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A Fairy-Tale for Grown-Ups

Christian Orthodoxy in the Theology of C.S. Lewis

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MA THESIS

DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM

1998

NICHOLAS SEWARD

- 2 NOV 1999

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates C.S. Lewis as one of the most successful Christian apologists of this century. It begins by looking at his influence as part of a movement of lay orthodoxy in the twentieth century, and examining some of the reasons for the emergence of that movement. In the context of this discussion, several key influences are explored. Charles Williams and G.K. Chesterton are examined as contemporaries who helped shape Lewis' specifically Christian theology, Edwyn Bevan as an influence on his philosophy of God, Baron von Hügel as a beacon of light in the Modernist crisis, and Rudolf Otto as the primary source of Lewis' synthesis of the rational and the non-rational in his theology.

The thesis then goes on to explore three areas where Lewis had a distinctive contribution to make to modern orthodox belief. The first of these is the assertion that he was making an attempt to resurrect Romanticism in some form in theology, in contrast to such figures as Karl Barth, for whom Romantic philosophy was part of the entire problem of the Liberal enterprise. The second area is the regaining of a Christian imagination concerning the life to come and of the doctrines of Heaven and Hell. It will be argued that Lewis' doctrine of Transposition offers suggestions as to an alternative to self-defeating reductionism in this area of Christian thought. The third area is Lewis' engagement with the ideas and philosophies of his day, and in particular his hostility towards Scientific Materialism. This will be examined through his use of the literary genre of Utopia/Dystopia to critique materialist and relativist positions. His work will be explored alongside two examples of the genre - H.G. Wells and Yevgeny Zamyatin - to place him in the context of the discussion of possible human futures of his time.

The thesis will argue that C.S. Lewis was the foremost exponent of a group of lay Christians who were concerned to restate orthodox Christian belief in the modern context. It will argue that Lewisian orthodoxy was a credible and complex construct which encompassed the rational and the non-rational, the moral and the numinous, the intellect and the imagination. Ultimately it will argue that Lewis offers theological suggestions as to the solution of the lost unity of heart and mind - the "dissociation of sensibility" - which the Romantics sought.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Andrew Louth, for his great patience and penetrating and insightful help with my work. I would also like to thank the staff and students of St. John's College for their support and encouragement in a variety of ways, not least in providing 'home' for the last four years. There are special friends also, without whom this thesis would not have come to fruition - Jem & Em, Nigel & Dominique, Margaret & Robert, Michael Beasley, Ros and Daren, Amanda, Jimmy & Fellows, and above all Michael Vasey. I would also like to thank Claire and George, who are still young enough to remind me about what is important in life!

for

Michael Vasey

“‘And the lesson of it all is, your Highness,’ said the oldest Dwarf, ‘that those Northern Witches always mean the same thing, but in every age they have a different plan for getting it.’”

C.S. Lewis, The Silver Chair

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

AOM	The Abolition of Man
CR	Christian Reflections
CRR	Christian Reunion & other Essays
EIC	An Experiment in Criticism
FE	Fern-seed and Elephants
FL	The Four Loves
FST	First and Second Things
GD	The Great Divorce
GID	God in the Dock
HHB	The Horse and his Boy
L	Letters of C.S. Lewis, ed. with a Memoir by W.H. Lewis
LB	The Last Battle
M	Miracles
MC	Mere Christianity
MN	The Magician's Nephew
OSP	Out of the Silent Planet
OTOW	Of This and Other Worlds
P	Poems
PC	Prince Caspian
PER	Perelandra
PP	The Problem of Pain
PPL	A Preface to Paradise Lost
PR	The Pilgrim's Regress
PRCON	Present Concerns
ROP	Reflections on the Psalms
SBJ	Surprised by Joy
SC	The Silver Chair
SL	The Screwtape Letters
SMRL	Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature
SPT	Screwtape Proposes a Toast
TAH	Timeless at Heart
TST	They Stand Together: Letters of C.S. Lewis to Arthur Greaves
TWHF	Till We Have Faces
VDT	The Voyage of the Dawn Treader

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Introduction

C.S. LEWIS continues to be one of the most popular and influential Christian writers of the 20th century. In the US, in particular, his apologetic works and fantasy novels attract a wide and enthusiastic audience over 30 years after his death. Last year his books sold over 2 million copies to the American market, and he attracts devotees as diverse as Peter Mandelson, Hillary Clinton, and Liam Gallagher. John Finney, in his extensive survey of Christian belief and practice (*Finding Faith Today*), cites him as an enduring influence on the spirituality of modern British Christians. The phenomenal success of *Shadowlands*, both on stage and screen, is indicative of his popular appeal. Attitudes towards Lewis today, as in his own lifetime, tend to be polarised between devoted adoration and dismissive contempt. Often accused of outdated sexist and racist opinions (with some justification), Lewis was never uncontroversial - a highly intelligent and articulate academic who sought to defend the Christian Faith in his own inimitable style.

There are, of course, many reasons for the profound influence of C.S. Lewis as a Christian apologist. Naomi Lewis, writing in the *Observer*, described his appeal as “an apparent simplicity, a genial homeliness”. For others, his outstanding gift was clarity. His friend Owen Barfield described reading Lewis as like opening a window onto a stuffy room. For others again, his unique power was an imaginative understanding of morality, a faculty through which, as *The Times* observed in his obituary, “he made religious books best-sellers, and in a nice sense, fashionable”. Perhaps, however, the secret thread was the radiant sense of God which many have found in his works, and which still resonates with many who read him for the first time.

Lewis undoubtedly saw himself as a defender of orthodoxy - advocating a return to the historic truths of Christianity as opposed (as he saw it) to the dangerous liberal trends in theology of his own time. As such, he belongs to a group of lay Christians of the early and mid-20th century which include Charles Williams, Dorothy Sayers, and G.K. Chesterton. My purpose in this thesis is to investigate the main tenets of this lay discovery of orthodoxy, particularly as it was espoused by Lewis. I will explore C.S. Lewis’ theology alongside an examination of his theological, literary, and imaginative influences, before suggesting areas where his contribution, in the context of this group of lay Christians, was distinctive.

LEWIS, as we have seen, saw himself as a conservative, and much of his writing attacks liberal and modern approaches to Christian faith. Nothing articulates his own position more, perhaps, than the resentment he felt at those who seemed to want to water down the ‘old truths’ and accommodate secular ideas into a faith barely recognisable as Christianity. The central focus of liberal thought, as Lewis perceived it, was the historical-critical approach to the Bible, and the consequent questioning of the historicity of the New Testament in particular. “There are two sorts of outsiders”, he once remarked to a group of ordinands:

...the uneducated, and those who are educated in some way but not in your way.. How you are to deal with the first class, if you hold views like Loisy’s or Schweitzer’s or Bultmann’s or

Tillich's or even Alec Vidler's, I simply don't know. I see - and I'm told that you see - that it would hardly do to tell them what you really believe. A theology which denies the historicity of nearly everything in the Gospels to which Christian life and affections have been fastened for nearly two millennia...if offered to the uneducated man can produce only one or other of two effects. It will make him a Roman Catholic or an atheist.¹

Later in the same address, Lewis identifies his culprits:

The undermining of the old orthodoxy has been mainly the work of divines engaged in New Testament criticism. The authority of experts in that discipline is the authority in deference to whom we are asked to give up a huge mass of beliefs shared in common by the early Church, the Fathers, the Middle Ages, the Reformers, and even the nineteenth century.²

Lewis was deeply distrustful of the theological establishment, and there is a strong sense of the wisdom of men being folly in the eyes of God in much of his work. There is a prevalent feeling that the study of theology is a dangerous business - divorced from a true experience and worship of God, theology can become a blinding, choking affair, which dulls the intellect and the emotions in word-games and snobbery. Lewis was utterly bemused, for example, by Bultmann's conclusion in his *Theology of the New Testament* that: "The personality of Jesus has no importance for the kerygma either of Paul or John...Indeed the tradition of the earliest Church did not even unconsciously preserve a picture of his personality." For Lewis this was evidence not of an ability to read between the lines of the biblical texts, but of an inability to read the lines themselves. Only a theologian could fail to see something that believers and non-believers alike could recognise:

What is gained by trying to evade or dissipate this shattering immediacy of personal contact by talk about 'that significance which the early Church found that it was impelled to attribute to the Master'? This hits us in the face. Not what they were impelled to do but what impelled them. I begin to fear that by *personality* Dr Bultmann means what I should call impersonality: what you'd get in a Dictionary of National Biography article or an obituary or a Victorian *Life and Letters of Yeshua Bar-Yosef* in three volumes with photographs.³

For Lewis, the basic battleground of theology in his day is perhaps best articulated by the following extract from a letter he wrote to the Church Times in 1952:

...To a layman, it seems obvious that what unites the Evangelical and the Anglo-Catholic against the "Liberal" or "Modernist" is something very clear and momentous, namely, the fact that both are thoroughgoing supernaturalists, who believe in the Creation, the Fall, the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Second Coming, and the Four Last Things. This unites them not only with one another, but with the Christian religion as understood *ubique et ab omnibus*.

The point of view from which this agreement seems less important than their divisions, or the gulf which separates both from any non-miraculous version of Christianity, is to me unintelligible. Perhaps the trouble is that as supernaturalists, whether "Low" or "High" Church, thus taken together, they lack a name. May I suggest "Deep Church"; or, if that fails in humility, Baxter's "mere Christians"?⁴

¹ FE, p.105.

² Ibid., p.106.

³ Ibid., p.111.

⁴ TAH, p.139.

WE have already observed that Lewis' writing is characterised by a deep hostility towards all 'modernism' in theology. The phenomenon of 'lay orthodoxy' - the appearance of a definable group of orthodox lay Christians at a particular time - is to some extent illuminated by Lewis' suspicion that many of his clerical contemporaries were infected with the modernist disease, and were in effect engaged in a form of religious prostitution. He saw himself as representing the fears of the laity, for instance, in a response to E.L. Mascall, in which he suggested a confusion had arisen between matters of liturgy and matters of doctrine:

What we laymen fear is that the deepest doctrinal issues should be settled by what seem to be, or are avowed to be, merely changes in liturgy. A man who is wondering whether the fare set before him is food or poison is not reassured by being told that this course is now restored to its traditional place on the *menu* or that the tureen is of the *sarum* pattern. We laymen are ignorant and timid...Can you blame us if the reduction of grave doctrinal issues to merely liturgical issues fills us with something like terror?⁵

The reference to "ignorant and timid" laymen is a false modesty - Lewis and his group can be seen as representing a dramatic loss of confidence not just in the clergy, but in the entire theological establishment, by educated and intelligent Christians. For someone like Lewis, for whom the journey through atheism, theism, and finally Christianity had been a long and difficult one, the attempt to reconcile Christianity to the prevailing ideologies of the day represented not simply a misguided intellectual enterprise, but a betrayal by those to whom the Faith had been entrusted.

THE distinction between Nature and Supernature is thus the ground of Lewis' theology. In the religious sphere, the existence of an objective moral law, and the assertion of a universal experience of the "Numinous" (to give it Otto's term) are corollaries from it. Another facet of Lewis' approach shared by many of his contemporaries is the affirmation of "romantic" experience as religious experience, at least potentially. For Charles Williams this was primarily the experience of sexual love, for Tolkien it was *faerie* ("Whispers from beyond the walls of the world, more poignant than grief."), and for Lewis, *Sehnsucht*, or the immortal longings. As Reilly has written, the romanticism of these three men was inseparable from their religion. The result of much of their work is a literary and religious construct whose purpose is to defend romanticism by showing it to be religious, and to defend religion by traditionally romantic means.⁶

This romanticism (thus defined) is at once both scholarly and combative. Its purpose is more ideological than literary - Reilly goes on to suggest that Tolkien (along with another of Lewis' friends, Owen Barfield) revives Coleridge's doctrine of the imagination, which for him leads to a state of the soul essentially that of the Christian beatitude. Lewis, meanwhile, revives the Kant/Coleridge distinction between practical and speculative intellect in order to apprehend and defend the truths of the Christian faith.⁷

⁵ Ibid., p.134.

⁶ Reilly, R.J.; *Romantic Religion*, p.5.

⁷ Ibid., p.6.

Lewis was also a particularist - of a particular sort. He believed in Christianity "because by it I see everything else". If the Nature/Supernature distinction, the moral law, and the numinous and romantic experiences were the foundations of Theism, Lewis' specifically Christian beliefs were founded on a particular interpretation of history, articulated by G.K. Chesterton's *Everlasting Man* (one of the most important single influences on him). The Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ were objective instances of the supernatural activity of God, the Atonement an objective act of reconciliation between the Creator and his Creation, and in the Person of Christ, at once divine and human, was found the fulfilment of *both* the religion of Israel *and* of the pre-Christian mythologies.

Within this framework, Lewis found scope for admitting truth in other faiths and creeds, but always incomplete and inferior to the Christian assertions. He also believed in Niebuhr's "anonymous Christians" in some form. As to the great paradoxes of the Christian faith, Lewis certainly took sides - emotionally, at least. With Hooker, and against Calvin, Lewis asserted that God commanded good because goodness was good of itself - not that whatever God commanded was by definition good. With regard to the Free Will/Predestination issue; he believed that much of the discussion was meaningless, and the mystery was best encapsulated by Paul's phrase from Philippians: "Work out you salvation in fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you for his own good purpose" (Phil.2:12-13). In reality, however, the essence of his writing points unerringly to the importance of the individual's acts of Will - however feeble and conditioned.

