Renewing minds

a journal of Christian thought

ISSUE 4 : FALL 2013

C. S. LEWIS: A SEMICENTENNIAL

a publication of Union University

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Renewing Minds: A Journal of Christian Thought **is a publication of Union University and aims to foster robust reflection at the intersection of higher education, culture, and the Christian intellectual tradition.**

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PUBLISHER'S INTRODUCTION

The influence of C. S. Lewis on American Evangelicalism is almost without equal. Books like *Mere Christianity* and *Screwtape Letters* have been essential reading material for several decades. Children have had their faith shaped either by hearing their parents read *The Chronicles of Narnia* and/or by reading this amazing work for themselves. On November 22, 2013, the 50th anniversary of his death, many of us will stop to reflect on the influence that Lewis has had on our lives, our thinking, and our faith development.

This issue of *Renewing Minds*, the fourth publication in the series for this journal, is devoted to vast and comprehensive ways that C. S. Lewis has touched our spheres of service and influence. Several new publications have seen the light of day this year in anticipation of this 50th anniversary moment. Perhaps, chief among these are the two publications by Alister McGrath. One of these, a major biography, receives an insightful review by Hal Poe in this issue. Other helpful reviews also engage the thoughts of Lewis.

The articles in this issue include two outstanding pieces by friends from Houston Baptist University. We are pleased to welcome the quality scholarship of Louis Markos and Holly Ordway to the pages of this journal. Outstanding articles by Union's talented faculty members are also included: David Thomas on history, Justin Barnard on naturalism, Hal Poe on narrative, Matt Lunsford on mathematics, and Gene Fant on reading. It is a pleasure to commend these thoughtful contributions to our readers.

I am grateful for the leadership of Ben Mitchell and Hunter Baker and the capable oversight of editorial and production

processes by Jon Dockery, Sarah Dockery, and Mike Garrett. The launch of this journal several months ago was the fulfillment of a longtime dream that I had to do so at Union. I am so grateful for all who have helped to make this dream a reality.

I will soon be passing the leadership baton to the next president of Union University. In doing so, I will step away from my role with the journal. It has indeed been a joy to be involved in the launch of this project. The first three issues of this journal have provided quality pieces worthy of reading and reflection. This issue is no exception. I trust you will enjoy the opportunity on the occasion of this 50th anniversary remembrance to join our contributors in thinking about the numerous and significant ways that our lives have been influenced by the legendary C. S. Lewis.

Soli Deo Gloria,
David S. Dockery
Publisher

BRIDGES AND FORDS: LEWIS ON HISTORY

DAVID THOMAS

Asking Lewis for his views on history might seem odd. He was not a historian by training, but a professor of literature and language. Worse, he was a professor of medieval literature and language: a subject known for credulity about historical fact. Worst of all, he became famous for books that are in some ways the opposite of sound histories: fantasy stories for children. However, it's not as bad as it might appear. Lewis on history does make sense. He was, in fact, deeply invested in the past and, at times, even spoke of himself as an ambassador of a different age. He had a commanding knowledge of the past and his delight in the literature and ideas of earlier times overflowed – a characteristic close to the heart of his scholarship. He was a theologically skilled and dedicated Christian who wrote with an Augustinian understanding of human history as a whole. And he was a beautiful writer. Good writing that is artful, commanding, and true; that's something special.

A word about history: Most generally, history is a true story about the past that attracts our attention for some reason, usually with the hope of changing things in the present. Memory and hope walk together: the one looks back to the past, the other looks forward to the future; both are essential to historical understanding. "A true story about the past that attracts our attention." This is a good shoe; it flexes where we need it to flex. For now, let me offer

three points of variability: the level of detail, the meaning, and the presence or absence of professional guidelines.

Sometimes the word "History" refers simply to "the past." In this sense, "history" includes all of the past, infinite in detail and complex beyond all knowing, almost entirely unrecorded and forgotten. Each moment has its contribution, yet the full past, as Lewis observed, is "a roaring cataract of billions upon billions of such moments: any one of them too complex to grasp in its entirety, and the aggregate beyond all imagination." Of course nobody tries to tell the entire story. We tell only stories that matter to us. In this sense, history is something people work with every day. Individually and communally, these true stories about the past are important to everything we do, bringing forth associations and memories from our past that are useful but also likely to be partly correct and partly wrong. We use the past constantly, incessantly, to understand and communicate, sort out the true from the false, filter the factual from the invented, and make sense of what our pasts actually mean.

The meaning of the past varies, not only from person to person and community to community, but also age to age. The range of meaning assigned long ago to events differs in important ways from the range of meaning of those same events today. Those events will carry somewhat different meanings for various generations in the future.

Let me make one more distinction. When these efforts to gain the truth about the past intensify and demand material evidence that can be checked for validity, then we have come to the professional history that historians write. This is still a "true story about the past that has attracted our attention," but the narrative has been limited to interpretations of the material evidence that we can gather, and is separated from other, less factual forms of true stories, such as novels, drama, and poetry. Professional history is certainly not where people begin, but instead is one place people arrive if their lives and communities demand an accounting of events.

Lewis wrote an enormous range of materials: academic writing, poetry, fiction, apologetics, theology, philosophy, and

thousands of pages of letters. Sometimes he wrote professional literary history and criticism. Other times he wrote in more familiar language to a broad audience. However, in both areas of writing, he communicated his historical understanding. In other words, we're not limited to the scholarly writing; Narnia is fair game, too, especially for the long arc of historical narrative.

Let me offer two observations about Lewis on history. First, Lewis' literary histories were controversial, bold, and in places transformed his field. Second, Lewis was an advocate for the past, seeking to read earlier writers for who they were, more than for what they contributed to future literature. He sought to reclaim the enchantment of an earlier age, immersing readers in the medieval imagination for its own sake, and yet he was simultaneously aware that the virtues of an earlier age can enhance the present. Sometimes, he even argued, the past must unhorse, or overthrow, the present.

THE LITERARY AND INTELLECTUAL HISTORIES

Lewis is, in fact, acclaimed for his historical contributions, especially to literary history and intellectual history. He was Professor of English literature first at Oxford University (1925-54) and then at Cambridge (1954-63), where he was the Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature. His professional scholarship focused on late medieval English literature and included four scholarly books, all of which were well received: *The Allegory of Love* (1936), *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (1941), *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama* (1954), and *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (1964). Two in particular were important: *The Allegory of Love* and *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama*.

The Allegory of Love is a study of allegory and love poetry as it developed in Western Europe (especially France and Italy), up to seventeenth century England. As Lewis' first scholarly book, it established his reputation as an innovative scholar and an artful writer. Alan Jacobs observed that "even before it was published, scholars who had read it in draft begged Lewis to write a volume in the ongoing *Oxford History of English Literature*." Lewis argued

for the central place of the allegorical literature of courtly love in medieval culture and offered "fresh and illuminating" assessment of virtually every author he mentions. His chapter on Chaucer was transformative and still shapes Chaucer studies today. Even booksellers noted that sales of medieval works increased in the wake of Lewis' book. Biographer George Sayers observes: "On the strength of *The Allegory of Love* and of his *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, there can be no doubt of his greatness as a literary historian."

One example: To open the chapter on Chaucer in *The Allegory of Love*, Lewis compares modern literary historians to the first readers of Chaucer:

> For many historians of literature, and for all general readers, the great mass of Chaucer's work is simply a background to the *Canterbury Tales*, and the whole output of the fourteenth century is simply a background to Chaucer. . . . When the men of the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries thought of Chaucer, they did not think first of the *Canterbury Tales*. Their Chaucer was the Chaucer of dream and allegory, of love-romance and erotic debate, of high style and profitable doctrine. . . . To grow impatient with the critical tradition of the earliest lovers of Chaucer is to exclude ourselves from any understanding of the later Middle Ages in England; for the literature of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is based (naturally enough) not on our reading of Chaucer, but on theirs. And there is something to be said for them.

In short, Lewis recontextualized Chaucer studies. This reflects one of Lewis' constant aims as a literary historian: to read earlier generations in their own voice and then offer to us what that generation found to be good and true and beautiful.

His other great contribution was *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama*. One of the problems in the scholarly study of that age is to explain the extraordinary burst of

creativity of the late 1500s, exemplified best by Spenser and Shakespeare. Spenser published the first half of *Faerie Queen* in 1590; Shakespeare started his theater career in the mid-1580s. Before that, most English literature was, as Lewis calls it, "Drab." The standard explanation of Lewis' day credited the humanists with lighting the fuse. Lewis reversed that conclusion, arguing that the humanists could not possibly have inspired the rejuvenation of English literature. They were far too pedantic, imitative, and rules-bound. "Whatever else humanism is," Lewis, argued, "it is emphatically not a movement towards freedom and expansion." Again, his conclusions inspired debate and a rethinking of the field as a whole.

A few things stand out. First, Lewis was unusually gifted with the languages of the classical and medieval ages. He was not only philosophically astute, but he also had an affinity with the philosophy of an earlier age. These personal connections with an earlier age were unique and allowed him to participate in the continuity between Medieval and Renaissance literature, not merely argue for it. When he claimed to be a "specimen" of the Old Western order, he wasn't that far off. As Donald Williams put it, "This background gave him a perspective on the literature of the Renaissance perhaps unmatched by any modern scholar."

Second, Lewis was highly skilled at finding commonalities between disparate writers and ideas: puritans and humanists, magicians and astrologers, John Milton and Beatrix Potter. He synthesized ideas very well.

Third, Alan Jacobs argued that what set him apart most was his capacity to be enchanted. His delight, his love of story, and his ability to communicate that delight are rare qualities among scholars.

Fourth, he was intellectually combative and competitive; he knew how to lead and wanted to lead. This was mixed with deep empathy for others; he understood mercy and generosity.

Finally, he was an artful, engaging writer. Lewis had a gift for writing that remains winning, rather than pedantic, engaging rather than stultifying, humbling yet delightful. His knowledge, skill, and personality are on full display in his academic prose, perhaps more so here than in any other area of his writing. His

writing is pointed, self-assured, sometimes witty, occasionally over the top rather than perfectly balanced. On the first page of *English Literature*: he criticizes the literature of the early 16th century as "ruthless . . . bludgeon-work. Nothing is light, or tender, or fresh. All the authors write like elderly men." The imagery alone is worth the price of admission.

SOMETIMES THE PAST MUST UNHORSE THE PRESENT

Memory and hope work together, as noted above. We use stories from the past to make decisions in the present that hopefully will benefit us in the future. It's as natural as breathing. We inhale the past, filter out some of the oxygen, and exhale the rest. The causal connections between past, present and future are elusive and complex beyond our knowing, but foundational to understanding. When we want to understand our current problems, identities, and opportunities, we look to the past.

Characters in Narnia regularly tell stories from the past to explain the present and guide the future. Aslan tells Lucy and Susan about deep magic from the past so they can understand his response to the White Witch. Jadis reveals her tremendous lust for power to Digory and Polly by telling them about her past use of the "deplorable word." We could go on, but there's no need. It's so normal.

The past that we use is an interpretation; this, too, is part of the landscape. The past doesn't come to us virginal and innocent, untouched by others. Getting the facts right is just part of it; getting the meaning of the facts right is equally important. Jadis explains her use of the deplorable word as if it were as obvious as cold water on a hot day, but Jill and Eustace are aghast. They interpret her actions very differently. This is important, for interpretation implies the possibility of disagreement and change. Whatever interpretation we agree to today might be overthrown tomorrow and almost certainly will be modified in thirty years.

All of this is preliminary to my argument about Lewis: sometimes the past is more than a guide. Sometimes the past is prophetic and demands change; the present must be challenged and unhorsed, overthrown. An older generation pulls the sword out of the stone

and the fashions and convictions of the present temporarily lay aside their rule.

Obviously Lewis recognized that going back in time is not possible. As he points out in his inaugural address as Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge, mere reversal is not possible; post-Christian does not mean a relapse into Pagan. Nonetheless, he loved an earlier age, sometimes saw himself as a capable representative of that age, and sought to challenge or even unseat aspects of contemporary culture.

I will explore two ways in which Lewis expresses this, one from his fiction and one from his non-fiction. In Book 2 of *The Chronicles of Narnia, Prince Caspian*, the usurper Miraz is overthrown with the aid of the four Pevensie children. As part of the overthrow, Aslan arrives, not only to establish Caspian as King, but also to overturn the consequences of misrule. Dogs break their chains, oppressed children are freed, and boring schools turn into forest glades. Among other events, the Bridge at Beruna is torn down by Bacchus, and the Ford of Beruna is reestablished. This is cause for celebration: the river has been freed, and the whole party along with Aslan, swim and splash and dance across the river. It is a "romp" as Dionysus calls it.

Certainly for Lewis this is emblematic of his resistance to present trends and especially the assumption of progress. He was grieved by the industrial advancements, often celebrated in the name of progress, that made possible the pollution, oppression, and carnage of the industrial age. (Remember that he was wounded and lost close friends in WWI, and that his friend Tolkien lost every close friend but one in that war.) Everywhere in Narnia -- and in Tolkien's Middle Earth for that matter -- their grievance is clear: technological advancement means war, factories, dirty rivers, tyrannical masters, decimated forests, fireplaces that don't draw, unjust laws, pasty food, a shortage of pipe weed, and uncomfortable clothes.

The story tells in the other direction, too. Victory over evil has cultural consequences that push back to an earlier, better day. Hobbits and Narnians alike toss aside new rules, tear down new buildings, set free the ossified and oppressed, shed uncomfortable clothes, and turn bridges into fords. More subtly, life returns to

being "a festival, not a machine." The revitalization is apparent in the Narnia stories, especially *Prince Caspian*, but that description of life as "a festival, not a machine" doesn't come from his fiction; it comes from his scholarship, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama*.

Lewis' non-fiction happily sends readers back to pre-industrial lives and literature. He advises audiences to read old books. He refers to himself as a "specimen" from an earlier age, a representative of an Old Western order. One of the major themes of his scholarly work is that our stereotype of the Middle Ages is not accurate and was largely a creation of seventeenth and eighteenth century humanists. By uncritically accepting the stereotype we miss a great deal indeed. Even calling it "medieval" is a capitulation to the humanists; certainly the medievals didn't think of themselves as such. According to his sources, the term *media tempestas* was first used in 1469. "And what can *media* imply," he observes, "except that a thousand years of theology, metaphysics, jurisprudence, courtesy, poetry, and architecture are to be regarded as a mere gap, or chasm?" "A preposterous conception," he argues, which requires us to agree with the humanists and devalue that which came before.

It is almost impossible to imagine that in the 1500s Calvinism was fresh and audacious and even fashionable. Yet this is what Lewis argues. Our associations with the word "puritan" have to be almost entirely corrected, he writes; "Whatever they were, they were not sour, gloomy, or severe; nor did their enemies bring any such charge against them." On the contrary, Christians of the sixteenth century were 'puritanical' as a rule, and Protestantism was accused of being "not too grim, but too glad to be true." Later Calvinists may have been severe; sixteenth century Calvinism, though, was not. Lewis insists that their context is vital: "The literary historian . . . is concerned not with those ideas in his period which have since proved fruitful, but with those which seemed important at the time. He must even try to forget his knowledge of what comes after, and see the egg as if he did not know it was going to become a bird."

In his inaugural address at Cambridge, Lewis argued that the difference between medieval and renaissance has been "greatly

exaggerated," especially compared to the transformations of the nineteenth century. He ends his discussion this way: "Lastly, I play my trump card. Between Jane Austen and us, but not between her and Shakespeare, Chaucer, Alfred, Virgil, Homer, or the Pharaohs, comes the birth of the machines." The rise of the machines, Lewis says later, "really is the greatest change in the history of Western Man." (I agree. Next to the Incarnation and the development of farming, no change created greater upheaval than industrialization.) By contrast, the change between late medieval period and the Renaissance is practically invisible, at least in England.

He has more in mind, though, than just historical revision. Lewis, with his long immersion in medieval and early modern literature, wants us to know that we can gain a great deal by listening to pre-industrial centuries. How do we listen, exactly? By reading the old books with well-tuned ear.

He offers similar advice, although in different forms, in Screwtape, his inaugural address, a few places in *Narnia*, and several essays. It's implied in his professional scholarship. In "On The Reading of Old Books," Lewis explicitly advises that for every new book we read, we ought to read one old. He suggests three supportive reasons. The first is that *earlier ages had different blind spots than our own*. Lewis argues for the practice of two of the basic Christian virtues: humility and reliance on the Body of Christ, the Church. Each generation, each community of believers, each family, each person has weaknesses. Reading the works of earlier generations will illuminate our mistakes and suggest correctives. Lewis speaks from experience – his writing leads one to suspect wide experience, actually.

