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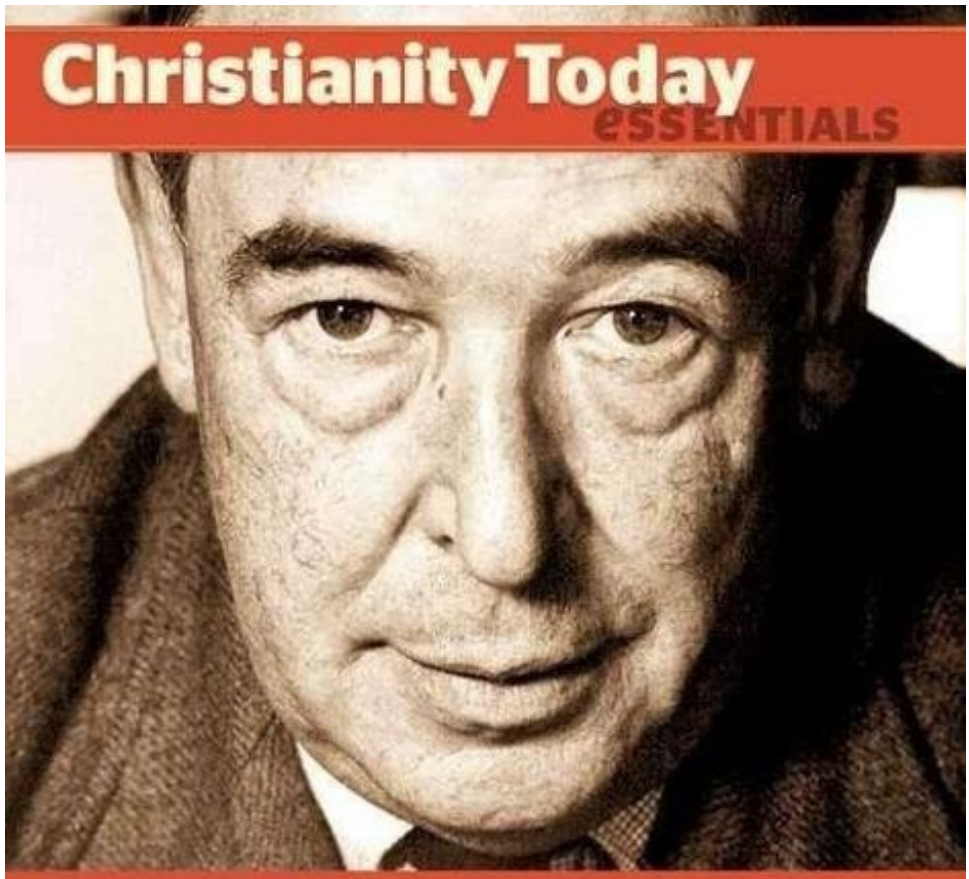


C.S. Lewis

HIS SIMPLE LIFE AND EXTRAORDINARY LEGACY

from the editors of
Christian History & Biography

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Christianity Today Essentials

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C.S. Lewis: His Simple Life and Extraordinary Legacy
From the editors of *Christian History & Biography*
Ver. 1.0

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Introduction

One day late in C. S. Lewis's life, his attorney told him he had to decide where royalties from his books should go after his death.

By this time, Lewis had already written The Chronicles of Narnia, which had been moderately successful, and *The Screwtape Letters*, which also enjoyed modest success. Still, he told his lawyer he needn't worry: "After I've been dead five years, no one will read anything I've written."

Lewis may have been a gifted writer, but like most of us, he was a poor prognosticator! It's been nearly half a century since his death in 1963, and this professor of medieval literature remains one of the best selling Christian authors. *Mere Christianity* was on the BookScan Religion Weekly bestseller list for over 500 weeks in the first decade of this century. HarperOne, who owns the rights to many of Lewis's books, reported that 430,000 copies of his books were sold in 2010 alone.

And it's not just the Christian market that keeps the Lewis flame alive. In 2008, *The Times* of London ranked him eleventh on their list of "the 50 greatest British writers since 1945." His fiction, especially The Chronicles of Narnia, still sells briskly even among those unaware of the Christian themes in his works.

Christopher Mitchell, director of the Marion E. Wade Center at Wheaton College, says, "You can't impact people if they don't know what you are saying. Lewis had just remarkable instincts about what to address and what not to address and how to address it." And he did this in deeply philosophical works like *The Abolition of Man* and *The Problem of Pain*, in popular spirituality like *The Screwtape Letters*, and in fiction for adults (the Space Trilogy) and for children.

The testimony of popular author and pastor John Piper could be repeated by the thousands (though the book that introduced us to Lewis might be different): "Someone introduced me to Lewis my freshman year with the book *Mere Christianity.* For the next five or six years, I was almost never without a Lewis book near at hand. I think that without his influence I would not have lived my life with as much joy or usefulness as I have."

What you'll find here

So who was the man behind the writings, and why does he still have such a hold us? Lewis was never one to talk about himself, but plenty of people have, since his death, been talking and writing about him. Many of those reflections

have appeared as articles in *Christian History & Biography* and *Christianity Today.* In this eBook, we bring together the best of these articles, written by some of the most knowledgeable C. S. Lewis scholars and reporters today.

Lyle Dorsett, Billy Graham Professor of Evangelism at Beeson Divinity School, leads off with a brief overview of Lewis's life. Dorsett is well positioned to do this, having written three books on Lewis, including a biography of Lewis's wife: *And God Came In: The Extraordinary Story of Joy Davidman* (Hendrickson).

Lewis is well-known for his famous friendships with such luminaries as J. R. R. Tolkien and Charles Williams. Colin Duriez, author of a number of books on Lewis (including *Tolkien and C. S. Lewis: The Gift of Friendship*, Paulist Press), explores why friendship was such an important theme in Lewis's life and writings.

To fill out these first two pieces, we've included brief sketches of the family and friends of Lewis after each, written by the editors of *Christian History & Biography.*

In the days before emails, there were letters, and Lewis was a master of the form. Andrew Cuneo, who teaches English literature at St. Katherine College in California (he earned a Ph.D. at Oxford researching Lewis's letters) helps us appreciate this.

Lewis not only wrote for children but also *to* them. Marjorie Lamp Mead is associate director of the Marion E. Wade Center and co-editor of *C. S. Lewis: Letters to Children* (Simon & Schuster), so she's the perfect person to help us understand what Lewis said and how he said it when he corresponded with his younger readers.

J. I. Packer, author of *Knowing God* (InterVarsity) and professor of theology at Regent College (Vancouver, BC), and Jerry Root, associate director of the Billy Graham Institute for Strategic Evangelism at Wheaton College, teamed up to look at Lewis's philosophical journey. This is followed by a brief sketch—again by the editors of CH&B—of two of Lewis's intellectual mentors, men of reputation in their own right: G. K. Chesterton and George MacDonald.

So the opening section of this eBook gives a concise overview of Lewis's life. We take up his legacy in the second part.

Clyde Kilby was an English professor (at Wheaton College), best known for his scholarship on the Inklings, especially J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis. Before he passed on, he wrote in CH&B about the place of the imagination for Lewis.

In a similar vein, Doris T. Myers has written "Training Hearts to See the Real." Since the imagination was crucial for Lewis—and since it is especially

through his imaginative works that most people come to know his writing—we thought it only right to have a couple of perspectives on this theme. Doris T. Myers is well qualified to address this: She is professor emeritus at the University of Northern Colorado and author of two books on Lewis's fiction, *C. S. Lewis in Context* (Kent State University) and *Bareface: A Guide to C. S. Lewis's Last Novel* (University of Missouri).

Jerry Root then offers another essay, this one similar to the one above but focusing on Lewis's theology. Root, by the way, has studied, spoken on, and written about Lewis extensively, and is a contributor to *The Pilgrim's Guide: C. S. Lewis and the Art of Witness* (Eerdmans).

One of Lewis's many literary gifts was his ability to "make doctrine dance," as the title of the next essay suggests. The author, Christopher Mitchell, is the director of the Marion E. Wade Center, which houses many Lewis writings and artifacts.

Once more we hear from Jerry Root (did I not say he has written extensively on Lewis?), who is joined by former CH&B editor Jennifer Trafton. Together they look at how Lewis dealt with the great grief of his life, the death of his wife, Joy, after only a brief marriage. Trafton, by the way, has taken a lesson from Lewis and written a delightful children's tale, *The Rise and Fall of Mount Majestic* (see JenniferTrafton.com for more information).

The subject of Peter Kreeft's essay is a bit abstract, but it is crucial to understanding Lewis's worldview and legacy. In this essay, Kreeft, professor of philosophy at Boston College and author of *Between Heaven and Hell: A Dialog Somewhere Beyond Death with John F. Kennedy, C. S. Lewis & Aldous Huxley* (InterVarsity), gives us many fine insights into Lewis's view of history.

As I mentioned at the top of this introduction, Lewis's star still shines bright, and it perhaps shines brightest in that part of the world known as evangelicalism. In "C. S. Lewis Superstar," Bob Smietana, now a reporter for *The Tennessean*, helps us answer the question: So how *did* Lewis become so popular among evangelicals? Smietana is co-author of *Good Intentions: Nine Hot-Button Issues Viewed Through the Eyes of Faith* (Moody). By the way, Rebecca Barnes, who teaches journalism at Peak to Peak Charter School, helped with the reporting of this piece, which originally appeared in *Christianity Today*.

In the epilogue, we come full circle, looking again at Lewis the man, especially as seen through the eyes of Douglas Gresham, who knew Lewis since he was a boy of eight, when his mother introduced him to the man who would become his step-father. Gresham chronicled this relationship in *Lenten Lands: My Childhood with Joy Davidman & C. S. Lewis* (Macmillan), and published a biography of Lewis: *Jack's Life: The Life Story of C. S. Lewis* (Broadman &

Holman). The interview with Gresham was conducted by the editors of CH&B.

At the back, you'll also find a timeline and suggestions for further reading.

Only a few people personally knew the man whom Gresham called "the finest man and best Christian I have ever known." But perhaps this little volume will give you a glimpse as to why Gresham, and not a few others, speak so highly of the professor of medieval literature.

—Mark Galli, senior managing editor of *Christianity Today*.

Part 1

The Man

Chapter 1

Mere Christian: A Sketch of His Life

Lyle Dorsett

"I'm tall, fat, rather bald, red-faced, double-chinned, black-haired, have a deep voice, and wear glasses for reading," C. S. Lewis wrote to a young admirer in 1954. If the famous author had been prone to notice clothing, he might have added that his trousers were usually in dire need of pressing, his jackets threadbare and blemished by snags and food spots, and his shoes scuffed and worn at the heels.

But Jack, as C. S. Lewis's friends knew him, was not bothered by fashion. It is not that he was slovenly. On the contrary, he was meticulous about the precise use of words, the quality of evidence presented in arguments, and the meter in verse. Nevertheless, the style and condition of personal attire was near the bottom of his list of concerns, whereas books and ideas were among his top priorities.

Early influences

Lewis was born into a bookish family of Protestants in Belfast, Ireland, November 29, 1898. His father, Albert, and his mother, Florence Augusta Hamilton, possessed first-rate minds, and they were members of the Church of Ireland. Eclectic in their reading tastes, they purchased and read many books, and their love for the printed word was passed on to their children. Jack and Warren (his only sibling, three years his senior) were not only read to aloud and taught to read, they were encouraged to use the large family library.

In his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, C. S. Lewis recalled early memories of "endless books." "There were books in the study, books in the dining room, books in the cloakroom, books (two deep) in the great bookcase on the landing, books in a bedroom, books piled as high as my shoulder in the cistern attic, books of all kinds," he remembered, and none were off limits to him. On rainy days—and there were many in northern Ireland—he pulled volumes off the shelves and entered into worlds created by authors such as Conan Doyle, E. Nesbit, Mark Twain, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

After brother Warnie was sent off to boarding school in England, Jack became somewhat reclusive. He spent more time in books and an imaginary world of "dressed animals" and "knights in armor." But he did more than read books, he wrote and illustrated his own stories as well.

If Warren Lewis's exile across the Irish Sea to school in 1905 drove Jack further into himself and books, his mother's death from cancer in 1908 made him even more withdrawn. Mrs. Lewis's death came just three months prior to Jack's tenth birthday, and the young man was hurt deeply by her passing. Not only did he lose a mother, his father never fully recovered from her death. For many years thereafter, both boys felt estranged from their father, and home life was never warm and satisfying again.

The death of Mrs. Lewis convinced young Jack that the God he encountered in church and in the Bible his mother gave him was, if not cruel, at least a vague abstraction. Four or five years later, by 1911 or 1912, and with the additional influence of a spiritually unorthodox boarding school matron, Lewis forsook Christianity and became an avowed atheist.

By autumn 1914, C. S. Lewis was somewhat adrift. He had lost his faith and his mother, and he felt alienated from his father. He was extremely close to his brother, but they saw one another only on holidays. A new friendship was beginning with a fellow student, Arthur Greeves, but it was interrupted in September when C. S. Lewis was sent to Great Bookham, Surrey, to be privately tutored by W. T. Kirkpatrick, a brilliant teacher and friend of Lewis's father.

"The Great Knock," as the Lewis family dubbed Mr. Kirkpatrick, had a profound effect upon the teenaged youth. He introduced him to the classics in

Greek, Latin, and Italian literature, and helped him make a beginning in German. Kirkpatrick not only led Lewis to great books, he pushed him to understand them in the original languages. A most demanding tutor, Kirkpatrick helped Jack learn how to criticize and analyze, and he taught him how to think, speak, and write logically. Consequently, after nearly three years with Kirkpatrick, C. S. Lewis was tough-minded and widely read. Many years later, Lewis wrote in *Surprised by Joy* that "My debt to him is very great, my reverence to this day undiminished."

The debt was large indeed. Kirkpatrick helped the young man prepare for scholarship examinations at Oxford, and the demanding mentor played no small role in Lewis's outstanding performance at University College, where he took highest honors in Honour Moderations, Greats, and English in 1920, 1922, and 1923 respectively.

If Kirkpatrick taught Lewis to think critically—to demand evidence for even the most casual assertions—Oxford introduced him to a wide horizon of ideas. Whereas Lewis's hard-pressing mentor had helped him reinforce his atheism, a few associates at Oxford forced him to re-examine his belief in a universe without God.

Oxford years

Lewis entered the world of Oxford in 1917 as a student, and he never really left. Despite an interruption to fight in World War I and his professorship at Cambridge beginning in 1955, he always maintained his home and friends in Oxford. He loved the bookshops, the pubs, and the Bodleian Library, and he reveled in the company of local men who loved to read, write, and discuss books. His attachment to Oxford was so strong that when he taught at Cambridge from 1955 to 1963 he commuted back to Oxford on weekends so that he could be close to familiar places and beloved friends.

It was in Oxford that Lewis pursued things of the mind with fervor. Ideas, books, and debates were ordinary fare in this heady environment. With no particular purpose in life beyond stimulating his imagination, feeding his intellectual curiosity, and writing for publication and posterity, he thoroughly enjoyed academic life. In 1919 he published his first book, a cycle of lyrics titled *Spirits in Bondage*, which he wrote under the pseudonym Clive Hamilton. In 1924 he became a philosophy tutor at University College. Then in 1925 he was elected a Fellow of Magdalen College, where he tutored in English language and literature. The next year his second volume of poetry, *Dymer*, was published under the name Clive Hamilton.

Alongside the generally self-centered life Lewis was leading, he demonstrated

a loyal and generous nature. When his college roommate, Paddy Moore, was killed in World War I, Jack befriended Paddy's mother, Mrs. Janie King Moore, and her adolescent daughter Maureen. Then in 1920, after completing his first degree, Lewis decided to share lodgings with them so that he could more carefully look out for their needs.

Spiritual awakening

This gesture of kindness did more than help Mrs. Moore and Maureen; it got C. S. Lewis outside of himself and taught him patience. The association with the Moores also introduced him to Mrs. Moore's brother, a combat veteran who suffered from a severe war-inflicted nervous disorder. This personal encounter apparently shook Lewis's confidence in materialism, because a letter he wrote in 1923 to his friend Arthur Greeves suggests a slight spiritual awakening. It seems that "Doc," as the Moores and Lewis referred to Mrs. Moore's brother, came to stay with the trio for three weeks. During the visit "Doc" underwent an ordeal of extreme mental torture. After the attack, when the poor wretch was hospitalized, Lewis wrote to his friend that "Doc" had believed he was in hell. He wore out his body in the "awful mental tortures," and then died from heart failure "unconscious at the end thank God." Lewis concluded his observation by suggesting it is "a damned world—and we once thought we could be happy with books and music!"