FOR C.S. Lewis, as we have seen, the central doctrines of Christianity were founded on miraculous events. The sustained attempt, therefore (of 19th century Liberal Protestantism in particular), to dismiss the miraculous elements of religion was nothing less than a direct attack on the Faith itself. A true Christian faith, including a belief in the miraculous, thus requires two conditions - a normal stability in Nature, in which the data offered to our senses recurs in regular patterns; and a belief in a reality beyond Nature.⁸ A view which accepted no other reality than "Nature" itself was essentially democratic in character, A belief in Nature and Supernature was a more monarchical picture. Belief in a supernatural reality could not, for Lewis, be proved or disproved by experience, but the metaphysical arguments in favour were for him conclusive:

...They turn on the fact that even to think and act in the natural world we have to assume something beyond it and even assume that we partly belong to that something. In order to think we must claim for our own reasoning a validity which is not credible if our thought is merely a function of our brain, and our brains a by-product of irrational physical processes. In order to act, above the level of mere impulse, we must claim a similar validity for our judgements of good and evil. In both cases we get the same disquieting result. The concept of Nature itself is one we have reached only tacitly by claiming a sort of *super*-natural status for ourselves.⁹

Lewis suggested that the modern dislike for the miraculous was rooted in two erroneous ideas. The first involved a confusion between the laws of thought and the laws of nature; with the consequent idea that a miracle represented a contradiction in terms. The second was a more aesthetic objection - that miracles were a clumsy

⁸ GID, p.13.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.13.

violation by God of the laws which he himself had imposed on his creation - a "solecism on the grammar of the universe". It is here that Lewis follows Athanasius. There are two sorts of miracle - some are reminders, others are prophecies. Both exhibit the wholesale activity of God at a different speed and on a smaller scale. The miracles spoken of by the Gospels are in fact:

...a retelling in small letters of the very same story which is written across the whole world in letters too large for some of us to see.¹⁰

LEWIS described the acceptance of an objective moral law as an essential starting point for any discussion of the universe in which we live and our place in it.¹¹ Indeed he wrote of his BBC *Broadcast Talks* (later to appear as *Mere Christianity*) as having the following purpose:

Mine are *preparatio evangelica* rather than evangelism, an attempt to convince people that there is a moral law, that we disobey it, and that the existence of a Lawgiver is at least very probable and also (unless you add the Christian doctrine of the atonement) that this imports despair rather than comfort.¹²

Lewis' extreme hostility to "modernism" in theology can perhaps be partly explained by the academic debate in which he felt himself engaged with Scientific Materialism. The assault on value and values put forward by writers such as Stapledon, Wells, and particularly J.B.S. Haldane, were castigated by Lewis as representing a "ghastly materialistic philosophy"; but nonetheless a dominant force of his time. Lewis' antipathy towards liberal theology, and his suspicion that it conformed or acquiesced in twentieth century *Zeitgeist* is understandable in the light of the rise of totalitarianism of many forms, and of the experience of the Nazi experiment. One could conjecture that for Lewis, the apparent undermining of the Supernatural, and thus of Christian orthodoxy, represented a naive religious validation of the more sinister ideological trends of his day. A major tenet of the defence of orthodoxy is thus the defence of an absolute moral law, which can be seen in the context of the historical circumstances of the time.

THE distinctive feature of Lewis' romanticism is the sense of longing, or 'Sweet Desire', that pervades his thought. He uses it as almost an ontological proof of the existence of heaven, and of the temporal nature of our earthly existence. Our experience is haunted by ineffable yearnings, almost too painful to bear, which are never quite fulfilled in this life. Earthly experiences suggest them, and are the vehicles by which we are transported by desire, but no marriage, employment, or landscape ever proves to be the pot of gold at the rainbow's end. Those longings are, as Lewis writes:

...the secret signature of each soul, the incommunicable and unappeasable want, the thing we desired before we met our wives or made our friends or chose our work, and which we shall still desire on our deathbeds, when the mind no longer knows wife or friend or work. While we are, this is. If we lose this, we lose all.¹³

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 16.

¹¹ MC, p. 19.

¹² L, p. 193.

¹³ PP, p. 117.

Human desires and appetites were made to be fulfilled, believed Lewis. We feel hunger - there is such a thing as food. We feel sexual desire - there is such a thing as sex.¹⁴ We sense an unattainable ecstasy hovering just beyond our consciousness - there is such a thing as heaven; where "To him that overcometh I will give a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it".¹⁵

LEWIS was not an advocate of the argument by design, in his advocacy of a benevolent, loving God, and certainly did not look to the evolutionary process, or to human 'progress', as a means to a utopian or heavenly end. His writing is often characterised by a certain *contemptus mundi* - in his view, the universe that scientific inquiry presents to us is cruel, rapacious, and wasteful. In all the cold, vast emptiness of the cosmos, there arises by blind chance a world in which the forms of life are so arranged that they can only live by preying upon each other.¹⁶ With Melville we might bewail:

(the) horrible vultureism of the earth! from which not the mightiest whale is free.¹⁷

In the higher forms of life arises consciousness, so that they might experience not only death, but pain also. In humankind arises reason, so that they might foresee their pain and death whilst acutely desiring permanence.¹⁸ Whither the blind dance of formless matter might lead us was immaterial in the end, at least so far as the optimistic evolutionist was concerned. For undergirding everything was the unalterable second law of thermodynamics, condemning the universe to a meaningless entropic death, in which all 'progress' must ultimately perish:

It is the creative evolutionist, the bergsonian or Shavian, or the communist, who should tremble when he looks up at the night sky. For he really is committed to a sinking ship. He is really attempting to ignore the discovered nature of things, as though by concentrating on the possibly upward trend in a single planet he could make himself forget the inevitable downward trend in the universe as a whole, the trend to low temperatures and irrevocable disorganisation. For entropy is the real cosmic wave, and evolution only a momentary tellurian ripple within it.¹⁹

His pessimistic view of the evolutionary process and of the natural order is closely akin to that presented in Wells' *The Time Machine*, and his opposition to the prevalent optimism in human scientific, material and cultural progress, as we have seen, is best expressed in the third volume of his cosmic trilogy, *That Hideous Strength* (which will be discussed later). The spectacle of the universe as it is experienced could not be the ground of religion, believed Lewis.²⁰ Along with the apprehension of numinous awe, and of morality ('ought'), the foundations of religious thought were coupled for Lewis with this deep sense of eternal longing.

¹⁴ MC, p.118.

¹⁵ Rev. 2:17.

¹⁶ PP, p. 11.

¹⁷ Herman Melville; *Moby Dick*, p.317.

¹⁸ PP, p.12.

¹⁹ GID, p.34.

²⁰ PP, p.13.

ONE of the ways in which a particular group defines itself is by its enmity to what it is *not*. For the Oxford Romantics, a uniting characteristic was an antagonism to Liberalism and to what it was perceived to believe. One tenet of Liberalism was the rejection of traditional ideas of hell or damnation, and, one could argue, of any definably orthodox eschatological perspective. The dearth of theological imagination concerning heaven and hell was a major preoccupation for Lewis, certainly, and the perspective of the eternal is indivisible from his outlook. He wrote of the idea of final damnation that:

There is no doctrine which I would more willingly remove from Christianity than this, if it lay in my power. But it has the full support of Scripture and, specially, of Our Lord's own words; it has always been held by Christendom; and it has the support of reason.²¹

Lewis sets himself to present the doctrine of Hell afresh - as not contrary to reason, if nevertheless opaque. The realities of Heaven and Hell are explored to a degree in *The Problem of Pain* and *Mere Christianity*, but Lewis' finest approach is through the imaginative and fictional techniques which he had developed in order to present his ideas - especially *The Great Divorce*.

As with any discussion of theodicy and hell, Lewis takes up the central problem of reconciling a genuine freedom and the need for a voluntary response to God, with the idea of an omnipotent and all-loving creator. Theologians such as McCord Adams have identified the various conceptions of hell as follows:²²

- An everlasting torment for those who have been disobedient to God.
- A succession of light penalties for those who continue to offend after death.
- A perpetuation by God of whatever (vicious) state of character the soul possesses at death.
- An abandoning of the sinner to his own devices by God; which can also be seen as a respect for the sinner's freedom.

None of these definitions really does justice to Lewis' treatment of the doctrine of Hell, and particularly through his imaginative works of fantasy, he presents a sophisticated and compelling argument for traditional conception, whilst retaining a credible notion of a loving and omnipotent God. In addition to this, he develops the idea that Hell, like other theological ideas, can stand for a present phenomenon, and can be experienced here and now. In Chapter 4 I will attempt to show that Lewis stands with writers such as Moltmann in conceiving of a hell on earth - in, for example, the unspeakable absence of God in the senseless suffering and guilt of an Auschwitz.²³

IN regard to theodicy, Lewis follows the fundamental Augustinian doctrines, which he summarised as follows.²⁴

²¹ PP, p.94.

²² M. McCord Adams; *Hell and the God of Justice*, p.433.

²³ J. Moltmann; *Jesus Christ for Today's World*, p.143.

²⁴ PPL, pp.65-66.

- God created all things good, and because they are good, no nature (i.e. no positive reality) is bad and the word Bad denotes merely privation of good.²⁵
- What we call bad things are good things perverted. This perversion arises when a conscious creature becomes more interested in itself than God. This is the sin of Pride.
- From this doctrine of good and evil it follows that good can exist without evil, but not evil without good.
- Though God has made all creatures good He foreknows that some will voluntarily make themselves bad, and also foreknows the good use which he will then make of their badness. Thus complex good is achieved with evil an instrument of that good.

In terms of imaginative fantasy, these themes in themselves have been dealt with most powerfully by Lewis' fellow romantic - J.R.R. Tolkien. The interaction of Divine Providence with creaturely Free Will, the nature of evil and evil wills, and complex good, are all explored in *The Lord of the Rings*, but perhaps most explicitly in the *Silmarillion*. In Tolkien's creation myth, *Aimulindale* (which forms part of that work), Iluvatar (God) contends with Melkor, his fallen angel, who attempts to introduce themes of his own to the Great Music, in order to increase the power and glory of the part assigned to himself. The result is discord and rebellion, out of which Iluvatar weaves a yet greater and more beautiful harmony:

Then Iluvatar spoke, and he said...thou, Melkor, shalt see that no theme may be played that hath not its uttermost source in me, nor can any alter the music in my despite. For he that attempteth this shall prove but mine instrument in the devising of things more wonderful, which he himself hath not imagined.²⁶

From all this it is clear that Lewis, Tolkien, and their movement were firmly opposed to certain trends of thought in theodicy, such as that articulated by John Hick and the 'vale of soul-making' school. The idea that moral evil was perhaps not truly at variance with the purposes of a sovereign, omni-responsible God, or inimical to all good - indeed that pain and suffering were necessary to soul-making and thus required by God,²⁷ was utterly alien to 'Lewisian' orthodoxy.

WITH regards to spirituality, the efficacy of petitionary prayer was a natural corollary from a belief in a dynamic relationship between God and His creation, and in particular those creatures to whom free will had been entrusted. Lewis argued with Pascal that prayer was a divine gift allowing creatures "the dignity of causality". Not only prayer, however, but physical action as well. It was clear to Lewis that God had not chosen to write the whole of human history in His own hand - that He allowed us to play some real part in the destiny of the universe.²⁸ The question of why God allows us to ask imperfectly for what He knows Himself to be good, and could very well do Himself without our asking, is put into context with all our actions. To ask, however, 'does prayer work?', as if it were a mechanical or magical device, was to start in the wrong frame of mind from the outset:

²⁵ Dr Trethowan notes that moral evil is a *refusal* to accept God's offer, and as such is a reality, but of a peculiar and negative kind (*Dr. Hick and the Problem of Evil*, p.407).

²⁶ J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*, p.18.

²⁷ J. Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, p.389.

²⁸ FST, p.42.

Prayer is either sheer illusion or a personal contact between embryonic, incomplete persons (ourselves) and the utterly concrete Person. Prayer in the sense of petition, asking for things, is a small part of it; confession and penitence are its threshold, adoration its sanctuary, the presence and vision and enjoyment of God its bread and wine. In it God shows himself to us. That he answers prayers is a corollary - not necessarily the most important one - from that revelation. What he does is learned from what he is.²⁹

Lewis was emphatically *not* a triumphalist where prayer was concerned. The prevalent idea in many Christian circles that enough faith is a guarantee of divine response (through one interpretation of the Dominical sayings), is contradicted by the experience of Christ in Gethsemane. The blunt refusal to Jesus' petition that his cup of suffering be taken from him - the forsaking of the greatest servant in his greatest need - represents a mystery which Lewis was loath to explore:

...Meanwhile, little people like you and me, if our prayers are sometimes granted, beyond hope and probability, had better not draw hasty conclusions to our own advantage. If we were stronger, we might be less tenderly treated. If we were braver, we might be sent, with far less help, to defend far more desperate posts in the great battle.³⁰

He did, however tentatively speculate that in the act of creation itself, there may be an agony of separation of which the Cry of Dereliction was a echo or symbol - the beginnings of an understanding of suffering and the Passion of Christ which saw in them something more than the inevitable consequences of sin and the Fall.

THE Christian life, for Lewis, was a battle. In *Mere Christianity*, he analogises our situation to that of resistance fighters living in enemy-occupied territory - going to church is like listening in to the wireless from 'outside'. Christian obedience consists of "standing at your post" and "doing your duty". Satan is the ubiquitous prince of this world, who leads the rebellion against the rightful King. Every day of our lives, through a multitude of choices, we move closer to one or other of the two camps.