Of course, reading older works really should be done with the intent to learn; one must be willing to receive what an earlier age has to give. Lewis writes thusly in *The Screwtape Letters* (and remember that Screwtape is a devil, so what he says is the opposite of what Lewis is arguing):

> where learning makes a free commerce between the ages there is always the danger that the characteristic errors

> of one may be corrected by the characteristics truths of another. But, thanks be to Our Father [by this Lewis means the devil] and the Historical Point of View, great scholars are now as little nourished by the past as the most ignorant mechanic who holds that 'history is bunk.'

Expanding on the point:

> Only the learned read old books, and we have now so dealt with the learned that they are of all men the least likely to acquire wisdom by doing so. We have done so by inculcating the Historical Point of View. The Historical Point of View, put briefly, means that when a learned man is presented with any statement in an ancient author, the one question he never asks is whether it is true.

"The characteristic errors of one may be corrected by the characteristics truths of another," Lewis reminds. Yes, but only if we go looking, ready to receive what they have to offer.

His second point is that *first-hand knowledge is more valuable than second hand*. His third point, that *reading original texts is more enjoyable*, is debatable. On the one hand, Lewis' love for old literature is unmistakable. In *The Allegory of Love*, he observes that his ideal day "would be to read the Italian epic – to be always convalescent from some small illness and always seated in a window that overlooked the sea, there to read these poems eight hours of each happy day." "It is easy to forget," Lewis writes in *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, "that the man who writes a good love sonnet needs not only to be enamoured of a woman, but also to be enamoured of the Sonnet." Nonetheless, even for Lewis, reading can be burdensome. He admits as much. His *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama*, runs to nearly seven hundred pages. One-third of this is devoted to what he calls the "Drab Age" which runs up to the 1570s. One can imagine the toil involved in writing a rather brilliant survey of literature one labels as "Drab."

Nonetheless, reading other ages and other peoples, Lewis argues, is very likely to be delightful. Now, I could be more abstract and tell you it will 'broaden your aesthetic appreciation,' but that's not what Lewis was going for. He chased after delight for its own sake; he was enchanted and wanted other readers to be enchanted, also. In our skeptical and cynical culture, delight can certainly aid our transformation into people who exhibit the fruit of the Spirit. In both the delight and the transformation, we find the past unseating the present.

Here's another way to put it. English professor Dennis Danielson observed that Lewis' inaugural address is not simply about exposing and explaining the literature and ideals of earlier peoples, "it is also, even overwhelmingly, a critique of modernism." That includes not only the ideas, but also the desires, the emotions, and the willingness to see life as "a festival, not a machine." We could say the same about a great deal of Lewis' writing.

"It is my settled conviction," wrote Lewis in 1954, "that in order to read Old Western literature aright you must suspend most of the responses and unlearn most of the habits you have acquired in reading modern literature."

And with that, the bridges become fords.

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WHERE HISTORY AND LEGEND MEET: CHRISTIAN MYTH-MAKING IN TOLKIEN AND LEWIS

LOUIS MARKOS

Imagine if you were to learn that all the old legends you had been told as a child were actually true: that leprechauns haunted the woods of Ireland; that the hidden valley of Shangri-la really existed, tucked away in the icy, inaccessible cliffs of the Himalayas; that there was once a mighty civilization known as Atlantis and that its ruins had been discovered in a silent corner of the sea; that the island of Avalon could be reached by a tall ship and the sleeping body of King Arthur gazed upon in all its splendor. What would it mean to you—and to the nations of the West—to know that Jason had once sailed in search of the Golden Fleece, or that Hercules had once performed his twelve deadly labors, or that Achilles and Hector had once fought to the death beside the wall of Troy? Today we think of ourselves as a progressive, forward-looking people, ever pressing onward to that bright future we can only imagine. But there is still that within us which looks to the past as well, casting behind us a long, slow backward glance at some dim, lost Golden Age.

Of all the subjects they learn in school, modern children are perhaps least trained in the discipline of history. Today, more and more young people, and not-so-young people, walk through their lives with little to no knowledge of what took place in the decades and centuries before they were born. They no longer see themselves

as standing within a historical stream, but are cut off, isolated on a stranded piece of the shoreline. And yet, oddly, even as history slips away, the myths and legends somehow persist. They can't place Henry VIII or Charles I on a timeline, but they know that a young man named Arthur once pulled a sword out of a stone. They don't know who Pericles was and probably could not locate Athens on a map, but they have a dim recollection that a hero named Theseus once fought a Minotaur in a labyrinth and that another hero named Perseus once cut off the head of Medusa. When it comes to history, they may have ceased to think, but they have not ceased to dream.

According to Freud, dreams are the royal road to the subconscious. In parallel fashion, I would suggest that the old legends and our desire for them are the royal road to the past. Both J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis rejected the post-Enlightenment tendency to make a sharp and unbridgeable distinction between history and legend, fact and myth. Indeed, one of the decisive moments in Lewis' pilgrimage toward Christian faith came when Tolkien suggested to him that the reason the story of Christ sounded so similar to the scapegoat myths of the pagan civilizations was because Christ was the myth made fact. The coming of Christ, they both felt, had been foretold not only by the Jewish scriptures but by what Lewis liked to call the good dreams of the pagans. In the pre-Christian tales of Adonis and Osiris, of Mithras and Tammuz and Balder, the cultures of Greece and Egypt, of Persia and Babylon and Scandinavia had been prepared for the coming of the one who would fuse history and legend into a single stream. Just so, the Magi followed the star, and it led them to Bethlehem.

There are many reasons why we who live in the modern world need to read and re-read *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*: to instruct us in the nature of good and evil, to spur us on to virtuous action, to help us reorient our moral compass, to build up in us a desire for the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, and to revive in us a sense both of our innate dignity and worth and our status as fallen creatures. And one more reason, one that is too often overlooked, not only by secular readers, but by Christian readers as well: the faerie stories of Tolkien and Lewis have the power to

restore to us that legendary, mythic past that has been denied to us by the forces of progressivism, utilitarianism, and scientism, but which still maintains a hold on our hearts.

Although Tolkien fought fiercely to preserve the integrity and separate existence of *The Lord of the Rings* against those who would allegorize it or link it to historical events (Mordor as post-WWI Europe, the Ring as the atom bomb, and so forth), there are a number of elements in Tolkien's epic that are nevertheless linked to human history. Such is the case with the Riders of Rohan (or Rohirrim), a race of men whom Tolkien clearly patterned after the Anglo-Saxons who wrote *Beowulf* and who ruled England before the Norman Invasion of 1066. In terms of their bloodlines, they are neither so noble as the Men of Gondor nor so base as the Wild Men who haunt the forests and mountains. They are brave warriors who live by a code of honor but who have lost their love for the arts of peace and who have allowed their imaginations to shrivel and grow hard. They still sing songs of the elder days, but they have come to shun the elves and to distrust the enchanted forest of Lórien, where dwells the Lady of the Wood: the beautiful and mysterious elf queen, Galadriel.

Perhaps they are most like us, for we too lie between the Men of Gondor and the Wild Men, neither kingly nor savage: civilized yet lacking a sense of our own proper destiny. Like the Rohirrim, we have heard rumors, whisperings of a greater story unfolding behind and around us, but we have chosen rather to ignore or scoff at them than to embrace and be strengthened by them. We would just as soon allow the old legends, like sleeping dogs, to lie quiet and undisturbed.

Though we are meant to experience *The Lord of the Rings* through the eyes of the hobbits, there is one Rider of Rohan through whose eyes we view, if briefly, Tolkien's grand vision. That character is Éomer, nephew to King Théoden, the Lord of the Mark. While riding on the plains of Rohan with his men, Éomer is met by Aragorn, the true King of Gondor, Legolas, an elf, and Gimli, a dwarf. In the dialog that ensues, Aragorn explains to Éomer that he, Legolas, and Gimli have recently come from Lórien and then reveals himself to

be the true King and wielder of Andúril, "the Sword that was Broken and is forged again." Éomer is amazed and cries out with wonder, "'These are indeed strange days . . . Dreams and legends spring to life out of the grass.'" When Aragorn then goes on to tell Éomer that they have come to Rohan in search of two hobbits, a second Rider, expressing Éomer's further amazement, exclaims: "'Halflings! . . . But they are only a little people in old songs and children's tales out of the North. Do we walk in legends or on the green earth in the daylight?'" The shock felt by Éomer and his companion is like the shock we the readers feel as we are drawn deeper and deeper into Tolkien's epic tale. It is as if a door has been opened on to a world where all the legends walk boldly in the sunlight and that which we hoped, prayed and dreamed was *real* is *real*.

But of course to find ourselves suddenly catapulted into the land of legends is not only to experience wonder and joy; the experience brings with it a heavy dose of cognitive dissonance as well. Consider Éomer's words after the full weight of what Aragorn has told him has sunk in:

> It is hard to be sure of anything among so many marvels. The world is all grown strange. Elf and Dwarf in company walk in our daily fields; and folk speak with the Lady of the Wood and yet live; and the Sword comes back to war that was broken in the long ages ere the fathers of our fathers rode in the Mark! How shall a man judge what to do in such times?

Part of the reason that our age tends to reject both legends and magic is that we have lost the old boundaries within which such marvels used to be understood. We simply do not know how to behave in the presence of magic, just as more and more Americans have lost a clear sense of how they are to behave in the presence of death, either that of others or their own. Like Éomer, our thoughts become muddled and our powers of judgment suspended in the face of things we cannot fully comprehend. When catapulted too suddenly into the unknown or unfamiliar, we react like a man who

is wrenched out of a deep sleep and cast into a brightly lit room before his mind has cleared or his eyes have become accustomed to the light.

The Lord of the Rings provides its readers with a wake up call. It shakes us, as Aragorn's words do Éomer, out of our lethargy. This is perhaps the reason why when a number of polls taken in America and England pronounced *The Lord of the Rings* the greatest book of the century, the "people" were overjoyed but the literati were horrified. The same thing happened in ancient Athens when Socrates exploded the pretensions of artists and academics and politicians who thought that they, unlike the rabble, possessed a full knowledge of beauty and wisdom and justice: the common folk cheered; the opinion makers plotted his death. There are those in society who are willing to be pulled out of their moral or ethical or aesthetic slumber (think of the tax collectors and prostitutes who followed Jesus) and others who are not (think of the Pharisees). There are those who will allow Tolkien's sacramental, faerie magic to pierce through the modern self-protective walls of naturalism and realism and nihilism and those who, when faced with what they dismissively call escapism, will merely add more bricks to the wall.

To read *The Lord of the Rings* in an open, non-defensive manner, to give it our sympathetic imagination, our willing suspension of disbelief, is to be overwhelmed by a kind of wonder that our modern world has lost sight of. It is to feel, as Éomer feels, that everything has suddenly become strange and unfamiliar. Perhaps all those legends we learned as children about Atlantis and Avalon really are true; or, to say ultimately the same thing, perhaps we really are creatures endowed with purpose and enmeshed in a drama of good versus evil in which the sacred and the secular are one and in which the myths of the poets often prove truer than the naked "facts" of the historians.

If we can see and feel that truth, even if only for a fleeting moment, then we may be able to gain the higher insight that King Théoden himself gains when he learns from Gandalf all the wonders that have so opened the eyes of his nephew:

> I have lived to see strange days. Long we have tended our beasts and our fields, built our houses, wrought our tools, or ridden away to help in the wars of Minas Tirith [the capital of Gondor]. And that we called the life of Men, the way of the world. We cared little for what lay beyond the borders of our land. Songs we have that tell of these things, but we are forgetting them, teaching them only to children, as a careless custom. And now the songs have come down among us out of strange places, and walk visible under the Sun.

The Rohirrim, like Americans, have long lived a practical life, tending to their own affairs and worrying little about what lies beyond their borders. And then the old legends start to stir.

One of the things that Tolkien did not like about *The Chronicles of Narnia* was their tendency to borrow widely from a diverse number of legends and cultures. Figures from the myths of Greece and Rome and the tales of the Arabian Nights, as well as Medieval, Arthurian, and Norse themes and objects, even Father Christmas, all find their way into the magical weave of Narnia. Tolkien considered this amalgamation a violation of that consistency he sought as a sub-creator, but the friends of Narnia have tended to respond to this heady mixture with joy and delight. For in Narnia, all those legends we most love rise up and dance. Only in the enchanted land of Aslan do we find grouped together all the archetypal myths which move us at the deepest level of our being. Here, we feel, is God's plenty.

If the cumulative impact of *The Lord of the Rings* can be summed up in the words of Éomer quoted above, then that of the *Chronicles* can be summed up even more briefly in two sentences of great pathos spoken by the aged Digory near the end of the final *Chronicles*, *The Last Battle*. Formerly, in *The Magician's Nephew*, the young Digory had watched with awe as Aslan had sung Narnia into being. Now, translated once more to Narnia in his old age, he watches that same Aslan order its destruction:

> "I saw it begin," said the Lord Digory, "I did not think I would live to see it die."

Because our time and Narnian time work independently of one another, Digory is enabled, during a single life span, to witness the birth and death of Narnia. And we, as readers, witness it with him. Over the course of seven brief novels, we see the full history of an entire world contracted, as it were, into a glass. All the legends, all the magic, all the yearnings: all condensed and concentrated, all drawn together by what is arguably the greatest mythic icon in all literature: Aslan the Lion.

In "Myth Became Fact," anthologized in *God in the Dock*, Lewis argues that in Christ,

> [t]he old myth of the Dying God, *without ceasing to be myth*, comes down from the heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history. It *happens*—at a particular date, in a particular place, followed by definable historical consequences. We pass from a Balder or an Osiris, dying nobody knows when or where, to a historical Person crucified (it is all in order) *under Pontius Pilate*. By becoming fact it does not cease to be myth: that is the miracle. . . . God is more than god, not less: Christ is more than Balder, not less.

In the character of Aslan, an equal and opposite process occurs: a figure of pure mythic force takes on the concreteness, the physicality, the reality that we normally associate only with historical "facts." Though we do not know Aslan, we immediately recognize him, not only because he is, literally, the Christ of Narnia, but because he is also the summation of all those legendary heroes that have stirred the imagination of the world since the beginning (indeed, since *before* the beginning) of recorded history.

Early on in *The Last Battle*, the overly rash King Tirian is captured by the "bad guys" and tied to a tree to await execution on the following morning. As he shivers, alone, in the darkness, Tirian thinks back on the history of Narnia; and, as he mentally retraces that sacred narrative, a connection forms in his mind. Whenever Narnia was in greatest danger, Aslan would always come from over the sea to give aid—but he never gave that aid alone. In all the old

stories, Aslan was helped by two or more children from another world. Legends, Tirian learns, are never arbitrary; there is always a meaningful pattern.

Just so, if we are to understand fully ourselves, our world, and our destiny, we must learn to identify and appreciate the deeper patterns that are missed (if not dismissed) by the utilitarians who run our schools, our media, our government, and, too often, our churches.

Postmodern theorists have long hailed the death of the meta-narrative, of that great, over-arching story that, if embraced, can provide us with meaning, purpose, and a final goal (or telos). The greatest and most central of these meta-narratives is the biblical story of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. The faerie stories of Tolkien and Lewis help us to see that what makes that narrative so compelling is that it effortlessly fuses the mythic, the legendary, and the historical into a single tale.

Knowing and understanding our past means more than memorizing dates or charting the rise and fall of kingdoms on a world map. It means seeing the telos that runs through those dates and kingdoms and acknowledging the part that we ourselves must play in the meta-narrative. It means opening our minds and hearts to the wonder that lies behind us and around us, discerning the hand of providence in the strange twists and turns of history, and seeing both the end in the beginning and the beginning in the end.

It means, yes, learning from the past, but not in a narrowly pragmatic way. Of course we want to avoid making the same mistakes as our ancestors, but studying the past (history, legend, and myth) has value beyond that practical, if worthy end. We study the past so that we can see ourselves *in* it, so that we can achieve that historical sense which, according to T. S. Eliot, "involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence."

We don't need a degree in history to know (as Tolkien's Sam Gamgee knows) which tales really matter. We need only the courage and humility to embrace those tales and make them our own. Meditating on the scapegoat myths of the ancient world led C. S. Lewis to the myth made fact. May we, by meditating on the

legends we have lost, be guided back to the way of Goodness, Truth, and Beauty.

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BRAINS BUT NO BLOOD: C. S. LEWIS' OBSESSION WITH NATURALISM

JUSTIN D. BARNARD

C. S. Lewis was obsessed with Naturalism, at least until 1948. What happened on February 2, 1948 arguably adjusted the timbre of Lewis' apologetic efforts. But it did not fundamentally change the nature of his concern. For throughout his life, Lewis understood the cost of Naturalism's soteriology. For the naturalist, to be 'saved' means not being "taken in." The naturalist is nobody's fool. She has what she believes to be a clear-headed grasp of the unforgiving, brute facts about reality, that Nature is all there is. Yet Lewis saw that the intellectual liberation that purportedly attends such insight is ultimately empty. It destroys all that is worth loving. Thus, Lewis carried lifelong burden to articulate Naturalism's destructive *telos*.