The spiritual awakening continued, enhanced by reading books by George MacDonald and G. K. Chesterton. One MacDonald volume called *Phantastes* had a powerful impact on his thinking. "What it actually did to me," wrote Lewis, "was to convert, even to baptize . . . my imagination." At Oxford Lewis continued to read MacDonald, and he imbibed G. K. Chesterton as well. The latter author's books, especially *The Everlasting Man*, raised serious questions about the young intellectual's materialism.

While MacDonald and Chesterton were stirring Lewis's thoughts, a close friend, Owen Barfield, with whom he spent much time during and after their student years, pounced on the logic of Jack Lewis's atheism. Barfield became a theist, and then a Christian, and he frequently badgered Lewis about his materialism. So did Nevill Coghill, a fellow student and lifelong friend who was brilliant, yet was, to Lewis's amazement, "a Christian and a thoroughgoing supernaturalist."

Soon after joining the English faculty at Magdalen College, Lewis met two more Christians, Hugo Dyson and J. R. R. Tolkien. These men became close friends of Lewis. He admired their brilliance and their logic. Soon Lewis recognized that most of his friends, like his favorite authors—MacDonald,

Chesterton, Johnson, Spenser, and Milton—held to this Christian angle of vision which threatened his whole worldview.

Gradually during the 1920s, two paths were converging in Lewis's mind: one was reason, the other intuition. In 1929 these roads met, and C. S. Lewis surrendered and admitted that "God was God, and knelt and prayed." Within two years the reluctant convert admitted that Jesus Christ is the Son of God—God incarnate. With this revelation the Oxford don became a communicant in the Church of England.

A new life

Christian history shows that when men and women meet Jesus, recognize his nature, and then decide to trust and follow him, they become strikingly different people. Those who convert—who turn around and obey Christ's command to "follow me"—are clearly people with changed lives.

If evidence of conversion is a new life, C. S. Lewis was obviously a believer after 1931. Many changes were apparent. His life now had a purpose—to know and obey God. This came to fruition most demonstrably in his writing. Earlier efforts to become a poet were laid to rest. The new Christian devoted his talent and energy to writing prose that reflected his recently found faith. Within two years of his conversion Lewis published *The Pilgrim's Regress: An Allegorical Apology for Christianity, Reason and Romanticism.* This little volume opened a thirty-year stream of books on Christian apologetics and discipleship that became a lifelong avocation. Between 1933 and his death in 1963, C. S. Lewis wrote books—including the seven volume *Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Great Divorce*, and *Mere Christianity*—that nudged atheists and agnostics toward the faith, and encouraged and nurtured believers.

As a good steward and responsible professional, Lewis did not ignore his academic discipline. He wrote literary history and criticism such as *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*, *Rehabilitations and Other Essays*, and *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama*. These books are still widely read and highly regarded.

Despite the large quantity and high quality of his academic publications, Lewis became known as a literary evangelist. The tone and impact of his theological and apologetical books help account for this reputation, as did his own assertion in a rejoinder to his critic, Dr. W. N. Pittenger, published in *The Christian Century* November 26, 1958, where Lewis admitted that most of what he wrote "is evangelistic."

A growing reputation

If Christianity altered Lewis's writing habits, the publication of those books had a palpable effect on his personal life. First of all, the change was manifested in the mail. Once Lewis's books became popular, which they did by the 1940s, he was inundated by letters. Because the famous author believed it was God's will for him to answer most of this mail himself, and because he was convinced, as he said in "The Weight of Glory," that there are "no ordinary people," he took time to write with care to each correspondent regardless of age, education, or place in society. This enterprise consumed many hours each week.

Furthermore, life with fame was laden with other pressures. There were numerous invitations to entertain guests, grant interviews, give lectures, and preach sermons. Writing, to be sure, is a lonely enterprise. This Lewis understood. And even though he felt called by God to write, he likewise felt it was required of him to counsel those who made the pilgrimage to the Kilns, his home on the edge of Oxford. Frequently he believed it was his calling to explain the Christian faith to people over BBC radio, and to the airmen at the RAF bases during World War II.

Preaching sermons, giving talks, and expressing his theological views over the radio throughout the United Kingdom bolstered Lewis's reputation and increased his book sales. With these new circumstances came other changes—not the least being a marked upswing in annual income. Throughout the 1920s Lewis had been getting by on little money. During his student years his father provided an allowance, and Jack supplemented that in various ways. Nevertheless, money was always scarce. And when the young academician took on the responsibility for Mrs. Moore and her daughter, finances were always tight even with the regular tutorial stipend.

As book royalties mounted during the late 1940s, and continued to spiral upward thereafter, C. S. Lewis refused to upgrade his standard of living. Partly out of disdain for conspicuous living, but mostly out of commitment to Jesus Christ, he established a charitable fund for his royalty earnings.

Neither the extent nor the recipients of C. S. Lewis's charity are fully known. Indeed, he made valiant efforts to conceal this information. It is known that he supported numerous impoverished families, underwrote education fees for orphans and poor seminarians, and put monies into scores of charities and church ministries.

A late marriage

The outreach of Lewis's books and the impact of his charity conspired to make still another significant change in his lifestyle. During the last decade of his earthly pilgrimage, Lewis's world was invaded by an American woman and

her two children. In autumn 1952, Joy Davidman Gresham, who had become a Christian partly because she read *The Great Divorce* and *The Screwtape Letters*, visited her spiritual mentor in England. Soon thereafter her husband abandoned her for another woman. In the meantime the divorcée, a writer in her own right, moved to London with her two adolescent boys, David and Douglas.

Joy Davidman Gresham gradually fell into financial trouble. Her acquaintance with C. S. Lewis led to his underwriting the boarding school education of David and Douglas. From charity and common literary interests grew a deep friendship, and eventually agape became eros. They were married in 1956.

Joy was sixteen years Lewis's junior, but that did not prevent a happy marriage. A savage case of cancer, however, cut short their life together. After several years of reprieve from an earlier and nearly fatal bout with cancer, Joy Lewis passed away in Oxford on July 13, 1960.

Joy's entry into Jack's life brought much happiness. As he wrote to one friend soon after their marriage, "It's funny having at 59 the sort of happiness most men have in their twenties. . . . 'Thou hast kept the good wine till now.'" Joy brought C. S. Lewis love, companionship, and two stepsons, complete with all of the delights and problems that naturally come in such circumstances. Furthermore, Mrs. Lewis brought insights, ideas, and a new angle of vision. Raised in a Jewish home, and having written a book on the Ten Commandments, *Smoke on the Mountain*, she encouraged him to renew his writing of apologetics, in particular *Reflections on the Psalms*. Her influence on what Jack considered his best book, *Till We Have Faces*, was so profound that he told one close friend she was actually his co-author.

Critics emerge

C. S. Lewis's marriage to Joy Davidman did not enhance his reputation in Great Britain. Long assumed to be a confirmed bachelor, the esteemed professor not only married late in life, he married an American who was at once Jewish, divorced, and personally rather abrasive. In brief, the marriage did not sit well with most of Mr. Lewis's friends and acquaintances. The critics notwithstanding, Jack's faithful brother Warren—who lived at the Kilns with Jack before, during, and after the years with Joy—supported him, as did a few other close friends.

C. S. Lewis was hurt by the disapproval of his old friends and colleagues, but it was by no means a new experience for him. Although he enjoyed the conviviality of weekly get-togethers with fellow Inklings (intellectuals and writers who met regularly to exchange ideas and share in good conversation), and the prodigious successes of his books, Lewis was frequently under attack for his decidedly Christian lifestyle. Close friends, among them Owen Barfield and

J. R. R. Tolkien, openly disapproved of Lewis's evangelistic speaking and writing. And if the opprobrium of fellow believers was unpleasant, it was mild compared with the attacks from colleagues and strangers who did not share the Oxford author's faith.

It is common knowledge that Lewis's "Christian" books caused so much disapproval that he was more than once passed over for a professorship at Oxford, with the honors going to men of lesser reputation. It was Magdalene College at Cambridge University that finally honored Lewis with a chair in 1955 and thereby recognized his original and important contributions to English literary history and criticism.

Along with Lewis's international reputation, ever-growing royalties, and thousands of fans throughout the English-speaking world came increasing alienation. Did Lewis take comfort in his Lord's warning in the Sermon on the Mount that his disciples would indeed be insulted and persecuted? We do not know.

Lewis died at the Kilns on November 22, 1963. He is buried beside his brother, who lived ten more years, in the cemetery of Holy Trinity Church, Headington Quarry, Oxford. His letters and books, and the lives these writings touch, are his legacy.

Lewis's Family

Albert Lewis
(1863–1929)

C. S. Lewis's father, Albert Lewis, was the son of a Welsh immigrant who found success as a partner in a firm that manufactured boilers and ships. Albert attended college and began a practice as a solicitor in Belfast in 1885.

Lewis believed his father's quick mind, eloquence, and love of oratory would have suited him for a career in politics if he had had the means. Albert's favorite pastime was spending an afternoon swapping anecdotes with his brothers, acting them out with great flourish.

C. S. Lewis described his father's side of the family as "true Welshmen, sentimental, passionate, and rhetorical, easily moved both to anger and to tenderness." Albert never fully recovered from grief following his wife's death, and his erratic and sometimes cruel subsequent behavior alienated his sons.

Albert filled the Lewis home with books, but his son's interest in fantasy literature was not shared by his parents. "If I am a romantic," he wrote, "my parents bear no responsibility for it."

Florence Hamilton Lewis
(1862–1908)

Flora Lewis, C. S. Lewis's mother, was the daughter of the Rev. Thomas Hamilton, rector of the church attended by the Lewises. Flora's talent for mathematics won her a first in the subject at Queen's College, Belfast, where she earned a B.A.

Flora's cool temperament was the antithesis of her husband's emotionality. When she agreed to marry Albert after an eight-year courtship, she wrote to him, "I wonder do I love you? I am not quite sure. I'll know that at least I am very fond of you, and that I should never think of loving anyone else."

C. S. Lewis wrote of her family, "their minds were critical and ironic and they had the talent for happiness to a high degree." Flora was a voracious reader and wrote magazine articles. She died of cancer when C. S. Lewis was only nine. "With my mother's death," he wrote, "all that was tranquil and reliable disappeared from my life."

Major Warren Hamilton Lewis
(1895–1973)

C. S. Lewis referred to his older brother, Warren ("Warnie"), as "my dearest and closest friend." The lifelong bond formed as the boys played together, writing and illustrating stories, in their country home. When their mother's death devastated their father, they were left with only each other for comfort and support.

Although their careers took widely different turns, the two lived together much of their lives. Warren was a career army officer in the Royal Army Service Corps and served in such posts as Sierra Leone and China. After retiring from 18 years of active service in 1932, he took up residence at the Kilns, where he lived until after his brother's death.

Upon retirement, Warren took on the task of editing the Lewis family papers. He was recalled to active service in World War II. During his final retirement he wrote seven books on the history of 17th-century France.

Warren Lewis returned to belief in Christianity five months before his brother's conversion. He was a frequent participant in weekly meetings of the Inklings. The Lewis brothers undertook many annual walking tours of up to 50 miles. His 40-year battle with alcoholism was a source of great concern to his

brother.

Chapter 2

The Joys of Friendship

Colin Duriez

“You modify one another’s thought; out of this perpetual dog-fight a community of mind and a deep affection emerge.” That is what C. S. Lewis said about his enduring friendship with Owen Barfield, who greatly influenced his bedrock views on imagination and myth.

C. S. Lewis’s writings often concern friendship and even more often are shaped by his friendships. Characteristically, his writings, from The Chronicles of Narnia to his scholarly *The Discarded Image* (on the medieval picture of the world), seek to rehabilitate values and virtues once known and lived out in what he called the Old West. He saw this as a civilization and consciousness increasingly lost to us since an unprecedented fracture that occurred, he speculated, early in the 19th century. Loss of these old virtues and values, he famously argued in his essay *The Abolition of Man*, put the very future of our humanity in jeopardy. One of the central values he sought to rehabilitate, both in his fiction and in his nonfiction, was that of friendship. In his life, his friendships played a dramatic role, shaping and coloring his years.

Lewis took a classical and Judeo-Christian view of friendship, seeing it as “the school of virtue.” Properly lived out, friendship could open one’s eyes to previously unseen aspects of reality. In our modern times—in the new, post-Christian West and its sphere of influence—friendship can function in a restorative way, bringing us back into contact with lost reality. The friend who follows the proper character of friendship, with its inner laws, can be very like the traveler in John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, a book deeply important to Lewis. The pilgrim has to face dangers and tribulations, finding that “shortcuts” are anything but. Bunyan writes, “Some also have wished that the nearest way to their father’s house were here, that they might be troubled no more with either hills or mountains to go over, but the way is the way, and there is an end.”

A shared vision

Lewis's belief in the restorative and perception-changing nature of friendship is revealed particularly well in comments he made about two friends, Hamilton Jenkin and his Ulster friend Arthur Greeves.

In *Surprised by Joy* he reports:

> The first lifelong friend I made at Oxford was A. K. Hamilton Jenkin, since known for his books on Cornwall. He continued (what Arthur had begun) my education as a seeing, listening, smelling, receptive creature. Arthur had his preference for the Homely. But Jenkin seemed able to enjoy everything; even ugliness. I learned from him that we should attempt a total surrender to whatever atmosphere was offering itself at the moment; in a squalid town to seek out those very places where its squalor rose to grimness and almost grandeur, on a dismal day to find the most dismal and dripping wood, on a windy day to seek the windiest ridge. [Jenkin exhibited] a serious, yet gleeful, determination to rub one's nose in the very quiddity of each thing, to rejoice in its being (so magnificently) what it was.

In Lewis's science fiction novel *That Hideous Strength* (1945), two characters become friends through a shared vision of the "quiddity" or thereness of things. Like Lewis and Jenkin, the fictional Arthur and Camilla Denniston like weather of all descriptions. Jane, a central character in the story, is surprised to discover this when she is invited on a picnic with them on a foggy autumn day. Arthur explains: "That's why Camilla and I got married. . . . We both like Weather. It's a useful taste if one lives in England."

Rather like the texts of literature, a friend provides another vantage point from which to view the world. For Lewis, his different friends opened up reality in varying ways. Owen Barfield, for instance, was very different from Arthur Greeves, who had revealed to Lewis he was not alone in the world. Though Barfield shared with Lewis a view of what was important, and asked strikingly similar questions, the conclusions he came to usually differed radically from those of Lewis. Throughout the 1920s, the two had waged what Lewis called a "Great War," a long dispute over the kind of knowledge that imagination can give. As Lewis put it, it was as if Barfield spoke his language but mispronounced it.

Lewis's friendship with J. R. R. Tolkien, like that with Barfield, was based upon irreducible differences as well as likenesses. Initially, the two were drawn together by a love of myth, fairytale, and saga, a bond that deepened when Lewis

became a Christian. There were emerging differences of temperament, churchmanship, and storytelling style, however, which strained yet enriched the friendship.

Guests at a common feast

Furthermore, in Lewis's group of friends, the process of opening up reality was richly interactive, a constantly moving play of light. He memorably expresses this in his chapter on friendship in *The Four Loves*. In the following excerpt, "Ronald" is Tolkien and "Charles" is Charles Williams. Both of them, along with Barfield, were members of the Inklings, a group of literary friends surrounding Lewis in Oxford. Of his friends, Lewis wrote:

> In each of my friends there is something that only some other friend can fully bring out. . . . By myself I am not large enough to call the whole man into activity; I want other lights than my own to show all his facets. Now that Charles is dead, I shall never again see Ronald's reaction to a specifically Caroline joke. Far from having more of Ronald, having him 'to myself' now that Charles is away, I have less of Ronald. Hence true Friendship is the least jealous of loves. Two friends delight to be joined by a third, and three by a fourth . . . each bringing out all that is best, wisest, or funniest in all the others.

Ultimately, for Lewis, a group of Christian friends is participating in a feast in which God "has spread the board and it is He who has chosen the guests."

A Gallery of Friends

Arthur Greeves
(1895–1966)

C. S. Lewis described Arthur Greeves as, "after my brother, my oldest and most intimate friend." Lewis met Greeves when the neighbor boy, bedridden with the bad heart that kept him an invalid most of his life, requested a visit. The two boys discovered a common love for books, and Lewis found in Greeves an "alter ego, the man who first reveals to you that you are not alone in the world

by turning out (beyond hope) to share all your most secret delights."

Although Lewis did not consider Greeves his intellectual equal, he learned much from Greeves's insight into the realm of feelings. The two began a correspondence that lasted for the rest of Lewis's life, and he wrote his friend nearly 300 letters. Greeves was also a consistent influence for Christ in his friend's life, and it was to Greeves that Lewis first revealed his own conversion.

Greeves's heart ailment prevented him from holding steady employment. Independently wealthy, he never needed it. He earned a certificate of art at a London school, and was considered a good painter. Although he also wrote, Greeves was never published. Lewis sent Greeves some of his manuscripts for critique.