Many commentators (Richard Harries for example) have been disturbed by Lewis' demonology and this stark portrayal of the human situation, yet Lewis' most popular adult work was (and continues to be) *The Screwtape Letters*, in which the battle between the divine and the diabolical for human souls is examined in fiction. Our everyday indulgences and compromises are suddenly presented in a new light - we see ourselves on a knife-edge between glorious and terrible possibilities at every moment. The destiny of our souls either in eternal bliss or in self-centred torment is the vision which should ultimately direct all our acts and thoughts.

These key themes undergirding Lewis' spirituality informed all his thinking and theology. The stern business of orthodox Christian doctrine and practice was the narrow door through which Lewis encountered a clear vision of the infinite bounty and glory of God. He believed life was to be lived in the light of the cosmic possibilities, both for good or evil, of which he was acutely aware. He believed that human beings were made for ineffable joy, plenitude and peace, but that these could only be attained by the strife and struggle of relinquishing the self. God is that first desire of our hearts,

²⁹ FE, p.101.

³⁰ Ibid., p.103.

both beautiful and terrible, who must be responded to with heart, intellect, will and emotion before wholeness can be comprehended.

THESE, then, are the main features of the lay defence of orthodoxy, of which Lewis was perhaps the most vocal exponent. A denial of the supernatural was an inevitable first step towards a materialist view of "faith" in which "God" could have no meaning in the traditional sense, but could only represent a phenomenon of "cosmic consciousness", or a sort of sum of our best intentions. The diversity of belief in the Church in this regard was a weakness rather than a strength. Lewis and his contemporaries saw themselves as representing the fears of the laity - namely that the clerical hierarchy and the professional theologians were selling out the Christian faith.

A Christianity worth the name, for Lewis, believed in a God of the miraculous; a self-existent Reality beyond "Nature" who was active within human and cosmic history. The doctrine of the continuation of the soul after death was not an embarrassing anachronism, neither was it secondary to the working out of religious life and duty in the present. The ultimate destiny of the soul was a reality which flooded our present existence with significance, and without which morality and Christian faith were meaningless.

Chapter 1

Influences

IN a review of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Lewis wrote of his friend's book that it was like "lightning from a clear sky".³¹ There is, among many of Lewis' admirers, a similar sense about the man himself - that, in an age almost pathological in its anti-supernaturalism, with Lewis had returned full-blooded Christian orthodoxy, "gorgeous, eloquent, and unashamed". No-one, however, exists in a vacuum, and there are certainly those who profoundly influenced Lewis (and indeed the group of lay Christians who were his contemporaries). We are here primarily concerned with those who affected his theological ideas, but this in itself is a difficult task, as literary and imaginative influences are also bound up here, as we shall see.

The study of the formation of C.S. Lewis as a theologian or a writer remains sketchy and inadequate. This is in spite of both his enormous popularity and influence as a Christian apologist; and his expressed and obvious debt to the likes of G.K. Chesterton, William Morris, and George MacDonald. Imaginatively, Lewis was shaped by an early love for Norse and Celtic mythology, and by works such as Morris' *News From Nowhere*. It was of George MacDonald, however, a relatively obscure Victorian writer and preacher, that Lewis could say he owed a debt "as great as any man owed another". Lewis said of MacDonald's *Phantastes* that it represented a "baptism of the imagination", and the significance of this will be developed later. For the present purposes, we will investigate those figures who shaped Lewis theologically, before integrating the rational and imaginative aspects which made up the complex construct which was 'Lewisian' orthodoxy.

We will first concentrate on Charles Williams, who befriended Lewis subsequent to his conversion and influenced the development of his Christianity, and then in addition on four works which I believe played a part in shaping him. These are G.K. Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man*, which had a profound effect on the atheist/agnostic Lewis, Edwyn Bevan's *Symbolism & Belief*, Baron Friedrich von Hügel's *Essays & Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion* (in particular "What do we mean by Heaven; what do we mean by Hell?"), and Rudolf Otto's *Das Heilige*. We will inquire into the significance of these writers in terms of the history of religious thought, and the currents and trends which were present during the period preceding that in which Lewis wrote. The purpose will be to highlight those aspects which Lewis appears to have made foundational or significant in his own thought, and to draw these together later.

³¹ OTOW, p.112.

1.1 Charles Williams

*Your death blows a strange bugle call, friend, and all is hard
To see plain or record truly. The new light imposes change,
Re-adjusts all a life-landscape as it thrusts down its probe from the sky,
To create shadows, to reveal waters, to erect hills and deepen glens.
The slant alters. I can't see the old contours. It's a larger world
Than I once thought it. I wince, caught in the bleak air that blows on the ridge.
Is it the first sting of the great winter, the world-waning? Or the cold of spring?
A hard question and worth talking a whole night on. But with whom?
Of whom now can I ask guidance? With what friend concerning your death
Is it worth while to exchange thoughts unless - oh unless it were you?³²*

C.S. Lewis, as he himself admitted, was greatly influenced by Charles Williams; and often expressed the hope that this contribution to his own work was reciprocated in that of his friend.³³ *That Hideous Strength*, for example, almost certainly borrows from Williams' Arthurian poetry, which develops the contrast between an archetypal, ideal England, and empirical Britain.³⁴ Lewis rather clumsily (one might say arbitrarily) inserts this theme into his cosmic trilogy, with somewhat unwieldy results. More positive results ensued from the regard in which Lewis held Williams as a scholar of Milton. Lewis' *Preface to Paradise Lost*, one of his finest pieces of writing, was dedicated to Williams in respect of the debt which Lewis felt he owed to his friend's own *Preface*, published two years previously. Most important, as Chad Walsh suggests, was the deepening of Lewis' psychological and spiritual insights, through his association and admiration of Williams work.³⁵

In this section I will attempt to explore Charles Williams' theological positions, and particularly those regarding the doctrine of heaven, and where this interacts with or influences those of C.S. Lewis. One of Williams' themes, with which I shall later deal, concerns the interdependence of human beings, spiritually and even physically. Lewis was greatly attracted to what he saw as a 'magical law of creation' - a doctrine of substitution by which one could bear the burdens of another. Lewis was later to attribute the relief of some of his wife's sufferings of cancer to this doctrine. In my opinion, however, the greatest contribution which Williams made to Lewis concerned his notions of 'Sweet Desire', and of the elusiveness of God.

³² Lewis, C.S.; "To Charles Williams" in P, p.105.

³³ Indeed, Lewis' relationship with Williams is unique among 'The Inklings', in that he attributed any influence at all to it. Lewis once wrote to an interested author who was proposing a literary inquiry into the group of writers: "...I do think you may be chasing after a fox that isn't there. Charles Williams certainly influenced me and I perhaps influenced him. But after that I think you draw a blank. No one ever influenced Tolkien - you might as well try to influence a bandersnatch...Dorothy Sayers was not living in Oxford at the time and I don't think she ever in her life met Tolkien. She knew Charles Williams well, and me much later. I am sure she neither exerted nor underwent any literary influence at all. Of course it may be that, just because I was in it myself, I don't see (objectively) what was really going on. But I give my honest opinion for what it is worth." Lewis, W.H. (ed.); *Letters of C.S. Lewis*, (London, 1966).

³⁴ Walsh, Chad; *The Literary Legacy of C.S. Lewis*, p.13.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.13.

The clearest expression of Charles Williams' conception of Heaven is to be found in his apologetic work; *He Came Down from Heaven*. As a piece of biblical theology, it exhibits many penetrating and illuminating insights; not least in regard to the interpretation of meaning in the Lord's prayer. Williams begins by exploring the changing perceptions of the word 'heaven', or heavens', both in scripture and in modern understanding. He marks its progress in Christian thought to that state of spiritual being equivalent to the habitation of divine things - 'a state of being consonant with union with God'.³⁶ He suggested that the meaning of the word tends to sway in modern minds between the spiritual and the spatial - with the emphasis being placed on the latter, because of the weight of Christian imagination attached both to the Lord's prayer and to the credal formulations. 'He came down...'; 'He ascended into...'; 'Our Father *who art in Heaven*..'; 'Thy will be done *on earth as it is in heaven*...' - our minds cannot but smuggle in spatial pictures of the relationship between Heaven and Earth.

Williams was aware of the theological and philosophical objections to any definition of God which implied His nature inhabiting place, but suggested also that to deny that 'heaven' in some sense could not inhabit space would be to deny the Incarnation.³⁷ Just as the nature of God is not primarily paternal - in that He does not exist primarily for our sake, but for His, so His nature is not primarily spatial - heaven exists because of the nature of God, "and to His existence alone all bliss is related".³⁸

However we define Heaven, Williams suggested, a Christian interpretation of the Lord's Prayer must necessarily see its counterpart in both spiritual and spatial terms. 'Earth', for us, is both the universe and world in which we live, bounded by the constraints of time and dimension; and the only spiritual state of being which we know, or can know. Here Williams makes a significant contribution to the interpretation of the Lord's Prayer. 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven' can be understood in two ways, he suggests. Normally, we would assume that the fulfilling of the Divine Will in heaven refers to angels or other inhabitants of a realm of perfection outside our own. Conversely, we ask for the fulfilling of that Will *as it pertains to us* and our realm. There is, however, a better reading, advanced by Williams, which illuminates his entire conception of heaven. As he himself puts it:

The fulfilment of the Will in heaven may relate to us grammatically as well to the angels. The events for which we sincerely implore that fulfilment upon earth are already perfectly concluded by it in heaven. Their conclusions have to be known by us on earth, but they already exist as events in heaven. Heaven, that is to say, possesses timelessness; it has the quality of eternity, of (in the definition which Boethius passed on to Aquinas) 'the perfect and simultaneous possession of everlasting life'. In that simultaneity the passion of the prayer is already granted; all that is left for us to do is to discover in the process of time the conclusion that we have implored in time. 'Let us', the clause demands, in this understanding, 'know Thy will being done upon earth as, in this very event, it is already perfectly done and perfectly known in heaven - in the beatitude which is of Thee.' This is the consummation of act in belief - in 'faith'.³⁹

³⁶ Williams, C.; *He Came Down From Heaven*, p.9.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.10.

³⁸ *Ibid.*; p.10.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.11.

This interpretation touches on the incomprehensibility of eternity (for us), and from it Williams develops his ideas on the paradox of free will, on the dual nature of our experience ('eternal' and 'actual'), and of the relationship between the two.

There are clear parallels with Lewis here, both in terms of his view of a timeless heavenly dimension, and of his speculations concerning the choices of individuals and their relationship with eternity. In *The Great Divorce*, for example, the final chapter appears to make a mockery of what has gone before. The majority of the book concerns the conversations of Ghosts with the Redeemed - sometimes successful in persuading them to truly submit to the Will of God and enter bliss. Finally, however, the vision changes - the immortal souls of the participants watch motionless, as their inmost natures are portrayed by silver chessmen going to and fro on a board before them. The Lewis of the vision asks his guide:

...is all that I have been seeing in this country false? These conversations between the Spirits and the Ghosts - were they only the mimicry of choices that had been made long ago?

MacDonald's answer is ambivalent:

...or might ye not say, anticipations of a choice to made at the end of all things? But ye'd do better to say neither. Ye saw the choices a bit more clearly than ye could see them on earth: the lens was clearer. But it was still seen through the lens. Do not ask of a vision in a dream more than a vision in a dream can give.

Clyde Kilby has drawn attention to Williams' articulation of this understanding, through the character of Anthony in *The Place of the Lion*. His (Anthony's) observation is that will entails the determination to choose something, but what is choice?

How could there be choice, unless there was preference, and if there was preference there was no choice, for it was not possible to choose against that preferring nature which was not his being; yet being consisted in choice, for only by taking and doing this and not that could being know itself, could it indeed be; to be then consisted precisely in making an inevitable choice.⁴⁰

Kilby also suggests a common biblical link between Lewis and Williams in the letter to the Hebrews.⁴¹ This concerns the conception that the earthy tabernacle was no more than a copy or a shadow of the 'real' or heavenly one (Hebrews 8:5). Whether this was an important or even exclusive source is a matter of conjecture, but the idea itself held tremendous sway over the writings of both men.

Perhaps the most cogent expression in Williams of this idea is to be found in his study of Dante, *The Figure of Beatrice*. Williams asserts that the poet's approach represents a 'Way of the Images', following Coleridge's definition of the characteristics of a symbol or image as:

- Existing in itself
- Deriving from a source greater than itself

⁴⁰ Williams, C.; *The Place of the Lion*, p.114; quoted in: Kilby, C.; *The Christian World of C.S. Lewis*, p.48.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.97.

