dark Tower and Other Stories* (HBJ, 1977), both of which are edited by Walter Hooper.

**Biographies and Correspondence**

*Carpenter, Humphrey. The Inklings: C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and Their Friends*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979. A well-conceived, well-documented “collective biography” of Lewis, Tolkien, and Williams that provides its reader with the rare opportunity to eavesdrop on three great minds as they encourage and critique one another. The book adopts an almost literary approach, resolving itself into a series of sketches (somewhat like Griffin’s biography of Lewis) that illuminate the personal and group lives of the Inklings.


Dorsett, Lyle W. *And God Came In: The Extraordinary Life of Joy Davidman, Her Life and Marriage to C. S. Lewis*. New York: Macmillan, 1983. If you were moved by *A Grief Observed* and want to know more about Lewis’s remarkable wife, this is the book to read. When he wrote the book, Dorsett was curator of the Marion E. Wade Collection (Wheaton College), home of Lewis’s original manuscripts, letters, and papers. He is one of the experts on all things Lewis.


*Green, Roger L., and Hooper, Walter. C. S. Lewis: A Biography*. New York: Macmillan, 1974. The standard biography of Lewis. As you probably noted earlier, Hooper has edited most of Lewis’s essays; no surprise, given that he was Lewis’s personal secretary during the last months of his life. One of the helpful aspects of this biography is that it incorporates so many of Lewis’s letters, diaries, and other personal writings. It offers a fine, rounded sense of the man, but it is less private than George Sayer’s biography and tends, unlike Wilson’s, to avoid touchy subjects.

Gresham, Douglas H. *Lenten Lands: My Childhood with Joy Davidman and C. S. Lewis*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1994. A moving and poignant account of Lewis’s brief marriage and his final years by someone who experienced it firsthand and who knew Lewis intimately, his stepson. This partial biography includes photographs and is a good companion to *A Grief Observed*.

Griffin, William. *Clive Staples Lewis: A Dramatic Life*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986. Yet another biography of Lewis; it is remarkable how much critical work Lewis has inspired. What sets this biography apart from the more standard biographies of Green and Hooper, Sayer, and Wilson is its unique, almost literary approach.

Hooper, Walter, ed. *They Stand Together: The Letters of C. S. Lewis to Arthur Greeves, 1914–1963*. London: Collins, 1979. A revealing set of letters sent by Lewis to one of his oldest and closest friends (second only to his brother, as Lewis has stated). These letters are particularly helpful to those wishing to achieve a fuller understanding of the young Lewis (roughly half of the more than 500 pages of this wonderful collection cover Lewis’s late teen years as a pupil under Kirkpatrick and as an eager undergraduate at Oxford) and to get a feel for what it would be like to converse with Lewis.


Kilby, Clyde S., and Mead, Marjorie Lamp. *Brothers and Friends: The Diaries of Major Warren Hamilton Lewis*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982. If you want to read it all, then you’ll be interested in the diaries of Lewis’s oldest and most constant companion.

*Kilby, Clyde S., ed. *Letters to an American Lady*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1969. A wonderful collection that really belongs among the major works. It gathers together under one cover the many letters that Lewis wrote (over a thirteen-year period) to a woman he never met.


*Sayer, George. *Jack: A Life of C. S. Lewis*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1994 (originally published in 1988 under the title, *Jack: C. S. Lewis and His Times*). An excellent biography by a one-time pupil and longtime friend of C. S. Lewis that combines the personal insight of the Green/Hooper biography with the critical objectivity of the Wilson biography. Sayer is to be thanked for being more frank and open about the sexual struggles of the early Lewis than Green and Hooper while refraining (as Wilson does not) from simplistic, reductive Freudian readings of his religious work.

Sibley, Brian. *C. S. Lewis through the Shadowlands: The Story of His Life with Joy Davidman*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994. Originally published in 1985, this book is a companion to the BBC TV movie, *Shadowlands* (see Appendix Two). Because it focuses only on Lewis and Joy’s brief relationship, it is more thorough in this area than Dorsett’s *And God Came In* (see above).