Owen Barfield
(1898–1997)

C. S. Lewis and Owen Barfield were drawn together during their undergraduate days at Oxford by a common interest in poetry. As they read and critiqued each other's work, Lewis found in Barfield a second great friend. The two men shared interests, but not points of view; Lewis described Barfield as his "anti-self," "the man who disagrees with you about everything."

After Oxford, Barfield worked as a free-lance writer until financial demands forced him to enter his father's legal firm as a solicitor. He maintained his friendship with Lewis for the rest of their lives, and was influential in shaping Lewis's views about the importance of myth in language, literature, and the history of thinking. Barfield resumed his writing career after retiring from law.

Raised an agnostic, Barfield became a Christian in his late twenties; nevertheless, he was never comfortable with Lewis's apologetics or his evangelism. He later embraced and wrote about anthroposophy, a form of religious philosophy which he believed complemented rather than detracted from Christianity.

J. R. R. Tolkien
(1892–1973)

Although they initially took opposite sides in a faculty dispute over English literature curriculum, Tolkien and Lewis were eventually united by an interest in myth and legend. Tolkien introduced Lewis to the Coalbiters, a club he had formed which read and translated Icelandic myths. Their mutual interest led to many late-night discussions and long walks. Lewis wrote to Greeves that Tolkien was "the one man absolutely fitted, if fate had allowed, to be a third in our friendship in the old days."

Their shared belief in the importance of myth led to a discussion about Christianity that Lewis regarded an important factor leading to his conversion. Lewis encouraged Tolkien in his work on *The Silmarillion*, a cycle of myth and legend, and read *The Lord of the Rings* as Tolkien wrote it. Tolkien was extremely critical of Lewis's Narnian chronicles, charging that they were hastily written, inconsistent, and that they failed to create a "real" setting. Tolkien was also critical of Lewis's marriage to Joy, partly because of his views on divorce and remarriage.

Tolkien was professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford from 1925 to 1945, when he became professor of English language and literature until retirement in 1959.

Charles Williams
(1886–1945)

The son of a clerk who instilled in him his love of literature and belief in understanding all sides of an argument, Charles Williams was largely self-educated. Williams began his career as a proofreader in the London office of Oxford University Press, where he worked his way up to the position of editor. Williams wrote poetry from his early days, and became a prolific writer of novels, drama, theology, and criticism as well.

Williams met Lewis when the latter wrote him a letter praising his novel, *The Place of the Lion*. At the same time, Williams was admiring Lewis's *Allegory of Love*. The two met occasionally until Williams moved to Oxford in 1939, where he became a regular member of the Inklings.

Although Lewis described Williams as "ugly as a chimpanzee," Williams's personal magnetism won him a wide following. He developed the idea of romantic theology, which considers the theological implications of romantic experiences, and the Way of Affirmation, in which earthly pleasures are seen as a door to Christian vision rather than a barrier.

Lewis was impressed by Williams's selfless character, and described him as offering himself wholly to others without expecting anything in return. Although Lewis said he was never consciously influenced by Williams's work, many students of the two see Williams's influence in Lewis's writing, especially in using ordinary people as the characters in the Space Trilogy.

R. E. Havard
(1901–)

The son of an Anglican clergyman, R. E. Havard studied chemistry at Oxford before becoming a medical doctor. Havard took his practice to Oxford in 1934, where he became the physician for Lewis and the Tolkien family. Lewis enjoyed

Havard, who was as willing to discuss philosophical problems as medical ones. After Lewis invited him to read a paper on the effects of pain at a Thursday evening meeting of the Inklings, Havard became a regular member of the group.

Tolkien said Havard, unlike most doctors, “thinks of people as people, not as collections of ‘works.’” Lewis named the doctor in *Perelandra* “Humphrey,” Havard’s nickname, in tribute to his friend.

Dorothy Sayers
(1893–1957)

Dorothy Sayers, one of the first woman graduates of Oxford, studied the classics and won honors in modern language studies. She worked as an advertising copywriter for 11 years. Sayers first won recognition as the writer of detective thrillers featuring Lord Peter Wimsey. She later wrote religious plays for radio, as well as numerous books and essays on Christian apologetics and theology. Sayers kept up correspondence, primarily concerning literature, with Lewis and his contemporaries. Lewis considered her “the first person of importance who ever wrote me a fan letter,” and he called her “one of the great English letter writers.” It may have been Sayers who spurred Lewis to write *Miracles*—he began work on the book just weeks after receiving her letter lamenting no good modern works on the subject.

Sayers was a member of Oxford’s Socratic Club, a forum for discussing intellectual challenges in religion and Christianity, of which Lewis was president for 22 years. Lewis appreciated Sayers in person as well as by post; he praised “the extraordinary zest and edge of her conversation.”

Chapter 3

The Postman’s Knock: Lewis’s Personal Correspondence

Andrew Cuneo

Thousands upon thousands of letters written in the hand of C. S. Lewis make up what is now the last original material being published under Lewis’s name, much

of it for the first time. Written on elegant Magdalen College letterhead (given to him by American friends), scraps of wartime economy paper (of discernibly lower grade than pre- and post-war paper), and thin sheets of typing paper (torn into thirds to get three letters out of one sheet), the letters of C. S. Lewis have accumulated into a monument of Lewis's thought, theology, and charity. One could characterize Lewis's letters as he himself characterized the letters of Charles Lamb: "You'll find his letters as good as his essays: indeed they are almost exactly the same, only more of it."

More of it indeed: At last count, the number of letters collected so far is about 3,400—and they continue to come in. Such a prolific correspondence dispels the image of the isolated bachelor Oxford don, hopelessly out of touch with his times. In fact, few professors could have been more aware of the drift of popular thought and the state of the common cultural soul.

Food for thought

On a given morning, Lewis might write to his publisher, Geoffrey Bles, and haggle over the title of his latest book; he might write a tactful letter to his former pupil John Betjeman, a major poet of the day who still resented his old tutor; or he might write to the American Dr. Firor in thanks of precious wartime food that supplemented the severe British rations.

How greatly, in fact, Lewis admired his American culinary benefactors: "The arrival of that magnificent ham leaves me just not knowing what to say. If it were known that it was in my house, it would draw every housebreaker in the neighborhood more surely than would a collection of gold plate." As Lewis quipped to another generous American, "Every third meal we eat is 'on America.'"

Most letters, however, were from correspondents who wanted Lewis to address a particular theological or personal question, for Lewis had become a touchstone of modern Christian thought in the 1940s and '50s. The following note to Mrs. Ursula Roberts, a correspondent whom he had never met, shows Lewis's typically direct style:

> To Mrs. Ursula Roberts, 31 July 1954:
>
> I am certainly unfit to advise anyone else on the devotional life. My own rules are 1. To make sure that, wherever else they may be placed, the main prayers should not be put "last thing at night." 2. To avoid introspection in prayer—I mean not to watch one's own mind to see if it is in the right frame, but always to turn the attention outwards to God. 3. Never, never to

> try to generate an emotion by will power. 4. To pray without words [that is, silently] when I am able, but to fall back on words when tired or otherwise below par. With renewed thanks. Perhaps you will sometimes pray for me?

All the hallmarks are there, in a form as condensed as a great moralist could make them: mature theology, practical advice, and simplicity of language.

Alongside the stream of popular inquiries were manuscripts from aspiring poets and novelists (some of whom sent entire works unsolicited) and the usual business correspondence of an academic with other academic friends he rarely saw. ("One's real friends are precisely the people one never gets time to write to," he notes to Dorothy Sayers.)

Sifting through the stack of mail each morning called forth a peculiar versatility in Lewis: He had to turn from matters literary to theological to pastoral in a succession of minutes. One can understand, then, Lewis's picture of the ideal life in *Surprised by Joy*, where he describes a day with "almost no mail" when he would "never dread the postman's knock."

If this sounds like an exaggeration, it is worth remembering that this picture emerges from at least two hours of answering letters a day for approximately twenty years. If Lewis took a holiday, it only compounded matters upon return. He wrote a remarkable number on Christmas Day itself—and they were not only Christmas cards.

Drudgery and drollery

From a strictly stylistic perspective, what a forge for Lewis's habitually clear expression this daily ritual must have been. To descend from a letter to T. S. Eliot down to a humble London convert and back up to Dorothy Sayers required intense modulation of tone and complexity. In all of Lewis's letters, high or low, the English is translucent, and when he chose to write in French, Anglo-Saxon, Greek, or Latin, no shine is lost.

The hammer of such a routine can be noticed particularly in the successful books where Lewis simply adopts the letter as his literary form: *The Screwtape Letters* and *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*. Something of Lewis's mind worked to the rhythm of the short burst of a letter, with its balanced phrases, its one-off chance to communicate Christian truth in nearly axiomatic sentences.

Lewis did have a devoted secretary, fortunately, to help him with the burden of daily mail. A great deal of the writing was a joint endeavor, in which Major Warren Lewis would type (hunt-and-peck method with two fingers) a full response or simply take down a dictation from his brother. Many letters, in fact

—especially those treating current political events—Warren wrote himself and signed “C. S. Lewis.”

Drudgery also gave way to drollery at points. “An anonymous postcard,” recalled Lewis in 1958, “tells me that I ought to be flogged at the cart’s tail for professing to believe in the Virgin Birth. . . . An unknown American writes to ask me whether Elijah’s fiery chariot was really a Flying Saucer. I encounter Theosophists, British Israelites, Spiritualists, [and] Pantheists.” One writer even wished to know whether Lewis had traveled to Mars and Venus—a journey that would have been a notable feat for the late 1930s.

The virtue of courtesy

Given that Lewis met what Chaucer terms “God’s Plenty” through the post, the question remains: Why would he answer, as he did, every correspondent? Doubtless, Lewis saw his salvation being worked out through relationships, and, from a steady caretaking of Mrs. Moore at the Kilns to the steady correspondence with the faceless thousands, Lewis demonstrated by action what transpires when one human being treats another with attention. Lewis gave theological and intellectual advice through his letters; perhaps more importantly, he also gave his time—generously.

Admirers and detractors almost invariably overlook this virtue of *courtesy* in Lewis, even though a host of his contemporaries attest to it. Lewis *chose* to answer all his correspondents, and that deliberate act of the will, repeated and sustained, points to a man who, like the apostle Paul, would write to the church around the world. For C. S. Lewis knew a great deal more people than the Inklings and his male Oxford and Cambridge colleagues. He knew and cared for women, for the evangelical leaders and laity of his day, for the poor, and for the ordinary Briton who valued his intellectual clarity. In the thousands of letters still being masterfully edited for publication by Walter Hooper, how often the Magdalen don’s dip pen ends with the short, perfect, and courteous, “Yours, C. S. Lewis.”

Meeting Children as Equals

“Perhaps . . . you will sometimes say a prayer for me?”

By his own admission, C. S. Lewis was shy around children. Perhaps, in part, this was the result of circumstances: For most of his life he was a bachelor (not

marrying until he was in his late fifties when his two stepsons were almost teenagers). In spite of limited contact and his own natural reserve, Lewis was nonetheless a caring godfather to the young children of several friends—including Lucy Barfield, to whom he dedicated *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. But even in these instances, his most comfortable connection was usually via the written word.

We see this demonstrated in a letter to his goddaughter Sarah. After explaining why domestic responsibilities will prevent him from being present at her confirmation, Lewis confesses: "If I had come and we had met, I am afraid you might have found me very shy and dull. (By the way, always remember that old people can be quite as shy with young people as young people can be with old. This explains to you what must seem the idiotic way in which so many grown-ups talk to you.)"

However, in this same letter to Sarah, Lewis goes on to give warm and practical advice about taking her first communion. Though he might have felt hesitant about his ability to relate to his goddaughter in person, Lewis was careful not to neglect his role as spiritual mentor in her life. But just as significantly, the advice that he gives to Sarah is counsel he could as easily have given to an adult. In other words, in spite of his natural reserve with children, Lewis still met them "face to face" as equals. It is this genuine connection that enabled him to write so effectively for children—whether in creating his seven Narnian tales or in answering a single letter from one of his young readers. Indeed, evidence of this respectful understanding can be found scattered throughout his letters to children.

For example, Lewis responded thoughtfully and without a trace of condescension to the many literary questions of his youthful correspondents, offering helpful insights such as, "A strict allegory is like a puzzle with a solution: a great romance is like a flower you can't quite place." Or, "Of course you're right about the Narnian books being better than the tracts; at least, in the way a picture is better than a map."

He often wrote humorously of his shared love for animals: "Reepicheep in your coloured picture has just the right perky, cheeky expression. I love real mice. There are lots in my rooms at College but I have never set a trap. When I sit up late working they poke their heads out from behind the curtains just as if they were saying, 'Hi! Time for you to go to bed. We want to come out and play.'"

Many of his letters include thoughtful words on spiritual matters: "Yes, people do find it hard to keep on feeling as if you believed in the next life: but then it is just as hard to keep on feeling as if you believed you were going to be nothing

after death. I know this because in the old days before I was a Christian I used to try."

And there is always evidence of an honest concern for the individual child: "It makes me, I think, more humble than proud to know that Aslan has allowed me to be the means of making Him more real to you. . . . Perhaps, in return, you will sometimes say a prayer for me?"

In one of his last letters to a young correspondent, written less than a month before his own death, C. S. Lewis penned these words, words that speak poignantly to each one of us, both child and adult—no matter what our actual age: "If you continue to love Jesus, nothing much can go wrong with you, and I hope you may always do so."

—Marjorie Lamp Mead

Chapter 4

Mind in Motion: Lewis's Philosophical Journey

J. I. Packer and Jerry Root

He was an imaginative Belfast Irishman in whom a cultivated Oxford accent replaced his father's oratorical brogue, and for whom Oxford was home.

He was a brilliant expositor and debater whose powers of logical analysis, bright brisk narrative, and vivid illustration were stunning.

He was a heavyweight academic with a self-possessed forthrightness that unnerved some of his students. He worked hard and expected others to do the same. Woe to you if Lewis was your tutor and you were lazy!

He was a teacher of literature who seemed to have read all the literature there was in English and Europe's other main languages. He was once called the best-read man of his generation. He wrote effortlessly and brilliantly.

He was somewhat eccentric, careless about clothes and home comforts and quixotically meticulous in keeping promises and observing routines. In his fifties, he enjoyed three years of great happiness married to a crippled Jewish divorcée from America.

His clubbable, booming jollity masked shyness; his schoolboy humor masked

seriousness; and his reading, teaching, writing, and endless dialectics masked a longing for deep and close relationships. “You’ll never get to the bottom of him,” his friend J. R. R. Tolkien once said.

Such was Clive Staples Lewis, “Jack” to his friends, fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, from 1925 to 1954, and professor of medieval and Renaissance literature at Cambridge from 1954 to 1963, who died of kidney failure on November 22, 1963, a week from his 65th birthday. It was the day Kennedy was shot.

He had become a clear-headed Christian in 1931, after almost two decades of professed atheism—that is, of denying all the realities of the high church Anglicanism in which he was reared and to which he now returned. Inwardly, his conversion turned him right around, giving him a lifelong desire to make known his recovered faith. Walter Hooper says he never knew a man who was so completely converted. Outwardly, however, his life as an Oxford don was unchanged.

His habits of mind also continued unchanged. He was already thinking the way he believed Christians should. All through his life, realism, or objectivism —that is to say, aiming always to discern and adjust to the reality that was *there*, both outside and within him—was the mark of his mind. “I want God, not my idea of God; I want my neighbour, not my idea of my neighbour; I want myself, not my idea of myself.” Plato and common sense combined to feed his passion for reality and to arm him against the subjectivism that projects onto the world whatever one wants it to be. Lewis’s powers of fantasy would offer him imaginary worlds of all sorts, but his inner demand for factuality forbade him to take up mental residence in them.

He recovered his faith primarily through argument. In 1943, he wrote:

> On the intellectual side my own progress (was) from ‘popular realism’ [i.e., naturalism, the belief that the material order, called Nature, is all there is] to Philosophical Idealism; from Idealism to Pantheism; from Pantheism to Theism; and from Theism to Christianity. I still think this a very natural road.

Yet it was not the whole story. From childhood, Lewis had known moments of what he called *joy*, meaning, very precisely, a sweet ache of sensing—and in that moment longing for—a reality of life, light, and beauty beyond ordinary experience. These aching moments, which he thought were common (though constantly misperceived), set a person searching for something not yet known.

In fact, these moments were wake-up calls from God, pointing to him as the ultimate reality that alone satisfies all longings. Lewis displays this autobiographically in his allegorical *Pilgrim's Regress* (1933) and his anecdotal *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (begun in 1948, published in 1955). He speaks of the "dialectic of desire," whereby these moments of joy critique all supposed human fulfillments, and says that in his conversion "this lived dialectic, and the merely argued dialectic of my philosophical progress, seemed to have converged on one goal."