- Representing in itself the greatness of the thing from which it derives

This in itself is a fairly succinct introduction to Lewis' doctrine of Transposition (which we shall discuss later). Williams contends that it represents the basis for Dante's poetry - as we observe in the Introduction to the work:

He (Dante) defined the general kind of experience to which the figure of Beatrice belongs in one of his prose books, the *Convivio* (IV, xxv). He says there that the young are subject to a 'stupor' or astonishment of the mind which falls on them at the awareness of great and wonderful things. Such a stupor produces two results - a sense of reverence and a desire to know more. A noble awe and a noble curiosity come to life. This is what happened to him at the sight of the Florentine girl, and all his work consists, one way or another, in the increase of that worship and that knowledge.⁴²

The Image of Beatrice in Dante's thought was, according to Williams, in some sense an image of the Redeemed Life or even of God Himself. It does not exclude the actual or objective Beatrice from his mind, in the same way that the actual, objective Beatrice does not exclude the Power which is expressed through her. Beatrice is the only way (for Dante) that God can be known - regarding God, his maxim is 'This also is Thou, neither is this Thou'.⁴³ Williams suggests that in being caught up in romantic love for Beatrice, Dante sees her as she is 'in heaven' - the unfallen, original (or redeemed, if better) Beatrice as God chose her. The 'actual' Beatrice, complete with the usual human shortcomings, is just as real as the image - both are aspects of the one person. The revealed virtues are as real as the celestial beauty.⁴⁴

The strong neo-Platonic overtones evident here are also present in Lewis' work. Lewis, however, lays greater stress on the celestial actuality. It is our present existence which is the diminution or shadow of the greater Reality. In heaven we are to become more ourselves than we ever were on earth. It is our 'true' country - death represents a farewell to the Shadowlands.⁴⁵ "Further up and further in" is the cry of The Unicorn in *The Last Battle*; and it represents Lewis' profoundest statement concerning the nature of Heaven and our deepest and truest selves. Meilander has written well on *The Last Battle*, offering it as a story that legitimises and invites our attachment to our present 'earth', but also our desire for something qualitatively different.⁴⁶ We are creatures of dust, who inhabit a temporal realm, and whose affections are rightly attached to finite objects and persons. We are also free spirits, made for God and transcending time. Death is thus ambivalent for us.

More evidence of this influence on Lewis is found in his appreciation of *The Place of the Lion*. Lewis himself described it as both based on the Platonic theory of archetypes, and a truly *Christian* fantasy in a letter to Arthur Greeves.⁴⁷ The lion of strength who appears in the book is an obvious suggestion as the genesis of Lewis' ideas about the

⁴² Williams, C.; *The Image of Beatrice*, p.7.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.8.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.27.

⁴⁵ There is here, perhaps, further evidence of the influence of the letter to the Hebrews - the sense of exile or longing which both writers describe in their work is well articulated in the great chapter on Faith (Heb 11:1-16).

⁴⁶ Meilander, G.; *Faith and Faithfulness*, p.158.

⁴⁷ TST, p.479.

Aslan of his Narnia. Caution must be exercised, however, as similar theories have been advanced (of influence in both directions) concerning Roger Lancelyn Green's *Land of the Lord High Tiger*, which Lewis himself dismissed.⁴⁸ Another example is in Lewis' appreciation of Spenser's poetry - he uses Charles Williams' phrase - 'illustrious with being' - to articulate Spenser's neo-platonic approach and worldview.⁴⁹ Strongest of all, perhaps, are the concluding chapters of *The Last Battle*, which could be described as a hymn to neo-platonism. The character of Digory, for example, talks of the 'real' Narnia opposed to the copy or shadow of it:

"...of course it is different; as different as a real thing is from a shadow or waking life is from a dream." His voice stirred everyone like a trumpet as he spoke these words: but when he added under his breath "It's all in Plato, all in Plato: bless me, what do they teach them at these schools!" the older ones laughed.⁵⁰

One of Williams statements which obviously had great meaning for Lewis was made in *He Came Down From Heaven*, Williams writes that: "Usually the way must be made ready for heaven, and then it will come by some other; the sacrifice must be made ready, and the fire will strike on another altar."⁵¹ Lewis often paraphrased it as: "The altar must often be built in one place so that the fire may come down in another place".⁵² In the context of Williams' work, it comes in a discussion concerning the technique of belief. Lewis, however, invested it with a myriad of possible meanings. One of the great theological themes to which Lewis contributes is the elusiveness or unpredictability of God. The biblical expression of this theme can be found in the Song of Songs, for example - many scholars argue that the inclusion of this piece of secular love poetry into the Hebrew canon is due precisely to that theme conveyed through the lover who cannot be found. In the New Testament Jesus speaks of the Spirit 'blowing where it will'. Lewis used and interpreted this theme heavily in his work.

For Williams, the statement represented an approach to 'the mystery of self-scepticism in the divine'. There are allusions in his work to the elusiveness of God - particularly to the story of Cain and Abel, and the unpredictability, and seeming arbitrariness of divine grace. The main point that Williams is trying to make, however, concerns the distinction between 'necessary belief and unnecessary credulity'. He suggests that this distinction is as important as belief itself, for without it belief cannot mature or be purified.⁵³ Williams cites the Babel legend as the biblical example of a recurrent temptation - the imagination of the orthodox of any creed that all will be well when their creed is universal - the attempt at an objective approach to heaven. But, he

⁴⁸ FE, p.116.

⁴⁹ SMRL, p.162.

⁵⁰ LB, p.161.

⁵¹ Williams, C.; *He Came Down From Heaven*, p.25:

⁵² CRR, p.88.

⁵³ Something similar is hinted at in one of Lewis' poems:

... *Only that now you have taught me (but how late) my lack.*

I see the chasm. And everything you are was making

My heart into a bridge by which I might get back

From exile, and grow man. And now the bridge is breaking.

For this I bless you as the ruin falls. The pains

You give me are more precious than all other gains.

Lines from "As the Ruin Falls" in Lewis, C.S.; *Poems by C.S. Lewis*.

suggests, the recurrent opposite is no more true. Unless something is done, nothing happens, unless devotion is given to the thing which must prove false in the end, the thing that is true in the end cannot enter.⁵⁴

In Lewis, this influence of this statement on his imagination was twofold - both in regard to his own peculiar interpretation of 'Romanticism', and his own exploration of the elusiveness of God. 'He's not a *tame* Lion' is a common assertion concerning Aslan, and throughout the Narnian chronicles the unpredictability and elusiveness of God is hinted at again and again:

"Then he isn't safe?" said Lucy.

"Safe?" said Mr Beaver; "don't you hear what Mrs Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."⁵⁵

"Will you promise not to - do anything to me, if I do come?" said Jill.

"I make no promise," said the Lion.

Jill was so thirsty now that, without noticing it, she had come a step nearer.

"Do you eat girls?" she said.

"I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms," said the Lion. It didn't say this as if it were boasting, nor as if it were sorry, nor as if it were angry. It just said it.⁵⁶

"I asked, are you ready?" said the lion.

"Yes" said Digory. He had had for a second some wild idea of saying "I'll try to help you if you'll promise to help about my mother", but he realised in time that the Lion was not at all the sort of person one could try to make bargains with. But when he had said "Yes", he thought of his Mother, and he thought of the great hopes he had had, and how they were all dying away, and a lump came to his throat and tears in his eyes, and he blurted out:

"But please, please - won't you - can't you give me something that will cure Mother?" Up till then he had been looking at the Lion's great front feet and the huge claws on them; now, in his despair, he looked up at its face. What he saw surprised him as much as anything in his whole life. For the tawny face was bent down near his own and (wonder of wonders) great shining tears stood in the Lion's eyes.⁵⁷

Williams' statement ("the altar must be built in one place...") is also used by Lewis to articulate what he calls a 'dialectic of desire'. This is concerned with the techniques of belief and the life of faith, but also, more importantly, with Lewis' whole preoccupation with 'Sweet Desire'. Other scholars have asserted that the particular expression of Romanticism which Lewis describes in his conversion process - the '*Sehnsucht*' or immortal longings - are fundamental in the experience of Western man.⁵⁸ Carnell contends (and Lewis suggests), that *Sehnsucht* is a 'given' in the human experience, and Carnell also outlines the importance of the idea in Joy Davidman's thought and the influence of this on Lewis' own ideas. Charles Williams himself suggested that the closest we come to an understanding of the relationship between 'heaven' and 'earth' is in the 'incredulous joy' of great romantic moments - in love, or in poetry, for example.⁵⁹ The new 'quality' in the love which Dante has for Beatrice is

⁵⁴ Williams, C.; *He Came Down From Heaven*, p.24.

⁵⁵ LWW, p.75.

⁵⁶ SC, p.26-27.

⁵⁷ MN, p.131.

⁵⁸ Carnell, C. quoted in Clyde S. Kilby; *The Christian World of C.S. Lewis*, p.200.

⁵⁹ Williams, C.; *He Came Down From Heaven*, p.24.

an actual joy in which The Lord of Justice has made himself visible in some sense⁶⁰ - 'this cannot possibly be, and it is'. The inevitable disappearance of this quality, and the often too-easy reconciliation to its loss, is the cause of 'age-old imbecilities' - 'young love'; 'it won't last'; 'you mustn't expect'; 'a quiet affection':

What then? Nothing; a particular phenomenon has disappeared. It is for us to decide whether its disappearance makes nonsense of its first appearance.⁶¹

Lewis' answer is to be found in his three responses: the way of the Foolish; the way of the 'Sensible' but disillusioned; and the Christian way - which entails the 'dialectic of Desire'. One of the fullest outlines of Lewis' ideas on the subject comes in his Preface to the Third Edition of *The Pilgrims Regress*. Sweet Desire is an experience of intense longing, which is distinguished from other longings by two things. The first is that although the sense of want is often acute or even painful, the mere wanting itself is curiously felt to be a joy in itself. The second is the mystery concerning the *Object* of the desire. Every one of the supposed objects which evoke our longing are discovered to be inadequate - the object of the desire is like a rainbow's end, forever tantalisingly out of reach. Lewis suggests that the experience of sweet desire is a fundamental clue to the nature of our existence - resulting in a clear knowledge that the soul was made to enjoy some object that is never given or can even be imagined as given in our present mode of subjective and spatio-temporal experience.⁶² As Lewis puts it:

The Dialectic of Desire, faithfully followed, would retrieve all mistakes, head you off all false paths, and force you not to propound, but to live through, a sort of ontological proof.⁶³

The fatal error, Lewis proposed, in his autobiography, was to make the experience of this Desire an object *in itself*. By doing so religion would become a self-caressing luxury, and having made this mistake, the second would follow - the attempt to produce it.⁶⁴ The Desire itself is, suggested Lewis, a by-product. Its existence presupposes that what is desired is 'other' and 'outer'. It comes unexpectedly, unawares. To make the Desire itself an object would be to lose it altogether. The real business of Christian life was to steadfastly buckle down to the business of obedience to the Will of God - and the Desire would come when it will. The 'building of the altar in one place' represented the duty and business of the individual Christian and the corporate church. The 'fire falling upon another altar' represented the unpredictable, unfathomable, grace and being of God.

A final observation on Charles Williams' influence on C.S. Lewis' thought concerns the doctrine of substitution, to which I earlier alluded. This doctrine of substitution, or 'co-inherence', articulates a vision of human beings as members of each other in a more literal way than is commonly believed. Williams uses the idea in his novel *Descent into Hell*, in which a woman takes upon herself the mental anguish

⁶⁰ Williams, C.; *The Figure of Beatrice*, p.34.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.34.

⁶² PR, p.15. Lewis' antagonism and dislike of T.S. Eliot stems, in the main, from his perception that the other thought his Romanticism 'so much nonsense'; and that Eliot appeared to him to represent a state of mind characterised as dead legalism - the character of Neo-Angular in the Pilgrim's Regress is often supposed to be based on Eliot.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.15.

⁶⁴ SBJ, p.136.

of a distant ancestor, put to death for his religious beliefs, and allows him to die a death of great courage. The idea that another's spiritual and physical burdens could be taken upon oneself was accepted by Lewis, and characteristically developed to become a sort of 'law of creation' which he used to explain certain phenomena in his own spiritual experience. This is observed, for example, in one of his many letters to an American lady:

I am v. glad that you have discovered Francois de Sales...how remarkable it is that such a man's mere statement that anxiety is a great evil at once helps you to escape from that evil. That indeed seems to be one of the magical laws of this very creation in which we live; that the thing we know already, the thing we have said to ourselves a hundred times, when said by *someone else* suddenly becomes operative. It is part of C. Williams' doctrine, isn't it? - that no-one can paddle his own canoe but everyone can paddle someone else's...⁶⁵

This particular influence of Williams is at its most apparent in what Lewis regarded as his own finest piece of writing, *Till We Have Faces*. Chad Walsh observes how the character of Psyche is enabled to undertake her trials because her sister Orual helps to bear the burden and anguish of them, although unknowingly.⁶⁶ The character of the Fox explains to Orual how humans flow in and out of each other, and even merge with the gods - "We're all limbs and part of one Whole".⁶⁷

As I hope can be observed from this short study, there is considerable overlap in the theologies of Williams and Lewis concerning not only heaven. There is certainly the potential to explore the links further, perhaps with regard to a common Platonic source. The extent to which Williams influenced Lewis, or *vice versa*, will always be difficult to gauge accurately, but I believe there are direct connections with regard to the formation of Lewis' ideas concerning the heavenly community, and the role and meaning of *Sehnsucht* in his theology.

1.2 Edwyn Bevan

Work which C.S. Lewis often cited in his writings, and which he recommended to those pursuing the Christian faith, was Edwyn Bevan's *Symbolism and Belief*. The influence of these Gifford lectures can be seen throughout Lewis' writings, primarily as a basis for his philosophy of God's existence. Bevan explores the uses of symbols employed in the expression of religious beliefs, and their value in extending and revealing human knowledge in terms of an understanding of a transcendent God. He cites the central question of the Lectures as the search for the Grounds of Belief.⁶⁸ Essentially, it is a search for grounds for *theistic*, not necessarily specifically Christian belief -although Bevan alludes to Christian faith throughout the lectures. I will attempt to summarise Bevan's lectures, pointing out where they appear to represent a basis for Lewis' ideas of God; and where they shed light on Lewis' definition of human beings as:

⁶⁵ L, p.236.