Strikingly, this obsession began before Lewis became a Christian. Prior to his conversion to Christianity in 1931, Lewis struggled to come to terms with what he then took to be the reality of a "materialistic universe" – one he would later described as an "empty space, completely dark and unimaginably cold," an existence in which "all stories will come to nothing: all life will turn out in the end to have been a transitory and senseless contortion upon the idiotic face of infinite matter."

Lewis' struggle to make peace with this naturalistic view of reality was rooted in the tension between two competing aspects

of his experience. On the one hand, Lewis believed, perhaps partly as a result of his intellectual formation by his beloved, though atheist, tutor, William T. Kirkpatrick (whom Lewis called, "the Great Knock"), that the "one great, negative attraction" offered by Naturalism was the space it afforded to be one's own god. As Lewis would later reflect, "that was what I wanted; some area, however small, of which I could say to all other beings, 'This is my business and mine only'." Such was the rational or intellectual appeal of a universe in which "nothing exists except Nature." In such a universe, there was no threat of what Lewis most feared, a "transcendental Interferer."

Yet, on the other hand, Lewis recognized that the cost of such freedom required one to "look out on a meaningless dance of atoms . . . to realize that all apparent beauty was a subjective phosphorescence, and to relegate everything one valued to the world of mirage." What Lewis valued was that transcendent dimension of his experience that was connected with longing or Joy, "an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction." In his first, post-conversion work, *The Pilgrim's Regress*, Lewis would characterize this unsatisfied desire in terms of a musical call, a sound "very sweet and very short, as if it were one plucking of a string or one note of a bell, and after it a full, clear voice – and it sounded so high and strange that [it seemed] . . . very far away, further than a star."

Lewis desperately wanted to respond to the call of that full, clear voice. But prior to his conversion, he was equally desperate in his desire to avoid being "taken in." Thus, he found himself locked a psychological struggle that he described in terms of the "two hemispheres of my mind": the imagination and the intellect. "On the one side a many-islanded sea of poetry and myth; on the other a glib and shallow 'rationalism'. Nearly all that I loved I believed to be imaginary; nearly all that I believed to be real I thought grim and meaningless."

Lewis' first published poetry manifests these early existential struggles with Naturalism. He began writing the poems of *Spirits in Bondage: A Cycle of Lyrics* as a teenager in 1915. Eventually published

in 1919, the set expresses the anxiety induced by a cosmic order that is indifferent to the misery of the human condition and explores the prospects for hope in the absence of an immanent, loving God. This tension is found in "Ode For A New Year's Day," where Lewis writes:

For Nature will not pity, nor the red God lend an ear.
Yet I too have been mad in the hour of bitter paining
And lifted up my voice to God, thinking that he could hear
The curse wherewith I cursed Him because the Good was dead.

Even before he was a Christian, Lewis apprehended that a universe of mere matter-in-motion is one that is bereft of transcendent meaning, of beauty and goodness ("the Good was dead"). In such a universe, despair is the great temptation. Thus, Lewis begins "De Profundis" with an adolescent rage; honest, but not aesthetically sublime:

Come let us curse our Master ere we die,
For all our hopes in endless ruin lie.
The good is dead. Let us curse God most High.

Yet, for all his railing, Lewis, the young, noble pagan, could not bring himself to make peace with the "endless ruin" that his logically-penetrating mind recognized as being entailed by the naturalistic worldview he embraced. His imagination or perhaps his romanticism got the better of him. Consequently, he continued to long for what, in his poem "Dungeon Grates," he called ". . . the strange power / Of unsought Beauty in some casual hour." This only, Lewis believed, could ". . . build a bridge of light or sound or form / To lead you out of all this strife and storm."

As devotees of "Jack" know, Lewis eventually found that "unsought Beauty" in the person of Jesus Christ. What Lewis longed for all his life, a longing symbolized in his writing by images of mountains and islands, was ultimately fulfilled as he would later write:

Not in Nature, not even in Man, but in one
Particular Man, with a date, so tall, weighing
So much, talking Aramaic, having learned a trade;

Not in all food, not in all bread and wine
(Not, I mean, as my littleness requires)
But this wine, this bread . . . no beauty we could desire

While his own conversion to Christianity eventually achieved a reconciliation between his own reason and imagination, Lewis never lost sight of Naturalism's destructive tendencies. Consequently, it is not surprising that in his early years as a Christian apologist, Lewis devoted a great deal of intellectual energy to refuting Naturalism as a worldview. Interestingly, Lewis' early apologetic efforts were largely (though not exclusively) rational, as opposed to imaginative. Perhaps this is partly because Lewis' own conversion to Christianity began as an intellectual one.

Even before he was a Christian, Lewis grasped what he would later call the "cardinal difficulty" of Naturalism. In 1924, Lewis commented in his diary about reading "A Free Man's Worship," an essay by the atheist philosopher, Bertrand Russell. In his essay, Russell echoes the ancient Stoics in arguing that human hope can only be built "on the firm foundation of unyielding despair," of recognizing that all of our experiences "are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms." Lewis thought that Russell had offered a "very clear and noble statement of what I myself believed a few years ago." But Lewis thought that Russell had not faced "the real difficulty – that our ideals are after all a natural product, facts with a relation to all other facts, and cannot survive the condemnation of the fact as a whole. The Promethean attitude would be tenable only if we were really members of some other whole outside of the real whole: wh[ich] we're not."

While it is only suggestive, this early, pre-conversion diary entry contains the seed of what in the 1940s would become Lewis' primary rational polemic against Naturalism. Although it took various forms, the structure of Lewis' argument was simple, elegant,

and profound. Lewis argued that if Naturalism were true (i.e., if Nature is all there is), then all of our thoughts (indeed reason itself) are merely the product of the accidental forces of matter-in-motion. But if all our thoughts are merely the product of the random motion of atoms, then we have no grounds for regarding our thoughts as being true or even rational. After all, nothing about Naturalism assures us, in advance, that the physical movements of the molecules that simply happen to comprise my brain will, in fact, generate reasonable thoughts, much less true ones. Therefore, Lewis argued, the truth of Naturalism would undermine reason itself.

Lewis delivered an early version of this argument to the Oxford Socratic Club on November 6, 1944 in a talk called, "Is Theology Poetry?". But by far, the most (in)famous incident surrounding Lewis' use of this argument was his February 2, 1948 Oxford Socratic Club debate with the Catholic philosopher, Elizabeth Anscombe. By this time, Lewis had already published a first edition of *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (1947). This included a chapter devoted to Lewis' argument against Naturalism entitled, "The Self-Contradiction of the Naturalist." Anscombe offered penetrating philosophical criticisms of Lewis' argument. As a result, Lewis made significant changes to the relevant chapter in a revised edition of *Miracles* (1960).

In the aftermath of the Lewis-Anscombe debate, it is tempting to think that Lewis let go of his youthful and early-Christian obsession with the dangers of Naturalism. This temptation is fueled partly by Lewis' own sense that Anscombe had "obliterated me as an Apologist," and by Lewis' obvious subsequent retreat from strident, rationalist polemics against Naturalism. Nevertheless, the temptation should be resisted. For, although Lewis adjusted the timbre of his apologetic efforts, he never lost sight of the existential dangers of Naturalism that he felt in his youth. To see this, one must recognize the manner in which Lewis would have understood a worldview like Naturalism and see its connection to his later (post-Anscombe debate) writings.

The former is captured beautifully in a diary entry from 1922. Commenting on his interaction with a contemporary from his

student days at Oxford, Lewis wrote that his friend was "once more proof how little purely intellectual powers avail to make a big man. I thought that he had not *lived* a single one of his theories: he had worked them with his brain but not with his blood." Even before he was a Christian, Lewis did not think of worldviews like Naturalism in *merely* academic or intellectual terms. For Lewis, worldviews were intrinsically the sort of thing that one *lived*. Worldviews must not merely fulfill the rigors of mind; they must also satisfy the heart. Lewis' own existential struggle with the naturalistic outlook of his youth illustrates that a significant part of his movement toward Christianity was the fact that he could not bring himself to *live* with the Naturalism that he tried so hard to *believe*. Thus, even when he came to the point, perhaps in the early 1920s, where he no longer found Naturalism *believable*, this was not merely a function of its *rational* or *intellectual* poverty as a worldview. Rather, it was equally a function of its existential emptiness. It could not be lived out in one's blood and bones.

In light of this, the adjustments that Lewis made in his vocation as a Christian apologist after his debate with Anscombe should not be taken to imply that Lewis "came to feel that [the] method and manner" of his rationalistic polemic against Naturalism was "spurious." Rather, in his inadequate attempts to deal with the philosophical sophistication of Anscombe's arguments, Lewis simply came to a deeper realization (perhaps even a remembrance) of something that was already true of his own life: man is not moved by mind alone. Rather, as the embodied – blood-and-bones – creatures that we are, we are also moved by that which we *inhabit*, that in which we "live and move and have our being."

For Lewis, a worldview like Naturalism was not merely a collection of ideas to be hammered out in the dialectical machinery of the ivory tower. Rather, Naturalism was a competing *narrative* to Christianity – an alternative story of reality. Like all narratives, whether Naturalism is believable depends partly upon whether it is *habitable*. Truth is not assured by mere logical consistency; it is primarily disclosed in livability. Thus, after his debate with Anscombe, it is not surprising that Lewis wisely turned his apologetic

powers toward the imaginative. In doing so, Lewis attempted to capture the contrast between habitability of the Christian story and unlivable narrative of Naturalism.

The culmination of this effort was Lewis' 1956 masterpiece, *Till We Have Faces*, a reimagined version of the classic myth of Cupid and Psyche. In Lewis' version, sisters Orual and Psyche are raised as daughters of a king in an ancient, mythical city called Glome. Their childhood tutor, a Greek slave they call "the Fox," attempts to inculcate in them a naturalistic outlook on the world. With the elder sister Orual, the Fox is successful; with younger Psyche, he is not. For much like Lewis himself, the latter feels too deeply the call of "the Mountain, to find the place where all the beauty came from." Much to Orual's jealous dismay, Psyche eventually finds herself taken to live with the god of the Mountain, to be his bride. Orual plots to rescue her sister from the 'god' whose existence she disbelieves. Ever the naturalist, Orual is no fool. She will not be "taken in" by Psyche's religious delusions. Thus, she conspires to have Psyche disobey her make-believe, divine bridegroom, which, to Orual's shock, results in Psyche's actual banishment.

Most of the remainder of Orual's earthly life might be characterized as a kind of entrenchment in the bloodless, rational Naturalism of her youth. She succeeds her father to become a highly successful Queen of Glome. But as she nears the end of her life she cannot escape the meaninglessness of all her achievements. "I did and I did and I did," Orual muses, "and what does it matter what I did?" At the end of her days, (indeed, at the end of one's life in a naturalistic universe) Orual simply goes "to my own chamber to be alone with myself – that is, with a nothingness." Orual is eventually rescued from the despair entailed by her naturalistic commitments through, among other things, a trip to the underworld where she reunites with the Fox, meets the gods face to face, and must confront herself. Touchingly, the Fox is genuinely repentant for the "trim sentences" of his intellectual arguments. He begs the gods not to hold Orual accountable for making her "think that a prattle of maxims would do, all thin and clear as water." For after his death, the Fox comes to realize that the "easy knowledge" of his

philosophical "words" pales in comparison to the narrative embodied in the religious practices of the pagan Priest who "knew at least that there must be sacrifices . . . dark and strong and costly as blood."

What Lewis, perhaps tacitly, recognized as a result of his exchange with Anscombe was precisely what he had grappled with earlier in his life while still in the rationalist grip of his atheist tutor, Kirkpatrick. As valuable as they are in dialectic, the "trim sentences" of Greek wisdom are not life-giving, especially in the face of a universe that is indifferent to existence. Lewis ached to live. And his tacit understanding that "the life of the flesh is in the blood," not the brains, eventually led to his salvation. It not only saved him from the despair of Naturalism itself, it also saved him from reducing the Christian faith which he so ably defended to "a prattle of maxims . . . all thin and clear as water." Instead, Lewis' lifelong obsession with Naturalism ultimately led to him to attack the heart of its destructive tendencies, namely, its destruction of the heart.

Of course, in defending the life-giving narrative of Christianity as against bloodless Naturalism, Lewis never lost sight of the deeply paradoxical manner in which the Christian faith preserves and protects the life of the heart. For both as a matter of his own experience, and as a teaching of Christian dogma, Lewis understood that in the Christian narrative, the path to life is the surrender (i.e., death) of one's heart. Whereas the whole thrust of Naturalism is the protection of one's heart by one's mind, Christian faith teaches the renewal of mind by the submission of one's heart.

This is why Lewis' two-pronged assault on Naturalism, both rational and imaginative, is vital to a fully-orbed understanding of the life of the mind. What Lewis showed in his obsessive engagement with Naturalism over the course of his life was this. The only life worth living is one that protects and preserves the life of the heart. Yet, only a heart fully-surrendered to its Life-Giver will live. Moreover, the heart that seeks the self-protection of its own mind will die; thus, killing the mind whose lifeblood it supplies. Consequently, because it has no heart, Christians should expect, as Lewis

clearly did in his early, rational polemics, that Naturalism cannot sustain the life of the mind. At the same time, Christians should recognize, as perhaps Lewis eventually did, that Naturalism's failure to provide adequate grounds for reason is a *secondary effect*; it is a consequence of Naturalism's principal problem. Specifically, if nothing exists except Nature, there's ultimately no reason to live at all.

If Lewis is right, then the practical consequence both for Christian apologetics and for the life of the mind, in general, is a significant one. The priority for both must be the restoration of the Christian narrative as the habitable landscape in which the intellect lives and moves and has its being. Mere disputation or intellection, divorced from the lived, livable, and living Christian story, will be an ineffectual witness to dying minds – to brains without blood. Christians today must begin where Lewis ended, by restoring imaginative wonder to its rightful place as the beginning of wisdom. Apart from this, Christians risk a kind of functional Naturalism, in which the "trim sentences" that constitute the "easy knowledge" of our intellectual life will be "thin and clear as water." Only surrendered hearts have enough lifeblood to save minds.

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C. S. LEWIS AND THE INKLINGS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF NARRATIVE

HARRY LEE POE

C. S. Lewis began his career in the wake of the devastation of World War I. Besides the enormous loss of life, the Great War also led to a collapse in the traditional art forms of western culture. Orchestral music, opera, and ballet continued to be produced, but in an academic way for a small audience. Painting and sculpture continued to be produced, but for a small audience. Poetry continued to be written, but for a small audience. Lewis and his friend J. R. R. Tolkien, along with several other friends who made up their literary circle known as the Inklings, represent one small part of a segment of the literary world that dug in their heels and determined to preserve narrative prose.

The very nature of philosophy and what one could meaningfully say about anything had fallen under suspicion. The legitimacy of value statements of any kind was questioned. The very concept of meaning and purpose came under attack. In this context, the Inklings talked and wrote about stories as some of them also began to write stories of their own.

THE DEATH OF ART FORMS

C. S. Lewis, better than most academics, understood how art forms die. As a scholar of medieval and renaissance literature, he had made a study of how the art forms of the Classical world died in

the transition to the medieval world. He also understood how the art forms of the medieval world died with the coming of the Renaissance. The way artists painted changed in the medieval world because of what people believed about the world in which they lived. The way people made music changed at the beginning of the medieval world, represented by such forms as the Gregorian chant. In his work as a scholar, however, Lewis focused on the origins and death of allegorical poetry and epic poetry.

In *The Allegory of Love* (1936) C. S. Lewis explains how allegorical poetry became the dominant form of storytelling in the West for a thousand years after the collapse of the Roman Empire. In this scholarly study, Lewis demonstrates how the Christian faith changed the very nature of love and marriage over this thousand year period from one in which marriage was only an economic transaction between two families to one in which marriage became a commitment of love between two people. Lewis marvels that a new kind of story appeared in the eleventh century that reflects the changing view of love and marriage. Because it is one of our culture's most popular kinds of story, it is hard to believe that this kind of story has not always been popular in every culture. It is the love story.

In *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (1942) Lewis explains how epic poetry works and traces its development in several different cultures. In its primary form, epic poetry like Homer's *Iliad* with its tale of the Trojan War focuses on the exploits of individual heroes and their admirable traits that the culture hopes to perpetuate from one generation to the next. In the development of epic to its secondary form, however, the epic story becomes the story of a great nation like Virgil's *Aeneid* and the founding of Rome. The last great epic poem in English was Milton's *Paradise Lost* published in 1667. The last great allegory in English was Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* published in 1678. With the publication of these two great works, western culture abandoned the form for telling stories that it had used for over a thousand years. The old forms died, but the thirst for story only grew. Shakespeare's plays and the extended prose narrative that became the novel, replaced allegory and epic.