The quest begins

Lewis's journey away from the Christian faith started at an early age. Through the trauma of the death of his loved and prayed-for mother when he was nine, estrangement from his orthodox churchman father, and grim times in two supposedly Christian boarding schools, his childhood religion sickened and died.

Then two-and-a-half teen years of study with W. T. Kirkpatrick, "the great Knock," a retired headmaster and disputatious rationalist, left Lewis convinced, first, that any God who existed would be a bad God and, second, that there is no real evidence of God's existence at all. Lewis took these views into the Army (1917) and to post-war Oxford (1919), and voiced them in his first book, a slim volume of poems titled *Spirits in Bondage* (1919).

Yet recurring moments of joy and the sustained impact of George MacDonald's *Phantastes*, which Lewis said "baptized" his imagination, convinced him that there was in reality something to be sought and found.

His resultant feeling that life must be lived as an exploratory search found expression in two long poems, the unfinished *Quest of Bleheris*, written at Kirkpatrick's, and *Dymer*, written at Oxford. By then, Lewis had looked hard at both occultism and spiritualism to see if they would help in his quest, but had concluded that they would not.

Lewis's Oxford friend Owen Barfield convinced him that if physical reality is all there is, thought itself (being a mere byproduct of matter) would lack validity and significance. To maintain his Kirkpatrick-inspired quest for a rational account of reality, Lewis saw that he must believe, as he later expressed in *Miracles*, that "reason is something more than cerebral bio-chemistry." Henceforth, Lewis's intellect no longer oscillated away from his imaginative questings into paths of dogmatic materialism, but sought a worldview that would somehow unite intellect and physical matter.

As a competent philosopher (he taught philosophy in his early Oxford days), Lewis now revisited the idealist view, still up and running at Oxford, which saw matter as having in some sense the nature of mind. What was then called

pantheism (i.e., seeing everything as expressing some sort of divine reality; today we label this view panentheism or monism) lies at the end of that road, and Lewis's investigation went all the way. But he found the coherence and clarity that would warrant conviction lacking throughout, so he moved on.

Hamlet, meet Shakespeare

Then, in the mid-1920s, through the impact of friends and of G. K. Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man* (1926), he found himself thinking that "Christianity was very sensible apart from its Christianity." Also, as never before, he began to feel that the living, personal God of theism (so different from idealism's fuzzy, abstract, non-demanding Absolute Spirit) was tracking him down.

He became morally serious: "For the first time I examined myself . . . and . . . found what appalled me; a zoo of lusts, a bedlam of ambitions, a nursery of fears, a harem of fondled hatreds. My name was legion." He felt haunted and hunted. "Amiable agnostics will talk cheerfully about 'man's search for God.' To me, as I then was, they might as well have talked about the mouse's search for the cat." Finally, in 1929, "I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed."

Nevertheless, at that time he did not think he could truly know God personally any more than Hamlet could know Shakespeare. It seemed as if his quest might end there, but his pursuit of truth was to lead him further still.

Certainty about the Incarnation came two years later, after a late-night talk with J. R. R. Tolkien gave him the idea that the pagan dying-and-rising-god myths were "good dreams" given by God to prepare the ground for myth to become fact in Jesus of Nazareth. Lewis realized that while Hamlet could not break out of the play to meet the author, Shakespeare could write himself into the play as a character, making the introduction possible. The Incarnation was, in some ways, like this.

"I was driven to Whipsnade one sunny morning," Lewis writes in *Surprised by Joy*. "When we set out I did not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and when we reached the zoo I did. . . . It was . . . like when a man, after long sleep, still lying motionless in bed, becomes aware that he is now awake." Wanderer Lewis had reached home at last.

The closing pages of *Surprised by Joy* review Lewis's intellectual path through this final phase, and the concluding section of *The Pilgrim's Regress* shows how he now saw human reality through his newly-converted eyes. All the seeds of his later Christian writings are found in these two places.

Further up and further in

Lewis's mind did not stop working when he became a Christian—rather the reverse. Besides composing his lecture courses and his academic masterpiece, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama,* plus his series of apologetic books covering much of the ground traversed in his own journey, plus several books full of essays, addresses, and articles on many topics looked at from a mainstream Christian standpoint, Lewis now labored to shore up Western culture, which he believed was about to come apart.

Lewis saw the civilization of which he was a product and a part as threatened by a pincers movement of two mutually reinforcing evils: subjectivism and scientism. Latter-day subjectivism would sweep away the morality given in universal natural law (the Tao, as he calls it) in favor of man-made ideals of behavior—immoralities, really. Scientism, meaning trust in scientists to advance our welfare and solve our problems, would sweep away the humanity experienced in the relationships of everyday life in favor of technocratic enslavement by a power-hungry elite.

Lewis threw down the gauntlet in his 1943 Durham University lectures, *The Abolition of Man,* and followed it up with a novel, *That Hideous Strength: A Modern Fairy-tale for Grown-ups* (1945), a sort of mythic parable in which he displayed ghoulish practitioners of subjectivist scientism invading a Durham-like university to pursue dehumanizing manipulations of all sorts.

One thing leads to another. In *The Abolition of Man* Lewis argued, echoing Plato, that in educating children one must instill "emotions organized by trained habit into stable sentiments," otherwise they will grow into "men without chests," lacking strength of character to control their unruly passions. Basic virtue—dutifulness, justice, prudence, self-control, love, fidelity, and so on—will not then survive, and society will sink into pagan barbarism.

Lewis therefore began writing fantasy tales for children that would teach these virtues by example. These are the Narnia stories (1950–56), seven tales built round the almost allegorical figure of Aslan, the lion Savior-Lord. In these and his other works of fiction, Lewis used the mythical manner to focus with imaginative and searching force realities that would get inside us to haunt us better than mere formal definitions could ever do.

One of the insights that Lewis the educator emphasized is that all reality is iconoclastic; that is, it constantly breaks up inadequate understandings of itself in order to take us on to a more adequate grasp of the world. Minds, therefore, must ever continue in object-oriented, self-critical thinking, constantly seeking to reach, as the talking beasts of Narnia phrased it, "further up and further in." This, Lewis would have said, is the will of God for us all. And who can doubt that he

was right?

Lewis's Intellectual Mentors

G. K. Chesterton
(1874–1936)

One of Lewis's primary mentors in apologetics, and an influence even in his conversion, was G. K. Chesterton. Novelist, poet, essayist, and journalist, Chesterton was perhaps best known for his Father Brown detective stories. He produced more than 100 volumes in his lifetime, including biographies of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Thomas Aquinas. His *The Everlasting Man*, which set out a Christian outline of history, was one of the factors that wore down Lewis's resistance to Christianity.

Chesterton was one of the first defenders of orthodoxy to use humor as a weapon. Perhaps more important was his use of reason to defend faith. Chesterton wrote that the universe can only be understood as a creation; that man's sense of right and wrong and his conflict when he becomes aware that he is not what he was made to be points to a Creator. Though they never met, Lewis called Chesterton "the most sensible man alive."

George MacDonald
(1824–1905)

The man C. S. Lewis regarded as his master barely made a living as a poet, novelist, lecturer, and writer of children's books. Yet Lewis said of the retired minister, "I know hardly any other writer who seems to be closer, or more continually close, to the Spirit of Christ Himself." In his teens, Lewis was profoundly changed by reading MacDonald's *Phantastes, a Faerie Romance*, an experience Lewis considered the "baptism" of his imagination. Lewis considered MacDonald the best writer of fantasy alive, and he found a sense of holiness in all MacDonald's writings. Lewis was touched by MacDonald's devotional writings as well. He wrote, "My own debt to (*Unspoken Sermons*) is almost as great as one man can owe to another," and he recommended the book with success to many seekers.

The Legacy

Chapter 5

Into the Land of Imagination

Clyde Kilby

Every normal person is blessed with imagination. Imagination operates ceaselessly and is capable of tying together even grotesque elements of matter and spirit. The apple which is said to have fallen on Isaac Newton's head launched him into a set of meanings which culminated in his laws of gravitation and motion. In his theory of relativity Einstein combined complicated mathematical equations with images of trains rushing into distant space. The best scientists know that great discoveries are not made simply by experiment and reason but sometimes in mental gyrations as great, even as delightfully humorous, as Alice's adventures down the rabbit hole.

There is hardly one of Lewis's expository works in which he fails to allude to the imagination. Lewis defined reason as the natural organ of truth and imagination as the organ of meaning.

The whole enterprise of art—music, sculpture, literature, even architecture—is particularly dependent upon consistent imagination. And is not life itself also, at least in the portions of it which seem really to live? Owing to the Great Mistake of Eden, life tends habitually to settle into the prosaic and ordinary. Indeed, is it not symbolic of fallen man that a steady smell of roses leaves them odorless? Imagination is necessary to the worthwhile life.

Imagination in the Bible

Some devout Christians fear imagination is inevitably evil, yet the Bible is almost embarrassingly imaginative. Lewis insists that the reader of the Bible, without losing sight of its primary value, must always remember that it is literature. "Most emphatically," he says, "the Psalms must be read as poetry." We remember such highly imaginative passages as "Let the floods clap their hands,

let the hills be joyful together," and Christ as a great storyteller describing a man who built his house upon sand and a sower who went forth to sow. He compared the kingdom of heaven to a grain of mustard seed and described himself as "the true vine." God, the greatest of imaginers, gives all men power to imagine, just as he gives them free will. Either can lead to steady and joyful devotion to him or else to everlasting misery.

Lewis believed that the modern imagination has fostered more than the usual quota of villainy, having too often searched out the devious and febrile in all the little corners where sin lurks. In the final chapter of *The Screwtape Letters*, Lewis describes hell's view of our times. At the Tempters' Training College for Young Devils, Screwtape speaks his gratitude for the abundance of souls now entering hell but bemoans their quality, souls "hardly worth damning," and harks back to periods of more substantial sinners such as Henry VIII, Farinata, or even Hitler. Lewis also believes that people in our time have, for whatever cause, tended to avoid the great positive potentials of love and holiness. "How little people know who think that holiness is dull. When one meets the real thing . . . it is irresistible."

The "Christian novelist"

In the one meeting I had with C. S. Lewis, we discussed the Christian novelist. When I mentioned the term, Lewis instantly responded with a comparison to the Christian carpenter. Each is simply a Christian doing his particular work, doing it well or badly. "If a man who cannot draw horses is illustrating a book, the pictures that involve horses will be the bad pictures, let his spiritual condition be what it may," he said. Of course the Christian writer should avoid "mendacity, cruelty, blasphemy, pornography" and "aim at edification insofar as edification is proper to the kind of work in hand." If the story is about Jack and the beanstalk he dare not allow Jack to stop on the way up and recommend high-growing bean seeds. A story must be true to the known rules for successful composition: content from one sentence to another requires not trickery but honesty and wisdom.

Take an instance from the beginning of the Narnian adventure *The Silver Chair*. Jill Pole has played the egotist and gotten her friend Eustace Scrubb into trouble. Shortly afterwards she comes upon a Lion (the capital is Lewis's) which turns and moves slowly back into the forest. Jill then hears running water and finds herself very thirsty, whereupon she plucks up her courage and steals carefully from tree to tree in its direction. She comes upon an open glade from which the sight of the enticing water ahead mightily increases her thirst. Ready to rush forward, she suddenly checks herself because there, between her and the

stream, is the Lion lying quietly with its head raised and its paws out in front. It is looking straight at Jill. The two face each other for a long time.

Jill's thirst is now so persistent that she must have water even if the Lion catches her. In a "heavy, golden voice" the Lion finally asks, "Are you thirsty?"

"I'm dying of thirst," Jill promptly responds.

"Then drink," said the Lion.

Hesitantly Jill suggests that the Lion go away while she drinks, to which a low growl is the only response. Then she says, "I daren't come and drink."

"Then you will die of thirst."

Taking a step nearer, Jill says, "I suppose I must go and look for another stream then."

"There is no other stream."

Now frantic with thirst, Jill proceeds to the sparkling stream and drinks "the coldest, most refreshing water she has ever tasted."

Apart from "no other stream," this whole episode is simply good narrative. Yet we can imagine the many Scriptures which ran through Lewis's mind as he wrote: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. . . . None other name under heaven whereby we must be saved. . . . Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst. . . . Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. . . . The wages of sin is death," and more.

We must not, of course, suppose that the manner in which Lewis presents this episode is the only possible way. What it does infer beyond question is that *The Silver Chair* is a story and therefore must above all keep literary faith. At the same time the record is abundantly clear that Lewis's Narnian stories have conveyed the Christian way to millions of children and adults. One of my friends wrote me at some length of how, over a period of some ten years, he had slowly lost total contact with God, and how one day while reading *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* to his children he was suddenly overcome with remorse and tearfully recommitted himself to the Savior.

Meaning and myth

Even one consummate value may redeem an otherwise poor writer. Lewis joyfully spoke of George MacDonald as his literary "master" despite a whole array of faults he found in him. One such fault was the quite common one of unnecessary sermonizing. What Lewis found valuable in MacDonald was "fantasy—fantasy that hovers between the allegorical and the mythopoeic." Lewis believed that ultimate meanings tend to fall into metaphor, allegory, and myth, types in which a Christian writer should feel he is on "home ground." Lewis calls myth at its best "a real though unfocused gleam of divine truth

falling on human imagination." He had such an ideal in view in all his creative works, particularly in what he considered his best story, *Till We Have Faces*. Myth, he says, "deals with the permanent and inevitable."

The scope of Lewis's imagination, if not as profound, is as wide as that of Dante and Milton. He tells how happy he was, after dwelling imaginatively on the infernal motives and intrigues of hell in *The Screwtape Letters*, to return to normalcy. Not only does he present for us these supernatural characters but also devilish-minded, even devil-possessed ones, right here on earth. In *That Hideous Strength*, Belbury's destructive might is set against the quiet Christianity of St. Anne's, one feverish with bustle and trickery and the other calmly, even in the threat of world insurrection, awaiting the will of God. In *The Great Divorce* people are allowed to go up from the murkiness of hell and stand warmly welcomed into the permeating glory of heaven and yet, with only one exception, they refuse heaven and return to hell. The thing they will never let go is their "proper pride." They continue, even after the pains of hell, to choose self over God. The painter urged to come inside rejects heaven when he learns it is without coteries and the worship of Big Names. Even the bishop, who has grown to love questions better than answers, rejects heaven in the interest of his little theological society in hell where he is admired for his papers on the speculative aspects of religion.

The imaginative process

Though many have tried, no one has ever been able to explain the imaginative process, no doubt because successful creativity is as large as life itself. Lewis gives a fragmentary sketch of how *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, one of his Narnian stories, came to be. It began, as his stories generally did, with a mental image, this time of "a Faun carrying an umbrella and parcels in a snowy wood." This initial bit first lodged in Lewis's imagination when he was about sixteen, long before he became a Christian. Years later, he says, he sat down to see if he could make a story out of it. Had he not in the meantime given himself completely to God, it would probably have become a good story as such, but now "Aslan came bounding into it." Not only that, Aslan "pulled the whole story together." Would the story become a Christian tract? Amazingly, Lewis in this book tied narrative interest and profound theology together and we not only experience a multitude of details related to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ but note that he died on a stone table representing the law of Moses.

Lewis accepted imagination as one of the great and varied gifts of God. As a Christian he saw it as a worthy avenue of spiritual witness. He believed, however, that it should never become a "device" or frame on which to hang a

sermon. For Lewis, the principle on which we must daily operate is a simple honesty which takes its life and its liberty from a living experience of the triune God.

Chapter 6

Training Hearts to See the Real

Doris T. Myers

In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, one of the Narnia books, Eustace, a factual-minded, thoroughly modern boy, meets a fallen star named Ramandu. On hearing that Ramandu is a star, Eustace says, “In our world, a star is a huge ball of flaming gas.” Ramandu replies, “Even in your world, my son, that is not what a star is but only what it is made of.”

This distinction between *scientia* (knowledge, the makeup of things) and *sapientia* (wisdom, the significance of things) informed all of Lewis’s writings, especially his fiction. Except for a brief period as an undergraduate when he tried to adopt modernist skepticism, Lewis spent his life pursuing wisdom. The pursuit led him to the philosophy of Plato and Wordsworth, but he also practiced the common sense Christianity of Samuel Johnson. Even though Lewis was a Platonist, he did not often talk of the visible world as a mere shadow of the real. In *Letters to Malcolm*, he says, “In fact we should never ask of anything ‘Is it real?,’ for everything is real.” We may think of our world as a stage set, but it is a real stage set. Because he thought everything was real, Lewis could create imaginary worlds with gusto.

The good, the bad, and the ghostly

In his worlds, missing reality is the prime error. It happens in two ways: either to focus completely on facts and miss significance, or to become self-centered and miss the real beauty of creation. In Lewis’s stories, the good people either possess or acquire the ability to touch reality, while the bad people are entangled in illusion. Like the inhabitants of Dante’s hell, they lack the good of the intellect.