⁶⁶ Walsh, C.; Op. Cit., p.172.

⁶⁷ TWHF, p.301.

⁶⁸ Edwyn Bevan; *Symbolism & Belief*, p.325.

...rational but also animate, amphibians who start from the world of sense and proceed through myth and metaphor to the world of spirit⁶⁹

BEVAN distinguishes at the outset between two different kinds of symbol. Those that stand for something of which we already have direct knowledge, but do not purport to give direct information about the things they symbolise include, for example, national flags, or the tolling of funeral bells. Those which Bevan concerns himself with, and which are different in character, are those that are intending to convey knowledge of the nature of things which we do have direct knowledge, and this is the category into which religious symbols fall. It is with Plato, he contends, that there first clearly appears the idea of a truly real, non-material and eternal world, of which we can only speak of in language that is groping and inadequate.⁷⁰ The history of thought alluded to in Chesterton and Lewis is outlined here as the congenial fusing of the Jewish and Platonic traditions - of a belief in the impossibility of 'seeing' God, and the impiety of attributing to him any material form in the one, and the essential incomprehensibility of God in human thought of the other. Bevan states:

In Christian theology it becomes a fixed dogma that God is incomprehensible, that all human language applied to Him tries by figures and parables to state truth about a Reality which infinitely exceeds all man's powers of understanding or imagination...The classical expression of this conviction was given in the great phrase of St. Paul. "For now we see through a glass darkly," "through a mirror or in a riddle."⁷¹

The extreme of this position is, of course, the *via negativa* - that God is reached by stripping off all the human qualities which have been attributed to Him. Bevan contends that this extreme position is, ultimately, indistinguishable from agnosticism, and that the problem for any theistic belief (including Christianity) is to make sense of the simultaneous claim or paradox that God is in some sense knowable.

THE first religious symbol dealt with is that of 'Height'. The development in religious thought is traced of an anthropological to a more spiritual conception of God as existing enthroned in the sky; as in some sense 'above' the earth. Bevan also notes the breach in religious thought implied in the first verse of Genesis: 'In the beginning God created the heavens' - implying that God must have existed in omnipotence before the existence of any heaven at all.⁷² This is curious in the light of the subsequent identification of the Divine with the word 'Heaven', which often becomes a verbal substitute for God.

Ultimately, however, the crude symbolism leads to a dividing in the ways of religious thought - between polytheism or monism (the identity of God and man), and the Hebraic conception of God as essentially other, as transcendent - the infinite difference of God as ultimate truth. This is a crucial point of departure one way or the other:

The attempt to amalgamate Christianity with a Monist view - to suppose that one can hold a Christian view of the universe and go on talking about the human soul as a portion of God, a

⁶⁹ GID, p.32.

⁷⁰ Edwyn Bevan; Op. Cit., p.14.

⁷¹ Ibid., p.22.

⁷² Ibid., p.41.

little pool in the one Divine ocean, and so on - surely shows an indiscriminating wooliness of thought which blurs the real alternatives in religion...The Christian doctrine of the Incarnation is not another way of saying what the Indian means when he asserts the essential identity of man and God. The doctrine of the Incarnation has its point solely in the Hebraic presupposition in the otherness, the transcendence of God. It is because God is infinitely above the world that His coming down into the world is wonderful.⁷³

Bevan notes the strong movement of Christian thinkers within his own time to repudiating a nineteenth century tendency towards the identification of man and God with a reassertion of transcendence. Lewis, in his characteristic way, continues this:

...Pantheists usually believe that God, so to speak, animates the universe as you animate your body: that the universe almost *is* God, so that if it did not exist He would not exist either, and anything you find in the universe is a part of God. The Christian idea is quite different. They think God invented and made the universe - like a man making a picture or composing a tune. A painter is not a picture, and he does not die if his picture is destroyed...Confronted with a cancer or a slum the Pantheist can say, 'if you could only see it from the divine point of view, you would realise that this also is God.' The Christian replies 'Don't talk damned nonsense'.

Bevan cites Barth as the religious thinker of his day in whom the transcendence of God is most strongly propounded. He also, however, identifies it in an earlier Protestant figure who opposes Barth on many points - Rudolf Otto. Otto's *Das Heilige* was a major influence on C.S. Lewis' thinking, which articulates the essential quality of religion as 'numinous' awe - the prostration of the soul before a Being conceived of as being incomprehensibly great. We shall examine Otto in greater detail in the final section of the chapter. The existence of the Tao (the moral law), and the sense of the numinous, are the two planks upon which Lewis builds his conception of God.

The character of 'transcendent' religion, then, is of worship, adoration, prostration, confession of unworthiness - things which are servile or ignoble if given to that which is unworthy, rather than 'the right recognition of consummate worth'. The primitive tendency to regard the sky as the domain of God is, then, an anticipation of the truth:

...in the higher starry region primitive man saw the revelation of perfect order, unvarying law, and Christians today face the spiritual disorders of the worlds about them with the belief that there is a sphere of being in which there is no disharmony and no evil.⁷⁴

BEVAN'S next considerations are given to the symbols of time and eternity. He accedes to the general agreement that the application of temporal measures to God is no more appropriate than the attributing of spatial characteristics - that the divine mode of Being is Eternity - not time prolonged to infinity, but the eternal Now. This conception of the relationship of time and God, suggests Bevan, did not enter religious thought until the influence of Neo-Platonism. The biblical conception of eternity does not suggest anything other than a mere prolongation of time, rather than something of a different quality altogether. Questions of foreknowledge, and of free will and predestination are illumined by this approach, and it becomes possible to reconcile the ideas that future choices are not yet determined, with the idea that God nevertheless foreknows what those choices will be. Lewis certainly adhered to this conception of the Divine Now, and used the picture of time as a line drawn on a piece

⁷³ Ibid., p.67.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.72.

of paper, with God being represented by the page itself - and thus watching events as they happen at all points along the line.

More importantly, Bevan's reflections on time and eternity lead him into conflict with the philosophy of Bosanquet, that "to throw our ideals into the future is the death of all sane idealism". He counters with the sort of ontological argument of a future bliss which contains hints of Lewis' own approach:

If ever the exigencies of the human spirit are to be satisfied, it cannot be in life under earthly conditions. If God does mean them to find fruition at all, it would obviously be absurd to say that they have already been satisfied at some past time: it would be equally absurd to say that they are being satisfied at the present moment; we know only too well they are not: their satisfaction then can only be, if at all, in the future.⁷⁵

This leads Bevan to derive a fundamental principle for any spiritual theism that the potential being of man extends beyond the world.

THE two main properties of *light* as a symbol are firstly that darkness is representative of concealment, and thus as a moral metaphor, represents deeds which we would not have known - 'Men preferred darkness to light'. The other property is that luminous bodies appear to send forth, without loss being suffered, emanations of substance, which remain one with the body, by a continuous mode of derivation. The religious idea associated with this symbol is that of the Logos.

In speaking of the Wrath of God, Bevan suggest that it is felt that there are grades of reality in the metaphors which we use to speak of God - it is recognised that all modes of speaking about the divine which infer material or local attributes are merely poetical - yet characteristics attributed of the human mind or spirit are nevertheless much closer to the reality. Lewis himself was cautious in dealing with the inherited metaphors concerning God. In particular, he believed the biblical imagery to be inspired in some way, and thus was loath to discard with patriarchal notions of God or male-oriented perceptions of the Divine Nature. Thus in his response to the Bishop of Woolwich; "Must our Image of God go?":

...If I were briefed to defend his position I should say 'The Image of the Earth-Mother gets in something which that of the Sky-Father leaves out. Religions of the Earth-Mother have hitherto been spiritually inferior to those of the Sky-Father, but, perhaps, it is now time to readmit some of their elements..' I shouldn't believe it very strongly, but some sort of case could be made out.⁷⁶

And more clearly in "priestesses in the Church?":

...Christians think that God Himself has taught us how to speak of Him. To say that it does not matter is to say that either all the masculine imagery is not inspired, is merely human in origin, or else that, though inspired, it is quite arbitrary and unessential. And this is surely intolerable...It is also surely based on a shallow view of imagery. Without drawing upon religion, we know from our poetical experience that image and apprehension cleave closer together than common sense is here prepared to admit; that a child who had been taught to pray to a Mother in Heaven would have a religious life radically different from that of a

⁷⁵ Ibid., p.105.

⁷⁶ GID, p.86.

Christian child. And as image and apprehension are in organic unity, so, for a Christian, are human body and human soul.⁷⁷

BEVAN discusses the nature of dogma in relation to the 'numinous'. By dogma he implies McTaggart's sense: "A proposition having metaphysical significance".⁷⁸ Bevan contends that religion cannot be undogmatic if it combines any belief in the real existence of a Divine Being with the apprehension of that Being in the numinous experience. To have purely undogmatic religion the meaning which the numinous sense attaches to particular objects or experiences must be void of conceptual content. To rule out the belief that the Ground of the Universe is spiritual (that would be a dogma) is to rule out any meaning in, for example, the sense of the beautiful, as anything but illusory. However, whilst a religion which consisted in merely attempting to grasp the enjoyment of numinous feelings without attempting to engage the Reality with intellectual conceptions may be erroneous; so to would be one which professed to have encompassed God within a set of dogmatic formulas.

Thus dogma seems to be one of those things which exist in order to be transcended and negated, which yet must be there in order that the act of transcending and negating can take place.⁷⁹ ("The altar must be built in one place, so that the fire may fall in another place"?)

This position seems to accord well with Lewis, who defended the idea of unchanging dogmas in the face of the progress of human knowledge in "Dogma and the Universe". Christian dogma, or the laws of Morality, he believed, were on a similar level to such things as the alphabet or the laws of mathematics - immutable (in our present state) building blocks of our knowledge of the universe; and yet:

Morality is a mountain which we cannot climb by our own efforts; and if we could we should only perish in the ice and unbreathable air of the summit, lacking those wings with which the rest of the journey has to be accomplished. For it is from there that the real ascent begins. The ropes and axes are 'done away' and the rest is a matter of flying.⁸⁰

BEVAN specifically discusses the nature of Truth in two of his lectures, as a more fundamental concern to the question of whether religious conceptions are true in any sense. He offers three different and conflicting theories of Truth to the discussion. The first of these is the Correspondence theory - i.e. truth equals the correspondence between a belief in someone's mind, and a objective fact or event independent of that mind. The theory opposing this view is the coherence theory - a belief is true "when it coheres logically with the whole system of experience which constitutes the universe".⁸¹ Another system of thought, suggests Bevan, is offered by the Pragmatist school. If desirous results are achieved from acting on a particular belief, then that belief is true.

Bevan contends that theories opposed to the correspondence theory may work well, for example, in the fields of mathematics or of science - in dealing with inanimate nature; but when applied to the world of conscious Spirit they become absurd. The

⁷⁷ Ibid., p.91.

⁷⁸ Edwyn Bevan; Op. Cit., p.257.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.262.

⁸⁰ GID, p.73.

⁸¹ Edwyn Bevan; Op. Cit., p.264.

desire to know truth in the sense of its external fact is raised to its greatest intensity in love. Thus, for a religious person, it is not enough to act *as if* his beliefs were true - as if they were helpful myths by which to live one's life, so to speak. Religion is not concerned with the conception of mind as an extension of material processes, but with Spirit, which is conceived of as :

...extending beyond the world we feel and see, extending, according to Christian theology, infinitely beyond it; it is concerned with the relation of my individual spirit to that all-encompassing Spirit and to other human spirits included, with me, in His embrace.⁸²

The problem for specifically Christian theology is the reconciliation of the Neo-Platonic doctrine of the supreme One, with Christian doctrine concerning God. The two opposite dangers are, according to Bevan, those of Agnosticism and Anthropomorphism. The one tendency emphasises the *via negativa* - that nothing positive can be known of God at all; the other falls into idolatry. Between these two errors the Church has traditionally followed the Scholastic doctrine of Analogy. In Aristotelian terms, one cannot attribute qualities to God either *univoce* or *aequivoce* - the resemblance is one of "proportionality".

Bevan goes on to suggest that there is a better way between the two pitfalls of anthropomorphism and agnosticism, articulated to a degree by the writings of Dean Mansel. Bevan describes his understanding of Mansel's philosophy as this:

When we think of God as just or loving, we attribute to Him something which we know as the manifestation of the spirit of man. But whereas we have an imaginative realisation of what love means when we think of it in our human friend, we can have no such imaginative realisation of what love is in the life of God. Yet we must believe that to think of God as loving is not only the best way of making our conduct and temper what they ought to be, but also the nearest approximation to the truth of which the human mind is capable, a much nearer approximation than to think of God, for instance, as the Infinite or the Absolute. If we could know the life of God we should see in it something which human love really resembled, so that to call it love would be the best way of saying what it is in human language. Thus conduct which flows from the belief that God is love is not only the best kind of conduct, judged by the scale of human ethical values, but is also the kind of conduct which corresponds best with Reality. If you are unable to imagine what the Reality is, you can know at any rate that it is of such a character that the right reaction to it in conduct and feeling is the reaction which follows upon your thinking of the Ground of the Universe as a loving God.⁸³

Bevan concluded that if this was an accurate description of Mansel's fundamental position, then it was one which any philosophical Theism must closely resemble.