STORIES IN A FELLOWSHIP OF FRIENDS

In the early 1930s, C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien began the habit or discipline of meeting together each week in Oxford to talk about what they were writing and to exchange criticism of each other's work. Joined by a few of their likeminded friends, they came to be called the Inklings. They met for regular discussion in Lewis' rooms at Magdalen College every Thursday night during term. Lewis was always known to his friends as Jack and Tolkien they called Ronald or Tollers. These men had survived the trenches of the Great War, so they understood conflict and they had a sense of what matters in the world. International conflict reawakened during the world-wide Depression of the 1930s. The Communists of Russia sought to spread revolution across Europe and Asia. The Fascists of Italy and Germany sought to recreate old empires. Closer at home, however, a revolution had erupted at the universities that had the potential for altering how every academic discipline understood itself and the nature of knowledge and education.

An intellectual movement came out of World War I that questioned the very idea of meaning and purpose. This kind of thinking took many forms and moved in different directions, but it had a huge impact on the arts. Narrative, or a good story, depends upon the story teller's ability to recognize what is important and what is not. A good literary detective must distinguish what is important to the case. Anyone telling an anecdote must recognize what aspects of an event have meaning. Everyone has had the experience of severe boredom whenever a certain someone we know begins to talk. They can talk for hours, but they never seem to say anything. They can recite a chronicle of everything they did, everywhere they went, everyone they met, and everything they saw over great spans of time. These people can make us aware of how long eternity must be, and they can do it in a matter of ten minutes. These people cannot tell the story of their own lives because they cannot distinguish the significance of the passing moments.

Storytelling involves more than a chronicling of information. An extract from the diary of Major Warren Lewis will illustrate the art of telling a story. In this brief anecdote, Warnie meets Hugo

Dyson who with Tolkien had taken part in the critical conversation about myth that finally turned C. S. Lewis toward faith in Jesus Christ. The diary entry for Saturday, February 18, 1933 begins in the rooms of C. S. Lewis in Magdalen College where Warnie has gone to help his brother:

> …in came J[ack]'s friend Dyson from Reading—a man who gives the impression of being made of quick silver: he pours himself into a room on a cataract of words and gestures, and you are caught up in the stream—but after the first plunge, it is exhilarating. I was swept along by him to the Mitre Tap, in the Turl (a distinct discovery this, by the way) where we had two glasses of Bristol milk a piece and discussed China, Japan, staff officers, Dickens, house property as an investment, and, most utterly unexpected "Your favourite readings Orlando Furioso isn't it?" (deprecatory gesture as I get ready to deny this) "Sorry! Sorry! My mistake". As we left the pub, a boy came into the yard and fell on the cobbles. D[yson] (appealingly) "Don't do that my boy: it hurts you and distresses us". We parted outside, D[yson] inviting me to dine with him in Reading on the 18th of next month, and J[ack] to dine and spend the night. "We'll be delighted to have you for the night too, if you don't mind sleeping in the same bed as your brother". This part of the invitation I declined, but I think I shall dine….

This brief anecdote forms almost a perfect story. It has a clear beginning, a development, and a conclusion. More to the point, the story means something. Warnie did not write the diary for publication. The story meant something to him that we can share as we read over his shoulder. It is the story of the beginning of a friendship that would last for over forty years. The ability to tell a story involves the ability to weave the incidents together in a meaningful way. Warnie would have appreciated the fact that in French, the word for story and for history is the same word (*histoire*). The well crafted story, however, has an impact on the reader in its conclusion. It is

not necessary that we know that Warnie and Dyson became friends afterward. The story tells us all we need to know and leaves us wanting to be part of the friendship.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF STORIES

The Inklings appreciated and told different kinds of stories. Hugo Dyson preferred the telling of stories to the writing of stories, and his impatience with elves was legendary among the Inklings to the point that Tolkien held off reading his hobbit stories when Dyson was present. C. S. Lewis never cared for detective stories, though his good friend Dorothy L. Sayers and his literary hero G. K. Chesterton excelled at mysteries. Tolkien did not care for modern novels, which for him meant anything after Chaucer. Literary tastes differ, even among great scholars.

Tolkien was the first of the Inklings to begin writing stories as an adult (though Jack and Warnie Lewis had written stories as children). He began creating another world, now known to us as Middle Earth, by the end of World War I. Lewis offered him the encouragement he needed to write the *Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. In 1938 Tolkien delivered a lecture "On Fairy Stories" that provides us with not merely an apologetic for this form of story, but also an insight into how he believed stories work upon people. Tolkien explained that *Faërie* is an entire realm rather than a particular magical creature. He further insisted that fairy stories were not originally composed for children. As cultural tastes changed after the Enlightenment, Tolkien argued that "Fairy-stories have in the modern lettered world been relegated to the 'nursery' as shabby or old-fashioned furniture is relegated to the play-room, primarily because the adults do not want it, and do not mind if it is misused."

The "story maker" of fairy stories "proves a successful 'sub-creator'" who "makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter." As long as the hearer accepts the norms of the Secondary World, they have entered the Secondary World. On the other hand, "the moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken; the magic, or rather art, has failed." Tolkien argues that entering the Secondary World involves more than Wordsworth's "willing suspension of disbelief;"

it must involve positive belief. Tolkien's success with this aspect of Faërie is reflected in the slogan so popular on college campuses in the 1960s – "Frodo Lives!"

Imagination allows the story teller to create a Secondary World. Imagination involves the mental power of forming images of things not actually present. This mental power of Imagination includes the perception of the image, the ability to grasp its implications, and the control over it necessary for successful expression. Tolkien calls the actual expression of the image "Art" which actualizes the sub-creation work of humans made in the image of the Creator. Tolkien's word for the sub-creative Art and its fantastic origin in Imagination is "fantasy."

Tolkien regarded Fantasy as a "natural human activity," no more given to evil or delusion than any other human activity in a fallen world. People create Fantasy "because we are made: and not only made, but made in the image and likeness of a Maker." Tolkien embraces the charge that fantasy is "escapist" in nature, but faults the critics for confusing escape with desertion. Fantasy may allow one to escape certain forms of ugliness, like factories and smoke stacks, but it does not allow one to desert the human condition. Fantasy allows humans to escape the limitations of existence. This very longing for escape provides the fuel that drives the Imagination to scientific discovery, but Tolkien was not prepared to allow the intimate relationship between science and art that Lewis had begun to grasp. With escapism, however, fantasy also brings consolation and the joy of a happy ending. Tolkien argues that the sudden and miraculous turn at the moment of the greatest danger represents grace more than mere escapism. He argues that this grace does not deny the existence "of sorrow and failure: the possibility of these is necessary to the joy of deliverance; it denies (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat and in so far is evangelium, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief." Here we find Tolkien providing Lewis with the vocabulary to describe his own conversion, as "Joy" becomes the word Lewis chooses to reflect upon as he tells his own story in *Surprised by Joy*.

Charles Williams wrote an entirely different kind of story that appeared to be a conventional realistic novel, until things began to happen. Lewis explained that Williams wrote neither the classic novel nor the fantasy, but a third kind of story that begins with the supposal, "Let us suppose that this everyday world were, at some one point, invaded by the marvelous. Let us, in fact, suppose a violation of frontier." Williams is interested in both sides of the frontier in a way that illumines the material world but also provides a reflection of the spiritual world.

Lewis wrote yet another kind of story that in its way tripped between the realistic and the fantastic. He gained recognition as an important writer of science fiction when that genre first began to "take off." In a letter to Ruth Pitter, Lewis explained that he had realized "what other planets in fiction are really good for: for *spiritual* adventures." With the blossoming of science fiction after *2001: A Space Odyssey,* the exploration of spiritual issues has become recognized as an integral feature of science fiction done well.

While Tolkien focused all of his literary energies on fantasy, other Inklings realized that the ideas Tolkien expressed had wider application throughout many forms of storytelling. In his lecture on Thomas Hardy given at Cambridge University in 1942, Lord David Cecil concludes his brilliant analysis of Hardy with the conclusion that Hardy's deep pessimism is only possible because he believed in the Christian virtues but did not have the Christian hope. Lord David points out that Christian teachers (alluding to Paul) have always taught that if the Christian faith is not true, then life is a tragedy. The deepest instincts of his heart as reflected in the very act of storytelling taught Hardy that the Christian virtues were true, yet Lord David noted that Hardy accepted "a philosophy of the universe that was repugnant to the deepest instincts of his heart." Lord David did not blush to add, "He may have been mistaken in this. Myself, I think he was."

If we think on the boring talk that has no point, no direction, no moment that stands out from all the rest, we find ourselves in the company of King Solomon groaning in Ecclesiastes over the meaningless repetition of events. In a cyclical universe of nature deities

or reincarnation, no one event has any more meaning or purpose than any other. The very act of telling stories that have movement from start to finish tells us something about the nature of the universe. This search for a meaningful universe drove Solomon back to Yahweh from the nature deities he had courted. Tolkien argued that this aspect of story represents good news that leads to a happy ending: "The Evangelium has not abrogated legends; it has hallowed them, especially the 'happy ending.' The Christian has still to work, with mind as well as body, to suffer, hope and die; but he may now perceive that all his bents and faculties have a purpose, which can be redeemed."

The human quest for meaning and purpose has always expressed itself in the process of storytelling, regardless of the form, whether drama, prose fiction, poetry, or dance – even in painting, sculpture, tapestry, and pottery. The narrative persuades us that life and the universe must have meaning, at least it was this way until the twentieth century. In his inaugural lecture as Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge, Lewis lamented the abandonment of meaning in the arts during the twentieth century and insisted that it represents a unique phenomenon in world civilization. Though every culture has its preference for forms of expression and Western culture has tired of old forms and replaced them with new forms, Lewis could not see in any of these changes

> ...the slightest parallel to the state of affairs disclosed by a recent symposium on Mr [T. S.] Eliot's Cooking Egg. Here we find seven adults (two of them Cambridge men) whose lives have been specially devoted to the study of poetry discussing a very short poem which has been before the world for thirty-odd years; and there is not the slightest agreement among them as to what, in any sense of the word, it means.

The Inklings rejected the modern materialist view that the universe and life have no meaning. At the conclusion of his essay "On Stories," Lewis observed,

> In real life, as in story, something must happen. This is the trouble. We grasp at a state and find only a succession of events in which the state is never quite embodied . . . . in real life, the idea of adventure fades when the day-to-day details begin to happen . . . . In life and art both, as it seems to me, we are always trying to catch in our net of successive moments something that is not successive.

Narrative teaches us to notice the unique moments of life that break the endless cycle or dull repetition and give life its meaning.

As academic writing with its emphasis on brute realism and subjective expression dominated the critical market in literature, the culture quickly dropped poetry and meaningless fiction as viable artistic expressions of the culture, just as allegory and epic had been dropped several centuries earlier. The strong narrative of modern fantasy, detective stories, and science fiction in which the Inklings and their friends were involved became the new literary forms through which Western culture began to understand itself.

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C. S. LEWIS: AN INTEGRATED VISION

HOLLY ORDWAY

C. S. Lewis died on the same day as John F. Kennedy and Aldous Huxley. Overshadowed by others of greater popular fame in the moment of his death, he might likewise have slipped quietly into the ranks of Christian apologists who did good work in their day, but who then pass the torch to the next generation and fade into the world of out-of-print books and minor academic interest. Rather, Lewis' star has continued to rise; he can be reckoned now as having joined the constellation of the greats. Why? After November 22nd, 2013, one possible answer to that question will have 'a local habitation and a name.' On that date, the 50th anniversary of Lewis' death, a memorial will be unveiled in Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey, placing Lewis in the company of Shakespeare, Chaucer, Dickens, Austen, and many other great literary men and women. Lewis joins the greats because of his contribution to English letters – and in that phrase is summed up all his varied work as an apologist, a scholar, and a writer. I would venture to suggest that this single memorial, standing for all of Lewis' work, suggests a certain unity about that work. Lewis was a thoroughly *integrated* man – and this integration, this sense of wholeness, is a crucial element in his lasting and extensive impact.

LEWIS AS AN IMAGINATIVE APOLOGIST

Lewis' wholeness was hard-won. "Nearly all that I loved I believed

to be imaginary; nearly all that I believed to be real I thought grim and meaningless." Such was Lewis' condition as a young man, and an atheist: "The two hemispheres of my mind," he wrote in his autobiography, "were in the sharpest contrast."

His conversion to Christianity involved a reunion of these divided hemispheres, such that he could see Christ's incarnation, crucifixion and Resurrection as a 'true myth.' When he became a Christian his first instinct was to give an account of his philosophical journey from atheism to faith – in imaginative terms. *The Pilgrim's Regress* is the firstfruits of the integrated vision that would undergird all of Lewis' apologetic writing. For the rest of his life, his work would remind us that to look at something and to look *along* it are both ways of knowing. In our present age, the scientists, the empiricists, have had it all their own way; but Lewis helps us recover the view of "looking along the beam," as he put it in his great essay "Meditation in a Toolshed."

Indeed, one of the major achievements of Lewis as an apologist is his recovery of the use of the imagination as a mode of knowing, without thereby rejecting or dismissing the role of reason. Lewis is a rigorous thinker; it is worth remembering that his early training was in philosophy and indeed he originally intended to pursue an academic position as a philosopher.

Yet if we ask whether any of Lewis' 'straight' apologetics works would be as effective as they are if they were stripped of their imagery, the stories boiled down to their propositional bones, I suspect that the answer would be 'probably not.' Lewis is effective as an apologist because, in all his works, he is concerned not simply with *truth* but with *meaning*. It is not sufficient merely to present an idea, cold and dead on a platter, for the skeptic to sniff at and then walk away; it must be brought to life.

Consider his extended discussion of faith in *Mere Christianity*. He sets out to explain how faith differs from belief, and how faith can be considered a virtue, noting that he once assumed that "the human mind is completely ruled by reason." If that were the case, then faith and belief would be the same thing – but in fact, this assumption is not true:

> For example, my reason is perfectly convinced by good evidence that anaesthetics do not smother me and that properly trained surgeons do not start operating until I am unconscious. But that does not alter the fact that when they have me down on the table and clap their horrible mask over my face, a mere childish panic begins inside me. I start thinking I am going to choke, and I am afraid they will start cutting me up before I am properly under. In other words, I lose my faith in anaesthetics.

Lewis sums up his argument with precise language: "It is not reason that is taking away my faith: on the contrary, my faith is based on reason. It is my imagination and emotions. The battle is between faith and reason on one side and emotion and imagination on the other." It is a clearly stated, powerful point, but it has its punch precisely because he has illustrated it so vividly beforehand. This technique of using images, miniature stories, and vivid metaphors to convey theological and philosophical ideas is perhaps the most consistent stylistic marker of Lewis as an apologist. Sometimes he starts off with an image and develops his idea from it, as with the passage above; sometimes he uses an image to sum up an extended argument, as in *The Abolition of Man*: "We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful." Here is a hint of Lewis' depth and staying power, why he continues to be unsurpassed as a popular apologist. As Austin Farrer put it with reference to Lewis' *The Problem of Pain*, "We think we are listening to an argument, in fact we are presented with a vision; and it is the vision that carries conviction." Everything Lewis wrote was infused with imaginative insight, and thus with meaning. And he knew what he was doing. "Reason," he wrote, "is the natural organ of truth; but imagination is the organ of meaning."

LEWIS AS A LITERARY CRITIC

As famous as Lewis became on the basis of his Broadcast Talks and later apologetics works, nonetheless he always, and rightly, noted that he was an *amateur* theologian. It is easy, especially for

Americans, to forget that Lewis was a working academic, an Oxford don and, late in his life, a Cambridge professor. For thirty years, from 1924 to 1954, his day to day work was tutoring students, giving lectures, and producing academic literary criticism. Lewis' literary critical work is often treated as if it were a 'day job' in the style of T.S. Eliot's bank-manager work; one sometimes catches a hint of regret from certain scholars that perhaps if he hadn't been an Oxford don, he'd have had more time to produce great works of apologetics. However, the more closely one looks at his academic work, the more significant it becomes, as the foundation and fount of inspiration for his popular work. If Lewis had not been the scholar that he was, in English literature, neither would he have been the apologist or the novelist that he was.

All his life, Lewis was an avid reader, something that certainly stimulated his imagination and involved him in vigorous intellectual debate – and in so doing, helped equip him for both popular apologetics and academic work. As a young man, he seemed sometimes almost drunk with literature, carried away by his imaginative engagement in the story or the 'atmosphere' of the work. He never lost that capacity for enjoyment, and indeed it is this that sets him apart from many, perhaps most academic literary critics today: his love of what he read.