Lewis’s fiction was based on his approach to reality from the beginning, but it

became more profound as he followed his imagination. In *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1933), a satirical allegory dashed off in the heat of his adult acceptance of Christianity, the pilgrim John travels, confused, through the intellectual milieu of the early 1930s. But after he is baptized, he retraces his steps and sees the illusions of modernism. In *The Great Divorce* (1946), angels, saints, and the environment of heaven are real. They are so solid and heavy that the tourists from hell are mere ghosts in comparison, and the very grass hurts their feet. They are offered the chance to become real, but they prefer to cling to their whiny, self-centered illusions. In *The Screwtape Letters* (1942), Screwtape, a senior devil in the Lowerarchy of hell, writes to his nephew Wormwood, a field tempter, to teach him how to lead his client away from reality. But Wormwood's temptation efforts are ineffectual; his client dies in an air raid and meets "Them" [the angels] with joy and recognition.

To eternity and beyond

In 1938, Lewis began to publish his space trilogy. All three novels picture the solar system not in terms of what it is made of, but in terms of what it means—not cold, empty space, but golden warmth so full of angelic powers that the planets seem like relative emptiness. These novels show Lewis's growing desire to use popular fiction to turn his readers' hearts toward what is real. In *Out of the Silent Planet*, Ransom, the hero, says, "What we need for the moment is . . . a body of people familiarized with certain ideas."

By the time Lewis wrote *Perelandra* (1943) and *That Hideous Strength* (1945), he had realized that "certain ideas" were not as important as the training of feelings. In 1943 he delivered the Riddell Lectures, later published as *The Abolition of Man*. In it he explains that in literature and the other arts, the child must be guided to feel pleasure in works that are delightful and well made and to "hate the ugly" with "a just distaste." He must learn to "give delighted praise to beauty, receiving it into his soul and being nourished by it, so that he becomes a man of gentle heart."

Perelandra exemplifies the delighted praise of beauty in a hymn to creation, the praise of the great cosmic dance. This hymn worships the Creator with such plenitude that sometimes reading groups have divided it among different voices and recited it in a worship service. *That Hideous Strength* teaches the hatred of ugliness and evil by the actions of Frost and Wither. There is an Objective Room, where everything is subtly out of shape. Frost uses it to train neophytes to abandon their natural emotions in favor of (falsely) scientific objectivity. Mark receives this training, but he escapes from it and is healed by reading a children's story.

Through the wardrobe

After finishing the adult fantasies, Lewis turned to writing his best-known work, The Chronicles of Narnia. These stories take their place with *The Wind in the Willows, The Velveteen Rabbit,* and *The Little Prince* as childhood classics. They are exciting and skillfully told, but also theologically profound and deeply devotional. And therein arises a problem. It is easy to think that children should immediately identify Aslan with Jesus. Instead, they need to "freely receive" this beautiful art into their souls and be nourished by it.

Now that *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* has been made into a movie, it is being touted as "The Passion of the Christ for Kids," and there are numerous websites explaining the cognitive doctrines of Christianity in language worthy of the grammarian Pulverulentus Siccus (Full-of-Dust Dry) in *Prince Caspian*. The allegorical correspondence between events in the stories and cognitive doctrines may be what the Chronicles are *made* of, but it is not what they *are*.

As Lewis explains in his essay "Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's to Be Said," at first he had no intention of promoting Christian ideas. He began to write *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* because he had begun to see images: "a faun carrying an umbrella, a queen on a sledge, a magnificent lion." The fairy tale seemed the best literary form to handle the events that were growing from the images. Later on, he began to see how the stories could be used to get away from stained-glass boredom and cultivate Christian feelings, especially among children who were alienated from Sunday school. To teach the Chronicles as Christian doctrine is to defeat Lewis's purpose in writing. Similarly, to demand that the reader respond with the "delighted praise of beauty" is to foster the literary snobbery that Lewis hated.

Trying to enjoy the Chronicles is self-defeating, like trying to fall asleep. The only way to succeed is not to try. A child who likes fantasy (not all children do) will benefit from the Chronicles naturally. An adult who likes fantasy can get the greatest value from them by reading them to a child—without comment unless the child asks questions. Lacking a suitable child, the next-best course for the adult is to read the Chronicles on vacation.

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe is especially beautiful in its portrayal of the children's relationship to Aslan. Lewis provides images that feel like the Christian's exchange of love with Jesus. It is like hugging and being hugged in lush fur, like being tossed in the air and caught by velvet paws, like riding on a swift animal as big as a horse but smooth-gaited as a cat, like being called "dear heart" and "my son." Aslan breathes on the children to give them courage; he roars when the White Witch suggests that he might not keep his word, for he is

fearsome as well as loving. He goes meekly to meet his death; he is mocked and tortured. Lucy and Susan weep bitterly; so do adults and sophisticated junior high students.

How did a middle-aged bachelor come to write *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*? He did it by writing the book he would like to read himself. He treated children like people, patiently and respectfully answering their questions. And he took very seriously what Jesus said about entering the kingdom of heaven as a little child.

Something better

After the Chronicles, Lewis wrote his adult masterpiece in the training of feelings, *Till We Have Faces*. He called it "far and away the best I have written," but then added ruefully, "That book . . . has been my one big failure both with the critics and with the public." Fifty years later, it is still Lewis's best book, but also the one least known by the public. Like its heroine Orual, it is both stepchild and princess. Some people have never tried to read it, but a few others read it over and over.

The Chronicles of Narnia educate the feelings through pleasure, as befits fiction for children. *Till We Have Faces* asks us to follow a woman who has had a miserable life, partly because she felt unjustly treated by God, but mostly because her self-centeredness rendered her unable to perceive reality. It is a very complex, subtle picture of the human spiritual journey, and those who are humble enough to perceive their own faults in Orual can find catharsis and repentance in it. By feeling compassion for Orual, we may learn to accept Christ's compassion for us.

There is a lot of Orual in Lewis, but his imagination, combined with his feelings for beauty and the real, gave him hope. In *Letters to Malcolm*, published posthumously, he imagined what heaven would be like, then concluded, "Guesses, of course, only guesses. If they are not true, something better will be."

Chapter 7

Following that Bright Blur: Lewis's Theology

Jerry Root

In a 1982 interview in *Discipleship Journal*, Elisabeth Elliot was asked, "How could a person deepen his theology and become a clearer thinker?" She answered, "Study the Bible. And study C. S. Lewis. People are always saying C. S. Lewis was not a theologian—and Lewis himself would say that—but he was. He covered the whole field of theology in popular, understandable language. The fact that he could put it in simple language is proof to me that he understood it better than many theologians."

This prescription is helpful. Lewis may not have considered himself a theologian, but his writing on theological subjects has stretched the minds, broadened the hearts, and challenged the thinking of many.

What was the core of C. S. Lewis's theology? A hint is found in the caption that appeared below his picture on the cover of the September 8, 1947, *Time* magazine. It simply read, "His heresy: Christianity." Both in written word and BBC broadcasts, Lewis sought to present historic Christian faith to the common man. Perhaps because his work is imaginative as well as analytical, some have criticized him for softness on issues that modern conservatives consider pivotal, for example, biblical authority. But the cornerstones of his theology are clearly orthodox: he called it "mere Christianity" not to diminish the truth-claims, but to suggest that the truth of God incarnate was so shockingly simple that people of all cultures and pedigrees might be stunned and joyful at its clarity and grace.

The supernatural

C. S. Lewis was a committed supernaturalist. In his essay "On Ethics" he commented: "I am myself a Christian, and even a dogmatic Christian untinged with modernist reservations and committed to supernaturalism in its full rigor." Remove the supernatural and the first principles of Christian orthodoxy are gone. Because God is high and holy, every doctrine of Christian faith has a sense of awe and wonder, and the miracles that demonstrate those doctrines are simply the retelling in capital letters of "the same message which nature writes in her crabbed cursive hand," he wrote. Lewis was fully committed to a Christianity with the supernatural elements intact.

Study of literature

Lewis's lifetime study of medieval and renaissance literature helped him understand the importance of written texts as a source of authority. He likened the doctrinal texts of Christian orthodoxy to a series of maps drawn by men of knowledge and legitimized over time. Ministering to RAF pilots during the war, Lewis urged them away from the elementary "thrills you and I are likely to get

on our own" and toward the grand themes of authority, essential maps "if you want to get further."

Literary sources also helped him with the insights that truth is one and that good thinking should unify all generations. Authority was weakened by the modern emphasis on individual autonomy. Authority rests in the cumulative wisdom of the ages, a demanding jury for all new ideas. Clearly Lewis knew the importance of history; his theology was bound to the church's historic statements.

Rationalism

Lewis's theology was further influenced by his commitment to logic and reason. Truth was not made for man; man was made for truth, and his chief purpose in life was to glorify God forever. Lewis wrote, "In coming to understand anything we are rejecting the facts as they are for us in favor of the facts as they are. The primary impulse of each is to maintain and aggrandize himself. The secondary impulse is to go out of the self, to correct its provincialism and heal its loneliness."

If pursuit of truth is like climbing a ladder, Lewis both mastered the steps and turned a floodlight on the ladder itself, illuminating the way so that others not wishing to remain in the lonely darkness of subjectivism might follow.

Illumined subjectivism

As dark subjectivism was a pitfall, illumined subjectivism—he often called it romanticism—could awaken the desire for truth. Lewis would often refer to this desire as joy. Just as hunger says, "I want food," and thirst says, "I want water," so informed joy pleads within a man saying, "I want God." Theology for C. S. Lewis was more than rational activity; it was the very burning of the soul not merely to define and explain God but to know him, to enjoy him, and yet to remain constantly in awe of him. He comments, "This hunger is better than any other fullness; this poverty better than all other wealth." Lewis not only sought to explain Christianity to others, he also sought to practice it himself. At the heart of this practice was his own personal devotion to God.

A comprehensive presentation of C. S. Lewis's theology would take a book—perhaps several volumes. Here we can briefly explore two cornerstones of Lewis's theological thought: the transcendence of God and the immanence of God.

God's transcendence

The idea of God's transcendence is simply this: God is great. He is

omnipresent, infinite, and eternal. Though he made the universe, God himself cannot be fully contained in the universe. Where creation leaves off, God goes on and on and on to infinity. In this sense, God is incomprehensible.

Because God is transcendent, mere men, said Lewis, cannot define him. The infinite cannot be reduced to finite definition. In *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*, Lewis refers to God as the "bright blur," admitting it is not a very good description. "In fact," he writes, "you cannot have a good description of anything so vague. If the description became good it would become false." As Walter Elwell has stated, "All theological formulations are, at best, approximate."

The best theology, then, is theology which makes the best approximations. It is necessary, therefore, to choose language equal to the task, and Lewis urges that the best language for this task is poetic. The language of literature is less limiting, is not concerned merely with quantity (as is scientific language) but with quality. Lewis wrote, "To be incommunicable by scientific language is, so far as I can judge, the normal state of experience."

The temptation of the theologian is to adopt language that will be suitable to the scientific mind. However, this kind of language only makes faith less credible. Such language may be suitable to the scientific mind, but it certainly cannot describe God. Lewis insisted that propositional statements about God are necessary. The idea of God, to be understood, must take form in our minds and thought, but if we are to understand the meaning of the propositions, we must go to the language of the poet. Much of the Scriptures are written in poetic form.

God's immanence

The second cornerstone of Lewis's orthodoxy is his commitment to the immanence of God. The infinite, eternal, omnipresent God can and does make his presence known. God can be talked about because God has made himself known to rational creatures capable of reasonable communication. When Lewis was a theist and no more, he thought it was impossible to actually know God personally and intimately. He understood the concept of transcendence, but had not yet balanced it in his thinking with the idea of God's immanence. He commented that he did not think, at that time, that a person could know God any more than Hamlet could know Shakespeare. Later Lewis came to realize that Hamlet could have known Shakespeare, but it would depend not on Hamlet but on Shakespeare. As the author, he could write himself into the play and make his presence known. Through this analogy, Lewis describes what actually took place in the Incarnation. God has made his presence known. Because God has communicated himself to man, man can know and talk about the immanent God.

Lewis wrote, “Christianity is not merely what a man does with his solitude. It is not even what God does with his solitude. It tells of God descending into the coarse publicity of history and there enacting what can—and must—be talked about.”

What a discovery! The mysterious God “brighter and less blurry.” Lewis wrote, “We may ignore, but we can nowhere evade, the presence of God. The world is crowded with him. He walks everywhere incognito.”

C. S. Lewis has left a rich theological legacy. He has become the theologian for every man, every man who hopes to take bearings on the “bright blur.”

Chapter 8

Making Doctrine Dance

Christopher Mitchell

Dorothy L. Sayers once described G. K. Chesterton as a kind of “Christian liberator” who blew into the church “gusts of fresh air, in which the dead leaves of doctrine danced with all the energy and indecorum of Our Lady’s Tumbler.” Sayers’s comment comes very near the mark in capturing the role C. S. Lewis has played since Chesterton’s death in 1936. Like Chesterton before him, to the English-speaking church Lewis has been nothing less than a Christian liberator.

As early as 1942, C. S. Lewis was already a bestselling author. In 1947, he was heralded as “one of the most influential spokesmen for Christianity in the English-speaking world” by *Time* magazine, which featured his picture on the front cover. “With erudition, good humor and skill,” the *Time* article proclaimed:

> Lewis is writing about religion for a generation of religion-hungry readers brought up on a diet of ‘scientific’ jargon and Freudian clichés. . . . [He] is one of a growing band of heretics among modern intellectuals: an intellectual who believes in God . . . not a mild and vague belief, for he accepts ‘all the articles of the Christian faith.’

The article attributed much of Lewis’s remarkable success to his “talent for

putting old-fashioned truths into a modern idiom" and giving "a strictly unorthodox presentation of strict orthodoxy." Three years earlier, *The Times Literary Supplement* had already suggested something similar: "Mr. Lewis has a quite unique power of making Theology attractive, exciting and (one might almost say) an uproariously fascinating quest."

But Lewis, like Chesterton, made the dead leaves of doctrine dance in a way that went against British social and academic convention. It was generally accepted that one's religious orientation should remain a private matter. Lewis's determination to take his Christian faith public with the aim of converting others was simply unacceptable, and to many downright indecent. His work in theology and apologetics, which appealed to vast audiences outside the university, defied academic protocol and created a great amount of ill feeling. According to his former student Harry Blamires, Lewis was acutely sensitive to the fact and once told him, "You don't know how I'm hated."

Lewis was clearly uncomfortable with the publicity his success brought. As early as 1941, responding to a comment made by Dom Bede Griffiths concerning his growing public persona, he acknowledged the growing tension within himself: "As for retiring into 'private life,' while feeling *very* strongly the evil of publicity, I don't see how one can. God is my witness I don't *look* for engagements."

Despite this tension, Lewis chose to go against the social and academic conventions of the day because of his understanding of the gospel mandate, the eternal value of every human soul, and the spiritual state of British society.

"The work is urgent"

Lewis was acutely aware that the biblical mandate to evangelize had particular implications for his own life and career. He had received the best education the British university system could offer. He held an academic post at arguably the most prestigious English university of his day. He was highly skilled in the art of debate and possessed unusual literary gifts. As a Christian, he knew that he was under orders to bring these things into the service of Christ and his church.

Moreover, he did not believe he had the option of thinking that such work was the sole task of professional theologians or clergy. He was as equally yoked to the gospel as they and, therefore, was obliged to do what he could for the evangelization of Britain. "The work is urgent," he declared, "for men perish around us."

Much of Lewis's sense of urgency was due to the spiritual state of Britain. By the middle of the 20th century, Christianity had been so successfully assimilated into the whole fabric of English social and intellectual society that what was left,

he observed, was not Christianity at all but a vague "spirituality and theism" supported by a firmly established moral code. This situation was rooted in 19th-century anti-clerical and anti-theistic forces that tended to reduce the Christian faith to what Lewis described as "mere 'religion'—'morality tinged with emotion,' 'what a man does with his solitude,' 'the religion of all good men.'"

Consequently, pupils in the current school system were learning neither the content of nor the case for Christianity. The younger generation was "never told what the Christians say and never heard any arguments in defense of it." The reason for the prevailing agnosticism or indifference among those of this generation was therefore not so much an antipathy towards Christianity as a lack of instruction.

The apologist's task

If this was the case, then there was reason to hope that the ignorance and incredulity of the students (as well as people in general) could be removed. To accomplish this, Lewis suggested, we must begin by clearly defining what the Christian faith is—that is, the "faith preached by the Apostles, attested by the Martyrs, embodied in the Creeds, expounded by the Fathers"—and then give a reasonable exposition and defense of it. He added that while each of us holds many opinions which we believe to be true and consistent with Christianity, it is not the business of the apologist to defend *them*. "We are defending Christianity; not 'my religion.' When we mention our personal opinions we must always make quite clear the difference between them and the Faith itself."