THE final lecture of Bevan's series deals most directly with the question of why we should believe that 'all these various conceptions, adumbrating various kinds of perfection in a supreme degree, point to any real spiritual self-existent Being.' He deals with the suggestions of Freud and Feuerbach, that, for example, all such ideas are the projections of wish-fulfilment upon an empty universe. Fundamentally, Bevan appears to believe that the whole argument turns on the question of whether we believe in rationality at all - such a belief must be an act of faith, unprovable by any argument which is not circular.

⁸² Ibid., p.269.

⁸³ Ibid., p.296.

1.3 Baron Friedrich von Hügel

IN the light of Lewis' Christian position, articulated throughout his work, the attraction of von Hügel is obvious. Here was a theological thinker who had emerged from the Modernist controversy clearly advocating the essential 'otherness' and Transcendence of God; and who drew Lewisian distinctions between a 'thorough-going supernaturalism', and a liberalism which 'watered down' the essential Christian truths. Von Hügel himself wrote:

The capital and decisive difference, therefore, now appears to be the difference between Religion conceived as a purely intra-human phenomenon; without evidence beyond the aspirations of the human race; and Religion conceived as essentially evidential, metaphysical, the effects in us of more than us - of more than any purely human facts and desires.⁸⁴

Heaney describes the Baron as being in search not of the God we would like to have, but of the God who loves us. He was a man who accused his fellows of 'trying to carry the good God in their pocket',⁸⁵

Lewis' antipathy to 'modernism' and 'liberalism' runs throughout all his work. He castigated Loisy (along with others) for holding views not consonant with a Christianity worth the name.⁸⁶ He clearly saw himself as standing for a restatement of orthodox belief and practice against a tide of undermining influences. Chief of these was the work of New Testament scholars, who Lewis saw as abandoning the great central beliefs (the 'mere' Christianity) shared by Christendom until the 19th century.⁸⁷ Indeed, it is fair comment to say that the entire thrust of his critical writings, in a negative sense, is towards the discrediting of sixteenth century Humanism and twentieth century Modernism. This is in spite of what Watson describes as Lewis' essential modernity.

The liberal bishop in the *Great Divorce* is one example of Lewis' conception of liberals as having committed 'sins of the intellect', rendering them incapable of seeing Reality as it actually is. Another (early) instance of his abhorrence of liberalism comes in a discussion of ecumenism:

...it seems to me that the "extreme" elements in every Church are nearest one another, and the liberal and "broad-minded" people in each Body could never be united at all. The world of dogmatic Christianity is a place in which thousands of people of quite different types keep on saying the same thing, and the world of "broad-mindedness" and watered-down "religion" is a world where a small number of people (all of the same type) say totally different things and change their minds every few minutes. We shall never get re-union from them.⁸⁸

VON Hügel in fact was much more sympathetic to Loisy than was Lewis. He worked to prevent the rejection of his friend by the papal authorities, believing

⁸⁴ Quoted in Heaney, John J.; *The Modernist Crisis: von Hügel*, p.202.

⁸⁵ Heaney, John, J.; *Op. Cit.*, p.210.

⁸⁶ FE, p.105.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.105.

⁸⁸ TAH, p.45.

that intellectual horizons of the Church should be broader than those of scholasticism - even if he did not agree with Loisy's critical conclusions.⁸⁹ Lewis was much more scathing. Here, again, in a discussion of the potency of 'myth':

...the extreme modernist, infidel in all but name - need not be called a fool or hypocrite because he retains, even in the midst of his intellectual atheism, the language, rites, and story of the Christians. The poor man may be clinging (with a wisdom he himself by no means understands) to that which is his life. It would have been better that Loisy should have remained a Christian: it would not necessarily have been better that he purged his thought of vestigial Christianity.⁹⁰

There is certainly good evidence that Lewis' conception of heaven and hell owed much to von Hügel. His discussion of hell, particularly, in the *Problem of Pain*, follows *Essays and Addresses* to a large degree.⁹¹ In the following, I shall draw some of the threads from von Hügel's work which appear to have influenced Lewis.

ONE such theme is Purgatory, which Lewis certainly believed in some sense, and which von Hügel wrote was a 'sheer fact' for the soul in its relation to God in this life. Lewis never fully articulated his views concerning Purgatory, but his suggestions in *The Great Divorce*, and in his letters, are reminiscent of von Hügel's views.⁹² The Baron suggested that a belief in Purgatory of some kind (and also of Limbo) is inescapable if we hold a belief in Heaven and Hell.⁹³ The only evidence for the workings of divine grace that we have are the experiences we have in our temporal state, and we have no grounds for assuming a radical change at death. Even a deep and sincere repentance of sins in this life does not remove the inward effects - a repentance of gambling does not remove the propensity to gamble, for instance. The gradual operation of divine grace and mercy in eradicating sinful tendencies in this life is one we must assume takes place in some respects after our death.⁹⁴

Von Hügel's interpretations of the gospel teachings on the reality and finality of heaven and hell certainly accord also with those of Lewis. He rejected the thesis that the Dominical utterances concerning hell are later interpolations or amplifications of his followers; or that they had no organic relation with Jesus' central message, and were merely an inevitable insertion stemming from his cultural background.⁹⁵ For von Hügel, the inevitable conviction is that the spiritual life is:

...a great all-important alternative and choice, a choice once and for all, with consequences final and immense.⁹⁶

In *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis directs us to von Hügel's assertion that we must not confuse the doctrine of hell with the imagery with which it is presented to us. The essence of hell in the New Testament teachings is its *unendingness* - the nature of

⁸⁹ Barmann, Lawrence F.; *Baron Friedrich von Hügel and the Modernist Crisis in England*, p. 79.

⁹⁰ GID, p. 44.

⁹¹ PP, pp. 98-99.

⁹² "When you die," he wrote, in a letter to Sister Penelope, C.S.M.V.; "...and if prison visiting is allowed, come down and look me up in Purgatory. It is all rather fun - solemn fun - isn't it?" L, p. 307

⁹³ Baron Friedrich von Hügel; *Essays & Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion*, p. 201.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 202-203.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

which Lewis goes on to speculate.⁹⁷ The emotional force of this conviction is evident in most, if not all, of Lewis' writings: *The Great Divorce*, *The Weight of Glory*, and *Till We Have Faces* are obvious examples.

OTHER themes which Lewis picks up in the *Problem of Pain* include the nature of lost souls - von Hügel describes the lost as stunted, self-occupied, jealously evading all realities which are not simply themselves. They are persistent in envious self-isolation, and suffer "niggardly pain" at the sight or thought of the unmatched greatness or goodness of other souls.⁹⁸ Compare this with the 'fountain' in *The Great Divorce*, which cures the 'inflammation' of self-regard and introspection:

When you have drunk of it you forget forever all proprietorship in your own works. You enjoy them just as if they were someone else's: without pride and without modesty.⁹⁹

The deepest sins, according to von Hügel, are the sins of thought, self idolisation and arrogant revolt against the truth as perceived by "the soul in its depths". Lewis himself drew a distinction between sins resulting from our animal nature (lust, greed, etc.) and the sins of pride, which were essentially diabolical, and came to us "directly from hell". Thus, according to von Hügel:

...it matters not so much what a man thinks he thinks, as what he thinks in actual reality.¹⁰⁰

This emphasis on our capacity for self-deception is strikingly apparent in *Till We Have Faces*. Orual, the central character of the book, in making her accusations against the Gods, makes discoveries about herself:

The complaint was the answer. To have heard myself making it was to be answered. Lightly men talk of saying what they mean...When the time comes to you at which you will be forced at last to utter the speech which has lain at the centre of your soul for years, which you have, all that time, idiot-like, been saying over and over, you'll not talk about the joy of words. I saw well why the gods do not speak to us openly, nor let us answer. Till that word can be dug out of us, why should they hear the babble that we think we mean? How can they meet us face to face till we have faces?¹⁰¹

1.4 G.K. Chesterton

G.K. Chesterton belongs to a group of conscious influences on Lewis who pre-date his conversion to Christianity, and which included MacDonald, Spenser, Milton, and Dr. Johnson. The significance of their Christian outlook did not, surprisingly, dawn on him until the beginning of his association with Neville Coghill. Along with the 'religious Pagans' (Plato, Aeschylus, and Virgil), they were characterised, for Lewis, by a "roughness and density of life".¹⁰²

⁹⁷ PP, p.100.

⁹⁸ von Hügel; Op. Cit., p.217.

⁹⁹ GD, p.75.

¹⁰⁰ von Hügel; Op. Cit., p.222.

¹⁰¹ TWHF, p.305.

¹⁰² Clyde S. Kilby; Op. Cit., p.18.

No admirer of Lewis can fail, on reading Chesterton, to note the striking similarities of style and approach. The combative polemic, the good-humoured, but heavy sarcasm, the distaste for puritanism, the 'port-sipping, nut cracking bonhomie'¹⁰³, are evident in both. Chesterton, for example, said of Grant Allen, a contemporary who had written a book about the Evolution of the Idea of God:

...it would be much more interesting if God wrote a book about the Evolution of the idea of Grant Allen.¹⁰⁴

The same phraseology is employed by Lewis in an essay he wrote for *Asking Them Questions*:

"What Are We To Make of Jesus Christ?" This is a question which has, in a sense, a frantically comic side. For the real question is not what we are to make of Christ, but what is He to make of us?¹⁰⁵

In addition to this, a great deal of the *content* of Chesterton's outlook also appears to have been taken up by C.S. Lewis. One of the more obvious examples of this is a shared, innate distrust of 'progress', and of the 'nanny-state'. For Lewis, the power over the modern imagination of the machine - the constant improving or replacing of new for old; had engendered the common perception that 'goodness = what comes next'.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, he was acutely aware of semantic changes - for instance 'permanence' had come to be spoken of as 'stagnation'.¹⁰⁷

Chesterton's writing is characterised by a nostalgia for a medieval 'Merrie England', and there are certainly traces of this in Lewis. J.A.W. Bennett wrote of him that:

In our time it was Lewis who turned men's minds to the Middle Ages and so stimulated our mental thirst. Admittedly the influence of a remote don - especially of a don who in unpropitious times dared *defend* his Chesterton - cannot be compared with a great novelist's, even allowing for Lewis' unique blend of imaginative and expository gifts. Yet it may be fairly urged that for multitudes who find Scott unpalatable Lewis was the first to reveal the fascination of the Middle Ages and, what is much more, to reveal what Gustave Cohen has called their *grand clarte*.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ J.R.R. Tolkien, in a letter to his son, once wrote: 'Lewis is as energetic and jolly as ever, but getting too much publicity for his or any of our tastes. "Peterborough" did him the doubtful honour of a peculiarly misrepresentative and asinine paragraph in the Daily Telegraph. It began "Ascetic Mr Lewis"...!!! I ask you! He put away three pints in a very short session we had this morning, and said he was "going short for Lent".'

¹⁰⁴ G.K. Chesterton; *The Everlasting Man*, p.24.

¹⁰⁵ GID, p. 79.

¹⁰⁶ P, p.55.

¹⁰⁷ In reply to an invitation to membership of the Society for the Prevention of Progress, of Walnut Creek, CA; Lewis wrote: "while feeling that I was *born* a member of your Society, I am nevertheless honoured to receive the outward seal of membership. I shall hope by continued orthodoxy and the unremitting practice of Reaction, Obstruction, and Stagnation to give you no reason for repenting your favour. I humbly submit that in...The Abolition of Man you will find another work not all unworthy of consideration for admission to the canon."

¹⁰⁸ Watson, G. (ed.); *Critical Thought Series I: C.S. Lewis*, p.58.

Lewis appears to have taken much of Chesterton's ideas concerning economics and the social order to heart. Chesterton, like Lewis, was indebted to William Morris in this regard, and was a proponent of the Roman Catholic social philosophy known as 'Distributism' - the redistribution of property without the normal kinds of state interference.¹⁰⁹ Evidence of Lewis' adherence to these ideas (in some form) can be found, for example, in *That Hideous Strength*. The community of St. Anne's could be said to be a model of Distributism, and indeed, the slighting remark that Denniston (a member of the community) "has become a Distributivist"¹¹⁰ seems reasonably conclusive. In *Mere Christianity* Lewis offers hints of what he thinks a Christian society would be like. He suggests that its economic life would strike us as rather socialistic, but that its family life would appear quite old-fashioned. Meilander suggests that the combination of these two examples points not towards socialism in the conventional sense, but to the widest possible distribution of private property. Each person would own their own small plot, factory, farm or shop.¹¹¹ Add to this Lewis' assertion of the New Testament's distaste for 'busybodies', and one can well understand the sources of his outraged remark that:

...I read the other day that a man could not, without a government permit, chop down a tree in his own garden, with his own axe, and make it into planks to build his own shed.

In addition to this, the basis for many of Lewis' literary ideas and imaginative themes can be found in Chesterton. The introduction to *The Everlasting Man* begins:

There are two ways of getting home; and one of them is to stay there. The other is to walk round the whole world till we come back to the same place.¹¹²

A more succinct statement of the theme of Lewis' spiritual autobiography (*The Pilgrim's Regress*) would be difficult to find. Reilly remarks on Lewis' use of a Chestertonian device throughout his space trilogy - that of making something seem marvellous by describing it in terms that we would never use for it.¹¹³ Another example is Chesterton's remark that:

One should never invoke the Gods unless you really want them to appear; it annoys them very much.¹¹⁴

This provides an instance of Lewis' habit of extracting a phrase from another author and investing it with an imaginative force of his own. The demonic character of Tash in the *Chronicles* immediately springs to mind, but Lewis also used the theme to describe God's dealings with us. 'Getting more than we bargained for' is a common theme of his writings on prayer and the spiritual life. We may go to God because of some specific request or failing, and find that once that is dealt with (if at all), we find that it is ourselves in entirety which God requires. Similarly, in his response to modern scepticism concerning the devil:

¹⁰⁹ G.K. Chesterton; *The Works of G.K. Chesterton*, p.vi.