Throughout all his books and essays, we can see Lewis' attention to meaning, and his willingness to surrender to the experience of reading. He enters into the world of the text, whether it is the medieval world of the *Roman de la Rose* or the science-fictional world of H.G. Wells, and he first meets with what he finds there on its own terms. Unlike what we might expect from a professional academic, he did not draw a sharp divide between what he read for 'work' and what he read for 'pleasure'; nor between 'high' and 'low' works. But his academic work refined his approach to reading as well – disciplining it, sharpening his sensitivity to genre, mood, word choice. In *Studies in Words*, he shows a keen attention to language: its nuances, its flavors, its change over time.

And so in his approach to reading, we can catch a glimpse of what made Lewis a gifted teacher – his genuine love of the subject

and enjoyment of reading as an experience; what made him a gifted creative writer – his exquisite sensitivity for the impact of word choice, perhaps best seen in the deceptively simple yet always precisely chosen language of the *Chronicles of Narnia*. This was the attention to detail and nuance that made him a gifted literary critic.

And just as Lewis' approach to reading sustained and nourished both his academic and popular work, so too his approach to communication was the same at its core. When Lewis gave his wartime talks on Christianity, he discovered that it was necessary to be able to explain theology in terms that his lay audience would understand – and that this was far more difficult than it seemed. He did the necessary work, learning how to communicate to a broader audience with depth and rigor. I suspect that his ability to make the shift, to discern his audience's level of understanding and adapt his approach to suit, without abandoning the content, was not something he discovered on the fly, but rather was rooted in his academic writing. For Lewis as an academic is shockingly readable, even in his most technical pieces.

His imaginative vision and his rational thinking allow him to express his insights in ways that are both precise and imaginatively powerful, and so we see his use of image and metaphor in his academic as well as in his popular work. Consider, for instance, the opening image of *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, a brilliant illustration of the necessity of understanding literary genre:

The first qualification for judging any piece of workmanship from a corkscrew to a cathedral is to know what it is – what it was intended to do and how it is meant to be used. After that has been discovered the temperance reformer may decide that the corkscrew was made for a bad purpose, and the communist may think the same about the cathedral. But such questions come later. The first thing is to understand the object before you: as long as you think the corkscrew was meant for opening tins or the cathedral for entertaining tourists you can say nothing to the purpose about them.

Lewis' point is that "The first thing the reader needs to know about *Paradise Lost* is what Milton meant it to be" – but so clear is the insight, and so vivid is the illustration, that the illustration

of the corkscrew and the cathedral is equally applicable to an understanding of any text whatsoever.

LEWIS AS A CREATIVE WRITER

Lewis' integration of imagination and reason, his use of image and metaphor to convey meaning, his love of and attention to language, his deep immersion in literature – these all come together in his creative work, as a poet and a novelist. It may seem surprising to first mention Lewis as a poet, but in fact his first sense of literary identity was as a poet, and his first two published works were volumes of poetry: *Spirits in Bondage*, a sequence of lyrics (1919) and a long narrative poem *Dymer* (1926). In his early years, when his friends thought of him as a writer, they thought of him specifically as a poet. He did not get the success he hoped for, and as his letters to Arthur Greeves show, he consciously, and painfully, let go of his poetic ambitions.

Yet there are two things to note here. One is that, although Lewis' fame is rightly founded on his prose works, he is a better poet than most people realize. His poems, many of them unpublished at his death or published under the pseudonym Nat Whilk ("I know not whom") were gathered by Walter Hooper into two collections, *Poems* and *Narrative Poems*, and, not surprisingly given contemporary lack of enthusiasm for poetry in general, have been largely overlooked by readers. It is to be hoped that Don King's forthcoming single-volume collection of the complete poetry will help to draw more sustained attention to Lewis as a poet. Hitherto, those who venture to read these volumes have often done so mainly out of curiosity for a seemingly un-Lewisian production; but if one does not have an existing taste for poetry, or familiarity with the kinds of forms Lewis used, or appreciation for the use of sound and meter in poetry, the merits of these poems are likely to be overlooked.

And they do have merit. In the poems we find phrases full of imaginative richness, compact and vivid: "This year the summer will come true"; "devils are unmaking language"; "heaven's hermitage, high and lonely." More significant than his imagery

is the *sound* of his poetry. This is one of the reasons Lewis as poet is difficult to quote, for his effect is (unfashionably) tightly bound up with the form and metrical structure of the whole poem; but it seems likely to me that his attention to sound and rhythm in his poetry disciplined him to do the same in his prose, but with a freer hand and larger canvas. Here we encounter a man who knew language intimately; who tasted it, who worked with the rhythm of a line, shaping it until it sang.

I would submit that it is from his lifelong attention to writing poetry that Lewis was able to write prose that resonates as it does – with lines like the brilliant close of "Is Theology Poetry?": "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."

NARNIA: A FULLY INTEGRATED WORK

If anything of Lewis' work survives when all the rest has passed away, it will almost certainly be the Chronicles of Narnia; here we see Lewis at his most integrated – as apologist, scholar, writer. The Narnia books are not a retreat from engagement with apologetics, but a new way to approach it, using imaginative strategies to present a view of the same objective truth that Lewis so powerfully defends in his 'straight' apologetics works. Yet there is something special about the Chronicles of Narnia, something that has proved impossible for later Christian authors to replicate; only Lewis' friend and fellow Inkling JRR Tolkien has managed, in *The Lord of the Rings*, to create a work of equal power and appeal that also conveys the Christian vision. No one since Lewis and Tolkien has achieved this, though the shelves crammed full of imitations attest to the fact that many have tried. The deftness of his word choice, the elegance and clarity of his prose, the consistent yet subtle patterning of his images throughout the novels, show the hand of Lewis the poet, attentive to the play of language. These are extremely well-written books, apart from any other consideration. Though there are plenty of good novels in the world, there is something distinctive about the *Chronicles of Narnia* that has made them particularly compelling for so many different readers.

What gives Narnia its resonance and power? Michael Ward has made a convincing case that the Chronicles are constructed out of, and deeply imbued with, the spiritual symbolism of the medieval seven heavens. Lewis the literary critic laid the foundations for Narnia. He didn't just stumble across an interesting bit of information about medieval cosmology and decide to include it in his writing; rather, he had been writing and teaching and thinking about medieval literature for his entire professional career as an academic. He fully understood, and had imaginatively engaged with, the imagery of the medieval cosmos; he knew from his reading, and from his poetry, and from his academic analysis, that these were genuinely "spiritual symbols of permanent value."

And Lewis the imaginative apologist built on those foundations. The Narnia Chronicles are "all about Christ" – presented not didactically, nor allegorically, but through a technique that Ward has called "donegality," with its invented etymology connecting to 'the spirit of Donegal,' the Irish coast with its glorious, Jovial waves that Lewis so loved. Donegality involves the deliberate creation of a distinctive atmosphere or flavor for each book that subtly crystallizes in a Christological character. The Christ of the Narnia books is the "cosmic Christ" implicit in every aspect of reality; Aslan is the Christ-figure in which the atmosphere of each book is focused. We breathe in the kingly spirit of Christ in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*; we are braced by his martial spirit in *Prince Caspian*; and so on through the Chronicles, as each book's distinctive atmosphere shows forth a different aspect of the One by whom all things were made.

Such an atmosphere could only have been created by a man who thoroughly understood the experience of reading, someone who could taste the 'flavor' of a novel like *The Last of the Mohicans* or the unspoken holiness of *Phantastes*, someone who understood from inside, as a lifelong reader of great sensitivity, how a work of fiction operates in the imagination. And the Christological focus of the Chronicles, which is also the source of their power and meaning – for Christ is not an add-on moral to the Chronicles, but the very center and heart, the love that moves the Narnian

sun and other stars – could only have been created by a man whose faith was part of every aspect of his life. For above all, and in all, and through all, is Christ: in the end, this is what gives Lewis an integrated vision; for indeed, as Walter Hooper put it, Lewis was a thoroughly converted man.

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THE MATHEMATICAL MIND OF C. S. LEWIS

MATT D. LUNSFORD

Clive Staples Lewis (1898-1963) was one of the intellectual giants of the 20th century and arguably the most influential Christian author of that period. Lewis was born in Belfast, educated at Oxford, and taught medieval and Renaissance literature at both Oxford and Cambridge. As a scholar, he made significant contributions to the areas of literary criticism, children's literature, and fantasy literature. His conversion to Christianity is well documented in his autobiography *Surprised by Joy*, as is his personal struggle with learning mathematics. He admits that he "could never have gone very far in any science because on the path of every science the lion mathematics lies in wait for you." In spite of his lack of success in mathematics, Lewis, through his writings, exhibited a deep appreciation of the discipline. More specifically, Lewis' thinking, as expressed in his writings, reflects two essential tools of a mathematician's mind: ratiocination and imagination.

Ratiocination is the process of logical reasoning. Lewis enjoyed all mathematics that involved mere reasoning but was less fond of mathematical calculation. In his early training at Oldie's School, Lewis claims only some geometry and grammar as accomplishments. In reflecting upon this time, he comments, "that though he [Oldie] taught geometry cruelly, he taught it well. He forced us to reason, and I have been the better for those geometry lessons all

of my life." His tutelage later under Kirk (Mr. Kirkpatrick), though not imbued with mathematics, proved indispensable for his ratiocination skills. Later in life, these skills were made evident in his Christian apologetic works. In one particular situation – moral decision-making – Lewis applied his logical reasoning abilities to argue against total pacifism.

Given that there exists an absolute right and wrong, how can one proceed to make correct moral decisions? Lewis addresses this rudimentary question of morality in the essay "Why I Am Not a Pacifist." The prototype for his argument is a geometric proof. While admitting that moral decision-making does not admit the mathematical certainty of a geometric proof, Lewis employs this approach to construct his argument. His method of reasoning involves three elements: 1) the reception of facts, 2) the recognition of self-evident truths (which Lewis calls intuition), and 3) the logical arrangement of "facts so as to yield a series of such intuitions which linked together produce a proof of the truth or falsehood of the proposition we are considering." For the mathematician, these essentials are known, respectively, as: 1) definitions and theorems, 2) axioms, and 3) mathematical proof.

As for the facts, Lewis claims that disagreements often arise from differences in the perceived facts of the matter rather than from differences in logical conclusions. A fact for Lewis is that war is very disagreeable. However, the sentiment that wars do more harm than good is not a fact for him, but instead is a debatable issue and therefore needs justification. Consequently, sorting out the proper facts of the matter is a crucial first step. The second step is finding the intuitions.

In his book *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis labels the entire collection of self-evident truths as "the *Tao*" and claims that, "Unless you accept these without question as being to the world of action what axioms are to the world of theory, you can have no practical principles whatever. You cannot reach them as conclusions: they are premises." The self-evident truths for Lewis relevant to this particular situation are simply that loving and helping are good, while hating and harming are not. But even these intuitions must

be qualified to some extent since helping one party might imply harming another.

The logical result, according to Lewis, based upon these facts and intuitions, is that complete pacifism is not practical. Furthermore, he claims that pacifism based upon human authority is very questionable and pacifism based upon divine authority rests upon a small portion of scripture (which he maintains can be interpreted in context to yield an entirely different meaning). He concludes the essay with these words:

> This, then, is why I am not a Pacifist. If I tried to become one, I should find a very doubtful factual basis, an obscure train of reasoning, a weight of authority both human and Divine against me, and strong grounds for suspecting that my wishes had directed my decision. As I have said, moral decisions do not admit mathematical certainty. It may be, after all, that Pacifism is right. But it seems to me very long odds, longer odds than I would care to take with the voice of almost all of humanity against me.

Thus, Lewis chooses ratiocination as the method for tackling the question of pacifism. This tactic also can be seen in many of his apologetic works. Two noteworthy examples are his argument against atheism found in *Mere Christianity* and his argument against naturalism found in *Miracles*. In other places, Lewis opts for a second essential tool of mathematical thinking – imagination. Imagination is the ability of the mind to be creative or resourceful. Lewis' gift of imagination is obvious in works such as the *Chronicles of Narnia* and his science fiction trilogy – *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength*. In one instance – the communication barrier that exists between the spiritual man and the natural man – imagination, of a mathematical sort, is used to bridge the gap.

Lewis discovered a significant truth of the Christian life – it is difficult to convey one's beliefs regarding the spiritual realm to those who believe only in the natural world. Lewis addresses this

topic in his essay *Transposition*, where he challenges the reader to use imagination to overcome this predicament. To further to elucidate his ideas, Lewis draws heavily upon a work of mathematical fiction, *Flatland*, written by Edwin A. Abbott – a book which has as one of its goals the enlargement of the imagination. The situation Lewis describes in *Transposition* is analogous to the dilemma of effective communication that exists in Abbott's novella between inhabitants of a higher dimensional world and inhabitants of a lower dimensional world.

In the essay, Lewis first juxtaposes a richer system and a poorer system to explain the relationship between the spiritual life (i.e. a higher dimensional world) and the natural life (i.e. a lower dimensional world). Lewis gives an example of the richer and poorer that is readily experienced, namely emotions and sensations. The emotional life is "richer" than the life of sensations because human nerves produce the same sensation to express more than one emotion. According to Lewis, it is impossible to find a one-to-one correspondence between such systems:

> Where we tend to go wrong is in assuming that if there is to be a correspondence between two systems it must be a one-for-one correspondence–that A in the one system must be represented as a in the other, and so on. But the correspondence between emotion and sensation turns out not to be of that sort. And there never could be correspondence of that sort where the one system was really richer than the other. If the richer system is to be represented in the poorer at all, this can only be by giving each element in the poorer system more than one meaning. The transposition of the richer into the poorer must, so to speak, be algebraical, not arithmetical.

Here we see that the richer system cannot relate to the poorer system in a one-to-one way. Thus, in the poorer system, multiple elements of the richer system must be represented by the same output or terminology. For instance, both joy and sorrow often yield tears.

To extend this analogy from the common natural experiences of our emotions and sensations to a discussion of the existence of the supernatural, Lewis gives this vivid illustration, inspired, no doubt, by the work of Abbott:

> Even more, we understand pictures only because we know and inhabit the three-dimensional world. If we can imagine a creature who perceived only two dimensions and yet could somehow be aware of the lines as he crawled over them on the paper, we shall easily see how impossible it would be for him to understand. … And soon, I think, he would say, "You keep on telling me of this other world and its unimaginable shapes which you call solid. But isn't it suspicious that all the shapes which you offer me as images or reflections of the solid ones turn out on inspection to be simply the old two-dimensional shapes of my own world as I have always known it? Is it not obvious that your vaunted other world, so far from being the archetype, is a dream which borrows all its elements from this one?

Lewis continues the analogy with these thoughts about the natural man:

> And the skeptic's conclusion that the so-called spiritual is really derived from the natural, that it is a mirage or projection or imaginary extension of the natural, is also exactly what we should expect, for, as we have seen, this is the mistake that an observer who knew only the lower medium would be bound to make in every case of Transposition. The brutal man never can by analysis find anything but lust in love; the Flatlander never can find anything but flat shapes in a picture; … On the evidence available to him his conclusion is the only one possible.

On the contrary, for the spiritual man, Lewis states, "At the worst, we know enough of the spiritual to know that we have fallen short

of it, as if the picture knew enough of the three-dimensional world to be aware that is was flat."

So, through the use of imagination, Lewis completes his analogy. The natural man is akin to a Flatlander who cannot fathom the realities of a world of three dimensions. On the other hand, the spiritual man is similar to a Spacelander, whose attempts to communicate the existence of the third dimension to a Flatlander are constantly thwarted by the obvious restriction of using terminology and examples drawn from a world of only two dimensions.

In concluding the essay, Lewis claims that this same principle of transposition might enlighten others areas of Christian thought. First of all, transposition provides insight into the virtue of hope, especially hope that pertains to aspects of the afterlife. Listen to these words of Lewis in which the distinction between a higher dimensional form and its rendering in a lower dimension can still be heard: "But I surmise that it will differ from the sensory life we know here, not as emptiness differs from water or water from wine but as a flower differs from a bulb or a cathedral from an architect's drawing. And it is here that Transposition helps me."

Secondly, this principle of transposition sheds new light on the doctrines of the Incarnation and the resurrection of the body. In his work *Miracles*, Lewis perceives the Incarnation as God descending into humanity just as the Supernatural descends into the Natural. Lewis states: "We catch sight of a new key principle–the power of the Higher, just in so far as it is truly Higher, to come down, the power of the greater to include the less." Furthermore, Lewis contends that the new nature of a resurrected body might be able to perceive dimensions beyond what is now observed: "It is useful to remember that even now senses responsive to different vibrations would admit us to quite new worlds of experience: that a multi-dimensional space would be different, almost beyond recognition, from the space we are now aware of, yet not discontinuous from it."