With these points in mind, Lewis's job, as he understood it, was plain. First, he had to break down people's intellectual prejudices against Christianity. This meant showing them the fallacies in their objections to belief in such a way as to make faith in Christianity intellectually plausible.

Second, he had to prepare people's minds and imaginations to receive the Christian vision. Lewis was thoroughly committed to using his academic position and training to nurture an intellectual and imaginative climate favorable to Christianity. He argued:

> If the intellectual climate is such that, when a man comes to the crisis at which he must either accept or reject Christ, his reason and imagination are not on the wrong side . . . then his conflict will be fought out under favourable conditions. Those who help to produce and spread such a climate are therefore doing useful work: and yet no such great matter after all. Their share is a modest one; and it is always possible that nothing—nothing whatever—may come of it. That does not mean we should down

tools.

Lewis's awareness of the useful part played by the apologist, coupled with his concern about the pervasive ignorance of Christianity within British society, compelled him to step forward and attempt to elucidate and defend the basic teachings of the Christian faith in the language of every day, something he later designated "mere" Christianity.

A forum for honest argument

Lewis's statements concerning the purpose of the Oxford University Socratic Club, of which he was the president from 1942 to 1954, shed additional light on his involvement in the apologetic enterprise. Lewis explained:

> In any fairly large and talkative community such as a university . . . there is always the danger that those who think alike should gravitate together into coteries where they will henceforth encounter opposition only in the emasculated form of rumour that the outsiders say thus and thus. The absent are easily refuted, complacent dogmatism thrives, and differences of opinion are embittered by group hostility. Each group hears not the best, but the worst, that the other groups can say.

Lewis perceived that each side misunderstood the other's position because the two sides never had a truly honest encounter with each other. He was convinced that, if Christianity was ever to confront successfully the contemporary intellectual forces arrayed against it, it would have to do so in an arena where argument itself was decisive.

Thus the Socratic Club was specifically designed to provide a university forum where the best minds of each opposing party could meet in honest disputation about the pros and cons of the Christian religion. The club's name reflected the Socratic exhortation to "follow the argument wherever it led."

Lewis envisioned the Socratic meeting as an arena where Christian and non-Christian could dispute the claims of Christianity, where the various intellectual prejudices against Christianity could be properly challenged, and where the integrity of the Christian's belief system could be demonstrated. Accordingly, non-Christian speakers who were specialists in their fields of study were invited to come and "propagate their creed."

Puddleglum vs. the positivists

Lewis did not limit the role of apologetics to the academic arena, however. A complete presentation and defense of what Christians believe must attempt to open not only an intellectual space favorable to Christian truth, but also an imaginative space. If a person's encounter with Christ is to be fought out under friendly conditions, both reason and imagination need to be brought onto the side of Christianity.

Lewis did this supremely well in his fiction. Whether he was explicating the anatomy of temptation by means of one demon writing to another, exploring the nature of the separation between heaven and hell by having a busload of denizens from hell take a day trip to heaven, or laying out the Christian cosmology through an interplanetary adventure that takes us from Mars to Venus and back to Earth, Lewis combined theological reflection with poetic imagination in order to draw his readers inside the Christian story.

One of the most memorable and apologetically significant examples of this comes in *The Silver Chair*. The Green Witch has just denied the existence of a world above ground, implying that the children's ideas about Narnia are nothing more than imaginary projections of the things of Underworld, "mere" metaphors having no relation to what is real, and empirically unverifiable. Puddleglum, having broken the witch's enchantment by stamping on her fire, launches a rebuttal. He observes that, if her world is the only real one, it is not worth living in. What is more, their so-called made-up world seems a "good deal more important" than her real world.

In the eloquent speech of a web-footed Marshwiggle, Lewis is challenging the underlying assumptions of the logical positivists who, like the Green Witch, claimed that nothing is true that cannot be proven by observable fact (and therefore that all statements pertaining to the supernatural are meaningless). Against this position, Lewis—through the mouth of Puddleglum—defends the validity of revelation (in this case a reality beyond what is empirically verifiable). Ultimately, he is claiming that the supernatural exists, that language can express its truth, and that imaginative literature is capable of depicting its reality.

Lewis's achievement

Knowing the value the Christian faith places on the human soul, aware of the separation between faith and learning that had occurred during first half of the 20th century, and believing himself obligated to do what he could for the salvation of Britain, Lewis stepped forward in an attempt to close the gap between the learned community and the community of faith. At a time when

many had ceased to believe that Christianity was a plausible picture of reality, Lewis reasserted its intellectual vitality and integrity. In doing so, he also reasserted Christians' right to enter into the public arena against those who routinely denied them that place.

By a rare combination of theological reflection and poetic imagination, Lewis thus achieved the equally rare distinction of making theology "attractive, exciting and . . . an uproariously fascinating quest," causing once again the dead leaves of Christian doctrine to dance.

Chapter 9

Faith and Grief: Lewis the Iconoclast

Jerry Root and Jennifer Trafton

During the 1952 Christmas season, C. S. Lewis invited Joy Davidman Gresham —an American with whom he had corresponded for over two years—to spend the holidays at his home, the Kilns. Joy asked Lewis to autograph her copy of his book *The Great Divorce*. He wrote, "There are three images in my mind which I must continually forsake and replace by better ones: the false image of God, the false image of my neighbours, and the false image of myself. C. S. Lewis 30 December 1952 (from an unwritten chapter on Iconoclasm)."

Though the planned chapter was never written, this simple inscription captures an idea central to Lewis's life and work: the idea that reality is iconoclastic—it breaks images or idols. An image of God (or of another person, or oneself) formed after reading a book, hearing a lecture or sermon, or having a conversation with a friend may temporarily give greater clarity of thought. But if it is held too tightly, it becomes an idol that must be broken in order to allow a better image to take its place. One might say that Lewis's entire relationship with the woman who eventually became his wife was encapsulated in the words he wrote on that December day.

Surprised by Joy

It was a story no one could have predicted. Lewis first came to know Joy through her fan letters. They met in person at Oxford's East Gate Hotel in

September 1952. Lewis was a 55-year-old scholar and confirmed bachelor. Joy was a 37-year-old ex-Communist Jew from Brooklyn, a recent Christian convert, and a poet whose marriage to writer Bill Gresham was foundering on the rocks. As Joy went through a divorce, moved to England with her two sons, and was diagnosed with cancer, the unlikely romance that blossomed between her and Lewis shocked everyone.

Lewis married Joy secretly in the Oxford registry office in 1956 to keep her from being deported back to the U.S. The next year, he married her again "for real" in a religious ceremony at what was thought to be her deathbed. But once more, reality shattered expectations: Joy's cancer went into remission, and the two enjoyed three very happy years together. Her sharp wit and intelligence matched his own, and she had a deep influence on Lewis's own favorite of all his books, *Till We Have Faces*, as well as *The Four Loves*. Whether she was managing the finances, sharing his love for poetry, or patrolling the woods behind the Kilns with a shotgun to keep away amorous trespassers, Joy turned upside-down the aging scholar's bachelor existence. Lewis remarked to his friend Neville Coghill, "I never expected to have, in my sixties, the happiness that passed me by in my twenties."

Such happiness did not last, however. Joy's cancer returned with a vengeance and took her life on July 13, 1960. Like any bereaved husband, Lewis plunged into grief, even asking whether God was a good God or a "Cosmic Sadist." He weathered his own dark night of the soul by analyzing his suffering in a poignant little book called *A Grief Observed*, published under the pseudonym N. W. Clerk in 1961.

Severe mercy

Over the course of his intellectual pilgrimage, Lewis's realism had led him to a robust form of Christianity that held up under life's stormy weather. He had always insisted on facing up to The Way the World Is, rather than settling for the way he thought it was or wanted it to be.

In the book that established his academic reputation, *The Allegory of Love*, he argued, "The universe is a battlefield in which Change and Permanence contend." Throughout all of the changes in life, the *temporarily* real fades, and what we are left with is the *eternally* real. He wrote in *Surprised by Joy* that God in his mercy kicks out the walls of the temples we build for him because he wants to give us more of himself—that God "cares only for temples building and not for temples built." Before Lewis met Joy, he had been corresponding with his former student Sheldon Vanauken after the death of Vanauken's wife, Davy. In one letter he gently suggested that Vanauken had had a flawed and idealized

view of love—and that "you've been given a severe mercy" (from which came the title of Vanauken's book *A Severe Mercy*).

With Joy's death, these beliefs went head to head with raw experience. The ideas in *A Grief Observed* were no different from those expressed in his earlier books, but this time they were accompanied by the "ouch" of profound personal pain as Lewis's own temples were kicked apart.

Loving Joy (whom he called "H." in the book) had been a continual exercise in shedding false ideals in favor of a real, unpredictable, flesh-and-blood woman. "All reality is iconoclastic," he wrote. "The earthly beloved, even in this life, incessantly triumphs over your mere idea of her." Joy was always pulling him up short "so unexpectedly, by being so thoroughly herself and not me."

Just as his image of Joy had been incomplete, he realized, so had his image of God: "My idea of God is not a divine idea. It has to be shattered time after time. He shatters it himself. He is the great iconoclast. Could we not almost say that this shattering is one of the marks of His presence?"

In words reminiscent of those he had written in Joy's copy of *The Great Divorce* years before, he reasserted his desire to reach beyond his changing perceptions and feelings in order to find what was eternally real: "Not my idea of God, but God. Not my idea of H., but H. Yes, and also not my idea of my neighbour, but my neighbour."

The journey continues

Many people who have seen the movie *Shadowlands* have wondered what happened to Lewis's faith after the shattering effect of loss. One can already see in *A Grief Observed* the rebuilding taking place. Pain did not make him bitter or despairing; it caused him to turn up the volume on themes he'd been talking about for decades.

Just before his own death, Lewis wrote *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (published posthumously). It was a practical, conversational outpouring of thoughts on devotional life to an imaginary correspondent—a book marked by the humility of one who knew from hard experience that, while God is absolute and unchanging, his own understanding of God's ways was not.

Here again, Lewis reminded readers that reality is iconoclastic. But what was earlier an expression of intellectual searching or emotional agony now became a call to worship: "God must continually work as the iconoclast. Every idea of Him we form He must in mercy shatter. The most blessed result of prayer would be to rise thinking, 'But I never knew before. I never dreamed . . .'" God can offer no gift to his creatures greater than the gift of himself. Whether through the mind's quest or the heart's sacrifice, Lewis believed that the Christian journey

must always lead “further up and further in.”

Chapter 10

Western Civilization at the Crossroads: Lewis’s Approach to History

Peter Kreeft

Cars have windshields as well as rearview mirrors. So do civilizations. For the latter, however, windshields are often muddy, and drivers who can peer intelligently through the grime and obscurity are rare. We rightly call them prophets. C. S. Lewis was able to look both ways, forward and back. His imaginative gifts have given readers insight into the past, and at the same time, glimpses into the future.

A look at history

How did this uniquely gifted writer sift and sort the past in order to preview the future?

First, Lewis was desperately critical of any so-called philosophy of history. Unlike the many historians who presumed to be able to isolate a “meaning” or “spirit” of a particular age, Lewis thought such attempts to be futile.

“I cannot convince myself that such ‘spirits’ or ‘meanings’ have much more reality than the pictures we see in the fire,” he wrote in an Oxford history of literature. “The ‘canals’ on Mars vanished when we got stronger lenses.” To discern the meaning of history, Lewis argued, one would have to step outside of history, and this no man can do, just as a driver cannot at the same time study the details in the rearview mirror and read a textbook on the principles of reflected light. We simply cannot step out of history to give it an objective look; we cannot examine time and events in a laboratory.

Guidelines to history

Though Lewis rejected the “grand theories” approach to history, he did hold to certain beliefs about the past— about history and human nature—that make him

a prophet worth hearing today.

In the last two centuries, most intellectuals have abandoned any notion of unchanging truth, especially in any description of the human person. Human nature is variable, they say, as variable in "spirit" as it is in "body," responsive to the environment and largely determined by it.

Lewis affirmed that our accidental qualities (height, weight, color, etc.) may change through history, but our *essence* never changes. Modern man therefore continues to make the same essential mistakes, is subject to the same addictions, sins the same sins, and reaps the same whirlwinds as his ancestors. The only changes in man's essence were the Fall and the Redemption. No other development has or will change our nature. "When poisons become fashionable they do not cease to kill" was Lewis's warning that we are not so much advanced or different from our predecessors. A moral link connects all people of all ages. On the first page of *The Allegory of Love* Lewis writes, "Humanity does not pass through phases as a train passes through stations; being alive it has the privilege of always moving yet never leaving anything behind. Whatever we have been, in some sort we are still."

And from Letter 146, written in 1931: "I find nothing obsolete. The silly things the great men said were as silly then as they are now; the wise ones are as wise now as they were then."

Moral perfectionism

Just as Lewis denied change in the *essence* of the human person, he also denied the popular belief in *accidental* change for the better, sometimes called Progressivism or Universal Evolutionism. It was simply a mistake, he taught, to believe that our century is spiritually superior to previous centuries.

The mistake was commonly made by comparing technology to people. In the current century, telephone service has improved and electricity has replaced steam power, but such technical progress does not mean that people are morally improved. Nor does it mean that old moral rules are by their mere age inferior. If water stands too long it stinks. To infer thence that whatever stands long must be unwholesome is to be the victim of metaphor. Space does not stink because it has preserved its three dimensions from the beginning. The square of the hypotenuse has not gone moldy by continuing to equal the sum of the squares of the other two sides. Love is not dishonored by constancy.

Paradoxically, Lewis's Christianity gives him a much more radically progressive outlook than evolutionism, for it calls on us not just to become better people but to participate in divine life: an infinitely greater transformation than any current secular fad!

What have we lost?

If the Enlightenment helped the modern world discard notions of original sin and moral absolutes, it also uprooted the foundations of truth and goodness. Unlike the Medieval era, all we have left are vague political and psychological notions of what works efficiently. Technology has replaced religion as our civilization's *summum bonum*. Naturalism has replaced supernaturalism. Subjectivism has defined a new age of moral relativity.

The Abolition of Man contains the most important and enlightening single statement about our civilization that I have ever read:

> There is something which unites magic and applied science while separating both from the 'wisdom' of earlier ages: for the wise men of old the cardinal problem had been how to conform the soul to reality, and the solution had been knowledge, self-discipline, and virtue; for magic and applied science alike the problem is how to subdue reality to the wishes of men [and] the solution is a technique.

Aristotle listed technique, technical knowledge, or know-how third on the hierarchy of values after contemplation of truth and practical knowledge or knowledge for acting. Modernity simply turns this ancient hierarchy upside down.

The future

From this bleak vantage point, where are we going? What does the future hold?

Lewis claims no crystal ball, and is highly suspicious of all who do. But he surely believes that the spirit of reductionism will continue to deconstruct the reality of heaven and hell, as humans continue to aggrandize themselves as the source and end of all meaning.

"There is much rash idealizations of past ages," Lewis wrote, "and I do not wish to encourage more of it. Our ancestors were cruel, lecherous, greedy and stupid—like ourselves . . . but was civilization often in serious danger of disappearing?" No, he answered, but now it is. Civilization to be safe must be "put second" to the higher values of God's kingdom. As long as civilization is supreme, it is supremely vulnerable.

Lewis was equally suspicious of mid-century collectivism, especially the mob psychology of the fascists in Europe. It seemed to him that this strange

submergency of the individual into the masses was a kind of death-wish, a suicide of the person. In such a condition, who could feel the joy, the inconsolable longing after God to which Augustine gave classic expression ("Thou has made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee")? In place of this genuine longing for God, the modern person has sought pleasure in violence and lust.

Like the biblical prophets, Lewis is no doomsayer, for that would make him a pessimistic determinist akin to his modern progressivist opponents. Like the biblical prophets Lewis draws us a road map, points us to a crossroads, a hope, and offers us a choice: to struggle for the truth in all its fullness, or to surrender the pursuit of truth to modern versions of nihilism.

Lewis reminds us that the choice is more than academic. Spiritual and physical destruction both loom large, and only minutes away. To those concerned with peace in our world, with survival, with life, Lewis would give the following advice:

> Perhaps the world will turn to God. Perhaps a few Abrahams will appear to intercede with God for our modern Sodoms and Gomorrahs, and perhaps God will find enough righteous men in them to spare them. They almost made it last time—if there had been only ten good men in them, God would have spared two cities! The most important thing for each of us to do to save the world . . . is to practice righteousness, to love God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength and our neighbor as ourself. You the individual can make the difference.