¹¹⁰ THS, p.19.

¹¹¹ Meilander, G.; *The Taste for the Other*, p.41.

¹¹² G.K. Chesterton; *The Everlasting Man*, p.9.

¹¹³ R.J. Reilly; *Op. Cit.*, p.134.

¹¹⁴ Humphrey Carpenter; *The Inklings*, p.135.

...I know someone will ask me, 'Do you really mean, at this time of day, to re-introduce our old friend the devil - hoofs and horns and all?' Well, what the time of day has to do with it, I do not know. And I am not particular about the hoofs and horns. But in all other respects my answer is 'Yes, I do.' I do not claim to know anything about his personal appearance. If anybody really wants to know him better I would say to that person, 'Don't worry. If you really want to, you will. Whether you'll like it when you do is another question.'¹¹⁵

One purely literary example is the wild ride of Jadis in the *Magician's Nephew*, which seems clearly modelled on the similar scene in the *Man Who Was Thursday*.¹¹⁶

It was not only Lewis that Chesterton appears to have influenced. Tolkien seems to have made much of his interpretation of the Incarnation, as a divine irruption into an enemy stronghold:

...It is not only that the very horse-hoofs of Herod might in that sense have passed like thunder over the sunken head of Christ. It is also that there is in that image a true idea of an outpost, of a piercing through the rock and an entrance into an enemy territory. There is in this buried divinity an idea of *undermining* the world; of shaking the towers and palaces from below; even as Herod the great king felt that earthquake under him and swayed with his swaying palace.¹¹⁷

Compare this with Tolkien's account of the undermining of Sauron's evil kingdom "from below", as it were, by the subterfuge of Providence:

...far away, as Frodo put on the Ring, ...in the very heart of his realm, the Power in Barad-dur was shaken, and the Tower trembled from its foundations to its proud and bitter crown. The Dark Lord was suddenly aware of him...he knew his deadly peril and the thread upon which his doom now hung...and throughout his realm a tremor ran, his slaves quailed, and his armies halted, and his captains suddenly steerless, bereft of will, wavered and despaired. For they were forgotten.

...Towers fell and mountains slid; walls crumbled and melted, crashing down; vast spires of smoke and spouting steams went billowing up, until they toppled like an overwhelming wave, and its wild crest curled and came foaming down upon the land.

...And as the Captains gazed south to the Land of Mordor, it seemed to them that, black against the pall of cloud, there rose a huge shape of shadow...and stretched out towards them a vast threatening hand, terrible but impotent: for even as it leaned over them, a great wind took it, and it was all blown away, and passed; and then a hush fell.¹¹⁸

Another example of Chesterton's influence is in apologetic approach. Lewis is renowned for his 'Mad, Bad, or God' treatment of the phenomenon of Jesus Christ and his teaching. Contrast this with Chesterton:

No modern critic in his five wits thinks that the preacher of the Sermon on the Mount was a horrible half-witted imbecile that might be scrawling stars on the walls of a cell. No atheist or blasphemer believes that the author of the Parable of the Prodigal Son was a monster with one mad idea like cyclops with one eye. Upon any possible historical criticism he must be put higher in the scale of human beings than that. Yet by analogy we have really to put him there or else in the highest place of all.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ MC, p.47.

¹¹⁶ See Clyde S. Kilby; *The Christian World of C.S. Lewis*, p.118.

¹¹⁷ G.K. Chesterton; *The Everlasting Man*, pp.209-210.

¹¹⁸ J.R.R. Tolkien; *The Lord of the Rings*, pp.981-985.

¹¹⁹ G.K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man*, p.236.

ALL of the above gives an insight into the extent to which Chesterton informed Lewis' literary and apologetic sympathies, but the single greatest influence on him of Chesterton's work was *The Everlasting Man*. Lewis first came upon this book before his re-conversion to Christianity, and later described how for the first time, the Christian interpretation of history began to be a credible alternative for him. From the outset, the book is shot through with scepticism of the sort of fashionable 'guesswork' about history which Lewis was later to pillory in *The Pilgrim's Regress* and *Fern-seed and Elephants*.¹²⁰ There, also, is Chesterton's assertion (found also in *Orthodoxy*) that what is striking about mankind and the rest of the animal kingdom is not their similarity, but essential difference.¹²¹ We differ from the 'brutes' not only in degree but in kind - distinguished by, among other things, our capacities for art, morality, and the 'beautiful madness of laughter'.¹²² Lewis reworked the theme into his imaginative works first as a distinction between the *hnau* and the ordinary animals of his planetary books; and later between the ordinary and *talking* beasts of Narnia.

Chesterton goes on to highlight what he sees as a fundamental human concern - that, bluntly, there is 'something the matter' with mankind.¹²³ The consciousness of the Fall, or the awareness of a universal moral law and our shortcomings before it, is the only basis from which Lewis believed one could sensibly begin to talk about anything (it forms the introduction to *Mere Christianity*). Also evident are Chesterton's deep sympathies with Pagan myths and culture - he talks of the 'Presence of the Absence' of God in the unfathomable sadness of Pagan poetry, and of 'fore-shadowings' of Christ.¹²⁴ Lewis' central thesis concerning Christianity as a historical faith was that it was myth become fact, and the roots of this belief are found clearly in Chesterton's book. Mythology is not a religion, it is essentially a *search* - since the birth of Christ no mythologies have been written, for what was sought has been found. Mythology satisfied some of man's needs before the arrival of Christianity - primarily the intuitive and deep felt need for sacrifice; but until their meeting in the 'sea of Christendom', the rivers of mythology and philosophy run parallel.¹²⁵ Lewis himself was later to write:

We must not be nervous about 'parallels' and 'Pagan Christs': they ought to be there- it would be a stumbling block if they weren't. We must not, in false spirituality, withhold our imaginative welcome. If God chooses to be mythopoeic - and is not the sky itself a myth? - shall we refuse to be mythopathic?

¹²⁰ This scepticism centres on the foundation of much of our knowledge on hypothesis - Chesterton remarked that the dogmatism of the Darwinians has been much too strong for the essential agnosticism of Darwin - echoes of Calvin & Calvinism and other such examples. G.K. Chesterton; *The Everlasting Man*, pp.45-51. See also *The Pilgrim's Regress*: 'Hypothesis, my dear young friend, establishes itself by a cumulative process. Or, to use popular language, if you make the same guess often enough it ceases to be a guess and becomes a Scientific Fact.'

¹²¹ G.K. Chesterton; *The Everlasting Man*, p.36.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p.39.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p.60.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.105-107.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.128.

1.5 Rudolf Otto

ONE of the most important sources for C.S. Lewis' ideas was Rudolf Otto's *Das Heilige*. A central tenet of Lewis' orthodoxy is the assertion that the 'numinous' is a fundamental of human experience, and it is from Otto's work that Lewis draws much of his thought. Otto, for me encapsulates the whole temper of Lewis' mind in his forward to the English translation of *Das Heilige*:

In this book I have ventured to write of that which may be called 'non-rational' or 'supra-rational' in the depths of the divine nature. I do not thereby want to promote in any way the tendency of our time towards an extravagant and fantastic 'irrationalism', but rather to join issue with it in its morbid form. The 'irrational' is today a favourite theme of all who are too lazy to think or too ready to evade the arduous duty of clarifying their ideas and grounding their convictions on a basis of coherent thought...I feel that no one should concern himself with the 'Numen ineffabile' who has not already devoted assiduous and serious study to the 'Ratio aeterna'.¹²⁶

Otto's thesis in *Das Heilige* is that the experience of the 'Holy' is the real innermost core of every religion. It contains an element or 'moment' which sets it apart from the Rational - it remains ineffable, beyond expression or apprehension in terms of concepts. In the understanding of his day, Otto argued that the word 'holy' had become imbued with the idea of moral goodness - a holy will was a perfectly moral will. This idea, he argued, we owed to the Judaic tradition. The ethical element, however, was neither original nor did it constitute the whole meaning of the word.

OTTO cited Schleiermacher as a significant figure in the development of thought concerning religious feeling, in response to the rationalist emphasis of the Enlightenment. However, he identified what he saw as two fundamental errors in his approach which he sought to correct. The first of these was Schleiermacher's conception of the feeling of dependence in religious experience. According to Otto, it was an error to conceive of this by distinguishing merely between absolute and relative dependence. The idea of dependence could only be used as a close analogy - the difference was one of intrinsic quality and not only of degree. Otto preferred to recharacterise the feeling of dependence as 'creature-consciousness' - the abasement and overwhelming emotion of nothingness of a creature before that which is supreme above all creatures.

Schleiermacher's second defect was in his formulation of the religious category itself - which Otto saw as primarily a category of self-valuation, religious emotion being a sort of self-consciousness, concerning one's dependence.

...Thus, according to Schleiermacher, I can only come upon the fact of God as the result of an inference, that is, by reasoning to a cause beyond myself to account for my 'feeling of dependence'. But this is entirely opposed to the psychological facts of the case. Rather, the 'creature-feeling' is itself a first subjective concomitant and effect of another feeling-element, which casts it like a shadow, but which in itself indubitably has immediate and primary reference to an object outside the self.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Rudolf Otto; *The Idea of the Holy* (Translated by John W. Harvey), p.vii.

¹²⁷ Rudolf Otto; *Op. Cit.*, p.10.

The numinous, concludes Otto, is thus felt as objective and outside of the self. He then turned to inquire into its nature and modes of manifestation.

THE only appropriate expression, suggested Otto, for the deepest and most fundamental element in all strong and sincerely felt emotion, was *mysterium tremendum*:

The feeling of it may at times come sweeping like a gentle tide, pervading the mind with a tranquil mood of deepest worship. It may pass over into a more set and lasting attitude of the soul, continuing, as it were, thrillingly vibrant and resonant, until at last it dies away and the soul resumes its 'profane', non-religious mood of everyday experience. It may burst in sudden eruption up from the depths of the soul with spasms and convulsions, or lead to the strangest excitements, to intoxicated frenzy, to transport and to ecstasy. It has its wild demonic forms and can sink to an almost grisly horror and shuddering. It has its crude, barbaric antecedents and early manifestations, and again it may be developed into something beautiful and pure and glorious. It may become the hushed, trembling, and speechless humility of the creature in the presence of- whom or what? In the presence of that which is a *Mystery* inexpressible and above all creatures.¹²⁸

Otto identified three elements of the adjective 'tremendum'. The first of these was the sense of 'awe-fullness' or 'peculiar dread'. Again, this element of 'fear' is distinct in character as well as degree from the ordinary sense of 'afraid'. The antecedent stage of religious fear is seen in queer perversions of 'daemonic dread' - the fear of ghosts, or the 'horror of Pan'. The physical reaction to an apprehension of the numinous is the 'shudder' or the creeping of the flesh. In its ennobled state, suggested Otto, this is transformed, in the adoration of God into the 'Holy, Holy, Holy' of worship - it has lost the crazy and bewildering note of the daemonic experience but not the ineffable 'something'. In the same way, Otto approached the biblical concept of the Wrath of God by suggesting that the *οργη θεου* differed in *quality* as well as degree from ordinary analogies of the passions. What at first sight appeared to be an Old Testament vision of a capricious and wilful divine anger, with no concern for moral qualities, was suggested Otto, nothing other than an apprehension of the *tremendum* itself, expressed by the aid of a naïve analogy.

The second element, which as already been noted to a degree, concerned the 'overpowering' or 'majesty' of the experience. 'Creature-consciousness' appears as a sort of shadow or pale, subjective, reflection of the overwhelming apprehension. Finally, Otto described the third element of the *tremendum* as being that of 'urgency' or 'energy', which clothed itself in symbolical expressions, such as vitality, passion, emotional temper, will, force, movement, excitement, activity, impetus. Otto argued that these features were typical of all levels of religious emotion - from the daemonic up to the idea of the 'living God':

We have here the factor that has everywhere more than any other prompted the fiercest opposition to the 'philosophic God of mere rational speculation, who can be put into a definition. And for their part the philosophers have condemned these expressions of the energy of the numen, whenever they are brought on to the scene, as sheer anthropomorphism. In so far as their opponents have for the most part themselves failed to recognise that the terms they have borrowed from the sphere of human conative and affective life have merely value as

¹²⁸ Ibid., pp.12-13.

analogies, the philosophers are right to condemn them. But they are wrong, in so far as, this error notwithstanding, these terms stood for a genuine aspect of the divine nature – its non-rational aspect – a due consciousness of which served to protect religion itself from being ‘rationalised’ away.¹²⁹

Otto cited Luther’s controversy with Erasmus as a prime example of this conflict in religious thought – of the conflict between those contending for a ‘living God’ and for voluntarism against rationalism and rationalists.