Wilson, A. N. *C. S. Lewis: A Biography*. New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1990. The most recent biography of Lewis that does not efface the standard work by Green and Hooper; it is, however, more critical and, like the Sayer biography, does not shy away from Lewis’s darker side. It sets out to dispel the Lewis-as-saint approach that Green and Hooper adopt more or less in their biography, and it does so without ever descending into scandal or muckraking.

Is it, then, necessary to read both Green/Hooper and Wilson? Necessary, no (Green/Hooper can stand on its own), but worthwhile, yes.

**Criticism**


Carnell, Corbin Scott. *Bright Shadow of Reality: C. S. Lewis and the Feeling Intellect*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974. One of the best early books on Lewis and the definitive study of his notion of *sehnsucht* (longing, desire, what Lewis calls joy). Carnell traces clearly and provocatively the influence of romanticism on Lewis’s view of *sehnsucht* and uncovers the pervasiveness of this view in nearly all of Lewis’s works.

Christensen, Michael J. *C. S. Lewis on Scripture: His Thoughts on the Nature of Biblical Inspiration, the Role of Revelation and the Question of Inerrancy*. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1979. Though Lewis has always been a favorite of conservative evangelicals, many have questioned his views on the inerrancy of scripture. This is the definitive study of Lewis’s view of scripture, a study that avoids a narrow denominational or partisan perspective and is, thus, accessible to a wide audience. It includes a foreword by Owen Barfield.

Christopher, Joe R. *C. S. Lewis*. Boston: Twayne, 1987. Part of the reliable Twayne authors series, a frequent source for high school and undergraduate reports.

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*Downing, David C. Planets in Peril: A Critical Study of C. S. Lewis’s Ransom Trilogy. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1992. The most recent assessment of Lewis’s Space Trilogy. A thorough study that includes an extensive bibliography of books and articles relating to Lewis in general and to each of the three books in particular. The reader emerges from Downing’s book with a rich and multifaceted understanding of the trilogy.

*Ford, Paul F. Companion to Narnia. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980. Fans of the Chronicles of Narnia must have this book on their shelves. It offers an encyclopedia of all the characters, place names, objects, and themes that appear in the seven books that make up the chronicles. The Companion is fully cross-referenced, and one can spend hours “surfing” from one entry to the next.


Hannay, Margaret Peterson. C. S. Lewis. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1981. A fine overview of Lewis that begins with a brief biography, then moves on to survey his fiction, his criticism, and his apologetics. A good place to start.

*Holmer, Paul L. C. S. Lewis: The Shape of His Faith and Thought. New York: Harper & Row, 1976. I consider this one of the finest assessments of Lewis’s work. Instead of spending most of his time paraphrasing Lewis’s books and essays (as most books on Lewis do), Holmer carries out a searching critique that succeeds in integrating the many sides of Lewis (the apologist, the fiction writer, the academic scholar, and so on). Holmer demonstrates in particular how Lewis’s theories of literature permeate all his work and how Lewis was able to assimilate classical virtues and Judeo-Christian morality. Had John Beversluis (see Appendix One) read this book more closely, I think he might have modified his critique.

*Hooper, Walter. C. S. Lewis: A Companion and Guide. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1996. One of the best available resources on C. S. Lewis by one who understands Lewis both as an editor and a friend and as a critic and lover of his work. Contains a wealth of information, including a lengthy biography and chronology of Lewis’s life and work, as well as extensive biographical and bibliographical material.


Keefe, Carolyn, ed. C. S. Lewis: Speaker and Teacher. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971. A useful and accessible collection for those wishing insight into Lewis’s approach and style on the platform. Full of biographical tidbits and colorful anecdotes that will delight the diehard fan. The book is made up of seven free-standing essays or reminiscences by such Lewis stalwarts as Clyde S. Kilby, Walter Hooper, and Owen Barfield.

Kilby, Clyde S. The Christian World of C. S. Lewis. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964. A standard overview of Lewis’s works and ideas. It relies a bit too much on paraphrase, but it is accessible and the criticism offered is sound.