Evidently, imagination was a means preferred by Lewis not only for communicating definite spiritual truths but also for grasping certain mysteries of the Christian faith.

Without question, Lewis, through his writings, demonstrated a high regard for the discipline of mathematics. More significantly, he effectively utilized two essential tools of mathematical thinking: ratiocination and imagination. In his autobiography, Lewis essentially agrees with this claim when he writes, "Yet, though I could never have been a scientist, I had scientific as well as imaginative impulses, and I loved ratiocination." In his renowned apologetic work *Mere Christianity*, he asserts that "a mathematician's mind has a certain habit and outlook which is there even when he is not doing mathematics." Even though Lewis could not tame the lion mathematics, his writings give evidence to the fact that his mind had that same kind of certain habit and outlook.

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C. S. LEWIS AND THE VIRTUES OF READING BROADLY

GENE C. FANT, JR.

As an English professor, I have had an affinity for C. S. Lewis because in his writings I have always recognized a passion for literature, particularly as viewed through the lens of faith, or perhaps it is more accurate to say theology through the lens of literature. Indeed, while I have heard non-Christian academicians call Lewis a "preacher" on more than one occasion, he would be baffled to be called anything other than a professor, essayist, and novelist. In those roles, however, Lewis is not without controversy in some Christian circles, as I might illustrate with a personal anecdote of my own.

Sometime ago, I was in the middle of a conversation with someone when she stopped to ask about my role as an English professor at a Christian college: "Do you have students read literature written by non-Christians?" I affirmed that I do, and she ventured further: "Do your students read fiction? Isn't that sort of like making them participate in lies? I don't see why anyone would read anything other than the Bible. It's enough for me." Her thinking reflects quite a strong tradition in Christianity, which views anything not produced within the Church (often a particularly sectarian understanding of the Church) as being unworthy of consideration by believers. Such a view finds a ready target in Lewis. I have heard Lewis called, at best, a liberal Anglican (and thus viewed with

suspicion) and, at worst, a heretic. The bottom line is, as Shakespeare's Julius Caesar once put it about the great political instigator Cassius, he is untrustworthy precisely because "he reads much."

To be fair, there is a bit of logic to an argument that is suspicious of the value of non-Christian learning, especially when one views the cultural context of the early Church. The pagan culture was, well, pagan, and it conflicted at every turn with the morality and theological presuppositions of the emerging Christian culture. One need look no further than Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (c. A.D. 8) to see the depravity of first-century literature, where Jove, for example, rapes his way through a sizeable portion of the countryside's female population. Early thinkers such as Tertullian (c. 160–c. 225) and Cyprian (c. 200–258) exhorted believers to ignore the surrounding culture's products, a view that may be summarized in Tertullian's scathing rejoinder, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" Tertullian meant that our learning should be edified by the Scriptures and church authority, rather than defiled by the thought patterns and exempla of pagan thinkers. For the Church Fathers, it was a matter of theological and moral integrity, an intellectual embodiment of Paul's instructions to the Philippians, to think about whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy (Philippians 4:7-9).

This view pretty well killed off the West's *belles-lettres* tradition as Christianity became the dominant cultural force, with theater and the literary arts quashed beneath the stern criticisms that held sway until Augustine (354 –430) arrived. Augustine's conversion came later in life, after he had won a reputation as a master teacher and scholar, a sort of forerunner to what we would now call a public intellectual, who used his great erudition to provide commentary on a variety of issues. Augustine argued forcefully that pagan thought was not devoid of truth but rather was distinctive in its incorporation of untruth, or "dross." He argued that in Exodus, the Israelites looted the gold of the Egyptians, gold that eventually became the furnishings of the tabernacle and the temple. In the same way, Christians can find truth in the intellectual products of non-Christians and can return that truth to its right use, the

glorification of God. The concept became known as 'raiding the gold of the Egyptians.' Three scriptural passages are readily understood in this light: Daniel 1:17-20 ("To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning . . ."), Acts 7:22 ("Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians . . ."), and Acts 17 (at Mars Hill, Paul quotes from Aratus, Epimenides, and Ovid). In them, Augustine and other later thinkers saw license to use pagan thought not as authoritative but rather as instructive and helpful to illumine Christian thought.

By the time of the Renaissance, the Christian humanists (Erasmus, Wyatt, Donne, Herbert, Shakespeare, Milton, etc.) embraced a very broad understanding of learning and literature, viewing all human pursuits as either positive or negative but always somehow connected to the truths of the faith and therefore worthy of our time and our energies.

Lewis was a scholar of Medieval and Renaissance literatures, so it should not surprise us that his view of the relationship between Christianity and broad reading would be one of enthusiastic support. In fact, I would be unjust to Lewis if I did not pause momentarily to consider the joy that he took in literature of all sorts. Any critical consideration of Lewis must be conducted within the context of Lewis' clear understanding that rational analysis should always entail the caveat that literature is not purely rational: it is emotional and intuitive, both of which are just fine. Lewis believed that literature was uniquely human, an activity that brought joy to the reader. He and his friend J. R. R. Tolkien both scolded those who would squeeze the life out of fiction and poetry by trying to make them about critical analysis rather than pleasurable, human activities. Lewis would likely declare that Christians should read broadly because everyone should read broadly; it makes us human. Stories and poems enrich our lives in ways that nothing else can.

In the 1989 play "Shadowlands," playwright William Nicholson places these words in Lewis' mouth: "We read to know we're not alone." While Lewis himself didn't say the words, they capture a sentiment that is thoroughly appropriate to Lewis. For him, stories are what connect us to one another, articulating the

inarticulatable, and reconciling the detached. When we consider Lewis and literature, we are in error if we do not presuppose the incredible pleasures, both emotional and intellectual, that lie in our shared literary traditions.

However, we would be unjust as well to claim that Lewis viewed text as little more than important pastime. For him, literature was foundational to rational thought and analysis, a vantage point from which we might see what had previously been hidden to us. For example, Lewis saw literature as being an incredibly rich moral banquet. Despite the various corruptions of human good depicted in many of the world's great masterpieces, from the sexual marauding of Jove in Ovid to the scandalous bigotry of Shakespeare's villains, Lewis notes that an exhaustive comparison of those masterpieces begins to generate an outline of the kind of morality that is common to all cultures.

Rather than exploring how the literary arts enrich our lives aesthetically or culturally, however, I will take up a slightly different charge, seeking to respond at least in part to those who see broad reading as spiritually dangerous. For Lewis, the reading of great literature is a thoroughly moral undertaking. Literature forms character by allowing us to examine ideals and failures from a front row, intellectually speaking. In heroes, we see the possibilities of human will, just as in anti-heroes, we see its weaknesses. We may become what we read; we may emulate what we have beheld. This is, in part, was the impulse that drove Lewis to become a novelist himself. He was concerned that modern approaches to literary study, and literary production, were becoming weak and ignoring the transformative power of narrative. In the process, he warned, we were creating "men without chests," who have no moral understanding of the world.

In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis describes this morality as the Tao, an ethical code that seems to define human good as a revelation of God's design for goodness. The idea is that when we compare the shared elements, casting away the dross of cultural variations and idiosyncrasies and embracing the overlapping virtues, we find the 'really real' of moral universals. Thus we note the general revelation

of God's law to all of humankind, through all of human literature is a part of how we should understand Rom 1:20, which notes that because God's "power" and "nature" have been revealed throughout creation, all people "are without excuse."

Critics of the Tao note that Lewis seems to embrace the particularly Christian virtues that are extant in other cultures but ignores the shared (im)moralities that do not find parallels in Christianity. Indeed, one of the distinctives of Christianity is not that it is the greatest common moral denominator but rather is something beyond that, a revelation of God's particular grace in the midst of a world dripping in common grace. Such a point hits the mark, of course, but Lewis' basic point still stands: we can discern a great deal about what lies at the root of our shared humanity specifically by examining our shared literary stories and traditions. Some might object, though, that a moral focus is a thin substitute for theological content. Lewis is not embracing morality as a substitute for faith; he is following Paul's argument in Romans that morality and the law lead inexorably to the need for grace. The law constantly reminds us of how much we need that which is greater: grace.

Lewis saw great value in the relationship between one thing and another, a relationship that could yield powerful insights. In literary terms, one means of accomplishing this is through the use of allegory. Allegory is a symbolic system where one term (or person, event, etc.) is not only literally true but is also true in a larger sense that provides fresh insight. The Bible uses this as a basic means of interpretation: John 3:14 is explicit in our need to read Moses lifting up the serpent in Num 21:8-9 as a prophetic foreshadowing of Christ's crucifixion.

Lewis' most important book of literary criticism, *The Allegory of Love*, works to recover the waning understanding of allegory in poetry and narrative. He proposes that allegory is what brought lasting value to Classical works in the Christian era: we are able to read the texts symbolically, so that the characters, events, and even ideals point ultimately to Christian understandings of reality. This method of reading revealed larger truths that might lie behind the woodenly literal parts of the narrative. An invented narrative might

even not be literally true but could be figuratively true, an irony that forms a significant part of Lewis' view of the world. A poem about love, then, might not actually be merely about the love of a man and a woman; it might be about a larger kind of love or even something else such as politics. The symbolic would thus shed light on the larger, more ideal truth.

When we read broadly, then, we can find connections, archetypes, and foreshadowings of theological and moral truth that would not otherwise be obvious. These Classical works (and their Medieval heirs) could point us in the right direction, particularly if we hold the appropriate keys to understanding the allegorical correlations. These shared literary traditions allow us to see beyond our own limitations, tapping into larger truths that may not be readily evident. Lewis' view of literature was that it should always convey the magic of narrative, the possibility of non-empirical knowledge or even delight, where love is magical, where beauty is possible, and where meaning itself may be intuited rather than analyzed. The text might just surprise us with a vision that we had never before known was possible, revealing to us truth that we had not yet been able to comprehend.

This leads us directly to what is perhaps the most amazing view of literature, that just as the law leads us to understand the need for grace, and allegory leads to spiritual wisdom, literature can lead to conviction by the Holy Spirit. Lewis' friendship with J. R. R. Tolkien was one of peers who loved myth and poetry, but who did not at first share faith. Tolkien was a dedicated and outspoken Christ-follower, who all but pled with his friend to abandon his atheism and embrace the true faith. The thread of their many conversations constantly visited this issue, one man's faith and the other man's doubt.

Prior to his conversion, Lewis believed that the biblical text was just another text among all of the world's other texts. This was a kind of inversion of the complaint that is offered by Christians who see no great value in the world's literature. Lewis was dismissive of Christian claims of truthfulness in a realm where he saw equivalence rather than truth claims. On one occasion, as he and Tolkien

were conversing about faith, he said that he saw Christianity as just another invented myth, like the others he had read so intensely. He saw all of them as ways to communicate truths and ideals but not an exclusive truth claim. He reviewed other myths that seemed to parallel the accounts of the biblical tradition. Tolkien affirmed that there were echoes that ran between the stories, but asked a particularly pointed question: What if the other myths foreshadowed Christ, so that Christ was the culmination of all that came before him? What if God had hard-wired humankind to resonate with his redemptive plan?

Lewis, with all of his great erudition and compendious knowledge of the great traditions of the world, suddenly saw that what made Christianity different was that it was true, and that Christ was ultimate Truth. As he wrote, "The heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact. . . . By becoming fact it does not cease to be myth: that is the miracle. . . . God is more than a god, not less; Christ is more than Balder [a Norse god who parallels Christ's sacrifice], not less." In a moment that echoed Augustine's conversion 1500 years previously, he submitted to the Gospel, due to the preparation of his mind and the illumination of the Spirit, meeting in that moment to change his life, and our own understandings of the world around us. The Spirit worked through the words of humans who had not known unadulterated Truth; his was an intellect empowered by the Spirit Who was calling to him, leading him, to help him see the outlines of Truth in the midst of untruth, finally allowing him to piece the shape of this Truth in such a way as to have him declare, I see it! Literature, then, was an agent of the Holy Spirit's conviction of Lewis.

Lewis scholar Louis Markos, in his helpful book *From Achilles to Christ: Why Christians Should Read the Pagan Classics*, says,

> If Christianity is true, then the God who created both us and the universe chose to reveal himself through a sacred story that resembles more the imaginative works of epic poets and tragedians than the rational meditations of philosophers and theologians. . . . [T]he gospel story spreads

> its light both forward and backward to uplift and ennoble all stories that speak of sacrifice and reconciliation, of messianic promise and eschatological hope. It was through the Psalms and the Prophets, which were written in poetry, as well as the 'epic' tales of the Old Testament—Abraham's long, circuitous journey, Joseph and his brothers, the Passover and Exodus—that Yahweh prepared the hearts and minds of his people for the incarnation of the Christ. Is it so unbelievable that he should have used the greatest poets, storytellers, and 'prophets' of antiquity to prepare the hearts of the pagans?

When I hear arguments that Christians should not read broadly, I know that what underlies these views is a belief that secular literature is so wicked and so seductive that it cannot be redeemed. My response echoes that which Lewis would likely utter: Romans reminds us that Christ died for us while we were helpless sinners (5:6) and enemies (5:10). How can Christ redeem sinful literature? In the same way that He has redeemed sinful men and women: through the redemptive power of the Creator God, Whose Gospel is the greatest story ever told, precisely because it is true.

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BOOK REVIEWS

C. S. Lewis: A Life: Eccentric Genius, Reluctant Prophet
Alister McGrath
Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House, 2013.
xvi + 431 pages, $24.99 hardcover

Reviewed by: Harry Lee Poe

In the fiftieth anniversary year of the death of C. S. Lewis, Alister McGrath has published a new biography of Lewis. Even Lewis devotees might be prone to wonder, "What? Another one? Whatever for?" Lewis has grown into a minor industry that bridges the divide between Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox, and Pentecostals, with scores of books published on him just in the years since the release of the first Narnia movie. Is there anything left to write about Lewis? McGrath has proven that quite a lot remained to be written about Lewis.

In many ways, McGrath does not write like the apostles Matthew and Mark who wrote in ways that assumed their audiences knew and understood the Palestinian, first century, Jewish world of Jesus. McGrath writes more like the apostle John who wrote in a way that assumed his audience knew nothing about the world of Jesus. Like the apostle Luke, McGrath shares his research methodology with his audience along the way, pausing to explain that sometimes what everybody knows simply is not true.

Walter Hooper and Roger Lancelyn Green wrote the earliest full biography of Lewis in 1974, though some earlier, brief treatments of him were written by Green (1969) and Helen Gardiner

(1966). Jocelyn Gibb's edited volume of recollections of Lewis by his friends in 1965 provides insight into Lewis that has helped biographers over the years. Walter Hooper's early biography was written without the benefit of all of *Walter Hooper's* scholarly achievement of the 1970s and 1980s that resulted in the publication of Lewis' diary and his letters to Arthur Greeves. George Sayer had the benefit of the Greeves letters when he wrote his admirable biography *Jack* in 1988 as did A. N. Wilson when he published his less admirable *C. S. Lewis: A Biography* in 1990. None of these, however, had the benefit of the massive three volume edition of Lewis' letters that Hooper published between 2004 and 2007.

The most sensational aspect of this biography concerns McGrath's re-dating of Lewis' conversion to theism. Biographers have long accepted the dating given by Lewis himself in *Surprised by Joy*. Lewis himself had the same problem with his spiritual autobiography as previous biographers have had. Lewis did not have access to his own letters. He operated purely on memory of events that had taken place twenty five years earlier. In the midst of his spiritual crisis, however, Lewis had written details to his friend Arthur Greeves. Though Lewis never saved any of his correspondence, Greeves saved all of Lewis' letters, and McGrath had this valuable resource. Others may have pondered the difficulty of reconciling Lewis' account in 1955 with what he had written in his letters in 1929-1930, but it has taken McGrath to conclude that the two accounts cannot be reconciled. For Lewis devotees, he has uttered the unspeakable heresy: Lewis had his dates wrong. Having settled that Lewis was mortal like the rest of us, McGrath moves on.

When approaching matters of some sensitivity, such as the relationship between Lewis and Mrs. Janie Moore or between Lewis and his father, McGrath has a habit of speaking confidentially to the reader with such comments as a "close reading" or a "sympathetic reading" or the "shrewd reader" will come to a different conclusion than the conventional wisdom. McGrath regards himself as the shrewd reader who stands far enough back from the life of Lewis to bring a fresh look at the man. Except for A. N. Wilson, all of the major biographers of Lewis had known him personally. Wilson had

his own ax to grind, and grind it he did, so McGrath in many ways represents the first biographer who can write of Lewis in a critical, detached way.