Chapter 11

C. S. Lewis Superstar: How He Became a Rock Star for Evangelicals

Bob Smietana, with Rebecca Barnes

At first glance, C. S. Lewis and Elvis Presley seem like polar opposites. But a closer look will show that these two cultural icons have a lot in common.

Like Elvis, C. S. Lewis had been a soldier. Both men came to fame on the radio. Both men's homes (Graceland and the Kilns) have become pilgrimage sites. Both left behind estates now valued in the millions. And both rose from relative obscurity—Elvis, a Mississippi truck driver, and Lewis, a tutor at Oxford—to become larger-than-life figures profiled in books and movies and beloved by legions of adoring fans. Like Elvis, even after death, Lewis remains a superstar.

Clive Staples Lewis was anything but a classic evangelical, socially or theologically. He smoked cigarettes and a pipe, and he regularly visited pubs to drink beer with friends. Though he shared basic Christian beliefs with evangelicals, he didn't subscribe to biblical inerrancy or penal substitution. He believed in purgatory and baptismal regeneration. How did someone with such a checkered pedigree come to be a theological Elvis Presley, adored by evangelicals?

The problem of pain

The journey begins in 1940, when the world was teetering on the brink of collapse. The Nazis were rampaging across Europe. France had fallen, Hitler had signed a nonaggression pact with the Soviet Union, and only Great Britain stood in the way of Nazi domination of Europe.

Theologian J. I. Packer was a schoolboy in England at the time. He recalls being taught about "inevitable progress . . . fueled by scientists who were churning out the idea that science was going to transform the world. Science and education would make everything wonderfully different."

Such liberal idealism quickly ran into sin-drenched reality. Packer notes dryly, "In the early months of the Second World War, the plausibility of that began to diminish rapidly."

Into this void stepped Lewis, a former atheist and current member of the Church of England. Known to his friends as Jack, his literary success so far had been uninspiring. Sales of his book *The Pilgrim's Regress* had disappointed the publisher, J. M. Dent & Sons. In *Clive Staples Lewis: A Dramatic Life*, William Griffin notes that when Lewis sent Dent a manuscript of his science fiction novel *Out of the Silent Planet*, the publisher returned it.

But Ashley Sampson, editor of a theological series called the Christian Challenge, had appreciated *The Pilgrim's Regress*. Sampson asked Lewis to write a book about suffering. Lewis agreed, and in it, rather than promoting "inevitable progress," he argued that pain and suffering are inevitable.

Lewis drew on Scripture and Christian tradition to make a rather old-fashioned point. "We are very shy nowadays of even mentioning heaven," Lewis

wrote. He added:

> We are afraid of the jeer about ‘pie in the sky’ and of being told that we are trying to ‘escape’ from the duty of making a happy world here and now into dreams of a happy world elsewhere. But either there is ‘pie in the sky,’ or there is not. If there is not, then Christianity is false, for this doctrine is written into its whole fabric. If there is, then this truth, like any other, must be faced, whether it is useful at political meetings or not.

On the radio

The Problem of Pain became Lewis’s first publishing success. Soon after its release, Lewis received a letter from J. W. Welch, head of religious programming at the BBC. Would Lewis consider recording a series?

The idea astounded Lewis, who, Griffin notes, “hardly listened to the radio and could not remember having heard a religious program.” Welch suggested two options: a series about Christian influence on modern literature or “a positive restatement of Christian doctrines in lay language.” The second appealed to Lewis. He wrote to Welch, telling him he would be glad to help, provided the programs could wait until the summer holidays.

In August 1941, Lewis began a series of four 15-minute programs for the BBC, with the assistance of a Presbyterian minister named Eric Fenn. That first series, “Right and Wrong: A Clue to the Meaning of the Universe,” was followed by talks on “What Christians Believe” and “Christian Behavior.” The three series would form the basis for Lewis’s masterwork of apologetics, *Mere Christianity*. He would appear 29 times on the radio, each with an estimated audience of 600,000 people.

The radio talks had to be brief, precisely scripted, approved by BBC censors, and then followed to the letter. Any unexpected pauses, as Justin Phillips pointed out in *C. S. Lewis at the BBC*, could have allowed the signal to be interrupted by the German propagandist “Lord Haw-Haw,” broadcasting on the same frequency. Fenn coached Lewis in the art of writing for radio. This skill sharpened Lewis’s writing, says Walter Hooper, Lewis’s literary executor. “Lewis was born with a talent for clarity and impatience with vagueness,” he writes, “but the BBC’s contribution was requiring Lewis to write short, crisp sentences, each of which made a precise contribution to Christian theology.”

The talks made Lewis a household name in Britain, says Christopher Mitchell, director of the Marion E. Wade Center at Wheaton College. “With the exception of Churchill,” Mitchell says, “Lewis was the most recognizable voice in

Britain."

Jerry Root, associate director of the Billy Graham Institute for Strategic Evangelism at Wheaton College, says that Lewis's academic credentials gave him "some credibility right off the bat." Also, Lewis had something to say when the opportunity came to him. "This wasn't a guy who fumbled when the spotlight shined on him," says Root.

Lewis's popularity grew through another technological innovation. "His books came out at a time when trade paperbacks were becoming popular," Root says. "Consequently, they were disseminated easily because he already had a [built-in] audience from the radio."

Concurrently with the broadcast talks, *The Guardian*, a Church of England newspaper, began running another of Lewis's literary inventions—a series of fictional letters from Screwtape, a senior devil, to his nephew, an entry-level tempter named Wormwood. The letters ran once a week from May to November 1941. Lewis's payment: Ł62.

When they were published in book form in the spring of 1942, *The Screwtape Letters* became an instant success. From 1941 to 1947, readers in the United Kingdom and the United States bought a million copies of Lewis's books, propelling him all the way to the December 1947 cover of *Time* magazine.

The timeliness of Lewis's message was matched by his clarity as a writer.

"You can't impact people if they don't know what you are saying," says Mitchell. "Lewis had just remarkable instincts about what to address and what not to address and how to address it."

In his fiction, especially The Chronicles of Narnia, Mitchell says, Lewis was subtler in his presentation of Christianity and talked about "smuggling the gospel past watchful dragons." In his apologetics, Lewis dispensed with subtlety. "He was not trying to be clever," Mitchell says. "He was not trying to engage in a nonoffensive way or leave some measure of ambiguity. He was not concerned about putting people off. He was concerned about communicating as clearly and as forcefully as he could what Christians really do say."

The writers and editors at *Time* in the 1940s and '50s seemed captivated by Lewis, running eight substantial articles on him from 1943 to 1958. These included reviews of *The Screwtape Letters* (1943), *Christian Behavior* (1944), *The Great Divorce* (1946), *Surprised by Joy* (1956), and *Till We Have Faces* (1957), as well as a cover story, "Don Versus Devil" (1947), a story on Lewis's first lecture as professor of medieval and Renaissance English literature at Cambridge (1958), and a recap of an essay Lewis wrote for *The Christian Herald* on faith and outer space.

The stories in *Time* are nearly unanimous in their praise. "Men who can write

readable books about religion are almost as rare as saints. One such rarity is the Oxford don, Clive Staples Lewis," wrote the reviewer of *The Great Divorce*.

"He would be the last to claim that what he says is new, but, like another eloquent and witty popularizer of Christianity, the late G. K. Chesterton, he has a talent for putting old-fashioned truths into a modern idiom," the author of "Don Versus Devil" wrote. "With erudition, good humor, and skill, Lewis is writing about religion for a generation of religion-hungry readers brought up on a diet of scientific jargon and Freudian clichés."

Narnia

The one area *Time* ignored was Narnia. These books came out once a year from 1950 to '56, again making Lewis a household name, says Packer. "Lots of people who weren't Christians loved the Narnia stories," he says. "They sold enormously from the start, and they really put him on the map in England and in the States. Previously, he'd just been one of the better-known Christian writers among those who read Christian writers, which wasn't the majority of the population."

The strange thing about the Narnia books is that Lewis never had children. According to his biographers, he was never particularly fond of them, either. But he had a rare ability to give "imaginative body to Christian doctrine," says Mitchell.

The Chronicles also shaped Lewis's legacy, says James Como, author of *Branches to Heaven: the Geniuses of C. S. Lewis*: "Lewis's repute these days . . . very often radiates out from Narnia. Once Narnia hit, there seemed to be a focus on a certain Lewis—the children's writer, the man of enormous imagination—and we get this second wind of rock stardom that goes on through the 1950s."

During this period, Lewis began to build relationships with American evangelicals. In 1953, Clyde Kilby, professor of English at Wheaton, visited Lewis at Oxford, and the two began corresponding. Two years later, Carl Henry, the first editor of *Christianity Today*, contacted Lewis about contributing to the magazine. Lewis declined but wished Henry well.

Lewis did appear in the magazine's pages several times during its first five years. The first time was in 1958, in Kilby's article "C. S. Lewis and His Critics," which defended Lewis against a critique by W. Norman Pittinger in *The Christian Century*. Lewis's orthodoxy and the straightforward approach of his writing bothered Pittinger.

"In all my reading of Lewis," Kilby wrote, "I think one of his best qualities is his avoidance of technically theological language. It is the very thing which has

made him spiritually thrilling to thousands of people around the world."

Mitchell says that Lewis appealed to evangelicals because his conversion was so much like their own. "He had an evangelical experience, this personal encounter with the God of the universe."

Speaking about *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis's spiritual autobiography, Mitchell adds, "Lewis takes the entire book to get to theism and unpacks it carefully, but his actual movement to Christ happens in about two or three sentences. That is all he says. At the end of the day, Lewis believed that in Christianity you are confronted with a person that you either say yes to or no to . . . and that is very evangelical."

Lewis's standing as an intellectual also appealed to evangelicals, because so few academics gave Christianity much credence. "He came along at a time when the assumption was we had basically gotten rid of Christianity, that no one took it seriously," says Mitchell.

Banking the coals

As he grew older, Lewis feared that he would be "one of those men who was a famous writer in his forties and dies alone." While those fears never came to pass, his writing fell out of fashion in the 1960s, says Como, and sales of his books slowed. "*Honest to God* comes out, and the '60s happened," Como says. Lewis was no longer seen as relevant. When Lewis died on Friday, November 22, 1963, the same day that JFK and Aldous Huxley died, it appeared that his influence on the broader culture would fade. In the next decade, the civil rights movement, Vietnam, and the drug and sexual revolutions thrust aside interest in classic apologetics or children's literature for many readers.

But under the cultural radar, a number of critical things were happening.

First, "the indefatigable and indispensable Walter Hooper was at work, editing Lewis's unpublished works," says Como. Hooper, who became literary executor of the Lewis estate, began compiling Lewis's articles, letters, sermons, and other material into book form and negotiating with a new publisher, Collins Publishers.

"My primary job was to edit new Lewis books and make sure the publishers kept Lewis's other books in print," Hooper told CT. "I made it clear that Collins would get a new Lewis book on the condition they reprinted two books that had gone out of print. It was tough going at first, but eventually they understood that Lewis would be around for a long time."

Consequently, though his books were not at the forefront of cultural conversation, thousands still had ready access.

Meanwhile, at Wheaton College, Kilby compiled *A Mind Awake*, the first

anthology of Lewis's work. He also began collecting Lewis's books and papers, a collection now housed at the Marion E. Wade Center at Wheaton. Kilby, says Como, was "planting seeds and keeping the coals burning"—passing Lewis on to a new generation of readers.

In 1969, devotees organized the New York C. S. Lewis Society, the first of its kind. Others soon followed, creating a network where devotees of Lewis could congregate and discuss his work. Como, one of the founders of the New York society, says these groups provided a way to pass on Lewis's legacy. "They had read Lewis in the 1940s and 1950s, and they started to remind those of us who were younger how great this man was," Como says.

The real heroes, says Douglas Gresham, C. S. Lewis's stepson, are parents.

"The children who first read The Chronicles of Narnia and loved them have read them to their children, and those children are now reading them to their children," Gresham told CT. "This starts youngsters off with an appreciation of literature, and they will turn to Jack's more grownup works later in life."

During the early 1970s, popular Christian authors such as apologist Josh McDowell and the newly converted Chuck Colson wove Lewis's works into their own. McDowell, in his book *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, made use of Lewis's famous description of Jesus as "liar, lunatic, or Lord."

Thin places

This was an era of renewed interest in the life of the mind among Christian college students, the era of Paul Little's apologetic works and John Stott's classic, *Basic Christianity*. On college campuses, Lewis's books had a "profound impact" for decades on InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF), says Bob Fryling, executive director of InterVarsity Press. Lewis's books were (and still are) read by Christian students and others curious about the faith. IVCF used Lewis at evangelistic discussions in college dorms. "Outside of the Scriptures themselves, Lewis is probably the greatest authority and example of a thoughtful Christian faith," says Fryling.

By 1977, Lewis's books were selling 2 million copies a year. Once again, he was on his way to stardom. Seven years later, Lewis was back on the BBC, this time portrayed by actor Joss Ackland in *Shadowlands*, a film about Lewis's romance with Joy Davidman Gresham. Soon after, the BBC broadcasted a live-action version of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

By the late 1980s, Lewis seemed to be popping up everywhere, even in Tom Wolfe's *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. Phyllis Tickle, an author and former religion editor for *Publishers Weekly*, recalls that in the early 1990s, Lewis's books began to appear on the religion bestseller lists of secular bookstores. This trend

continued after the Hollywood version of *Shadowlands*, starring Anthony Hopkins and Debra Winger, was released in 1994. According to Gary Ink, librarian at *Publishers Weekly*, *Mere Christianity* has been on the religion bestseller list ever since. According to HarperCollins, Lewis's publisher, sales of his books have increased 125 percent since 2001.

Part of Lewis's current appeal, says Tickle, is a postmodern interest in "thin places"—places where the physical world and the spiritual world meet—and in myth that makes sense of life in a way that rational thinking can't. For their dose of myth, postmoderns turn to *The Matrix*, The Lord of the Rings, *Star Wars*, Harry Potter, and, of course, Narnia.

"Fantasy allows you to explain and grasp and integrate into your life things that are not logical," she says. "Which is not to say that we're fantasizing about our lives. It is to say that we can tell each other truth in story."

Though Lewis's reputation was revived through his apologetic works, currently (as in the 1950s) his imaginative literature is capturing the attention of evangelicals and others in this latest phase of his rock-star-like popularity. The Hollywood release of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* played no small part.

The question of God

In the 1940s, Lewis wrote about God to a generation "raised on Freudian clichés." In 2004, he took on Freud himself—in a PBS series called "The Question of God." The series was based on a more substantive book by Armand Nicholi, a Harvard psychiatrist who had for 35 years been exploring the meaning of life with his students through Freud and Lewis. That series has now become an off-Broadway play called Freud's Last Session.

"Who would have guessed," Como asks, "that Sigmund Freud—one of the intellectual giants of the 20th century—would now be seen on equal footing with C. S. Lewis?"

Hollywood was certainly convinced that Lewis was hot enough to produce three Narnia movies. But Hollywood's interest comes and goes, and that interest depends a lot on mere box office receipts.

Yet whether Lewis sells in Hollywood or on the stage will be beside the point for most evangelicals. The Oxford don with a mixed pedigree is not likely to go out of favor with a movement that stands for classic Christian faith and loves a good story.

Epilogue

The Jack I Knew: A Conversation with Lewis's Stepson

When Douglas Gresham was eight years old, his mother, Joy Davidman, introduced him and his brother David to the man who would eventually become their stepfather: C. S. Lewis, known to his friends and family as "Jack." Gresham chronicled this remarkable relationship in *Lenten Lands: My Childhood with Joy Davidman & C. S. Lewis* (Macmillan, 1988). In addition to serving as the Creative and Artistic Director of the C. S. Lewis Company and co-producer of the film version of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Gresham has recently published a new biography of Lewis, *Jack's Life: The Life Story of C. S. Lewis* (Broadman & Holman, 2005). In it, he calls Jack "the finest man and best Christian I have ever known."

In the introduction to your new book, you write, "This is merely the simple recounting of the story of what I believe to be the extraordinary life of an extraordinary man." What are you trying to offer in your biography of Jack that is different from the other biographies of him that have been published?

All too often, Jack's personality and his traits of honor, courage, duty, and commitment seem to get lost in the verbiage that clutters the pages of books about him. His wonderful sense of humor, his consciousness of his own sinfulness and of his salvation from it—these are missing from most writings about him, yet they were the essential characteristics of his personality.

I suppose I have tried to write about what sort of man he really was.

Your book focuses on the private, home life of Jack, with his public life taking place off stage, so to speak. In what ways did Jack have a far more demanding domestic life than most Oxford students and dons of his day?

Jack's unconditional acceptance of the responsibility to care for the mother and younger sister of Paddy Moore, his friend and fellow soldier who died in the war, resulted in his living a very difficult life for the 30 years that he stood by his commitment. Initially, when he was a student at Oxford, he did his best to provide a home and sustenance for this little family out of the meager student's

allowance that his father provided. This allowance would have been ample for one undergraduate living in college, but for a young man trying to support a family, it was a pitifully small amount at the time.