*Kreeft, Peter. C. S. Lewis for the Third Millennium: Six Essays on The Abolition of Man. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994. A fine study of The Abolition of Man that considers from hindsight the accuracy of Lewis’s predictions. Indeed, more than just a study of The Abolition of Man, this book pieces together all of Lewis’s scattered comments on history, ethics, progress, and so on.

*Lindskoog, Kathryn. Finding the Landlord: A Guidebook to C. S. Lewis’s Pilgrim’s Regress. Westchester, IL: Cornerstone Books, 1995. A helpful guide to breaking the allegorical code of The Pilgrim’s Regress by an ardent (some would say too ardent) fan of Lewis who has devoted much of her life and career to studying Lewis’s works. Stuffed with great historical and bibliographical notes that bring the book to life.
Lindskoog, Kathryn. *The Lion of Judah in Never-Never Land: The Theology of C. S. Lewis Expressed in His Fantasies for Children*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973. This is a fast-paced, easy-to-read overview of the Chronicles of Narnia by one who has a deep love and understanding of both the works of C. S. Lewis in particular and children’s literature in general. It’s a bit elementary, but it’s a good place to start and is faithful to Lewis’s intentions. Recently, Lindskoog has updated and expanded this work; it now appears under the title *Journey into Narnia* (an expanded edition of this book came out in 1997).

Macdonald, Michael H., and Tadie, Andrew A. *G. K. Chesterton and C. S. Lewis: The Riddle of Joy*. London: Collins, 1989. A fine collection of essays on Chesterton and Lewis that takes both a personal look at the men themselves and a more scholarly look at their fiction and apologetics. Readers will want to consult in particular three essays: Walter Hooper’s “C. S. Lewis and C. S. Lewises” for its affectionate look at the many sides of Lewis; Lyle W. Dorsett’s “C. S. Lewis: Some Keys to His Effectiveness” for revealing the centrality of Lewis’s prayer life and the extent of his charitable nature; and, most of all, Peter J. Kreeft’s “C. S. Lewis’s Argument from Desire” for its brilliant and lucid explication of what may be Lewis’s strongest apologetic.

*Meilaender, Gilbert. *The Taste for the Other: The Social and Ethical Thought of C. S. Lewis*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978. This, along with Holmer’s *C. S. Lewis: The Shape of His Faith and Thought*, is the best general study of Lewis; indeed, read in conjunction, they offer a full overview of Lewis’s thought. Meilaender has read the entire Lewis canon with a depth of sympathy and understanding that does not exclude critical objectivity.

Payne, Leanne. *Real Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Works of C. S. Lewis*. Westchester, IL: Cornerstone Books, 1979. A beautifully written and moving book that is both an analysis of Lewis’s spirituality and a work of great devotional power. This one is focused more toward a believing audience, but it never becomes preachy or condescending.


Purtill, Richard. *Lord of the Elves and Eldils: Fantasy and Philosophy in C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien*. A comparative analysis of Lewis’s fiction and Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* trilogy that looks at the diverse ways these two friends and fellow Christians handled such subjects as religion, fantasy, and good and evil.


*Schakel, Peter J. *Reason and Imagination in C. S. Lewis: A Study of Till We Have Faces*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984. This book offers what is certainly the definitive study of *Till We Have Faces*, Lewis’s most difficult but most rewarding novel. Unlike many other Lewis scholars, Schakel, rather than treat Lewis’s views and beliefs as a fairly stable monolith, tries to uncover subtle changes in the way he views both the merits and the limitations of reason and imagination.


Schultz, Jeffrey D., and West, John G. *The C. S. Lewis Readers’ Encyclopedia*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998. Hot off the presses, this is an excellent resource that contains a biography of Lewis, a timeline, a list of books that influenced him, a list of additional resources, and much, much more.