McGrath takes his stand on a number of Lewis controversies, including the famous debate with Elizabeth Anscombe. He disagrees with A. N. Wilson and others who contend that Lewis abandoned apologetics after his debate with Anscombe and turned to writing fiction. Wilson argued that this retreat reflected Lewis' "realization that rational argument cannot support the Christian faith" (254). This view of Wilson ignores the number of essays Lewis wrote until his death and his publication of *Mere Christianity* in 1952. McGrath correctly argues that Lewis did not retreat from reason, but wed reason and imagination as he created the world of Narnia.

Readers will find much to admire and the occasional point to debate with this biographer, but McGrath has made a substantial contribution to the understanding of C. S. Lewis and his contribution to twentieth century Christianity.

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KJV 400: The Legacy and Impact of the King James Version
Ray Van Neste, editor. Foreword by David S. Dockery
Mountain Home, Arkansas: Borderstone Press, 2012
294 pages, $34.95 hard cover

Reviewed by: Michael E. Travers

With the 400th anniversary of the publication of the King James Version came numerous conferences and publications about this translation of the Bible that has had such a deep and far-reaching influence in western culture. The present volume is grounded in one such conference at Union University. What renders this collection of essays important is that, without sentimentality, it explores how the KJV has shaped the western intellectual tradition.

Leland Ryken, well-known for his many publications in literature and literary features of the Bible, opens the conversation by demonstrating why the KJV is great, and why it has had such a profound impact over these four centuries. The rest of the book is divided into two large sections, the "Setting from which the KJV Emerged" and the "Impact of the KJV," which unfold the implications of Ryken's essay. Six chapters in part one of the book explore earlier renderings of the Bible into English, along with the political, philosophical, and artistic contexts for the KJV translators as they began their work in 1604. Part two offers eleven chapters which investigate the influence of the KJV in almost every area of western life since the translators finished their work in 1611. What emerges from the pastiche is a picture of the deeply-enriching and pervasive influence of this Bible translation.

The chapters in the first part of the book contribute to our understanding of the contexts in which the KJV was translated. Timothy George demonstrates that Tyndale was laser-focused on translating the Bible into English, and Gavin Richardson shows that even Old English writers were interested in a Bible in English. Other chapters in this first part of the volume look at the broader cultural milieu of the early seventeenth century in England and how it affected the translation and even its cover page (Steve Halla).

The second part of the book, the "Impact of the KJV," reveals the deep and wide influence of the Bible in western culture. It's easy to state that the KJV was the most important book in English for 350 years, but the chapters in part two of the book illustrate some of the ways in which the DNA of the KJV has informed western culture for almost four centuries.

Four chapters explore the influence of the KJV on literature from William Wordsworth in early nineteen-century England to Flannery O'Connor, and even contemporary American poetry. Gene Fant Jr. pulls the discussion of literature together in his chapter on the simultaneous fascination and repulsion of secular writers with the "power of the KJV." Following the chapter on literature are essays analyzing the role of the KJV in fields as disparate as psychology, music, and science. Even more broadly, later chapters consider the "KJV-Only" debate and the cultural and political milieus of the translation. The book concludes with Richard C. Wells' chapter on how the KJV "recreated" preaching and gave us the mainstream of Protestant expository preaching ever since—a chapter as inspiring as it is illuminating.

Well-informed with rich scholarship, yet accessible to the non-expert, *KJV 400* finds the right balance between re-tracing the old paths and providing new information and analysis that illuminates the importance of the KJV translation of the Bible. The present volume reminds its readers how the KJV of the Bible benefited from the best of a rich tradition of Bible translations in English and in turn largely shaped our cultural heritage until just recently. Readers will have their appreciation for this translation of the Bible in particular, and the work of God in His Word more generally, enriched in this volume. Highly recommended.

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The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature
C. S. Lewis
Canto Classics Reprint Edition
Cambridge University Press, 2012
232 pages, $19.99 paper

Reviewed by: Gavin T. Richardson

In *Beowulf*, near the mathematical center of the poem, the aged king Hrothgar offers a lecture to the eponymous hero who has just slain the Grendelkin. In "Hrothgar's Sermon," as it has come to be known, the king cautions the young hero against pride, warning that physical strength will not last forever. Hrothgar explains that he too was once a powerful young hero, only to become an aged man incapable of protecting his own people. The poem then fast-forwards a hundred half-years, placing Beowulf in the position of Hrothgar, prompting the reader to speculate on whether Beowulf has heeded the lessons of that man who, in Seamus Heaney's translation, had "wintered into wisdom."

I begin this consideration of C. S. Lewis' *The Discarded Image* with Hrothgar's Sermon because the Beowulf-poet posits the period of fifty years as a time to reflect on the imparting of wisdom and lessons learned. As Lewis' book, published posthumously in 1964 by Cambridge University Press, turns fifty, it is fitting to reappraise the work and consider to what extent it too has wintered into wisdom, and to what extent readers have grown in wisdom because of it.

A description of the book itself is best summed up by its subtitle: *An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature*. Based on a series of Oxford lectures, the book is a *vade mecum*–a handbook designed to equip the reader on the front end with some basic understanding of how the universe was perceived during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. The purpose of *The Discarded Image*, then, is to liberate the reader of Dante or Chaucer or Spenser or Shakespeare from having to consult footnotes at every turn, enabling greater reading comprehension and pleasure. The title refers to an image of the universe that contemporary culture no longer comprehends. For most of the book, however, Lewis does not use the term image

to refer to what might be called the "medieval worldview"; rather, he prefers the term "The Model." After referencing Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* and Dante's *Divine Comedy* as works which best reflect the medieval mind's capacity to codify phenomena, Lewis writes of a third work: "This is the medieval synthesis itself, the whole organization of their theology, science, and history in a single, complex, harmonious mental Model of the Universe. The building of this Model is conditioned by two factors I have already mentioned: the essentially bookish character of their culture, and their intense love of system" (11).

The book consists of eight brief chapters. The first two chapters articulate The Model–what it was, how it was constructed, who subscribed to it, and to what degree. These are followed by two more chapters which outline the basic ideas of certain classical and medieval writers who were very influential but might not be widely known today (e.g., not Vergil and Ovid, but Claudian and Macrobius). Lewis then turns his attention from the architects of The Model to its architecture and occupants: "The Heavens," "The Longævi" (beings such as faeries who were believed to live long lives), and "Earth and Her Inhabitants." His final chapter outlines "The Influence of the Model," examining recurrent medieval and Renaissance literary preoccupations such as cataloging, amplification, didacticism, and love of detail.

Within these chapters are several subheadings, and any attempt to simplify *The Discarded Image* does a disservice to the astonishing breadth which belies its 232 pages. In an early review of the book, Edward Grant surveyed its contents and wrote, "There is, of course, much else, and Lewis discusses some of it…" (Isis 56.1, Spring 1965: 100). This description hints at the generous and wide-ranging nature of *The Discarded Image*. I suppose one could get this kind of information today from a host of sources–most likely Wikipedia– but it would take a while, and it would ultimately be of uneven reliability. In Lewis' book, the essential information has been gathered in one place and sifted for relevance, and by a scholar of considerable *auctoritas*. Indeed, Lewis' erudition is impressive but never off-putting. It is the kind of erudition that inspires readers

to higher things. When Lewis drops in an untranslated (even untransliterated) Greek phrase, it does not intimidate or frustrate you because it is clear by context. It does, however, make you want to learn Greek. When Lewis naturally and organically alludes to works of both major and minor medieval authors, it inspires you to read as widely as he has. And Lewis' scholarly prose is so engaging that reading him is like listening to him over a ploughman's lunch at the Eagle and Child. Thus *The Discarded Image* can be read cover to cover with some pleasure, but it can also be "dipped into" as required. Reading Shakespeare and need a primer on the physiological doctrine of the humours and their cosmological origins? Review Chapter 7. Reading Milton and wish to understand his angelology? Consult Lewis' outline of Pseudo-Dionysius' nine-fold hierarchy of angels. Mounting a defense of the Liberal Arts and require a historical approach to their role in the university? That's in chapter 7, too.

It is clear that *The Discarded Image* still holds great value for students. But what of its place among medieval and Renaissance scholars? It's fair to say that totalizing approaches to the history of ideas have fallen out of scholarly favor. Literary criticism of the past twenty-five years has sought to reclaim marginalized voices and perspectives which deviate from the dominant discourse, and which may not fit neatly into any systematic model. Ideological monoliths, so the argument goes, do not represent the rich variety of medieval thought. To put it another way, for every Dante neatly ordering his universe and "preserving the appearances" of things in accordance with classical and biblical *auctores*, there is a Margery Kempe weeping in the back of the church, disrupting comfortable hierarchies, and generally kicking against the pricks. Chained libraries may have a hard time accounting for her, though I suspect that Lewis would insist that even Margery Kempe subscribed to many aspects of the model. Suffice it to say that just as Tillyard's Elizabethan World Picture with its Great Chain of Being may still be promulgated in the undergraduate Shakespeare classroom, discussions in graduate seminars would likely privilege New Historicist perspectives designed to reveal heterogeneity in

thought, represented by a plurality of voices drawn from a host of resources, both canonical and noncanonical: letters, broadside ballads, medallions, religious tracts, diaries, medical treatises, etc. Thus *The Discarded Image*, which sets out to present a medieval and Renaissance world picture, might be viewed as unduly reductive in the present study of literature.

I first encountered the book as recommended reading for my sophomore-level British literature survey course at Vanderbilt, taught by the Spenser scholar Harold L. Weatherby, Jr.—a man whose erudition was both as intimidating and inspiring to me as was Lewis'. The work made a profound impression on me as a student, and as I reread it as a professor some quarter century later, I am struck by how many of my classroom bromides come from it. Whenever I teach Dante's *Paradiso*, structured as it is by its concentric spheres of light, I typically assign Lewis' Chapter 5, "The Heavens," on the pre-Copernican universe controlled by planetary spheres, each with its own operant divinity. In my classical antiquity course I regularly teach the second-century author Apuleius–an author I was first introduced to in Chapter 3 of *The Discarded Image*. And my lectures on Chaucer's pilgrims bear the heavy thumbprint of C. S. Lewis. I do not think I am alone in being deeply indebted to this book. I suspect that it has become part of the teaching and research DNA of many a medievalist and Renaissance specialist, perhaps in ways they are not fully aware of.

One shaping legacy of *The Discarded Image* is its insistence that readers engage the Middle Ages and Renaissance on their own terms. There is a pernicious tendency for modern thinkers to conceive of medieval men and women as infantile versions of themselves–naïve caricatures from illuminated manuscripts lacking perspective, roaming a flat earth looking for witches to dunk. Lewis' work, which refuses to condescend, is a necessary antidote to such dangerous misapprehension.

In an epilogue, C. S. Lewis acknowledges one inconvenient detail about The Model: "[I]t was not true" (216). The gradual discarding of the medieval image, however, was not merely due to changes wrought by scientific advancement. While Lewis never

explicitly identifies the source of its demise, he argues that in the centuries after the Renaissance a broad shift occurred in the European imagination–a shift which favored an evolutionary vision of human experience rather than a devolutionary vision. Put another way, medieval and Renaissance thinkers saw perfection at the origin of things, to be superseded by gradual decay. By the time of the Romantics, however, a different view was gaining currency. Humankind could be, if not perfected, at least improved, and time would bring bright evolutionary possibilities in a host of disciplines, not inevitable degeneration. Elsewhere Lewis writes, "In modern, that is, in evolutionary, thought Man stands at the top of a stair whose foot is lost in obscurity; in [The Medieval Model], he stands at the bottom of a stair whose top is invisible with light" (74-5). It is this shifting mentality, Lewis argues, that accounts for why The Model becomes discarded. And while Lewis acknowledges real affection for The Model, he cautions against a regressive fetishization of it:

> I hope no one will think that I am recommending a return to the Medieval Model. I am only suggesting considerations that may induce us to regard all Models in the right way, respecting each and idolizing none…No Model is a catalogue of ultimate realities, and none is a mere fantasy. Each is a serious attempt to get in all the phenomena known at a given period, and each succeeds in getting in a great many (222).

The Discarded Image, then, calls to us from across a gulf of fifty years, reminding us not to be so overconfident to believe that current structures of perception hold absolute truth; even the strength of our present vision will pass away.

In *Beowulf*, fifty years after Hrothgar's sermon, the aged Beowulf insists on fighting the fire-drake single-handedly. The faithful retainer Wiglaf ignores the old king's wishes and helps him dispatch the dragon, but not before it has inflicted Beowulf's death-blow. The hero then commands Wiglaf to fetch some of the dragon's treasure hoard so that he might gaze upon it in his last moments: "þæt ic ðy seft mæge / æfter maððumwelan · min alætan

/ lif ond leodscipe, · þone ic longe heold" ("so that I, because of the treasure-wealth, may more softly leave my life and the nation which I long held") (ll. 2750b-2751). However, the lordless Geats know that without Beowulf they are a race doomed to destruction at the hands of neighboring Germanic tribes. They bury the gold in the ground with him, "þær hit nu gen lifað / eldum swa unnyt · swa hit æror wæs" ("where it now dwells, as useless to men as it ever was" (ll. 3167b-3168). The strong implication at the end of the poem is that Hrothgar's Sermon, uttered fifty years earlier, went unheeded by the courageous but short-sighted warrior king. At fifty, C. S. Lewis' *The Discarded Image* can be seen as both sermon and treasure, and like both, its true value may be determined by our resolve to use it wisely. It remains as instructive and finely crafted as the medieval universe which Lewis gazed upon with wonder and with love.

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Recovering Classic Evangelicalism: Applying the Wisdom and Vision of Carl F. H. Henry
Gregory A. Thornbury
Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2013
224 pages, $17.99 paper

Reviewed by: Stephen J. Wellum

In celebration of the centennial anniversary of Carl F. H. Henry's birth, Gregory Thornbury aims to recover the "classical evangelical" theological vision of Henry for evangelicals today. Thornbury wants to make Henry "cool again" (22) despite his waning influence in recent years. Thornbury, who recently became President of King's College after finishing serving at Union University as Professor of Philosophy and Dean of the School of Theology and Missions, is convinced that Henry's theological vision is what evangelicalism desperately needs today.

In chapter one, "The Lost World of Classic Evangelicalism," Thornbury describes the current state of evangelicalism in order to set the stage for why Henry's vision is so desperately needed. He defines evangelicalism as a "suicide death cult," (17) awash in self-image problems, defeatism, and theological confusion, a movement with little cultural impact. As part of our "suicidal" ways, we tend to "undermine or move away from the people who got evangelicals where they are today" (19), and this is particularly true of how some have departed from the theological vision of Henry and other classic evangelicals.

In briefly describing Henry's life, Thornbury reminds us how important Henry was for evangelical theology and evangelicalism. Born in New York City in 1913, Henry came of age at a time when the modernist-fundamentalist controversies were raging. After his dramatic conversion in 1933, he went on to earn degrees from Wheaton College and a Ph.D. from Boston University. In 1947, he published *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* which called fundamentalists away from their social apathy and lack of cultural engagement to stand firm for the truth of God's Word in the public square. Then from 1976 to 1983, Henry published his six volume work, *God, Revelation and Authority*, which laid the epistemological and theological grounds for a robust evangelical theology

rooted in Scripture as God's authoritative speech. His impact on evangelical institutions was massive. Henry was instrumental in the start of the National Association of Evangelicals. He participated in the formation of key evangelical institutions such as: *Christianity Today*, the Lausanne Conference, World Vision, Prison Fellowship, and Fuller Seminary, and he influenced numerous other evangelical institutions. Yet, as Thornbury notes, with the passing of time and the impact of postmodernism on evangelical theology, Henry's influence waned, and even by some, it was rejected.

Thornbury's goal is for Henry's work to serve as a "cipher to its future" (31). Through Henry, Thornbury calls evangelicals back to their "classic" heritage. He wants to promote the strengths of the past in order to affirm presently a robust theology consistent with historic Christian orthodoxy. He especially wants to provide the necessary epistemological grounding which has been eroded in our postmodern age. In order to accomplish this goal, Thornbury chooses to "reengage Henry as a theorist of classic evangelicalism" (33) through the lens of a few key texts: volumes 2 and 4 of *God, Revelation and Authority* and *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*. Thornbury is convinced that if these works are recovered, evangelicalism will move beyond its "suicidal" tendencies. Thornbury successfully re-introduces Henry's theological vision for evangelicals today in chapters 2-6 entitled: "Epistemology Matters," "Theology Matters," "Inerrancy Matters," "Culture Matters," and "Evangelicalism Matters." The book concludes with a selected bibliography of works by Henry.

What are the strengths of this work? There are many, but let me focus on two. First, Thornbury helpfully distills Henry's most important points and succinctly presents them in light of the current debate. In a short space, we are introduced to Henry's thought which is especially useful for those who are reading Henry for the first time. Henry is not an easy read, but Thornbury's accurate exposition is a valuable introduction to Henry's work.