In addition to financial difficulties, he was always working, either at his studies, to which he was very dedicated, or in the succession of temporary homes that they inhabited. Jack found himself not only a student, but also a domestic servant, a handyman, carpet layer, occasional carpenter, removalist (every time they moved from one residence to another it was Jack who did the hard work), assistant cook, and so forth.

Amazingly, he was able to put his practical skills into a wide variety of tasks while still keeping up with his academic pursuits, and all this without complaint or resentment.

Jack's brother Warnie thought it was a waste for such a brilliant man to be peeling potatoes and cleaning dishes all those years. How do you think such a life of domestic responsibility helped form Jack into the kind of person who could write *Mere Christianity*, create Narnia, and be the spiritual shepherd of millions?

Nobody ever learns how strong temptation can be until they have overcome it. Jack overcame many of the temptations that beset us every day, and having done so he gained a great understanding of the nature of temptation and also of people and their behavior. The private Jack was the man who fought against anger, impatience, intolerance, and all the other daily temptations, and mostly defeated them. The public Jack was the man who then went to the trouble of writing down all that he had learned from those battles so that others would benefit.

How did Jack's sense of knightly honor and chivalry, which comes across so clearly in his writings, affect how he lived his daily life and how he treated people?

Those concepts are very much evident in the way that he lived his life from moment to moment. Jack was always ready to defend those who were defenseless, to help the helpless. He would step in anonymously to help all sorts of people in all sorts of need. Jack made his sense of charity a watchword of his life, and there are many today whose education is owed to anonymous donations from him. Jack paid for my schooling as one of his many charitable exercises long before he and Mother were married.

His sense of duty is exemplified by the fact that at the age of 18 he

volunteered to fight in World War I when he had no need to do so [because he was an Irishman]. He felt that it was his duty to defend the country which had given him so much. “Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends,” and Jack laid his life down day by day for the benefit of all whom he encountered and on a wider scale by writing his books. Who could count the millions of people whom his daily living has deeply affected?

What is your favorite story from Jack’s life?

I am rather fond of the time that he took 32 German prisoners during the First World War. Jack and his platoon were approaching a shell-shattered French farmhouse, and his experienced and battle-wise Sergeant Ayers didn’t like the look of the place. It was too quiet and inoffensive looking. So he suggested that Jack take half the platoon and conceal themselves in front of the house while he, Sergeant Ayers, took the other half and stormed the house from the back.

Jack and his men waited under scant cover while Sergeant Ayers and his men stormed into the back of the house roaring at the top of their voices and firing their rifles at the windows and doors. Immediately, the German soldiers inside came bursting out of the front door. Jack and his men immediately rose to fire, but the Germans threw their weapons away and raised their hands, crying for mercy. At once, Jack emerged from cover and calmly walked up to the two terrified German officers who were leading the men, accepted their surrender, and formally took them prisoner along with their men.

When all the fuss was over and the Germans had been sent under escort back to the prisoner-marshalling area, Sergeant Ayers gently reproved Jack, saying, “Sir, you might have at least drawn your pistol.” Jack had to admit that the thought had never even crossed his mind. He had to all intents and purposes been unarmed all the time.

Describe a typical day at the Kilns when you lived there with Jack and Joy.

It would often start before dawn as I heard Jack rise at about five and make his early morning cup of tea in the kitchen (my bedroom was off the kitchen). Jack would take a tea tray to his study and begin work on his correspondence. He would stay there until about 8:00, when he would join my mother for breakfast. Then he would return to his study to work or finish writing letters. I would go about my own pursuits, perhaps helping Fred (Paxford) in the gardens or paddling my kayak on the lake.

Lunch was at 1:00, and I was expected to be on time. Afterwards, Jack would

usually go out for a walk. Sometimes I would accompany him, but more often he went his way and I returned to my own adventures. In bad weather, I would stay in the house and read, but it would be very severe conditions indeed that kept Jack indoors. Sometimes he would meet friends for a pint in a pub somewhere, then walk home and retire once more to his study, writing or correcting exam papers, or doing whatever duty was upon him at the time.

At 4:00, Jack and sometimes Warnie would join Mother for tea in the "common room," and I would come in around then to raid the larder for whatever goodies were not guarded. Then the grownups went back to work, and I returned to the serious business of growing up, which I did reluctantly I have to admit.

Dinner time was 7:00, and the family once again gathered at the dining room table. After dinner, Jack would join Mother, and they would read, play Scrabble, or enjoy conversation until it was time for bed. Warnie often joined them, and sometimes I was there too. But more often, I was adventuring either in a book or outside. Finally, the day would close on a late evening cup of tea with some biscuits or cake, and then to bed.

You recount in your book how difficult a relationship Jack had with his own father. How do you think this influenced his relationship with you as your stepfather?

I don't think it did. Jack was sufficiently self-aware to swiftly apprehend any behavioral patterns in himself that may have originated in his childhood, and if they were disadvantageous, he would curb them. The one he had most difficulty with was his constant fear of penury, a trait that he shared with Warnie. His technique for dealing with it was to give away as much money as was asked of him whenever it was asked or whenever he became aware of dire need in someone else.

What kinds of things did you and Jack do together?

Many things—walking, sawing firewood, discussions, entertaining visitors, all kinds of everyday things. We talked about almost everything under the sun.

Did he ever talk to you openly about his grief after your mother's death?

It was rather more that we shared our grief with each other. If we tried to talk about it, though, we would both dissolve in tears, and that was a very

embarrassing experience for those brought up to believe in the “stiff upper lip” philosophy of English schools of the time.

What is the most important thing Jack taught you?

To think (and I mean really think) rather than to emote, and that both men and women must learn to control their emotions rather than allowing their emotions to control them.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Timeline: Lewis’s Life and Works

His life
Nov. 29, 1898: Born in Belfast, Ireland

1901: *Queen Victoria dies*

1908: Mother Flora dies of cancer
1911: Ceases to be a Christian while studying at Cherboug House, a preparatory school for Malvern College

1912: *The Titanic sinks*
1914–18: *World War I*

1914–17: Studies with W. T. Kirkpatrick (“the Great Knock”); during this time he reads George MacDonald’s *Phantastes*, which “baptizes” his imagination
1917: Begins studies at University College, Oxford; meets Paddy Moore and his mother Mrs. Janie Moore; joins army and is sent to France
1918: Wounded in action and hospitalized in London; Paddy Moore is killed in battle

1919: Returns to University College, Oxford
1924: Begins tutorial work at University College
1925: Elected Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford
1925: G. K. Chesterton publishes *The Everlasting Man*
1926: Meets J. R. R. Tolkien
1929: Confesses on his knees in his Magdalen rooms that "God is God"; father Albert dies in Belfast
1930: Lewis and Moores move into the Kilns
1931: Accepts truth of Christianity while riding to Whipsnade Zoo
1932: Warren Lewis retires from the army and moves into the Kilns
1933: Circle of friends called "the Inklings" forms
1936: Meets Charles Williams
1939: First evacuated children arrive at the Kilns

1939–45: *World War II*

1941: Gives lectures on Christianity for the Royal Air Force
1941: Preaches famous sermon "The Weight of Glory" at the church of St. Mary's in Oxford
1941–44: Gives 25 talks on BBC radio; these talks will eventually become *Mere Christianity*
1942: First meeting of the Oxford Socratic Club

1945: *United Nations founded*

1945: Charles Williams dies
1946: Awarded honorary Doctor of Divinity by University of St. Andrews
1947: Featured on the cover of *Time* magazine
1949: George Orwell publishes *1984*
1950: Receives first letter from Joy Davidman Gresham
1951: Mrs. Moore dies
1952: Meets Joy Davidman during her trip to London
1953: Joy moves to England with her sons David and Douglas
1954: J. R. R. Tolkien publishes The Lord of the Rings
1954: Accepts Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge University
1956: Marries Joy in a legal ceremony

1957: *U.S.S.R. launches* Sputnik *into orbit*

1957: Ecclesiastical marriage at Joy's hospital bed; Joy's cancer goes into remission
1960: Joy dies
Nov. 22, 1963: Dies at the Kilns and is buried in the parish churchyard

Nov. 22, 1963: *John F. Kennedy is assassinated*

1973: Death of brother Warren Lewis

His works
1919: *Spirits in Bondage: A Circle of Lyrics* [under pseudonym Clive Hamilton]
1926: *Dymer* [under pseudonym Clive Hamilton]
1933: *The Pilgrim's Regress: An Allegorical Apology for Christianity, Reason and Romanticism*
1936: *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*
1938: *Out of the Silent Planet*
1939: *Rehabilitations and Other Essays*
1939: *The Personal Heresy: A Controversy* [with E. M. W. Tillyard]
1940: *The Problem of Pain*
1942: *The Screwtape Letters*
1942: *A Preface to 'Paradise Lost'*
1943: *Perelandra*
1943: *The Abolition of Man*
1945: *That Hideous Strength*
1946: *The Great Divorce*
1947: *Miracles*
1948: *Arthurian Torso* [poems by Charles Williams with commentary by C. S. Lewis]
1949: *Transposition and Other Addresses*
1950: *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*
1951: *Prince Caspian*
1952: *Mere Christianity*, combining Broadcast Talks (1942), *Christian Behaviour* (1943), and *Beyond Personality* (1944)
1952: *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*
1953: *The Silver Chair*
1954: *The Horse and His Boy*
1954: *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama*

1955: *The Magician's Nephew*
1955: *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life*
1956: *The Last Battle*
1956: *Till We Have Faces*
1958: *Reflections on the Psalms*
1960: *The Four Loves*
1960: *Studies in Words*
1960: *The World's Last Night and Other Essays*
1961: *A Grief Observed* [under pseudonym N. W. Clerk]
1961: *An Experiment in Criticism*
1962: *They Asked for a Paper: Papers and Addresses*
1964: *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*
1964: *The Discarded Image*

Posthumous collections include: *Poems* (1964), *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, ed. W. H. Lewis (1966), *Of Other Worlds* (1966), *Christian Reflections* (1967), *God in the Dock* (1970), *Fern-Seed and Elephants* (1975), *The Dark Tower and Other Stories* (1977)

Appendix 2

Recommended Resources

Since the number of books about C. S. Lewis has risen to flood levels, we asked the experts in this issue to give us their recommendations for the best ones.

The unanimous choice for the "must-have" reference book on C. S. Lewis's life and work is Walter Hooper's *C. S. Lewis: A Companion and Guide* (HarperCollins, 1996). Hooper's authoritative 940-page volume gives a thorough overview of Lewis's life, major works, key ideas, and bibliography, as well as a helpful "Who's Who" and "What's What."

In addition to the numerous collections of Lewis's writings that Walter Hooper has already edited, he has spent several decades collecting and editing Lewis's letters, culminating in the definitive three-volume *Collected Letters* published by HarperCollins (2004, 2005). While you're perusing Lewis's extensive correspondence, don't forget his *Letters to Children*, edited by Lyle W. Dorsett and Marjorie Lamp Mead (Simon & Schuster, 1995).

Jack: A Life of C. S. Lewis, written by Lewis's former student and friend George Sayer (Crossway, 1988, 1994), is generally acknowledged to be the best overall biography. David C. Downing's *The Most Reluctant Convert* (InterVarsity, 2002) illuminates Lewis's intellectual journey to faith; Lyle W. Dorsett's *Seeking the Secret Place: The Spiritual Formation of C. S. Lewis* (Brazos Press, 2004) traces Lewis's spiritual development; and Alan Jacobs's new biography, *The Narnian: The Life and Imagination of C. S. Lewis* (HarperCollins, 2005) explores his imaginative development.

Lewis's stepson Douglas Gresham does a wonderful job of humanizing Lewis in his biography *Jack's Life: The Life Story of C. S. Lewis* (Broadman & Holman, 2005), a book that would be appropriate for younger readers as well. *C. S. Lewis: Images of His World*, the classic pictorial biography by Clyde S. Kilby and Douglas Gilbert (new edition by Eerdmans, 2005), is full of photographs of Lewis's family, friends, and favorite haunts.

You can learn a lot about Lewis by following him through his favorite books. A top-notch group of scholars does just that in *Reading the Classics with C. S. Lewis*, edited by Thomas Martin (Baker, 2000).

Another fascinating way of getting to know Lewis is by reading the

recollections of those who knew him. Two classic collections of these remembrances are *C. S. Lewis at the Breakfast Table*, edited by James T. Como (Macmillan, 1979) and *Light on C. S. Lewis*, edited by Jocelyn Gibb (Geoffrey Bles Ltd., 1965).

Humphrey Carpenter's *The Inklings* (George Allen & Unwin, 1978) and Colin Duriez's *Tolkien and C. S. Lewis: the Gift of Friendship* (Paulist Press, 2003) both provide insight into some of Lewis's closest friendships.

As you explore the realms of Narnia, you can ask for no better guide than Paul Ford's encyclopedic *Companion to Narnia: A Complete Guide to the Magical World of C. S. Lewis's The Chronicles of Narnia* (HarperCollins, revised ed. 2005). For a general introduction to Lewis's thought and fiction, Clyde S. Kilby's pioneering work *The Christian World of C. S. Lewis* (Eerdmans, 1964) is still one of the best.

Here are a few other resources to add to your library:

David Downing, *Into the Wardrobe: C. S. Lewis and the Narnia Chronicles* (Jossey-Bass, 2005); *Into the Region of Awe: Mysticism in C. S. Lewis* (InterVarsity, 2005); and *Planets in Peril: A Critical Study of C. S. Lewis's Ransom Trilogy* (Univ. of Mass., 1992).

Bruce Edwards, *Not a Tame Lion: The Spiritual World of Narnia* (Tyndale, 2005) and *Further Up and Further In: Understanding C. S. Lewis's* The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (Broadman & Holman, 2005).

Wayne Martindale and Jerry Root, eds., *The Quotable Lewis* (Tyndale, 1990).

Doris Myers, *C. S. Lewis in Context* (Kent State Univ., 1994) and *Bareface: A Guide to C. S. Lewis's Last Novel* (Univ. of Missouri, 2004).

Leland Ryken and Marjorie Lamp Mead, *A Reader's Guide through the Wardrobe: Exploring C. S. Lewis's Classic Story* (InterVarsity, 2005).

Peter J. Schakel, *The Way into Narnia* (Eerdmans, 2005) and *Word and Story in C. S. Lewis*, edited with Charles A. Huttar (Univ. of Missouri, 1991).

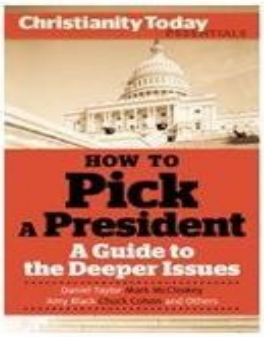
Jeffrey D. Schultz and John West, Jr., *The C. S. Lewis Readers Encyclopedia* (Zondervan, 1998).

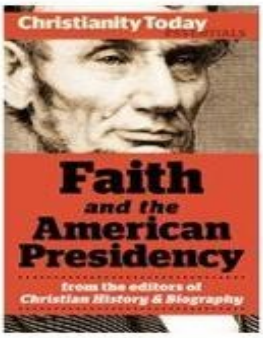
More bibliographic recommendations, as well as information on Lewis and related writers, can be found at Bruce Edwards's *C. S. Lewis & The Inklings* resource site. Another very popular website, full of photos, biographical information, articles, news, and forums, is *Into the Wardrobe*.

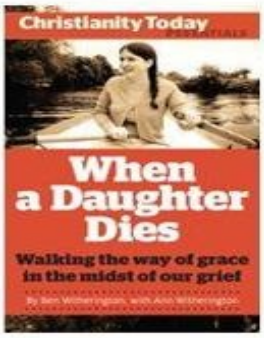
Finally, no list of C. S. Lewis resources is complete with mentioning the ultimate resource for any serious researcher: the Marion E. Wade Center at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois, which houses a vast collection of books, periodicals, photographs, letters, first editions, dissertations, and memorabilia. Besides, where else can you stick your head inside the wardrobe itself?

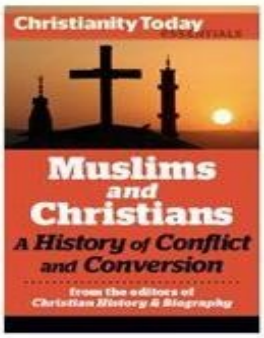
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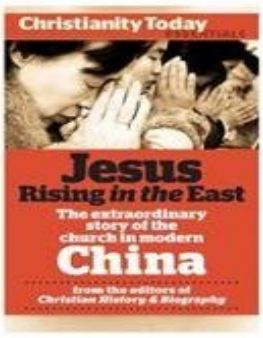
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