Appendix One

A Critique of Two Critiques of Lewis

Aside from negative contemporary reviews that greeted each of Lewis’s Christian works (almost all of which issued from an entrenched academy, both secular and religious, unwilling to take seriously either Lewis’s “archaic” stances or his orthodox, creed-based Christianity), most of the critical work on Lewis tends to be very positive and even adulatory (I certainly count myself among this group). However, the mid-1980s and early-1990s produced two works (the first rational-empirical, the second psychological-phenomenological) that put forth consistent and well-reasoned critiques of Lewis:


The latter work attempts to interpret the Chronicles of Narnia (as well as the other fiction) as products of a tormented psyche that was never able to deal properly with the death of its mother. It would be nice to be able simply to dismiss Holbrook’s thesis as “dime-store” Freudianism, but the argument is powerfully constructed and substantiated by copious references to the Narnia books, to Lewis’s autobiography, and to his letters. Guilt over masturbation, fears of castration and annihilation, the repressed suspicion that his mother’s cancer was caused by the sexual act, paranoia that hides behind patriotism and loyalty: all of these and more are factored into Holbrook’s analysis and are skillfully linked to countless details in the Narnia books. Holbrook does a particularly good job of identifying a somewhat disturbing tendency in the chronicles (that of solving problems through violence and ritual humiliation), then linking that tendency to Lewis’s grim experiences at public school (as recorded in *Surprised by Joy*). If you’ve ever had your favorite fairy tale “ruined” by a friend who insisted on “opening your eyes” to its sexual subtext and subsequently swore never to allow such a thing again, then do not read this book. It willfully, at times recklessly, spoils the beauty and innocence of Narnia (Holbrook himself admits that his Christian friends begged him not to write it). If, on the other hand, you are fascinated by the psychological sources of literature and myth, have a good sense of humor (Holbrook’s work has none; it is deadly serious), and can take your Freud with a grain of salt, you might find it a fascinating read. Though I reject most of Holbrook’s presuppositions and disagree somewhat with his analysis of the more violent aspects of the chronicles, he does offer some intriguing possibilities for the origins of Lewis’s imagery.

As a critique, however (and it is a critique; Holbrook does not think children should be given the Narnia books to read!), it is seriously flawed. The critique emerges finally from Holbrook’s categorical denial of the reality and rationality of Lewis’s orthodox faith. Though clearly possessed of a finely honed intellect, Holbrook seems unable (or unwilling) to fathom most of the key tenets of Christianity: that God is both holy and merciful, loving and wrathful; that all sin is rebellion against God and is a justifiable occasion for his wrath; that we not only sin but are also possessed of a sinful nature; that Satan, as prince of this world, has a claim to us that Christ ransomed at the Cross; and so on. In the final analysis, Holbrook’s “exposé” of Lewis’s wish-fulfillment-need for an authoritarian God to which he can submit completely has (to paraphrase an argument from Lewis’s *Pilgrim’s Regress*) the unintended result of exposing Holbrook’s own wish-fulfillment-need that this authoritarian God be explained away as some psychological-phenomenological projection. Basically, what Holbrook “does” to Lewis is what Erik Erickson “did” to Luther (in *Young Man Luther*) and what countless other skeptics have tried to do to those other two great defenders and expositors of the Christian faith, St. Paul and St. Augustine. That is, he has tried to explain away the searing, accountability-demanding power of their Christian apologetic by dismissing them as psychotics, sociopaths, paranoid-schizophrenics, prudes, and so on. As Lewis himself would say, this just will not do.

Whereas Holbrook mounts his attack from the dark, irrational recesses of the psyche, Beversluis mounts his from the well-lit, rational worlds of empiricism and logical positivism. Analytically, systematically, relentlessly, he submits Lewis’s (nonfictional) apologetics (aside from the *Pilgrim’s Regress*, he ignores completely Lewis’s fiction) to the rigorous test of modern (post-Enlightenment) scientific rationalism. And he finds them wanting. He argues that Lewis’s defenses of Christianity fail on every level and accuses him of attacking a straw-man version of naturalism and of relying on emotional appeals and false dilemmas to drive home his points. At times, he is persuasive. He uncovers genuine flaws in Lewis’s defense of miracles and his attacks on relativism. It is also hard to rebut his point that Lewis is often unfair to those he is attacking and appears out of touch with the more subtle and
nuanced arguments of such modern schools as ethical subjectivism. Beversluis is also quite correct that fans of Lewis (who write nearly all the books about him) tend to overlook or rationalize his flaws. Nevertheless, Beversluis is nowhere near as successful as he so cavalierly, at times smugly, thinks himself to be.