Second, each chapter nicely captures what is especially important in the current discussion. Thornbury correctly laments that epistemological discussion is lacking in current theology and

especially its theological grounding (see 34-58), something which Henry repeatedly addressed. Henry, Thornbury notes, unashamedly espoused a "revelational epistemology" grounded in theology proper, which is just as important to emphasize today as it was then.

Additionally, Thornbury nicely describes how Henry stood against various postliberal tendencies to de-propositionalize truth. He rightly warns that we must affirm our conviction that God has spoken and as such, there is objective truth and an authoritative Scripture. In making this point, Thornbury rightly sounds the alarm against some forms of postconservativism which, in the end, are confused over the nature of truth thus leaving theology groundless (see 59-115). In "Inerrancy Matters," Thornbury demonstrates why inerrancy was so important for Henry and why it must be important for us. He nicely applies this discussion to current debates over the historicity of Adam and various hermeneutical issues (see 116-158). Overall, Thornbury, through Henry, does a fine job of showing why evangelical theology must not forfeit her commitment to truth and the Triune God of truth.

Are there any weaknesses in this work? In my view the book's strengths outweigh its weaknesses, but let me mention two. First, in his zeal to promote Henry's theology over against current evangelical trends, and especially to respond to some of Henry's critics, Thornbury does not differentiate between critics who are sympathetically building on Henry but seeking to improve him (thus these "critics" would basically agree with Henry's theology, emphasis on epistemology, inerrancy, etc.) and those critics who oppose him due to their departure from his overall theology. For example, Thornbury lumps together Stanley Grenz and John Franke, who are definitely in the latter category, and Kevin Vanhoozer, who belongs in the former category. Even though Vanhoozer has criticized Henry, he sympathetically builds on him while maintaining a full commitment to inerrancy, a classic theology proper, and most of Henry's theological concerns.

Second, and more significant, is Thornbury's categorization of speech-act theory as an epistemology when it is not. He contends that since speech-act theory was developed by naturalists like John

Searle that it cannot be utilized in theology and that speech-act theory is antithetical to a correspondence theory of truth (21-22, 103-115). As applied to evangelical theology, Thornbury specifically critiques Vanhoozer's use of speech-act theory and seems to imply it will lead to a denial of propositional revelation, yet there is nothing in Vanhoozer or speech-act theory which substantiates this claim. In fact, Vanhoozer agrees wholeheartedly with Henry that "God spoke in intelligent sentences and paragraphs" (109). Vanhoozer's concern is to do justice to all the ways that God has spoken in human language but also to apply these truths to the actual doing of theology.

However, apart from these weaknesses, Thornbury's work is a must read for those who are concerned about the current state of evangelical theology. Its overwhelming strength is that it reminds us again of the ground-breaking work of Carl F. H. Henry. We all stand on the shoulders of those who have preceded us. Our generation of evangelicals is the worse if we fail to stand on the shoulders of Henry, and we ought to be thankful for Thornbury's work which enables us better to do so.

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Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer
C. S. Lewis
New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964
124 pages, $13.95 paper

Reviewed by: Jennifer Gruenke

One of Lewis' earliest and best-known works, *The Screwtape Letters*, is written in the form of a series of letters that give the reader half of a conversation. One of Lewis' last and least-known works also takes this form. Instead of letters from a junior tempter to an elder devil, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* takes the form of letters from Lewis to a (fictional) friend on the subject of prayer. Lewis had started to write a book on prayer for "babes in the faith" a decade earlier, but struggled with it and set it aside. In that intervening decade before returning to and finishing the book, Lewis lost his wife and saw his own health decline. The book gives the impression that he is sharing lessons on prayer that he has learned firsthand, at a time he knows to be near the end of his life. Lewis died later the same year, and *Letters to Malcolm* was published posthumously.

Malcolm contains examples of Lewis' brilliantly clear style and quotable lines such as "Joy is the serious business of heaven." Why then isn't the book more popular? The answer may be that Lewis answers thorny questions about prayer using an ontology that modern evangelicals will struggle to understand, much less embrace. Lewis' answers are worth the difficulty and thought, even for readers who ultimately disagree with him.

If God is not in time, how could temporal prayer lead God to take some temporal action in the world? Most poignantly, why do the prayers born out of our greatest need and darkest moments seem to fall on deaf ears? Lewis answers these questions with a series of meditations on the nature of creation itself. He rejects both Pantheism, in which the nature and God are fully one, and Deism, in which nature and God are fully separated. A proper balance requires that to Pantheists one must emphasize the independence of creation, but that for Deists, "one must emphasize the divine presence in my neighbor, my dog, my cabbage-patch."

If the divine presence is in us, prayer is, in a sense, God speaking to himself. Take this even further and it is part of the nature of all of creation for a timeless God to intersect with temporal creatures. Our reality is from him, and therefore the more real our prayer, the more it is his, but also the more it is ours. From this perspective, God does not reach into creation from the outside in order to answer prayers, but indwells creation so that not only the answer but the prayer itself is part of His symphony.

Of course, Lewis rejects pantheism, instead viewing creation as something intrinsically separate from God, as something "ejected." He therefore has an explanation, if not a cure, for the creatures' sense of alienation from God. It is the perfect man, he points out, who cried to God "Why hast thou forsaken me?" From this point of view we might imagine that there is naturally "an anguish, and alienation, a crucifixion involved in the creative act." For Lewis, reality, and therefore prayer as part of reality, exists in this tension between isolation from the divine and immersion in it. Whether or not Lewis is correct, he prompts the reader to re-examine how esoteric-sounding questions about the nature of reality impact day-to-day experiences like prayer.

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Flourishing Faith: A Baptist Primer on Work, Economics, and Civic Stewardship
Chad Brand
Grand Rapids, Michigan: Christian's Library Press, 2012
135pages, $10 paper

Reviewed by: Micah Watson

Properly understood, the Christian worldview has never been confined to stereotypically "religious" topics. For if the biblical teachings about God's world and human nature are true, then we would expect these truths to have profound implications for every area of human endeavor and interest, including art, science, economics, and politics. Loving the Lord God with our minds means, to some degree, thinking deeply about these topics and applying our knowledge to our actions.

Dr. Chad Brand, professor at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Associate Dean at Boyce College, and Southern Baptist pastor, has written Flourishing Faith to provide pastors, students, and other Christian laypeople with an introductory primer to Christian thinking about economics, wealth, work, and politics. Appearing in a series of books devoted to this topic, Dr. Brand writes from a Baptist or "Free Church" perspective, though many of his arguments are grounded in the broadly evangelical Christian tradition.

The strategy of the book is as straightforward as the topics of money, politics, and religion are controversial. Dr. Brand sets out to provide sound biblical and theological grounding for such crucial and pervasive aspects of our lives as work, wealth, politics, and faith. His means for this goal include scriptural exegesis of key passages, historical examples drawn from the Roman Empire and American history, and timely pop culture references. Dr. Brand begins with two chapters explaining the biblical grounding for the dignity of work, defends a proper understanding of wealth in chapter three, and outlines his approach to political theology in chapter four.

In chapter five Dr. Brand employs the lessons he has drawn by applying them to various contemporary misuses of power, primarily by the Obama administration. Chapter six returns to a more

theoretical emphasis, surveying various historical approaches to economics, and chapter seven concludes the book with an overview of Baptist approaches to economic flourishing and an endorsement of a free-market approach as being most consistent with Christian principles.

This book has many strengths. It addresses a crucial need within the Church, as it encourages Christians to take their faith seriously by applying it to the everyday concerns and subjects that comprise so much of our lives. Dr. Brand clearly cares a great deal about these issues, as well as the church, and his enthusiasm for Christian thinking is admirable and contagious. Dr. Brand also weaves in several helpful allusions and examples to buttress his primary reliance on scripture.

Moreover, Dr. Brand has gone to great pains to make this book accessible to non-specialists. Economics and politics can be intimidating subjects, and the book recognizes the intricacy of the various topics and their intertwining, but does so in a very welcoming and friendly way. Each chapter includes suggestions for further reading as well as discussion questions.

Alas, any book ambitious enough to address these topics will also garner some disagreement—hopefully constructive!—and this book is no exception. The trait of accessibility is a strength as well as a potential weakness. If one of the purposes of the book is to equip pastors and laypeople to apply the arguments and facts within, then citations pointing readers to the sources Dr. Brand relies on would further that purpose. For example, Dr. Brand contradicts some economic claims made by fellow Baptists Ron Sider and Craig Blomberg, telling us he has done the math and their claims do not work (120). But without seeing the math, or knowing where to find it, readers will be at a loss when confronted by advocates of the Sider/Blomberg approach. Important as it is to avoid lengthy footnotes and academic jargon, the inclusion of citation notes would make this book a more useful tool for its intended audience.

On a more substantive note, it is a worthy project to expound on the biblical foundations and timeless principles that underlay a

sound approach to economics and politics. Criticizing the particular peccadillos of today's politicians is also commendable. Doing both in the same slim tome, however, is particularly difficult. Given how easy it can be for some to dismiss genuine Christian thinking about politics as a mere cover for partisan politics, Dr. Brand's repeated, and reasonable, criticism of the Obama administration risks undermining the receptivity of his books early foundational chapters. To his credit, he acknowledges that both parties violate the approach he articulates and endorses, but the examples on offer are decidedly one-sided.

These reservations aside, *Flourishing Faith* is a welcome addition for the thinking Christian looking for an introduction to a biblical approach to work, wealth, economics, and politics.

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Western Christians in Global Mission: What's the Role of the North American Church?
Paul Borthwick
Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2012
224 pages, $15.00 paper

Reviewed by: Hayward Armstrong

We've all heard good news/bad news stories. My favorite goes something like this:
Doctor: "I have good news and bad news. Which do you want first?"
Patient: "Give me the good news first."
Doctor: "You only have 24 hours to live."
Patient: "If that's the good news, Doc, what's the bad?!"
Doctor: "I meant to tell you yesterday."

Borthwick's book is somewhat like a good news/bad news story. On his "journey into global Christianity" (11), he walks his readers through celebration and lament, joys and concerns about the rise of the church in the Majority world, as well as successes and failures in the Western church's attempt to fulfill the Great Commission. He searches for the place of the North American church in the global family of believers. Missiologists, cultural anthropologists, church historians and futurists may find no great surprises in the book, although current data, fresh packaging and new illustrations are always welcome, and are supplied abundantly. Many readers, perhaps not as informed about the church on mission, may find themselves like the doctor's patient, wishing they had gotten Borthwick's diagnosis earlier.

The book is organized into two parts. In the first, "Where Are We Now?" Borthwick sets the backdrop for the journey by underscoring dramatic changes in the world that must be at the forefront of any discussion of the role of North American Christians in the Majority World church. He reminds us that the world is young, restless, uncertain, non-white, non-Western, non-wealthy, technologized and lonely, conflicted about faith, migratory, globalized, and urbanized. Such descriptors apply to the non-Christian and Christian world alike and cannot be dismissed by

agencies, churches, or institutions seeking to make an impact on the world for Christ.

Borthwick addresses this first overarching question by offering chapters on the current state of the world (an admittedly presumptuous task), and appraisals of the church in North America and the Majority World. His statistical data, illustrations, and implications of the fast-paced changes happening in today's world are mind-numbing, even for those who are already concerned about and thinking about those realities. Readers not yet attuned to the Church's changing context, confronted with the likelihood that the center of the global church will soon have moved from North to South and is apparently moving from West to East, that churches from traditional mission fields are quickly becoming mission senders, and that the Western church is quickly losing its focal point on the map of Christianity may find such facts incredible and disturbing. The good news about the North American church (generous, wealthy, optimistic, well-trained, multicultural, and with the benefit of history), may be offset by the bad news (pluralism, globalization, territorialism, faulty ecclesiology, disconnectedness with the poorer world, lack of information, a propensity to oversimplify the world and to nationalize God, failure to think critically, option overload, and the possibility of a cross-less Christianity). Strengths, the good news about the Majority World church, which is moving from everywhere to everywhere, might include zeal for the Lord, zeal for missions, expectancy and faith, and a rugged, sacrificial faith. Concerns, the bad news, may be reflected in the abuse of power, making converts rather than disciples, prosperity theology, and ignoring societal transformation. Taking all this into account, Borthwick is hopeful that "when we join together – rich and poor, Western and non-Western, brothers and sisters – we can learn how to steward our mutual resources toward the vision of a global family in worship: from every tribe, language, people and nation" (101).

In Part Two, "Moving Forward," the author reminds us that regardless of what is happening in our fast-changing world, including an emerging, vibrant Majority World church, we still have a

God-given mandate to carry the Gospel to the world. How we do that in the best possible way? Borthwick recommends joining God's global agenda rather than defining it, rejoicing in the fact that the growth of the global church is not confirmation of the decline of the church in North America but of the rise of the church everywhere else. This is where the author attempts to carry us in this second, more practical section. Perhaps his clearest summary answer to the question of where we fit in the global church is "it depends" (106). It depends on things like a renewed understanding of Biblical continuity, humility, purposeful reciprocity, sacrifice rather than generosity, partnership equality, and just good listening, all of which are essential, and all of which he deals with extensively.

In the final chapter, the author offers his most practical suggestions about how we might appropriately get connected to the Global Church, including twenty-five very specific research recommendations to prepare ourselves for cultural sensitivity. Borthwick's insights and recommendations, the product of decades of extensive world travel, research, teaching, and strong relationships with leaders in the Global Church, make this book a valuable resource for anyone involved in long or short term cross-cultural missions, and for those who are calling them out and preparing them to go.

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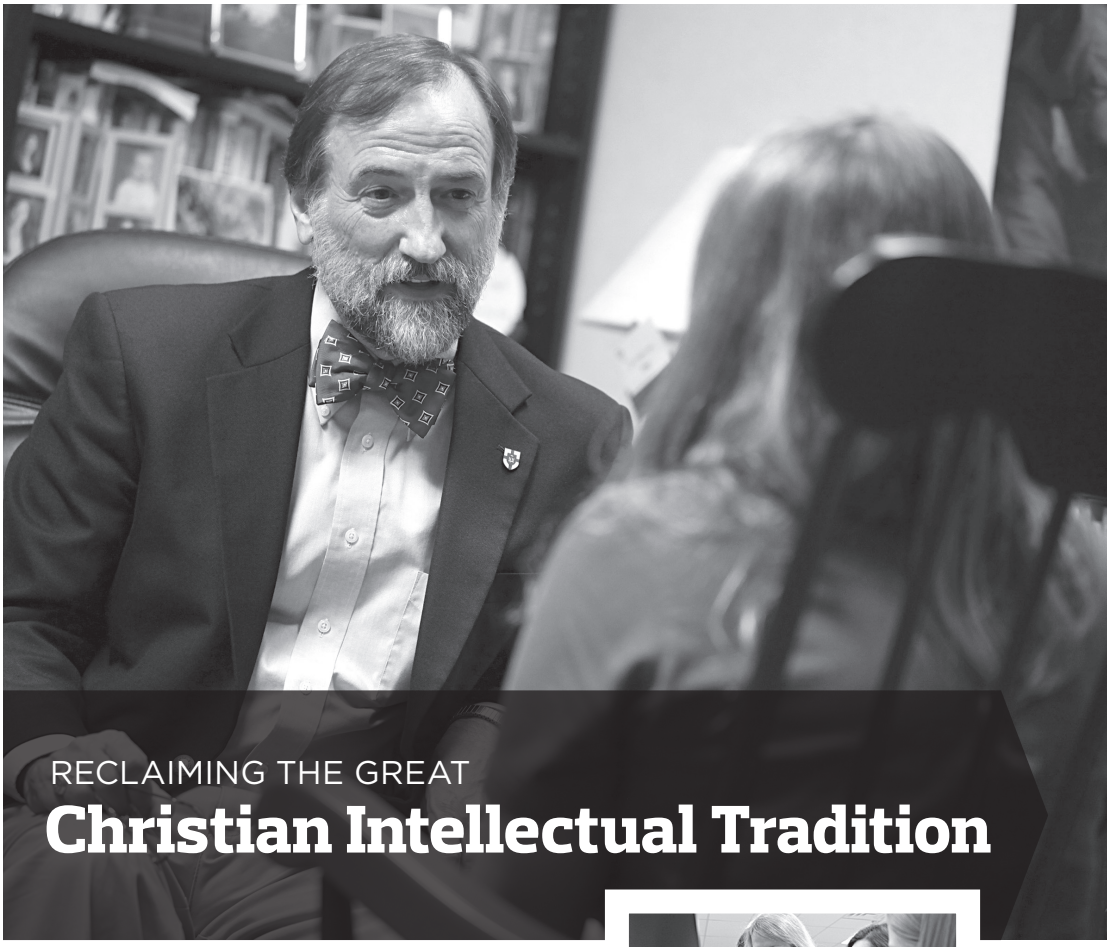

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