First, his attack on Lewis’s argument from desire is muddled and unconvincing, as Peter Kreeft powerfully demonstrates in the essay he contributed to *G. K. Chesterton and C. S. Lewis: The Riddle of Joy*, edited by Macdonald and Tadie. His dismissal of Lewis’s most famous and, I think, strongest apologetic (the so-called trilemma: Christ is a liar, a lunatic, or Lord) is unfounded, poorly argued, and incorrect; he treats the argument as a dilemma, Lord or lunatic, rather than as a trilemma. Second, his critique is unflinchingly and exclusively inductive and empiricist. He won’t even grant the possibility of rational, deductive a priori logic. It is clear, at least to this reader, that even if Lewis had altered his forensic style and refuted all of Beversluis’s arguments, that he (Beversluis) would still have rejected (a priori) the entire enterprise of a rational defense of the faith. Ironically, if he had only read more closely Lewis’s *Pilgrim’s Regress* (a work he refuses to take seriously), Beversluis would have encountered Lewis’s convincing argument that the empiricists, and those related to them, are finally just as rigidly a priori in their thinking as the metaphysicians.

Third, Beversluis rejects too quickly, and without enough biblical support, Lewis’s main strategy (and mission) of unifying the streams of truth that flow from Athens and Jerusalem. That is, he does not give enough credence to what he considers a failed dialogue between classical humanism and Christianity. Fourth, in an instance of supreme bad taste, Beversluis uses Lewis’s honestly confessed, grief-inspired doubts in *A Grief Observed* as a stick with which to beat him. Here, Beversluis can be compared to a quarrelsome, unsatisfied wife who uses hasty words spoken by her husband in a fit of anger as “proof” that his love for her is not real or sincere or, more to the point, as if we were to use David’s “angry” Psalms as proof that his love of and yearning for God was merely a delusion. Finally, Beversluis demonstrates in chapter eight (“Fideism”) that he is aware that Lewis knowingly refused to buy in to the false dichotomies of reason versus faith and fact versus value. However, he never quite makes the connection between this refusal and Lewis’s conscious practice of using straw men and emotional false dilemmas to rip his readers and listeners out of a modernist mindset that most of them have taken for granted as being unquestionably true.

For many generations now, the empiricist, anti-supernatural academy has convinced people that Christianity is an outworn system that has been fully and categorically disproven. Lewis, using a method that combines Socratic humor and wit with Platonic dialectic, has been one of the few apologists who has been able to get us to rise above entrenched post-Enlightenment ideas and to even laugh at them in a way that is both freeing and cathartic. This is a laughter that the academy (and Beversluis hails fully in mind and spirit from the academy) cannot bear. They take themselves very seriously and will not abide a troublemaker like Lewis stirring up the waters and giving the common folk a chance to think for themselves. Those who read and love (and are converted by) Lewis and his arguments do not so much read him for his “logic” (in the Aristotelian or Kantian sense) but for the gift he had at making us think about old things in new ways, the imaginative, intuitive leaps that give us a glimpse of a higher reality, of a deeper purpose in our lives and in the universe. Even if these glimpses, these intimations, don’t convince all his readers to become “mere” Christians, Lewis’s work forces them to rethink assumptions they have long taken for granted and to view such things as miracles, pain, and temptation from a new and fresh perspective. I have tried to demonstrate this ability in my series, and it is partly because I think that Holbrook and especially Beversluis seem unable to grasp this that I have critiqued their works at such length.

Indeed, the arguments of Holbrook and Beversluis are finally limited by the inability of both scholars to grasp and take into account the “full” C. S. Lewis. Holbrook cuts the emotional side off from the rational, treating Lewis as a bundle of neuroses and psychoses. No intellectual credence is given to Lewis’s understanding of sin and grace; spiritual truths are but products of deep psychological structures. Beversluis takes the opposite view, cutting the rational side off from the emotional and judging his arguments solely on the basis of a mathematical, reductivist logic. What he fails to realize is that Lewis’s arguments do not exist in an abstract realm of pure philosophy; they are, to paraphrase Wordsworth (a major influence on Lewis’s thought and practice), proven in the blood and tested along the heart. One of Lewis’s goals was to bring philosophy (and theology) back to the world, to embody it with flesh and blood and to breathe into it the healthy air of common sense. His life, his thought, his work were profoundly incarnational, just as the God he worshipped was the very Word made flesh. If we are to take Lewis’s God seriously, we must accept both His transcendence and His immanence; if we are to take Lewis’s works seriously, we must accept them as creations of passionate thinking, of the spiritual brought down to the physical, of experience carried up into reason.
One last note on Beversluis: if you decide to read his book, and all serious Lewis scholars should probably give it at least a look, please do not read it until you have first read and absorbed most of Lewis’s apologetical works. If you read Beversluis first, it will distort your reading of Lewis (this is even more true if you try reading Holbrook’s work before reading the chronicles!).
Appendix Two

Additional Resources

For those who have access to the Internet, the best and fastest way to purchase books by and about C. S. Lewis is through the Web site Amazon.com (the largest onsite distributor of books). Needless to say, Amazon.com (which has low prices and amazingly fast delivery time) carries all the books listed in the bibliography and many, many more.

Another great (noncomputer) source for books by and about C. S. Lewis is Christian Book Distributors, a mail-order catalogue that offers Christian books (ranging from the most academic to the most popular), Bibles, fiction, reference works, videos, music, and so on, at reduced prices. The address is P.O. Box 7000, Peabody, MA 01961-7000, and the number is 978-977-5000.

Christian History Magazine, a subsidiary of Christianity Today, devoted (back in 1985) an entire issue to C. S. Lewis (Vol. IV, No. 3). The issue is well illustrated and has numerous short articles devoted to Lewis’s biography, his faith, his fiction, his academic work, his tragic marriage to Joy Davidman, and other subjects. You may purchase this back issue for $5 by calling Christian History at 1-800-806-7798 and asking for CH007.

A good resource for C. S. Lewis materials (including audiotapecs of Lewis reading The Four Loves) is The Episcopal Radio-TV Foundation, 3379 Peachtree Road, NE, Atlanta, GA 30326. The number is 404-233-5419.

James Dobson’s Focus on the Family has put out an audio version of The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe that is supposed to be quite good. Call 1-800-232-6459 for more information.

If you are ever in the vicinity of Wheaton College (Wheaton, IL), make sure to visit the Marion E. Wade Collection, home of Lewis’s original manuscripts, letters, and papers.

The first four books of the Chronicles of Narnia have been filmed (in live action) by the BBC as part of the WonderWorks Series (1988). The series consists of three 3-hour segments. Part I is devoted entirely to The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe; Part II devotes its first hour to Prince Caspian and the latter two to The Voyage of the Dawn Treader; Part III retells The Silver Chair. The films are enchanting, if a bit stiff and chatty at times, and will delight children. Most large public libraries should own copies; they may also be purchased through Public Media Video (1-800-262-8600).

The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe has been made into a delightful, Emmy Award-winning animated film that I find more compelling than the live-action BBC version. In a mere ninety-five minutes, it captures the full flavor of the book and will thrill both children and adults. It is available through Gateway Films/Vision Video (1-800-523-0226) for only $12.95.

The story of Lewis’s marriage to Joy Davidman Gresham and her subsequent death from cancer is powerfully told in a British made-for-TV movie, Shadowlands (1985; also known as C. S. Lewis: Through the Shadowlands), that was written by William Nicholson, directed by Norman Stone, and starring Joss Ackland and Claire Bloom. In 1993, it was remade into a major film of the same name (the script again was by Nicholson who had earlier turned his TV script into a play), directed by Richard Attenborough (the famed director of Gandhi), and starring Anthony Hopkins and Debra Winger.

If you have enjoyed this series and would like to share with me any comments or questions on the life, writings, and/or apologetics of C. S. Lewis, please feel free to email me at lmarkos@hbu.edu. In addition, if you would like to learn more about my work and to read some of the essays that I have written on C. S. Lewis, please visit my webpage at http://www.fc.hbu.edu/~lmarkos.