C.S. Lewis’ fictional treatment of this theme can be found in his retelling of the myth of Cupid and Psyche – *Till We Have Faces* (a novel which he regarded as his finest piece of work – despite a lukewarm critical reception). The principal theme of the book is concerned with the corruption of natural loves, left to themselves. Alongside this, however, there is a profound exploration of the differing approaches to reality offered by ‘the Fox’ (a personification of Greek philosophy) and the dark, bloody and superstitious religion of Ungit worship. Lewis gave a crude description of the division of rational and non-rational elements of the religious experience in an address originally published as *Undeceptions*:

We may *salva reverentia* divide religions, as we do soups, into “thick” and “clear”. By Thick I mean those which have orgies and ecstasies and mysteries and local attachments: Africa is full of Thick religions. By Clear I mean those which are philosophical, ethical and universalising: Stoicism, Buddhism and the Ethical Church are Clear religions. Now if there is a true religion it must be both Thick and Clear: for the true God must have made both the child and the man, both the savage and the citizen, both the head and the belly. And the only two religions that fulfil this condition are Hinduism and Christianity. But Hinduism fulfils it imperfectly. The Clear religion of the Brahmin hermit in the jungle and the Thick religion of the neighbouring temple go on *side by side*. The Brahmin hermit doesn’t bother about the temple prostitution, nor the worshipper in the temple about the hermit’s metaphysic. But Christianity really breaks down the middle wall of the partition. It takes a convert from central Africa and tells him to obey an enlightened universalist ethic: it takes a twentieth century academic prig like me and tells me to go fasting to a Mystery, to drink the blood of the Lord. The savage convert has to be Clear: I have to be Thick. That is how one knows one has come to the real religion.¹³⁰

Having found the adjective ‘tremendum’ to be justified only by analogy, Otto then turns to the substantive idea ‘mysterium’. He cites Augustine’s Confessions as a striking example of the “stiffening, numbing” character of the “wholly other”, and its contrast to the rational element of the numen. He suggests that the mysterious is not simply that which is absolutely and invariably beyond our understanding, but that:

The truly mysterious object is beyond our apprehension and comprehension, not only because our knowledge has certain irremovable limits, but because in it we come upon something inherently ‘wholly other’, whose kind and character are incommensurable to our own, and before which we therefore recoil in a wonder that strikes us chill and numb.¹³¹

The fear of ghosts is a caricature, or off-shoot of the daemonic experience itself, and Otto analyses this “positive feeling-content” of the religious experience to suggest that

¹²⁹ Ibid., pp.23-24.

¹³⁰ TAH, p.29.

¹³¹ Rudolf Otto; Op. Cit., p.28.

concepts of the 'transcendent' and 'supernatural' become designations for a unique character we can feel, without being able to give it conceptual expression.¹³²

HAVING analysed the of 'dreadful' and 'awful' character of the numinous experience, Otto then turns to the element of fascination. The numinous consciousness, he suggests, has a dual character, to which the entire religious development of humanity bears witness. On the rational side of the non-rational fascination are the 'natural' elements of the psychical life - Love, Mercy, Pity, Comfort. On the non-rational side is the 'Dionysiac' element of the numen. Ultimately, suggests Otto, there is above and beyond our rational being the hidden and highest part of our nature, which can find no satisfaction in the mere allaying of the needs of our sensuous, physical or intellectual needs or cravings. This is the mystic's 'ground of our being' which expresses itself in Augustine as that central part of us which "finds no rest until it rests in thee".

Otto's interpretation of the religious history of humanity is one which accords with that of Lewis and Chesterton. The first stage, he conjectures, begins with one 'pole' of the numinous experience - the daunting aspect of daemonic dread. The practices of expiation or propitiation are attempts to appease the wrath of the numen. The phenomenon of shamanism is an attempt to appropriate the 'prodigious force' of the numen for the natural ends of humanity.

One of the most surprising aspects of religious history is then this association of the numinous with moral goodness, and Otto argues that both are a priori human 'givens'. The argument of evolutionists that moral obligation evolves from restraint by custom to the idea of a universal moral 'ought' is dismissed. Such a theory does not take into account the *character* of moral obligation, which is qualitatively different from such a restraint by custom. It is just the same, argues Otto, with the sense of the numinous - it is not to be derived from any other feeling; it is "unevolvable".¹³³ The Holy is not simply awe, but a conscious recognition of value, precious beyond conceiving, which finds its expression biblically in such examples as Isaiah's vision of the heavenly throne ("I am a man of unclean lips.." Is.6:1-9), or St. Peter's "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord". In this context also, Otto observes that mere 'unlawfulness' only becomes impiety, sin, or sacrilege when numinous unworthiness is translated to and centred in moral delinquency. Thus the meaning of sin is not understood by natural or merely moral man. As Otto writes:

The morally robust older Rationalism was lacking neither in a sincere and respectful recognition of the moral law nor in honest endeavour to conform to it...But no 'downfall' or 'collapse' and no 'need of redemption' came within its scheme, because the objection brought against it by its opponents was in fact just; Rationalism lacked understanding of what sin is. Mere morality is not the soil from which grows either the need of 'redemption' and deliverance or the need for that other unique good which is likewise altogether and specifically numinous in character, 'covering', and 'atonement'.¹³⁴

¹³² Ibid., p.30.

¹³³ Ibid., pp.44-45.

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp.55-56.

Lewis, as we shall see, respected the 'morally robust' older Rationalism, but he too believed that it was operating on an incomplete appreciation of human spiritual experience.

Modern antipathy towards theologies of Atonement are due to a misunderstanding of the numinous character, suggests Otto. The picture of an angry deity demanding blood sacrifice for wrongs committed against him represents a parody of the truth, or at least a regression to a more primitive religious consciousness. Atonement has more to do with heightened sense of the numinous, in its dual character - both the unspeakable attraction of the Holy, and the desire to transcend a felt sundering unworthiness. Here Otto uses the 38th chapter of Job as the supreme biblical example of such a consciousness. Where Paul renounces theodicy (Rom. 9:20, for example), Job, rather, puts forward a theodicy of its own - the element of the mysterious is displayed in a rare purity and completeness. Job's repentance in dust and ashes does not represent an impotent collapse to superior strength, but an admission of inner conviction and conviction:

This chapter...aims at putting forward a real theodicy of its own, and a better one than that of Job's friends; a theodicy able to convict even a Job, and not only to convict him, but utterly to still every inward doubt that assailed his soul. For latent in the weird experience that Job underwent in the revelation of Elohim is at once a relaxing of his soul's anguish and an appeasement, an appeasement which would alone and in itself perfectly suffice as the solution of the problem of the Book of Job, even without Job's rehabilitation in chapter 42.¹³⁵

The case is then made for the superiority of the Christian religion, (in the orthodox sense as Lewis would have seen it), as the culmination of a process in which the 'numinous' is rationalised and moralised until it becomes 'the holy' in the fullest sense of the word. In the Islamic experience, for example, Otto suggests that Allah represents mere Numen - Yahweh in pre-Mosaic form on a larger scale. Christianity, by contrast, requires of us *both* to escape our mental atmosphere - to recapture the awe of the Jew towards Yahweh, the hellenistic Greek towards Destiny, or of primitive man towards the anger of the gods, *and* to embrace the prodigious paradox of the same God admitting access to himself - not a mere matter of course, but a grace beyond our power to comprehend.

C.S. LEWIS *explicitly* deals with the numinous most fully in the introductory to *The Problem of Pain*.¹³⁶ In all developed religion, he argues, we find three strands or elements, and in Christianity one more. The first of these is the Numinous. Lewis in his "genial homeliness" uses an example from *The Wind in the Willows* ("if we are not too proud to seek it there") to illustrate the numinous experience, when Rat and Mole approach Pan on the island:

"'Rat,' he found breath to whisper, shaking, 'Are you afraid?' 'Afraid?' murmured the Rat, his eyes shining with unutterable love. 'Afraid? Of Him? O, never, never. And yet - and yet - O, Mole, I am afraid.'"¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Rudolf Otto; Op. Cit., pp.80-81.

¹³⁶ PP, pp.11-15.

¹³⁷ PP, p.15.

There are, argues Lewis, only two views that we can hold about numinous awe. The first is that it is a mere twist in the human mind, corresponding to nothing objective and serving no biological function, but with no tendency to disappear at the point of highest spiritual development from poet, philosopher or saint. The second is that it is a direct experience of the supernatural, to which the name Revelation might be given.

The second strand is the sense of the Moral Law. Echoing Otto, Lewis suggests that “I want”, “I am forced”, or “I should be well advised” bear no resemblance to “ought” or “ought not”. The Moral Law, like the sense of the Numinous, is either inexplicable illusion or revelation.

The third element is the identification of the numinous with the moral. Only those who take it are safe from the obscenities and barbarities of unmoralised worship or the cold sad self-righteousness of sheer moralism. It was the Jews who fully and unambiguously identified the awful Presence haunting black mountain tops and thunderclouds with “the righteous Lord” who “loveth righteousness” (Ps.11:8)

Lewis concludes his interpretation of Otto with the assertion of the fourth strand which defines Christianity as unique - the historical event of Jesus Christ. The distinctive Christian claim is that of the paradox of a Man who claimed to be Son of, or one with the “awful haunter of nature and the giver of the moral law”, and that the death and new life of this man effected a real change in our relations with the “awful” and “righteous” Lord.

As has been noted, these themes are developed imaginatively in Lewis’ novel *Till We Have Faces*. The story is seen through the eyes of Orual, the ugly sister of Psyche, and is set in an ambiguous, feudal period of Mediterranean history. The conflict between “thick” and “clear” religion is personified in the antagonism of the Fox, a Greek rationalist who serves the King - the father of Psyche and her sisters, and the Priest - the high cleric of the superstitious and bloody “Ungit - worship” of the nation. The land is beset by famine, pestilence, drought, and the barrenness of sons of the King. The Priest decrees that ‘The Accursed’ must be found, and must be offered up by death as ‘The Great Offering’ to the anger of Ungit - to the Brute which is her son:

“The victim must be given to the Brute. For the Brute is, in a mystery, Ungit herself or Ungit’s son, the god of the Mountain; or both. The victim is led up the mountain to the Holy Tree, and bound to the Tree and left. Then the Brute comes. That is why you angered Ungit just now, King, when you spoke of offering a thief. In the Great Offering the victim must be perfect. For in holy language a man so offered is said to be Ungit’s husband, and a woman is said to be the bride of Ungit’s son. And both are called the Brute’s supper.”¹³⁸

The Fox has no patience with what he sees as the nonsense and the superstitions of the Priest’s religion:

“Do you not see, Master,” said the Fox, “that the Priest is talking nonsense? A shadow is to be an animal which is also a goddess which is also a god, and loving is to be eating - a child of six would talk more sense. And a moment ago the victim of this abominable sacrifice was to be the Accursed, the wickedest person in the whole land, offered as a punishment. And now it is to be

¹³⁸ TWHF, pp.56-57.

the best person in the whole land - the perfect victim - married to the god as a reward. Ask him which it means. It can't be both."¹³⁹

To which the Priest gives his contemptuous view of 'Greek wisdom' - of the rationalist view of the world:

"...Much less does it give them understanding of holy things. They demand to see such things clearly, as if the gods were no more than letters written in a book. I, King, have dealt with the gods for three generations of men, and I know that they dazzle our eyes and flow in and out of one another like eddies on a river, and nothing that is said clearly can be said truly about them. Holy places are dark places. It is life and strength, not knowledge and words, that we get in them. Holy wisdom is not clear and thin like water, but thick and dark like blood. Why should not the Accursed not be both the best and the worst?"¹⁴⁰

In the denouement, the divine character is brought into focus. The Fox, seeing how his one-sided perception of Reality has affected Orual, abases himself before the heavenly court:

"The priest knew at least that there must be sacrifices. They will have sacrifices; will have man. Yes, and the very heart, centre, ground, roots of a man; dark and strong and costly as blood. Send me away, Minos, even to Tartarus, if Tartarus can cure glibness. I made her think that a prattle of maxims would do, all thin and clear as water. For of course water's good; and it didn't cost much, not where I grew up. So I fed her on words."¹⁴¹

Finally the god himself comes, and Lewis attempts his own portrayal of the approach of 'the holy' in Orual's response:

The earth and stars and sun, all that was or will be, existed for his sake. And he was coming. The most dreadful, the most beautiful, the only dread and beauty there is, was coming. The pillars on the far side of the pool flushed with his approach. I cast down my eyes.

There are echoes of Otto's 'theodicy of Job' in Orual's dawning self-knowledge in the presence of holiness:

I know now, Lord, why you utter no answer. You are yourself the answer. Before your face questions die away. What other answer would suffice?¹⁴²

¹³⁹ TWHF, p.57.

¹⁴⁰ TWHF, p.58.

¹⁴¹ TWHF, p.306.

¹⁴² TWHF, pp.318-319.

Chapter 2

Romantic Theology

WHAT was distinctive about the way in which C.S. Lewis defended Christian orthodoxy? His clarity of thought, savage (and sometimes unkind) wit, and lucidity of expression are all reasons for his enduring popular appeal. These, however, are not attributes which he could claim as exclusively his own. A clue to the characteristic contribution of Lewis and his fellows to the defence of Christian belief can be elicited from a letter he wrote to the Milton Society of America in 1955. Lewis was concerned to explain the connection between the diverse forms of literature which he had published:

The list of books which I send...will I fear strike you as a very mixed bag...(but) there is a guiding thread. The imaginative man in me is much older, more continuously operative, and in that sense more basic than either the religious writer or the critic. It was he who made me first attempt (with little success) to be a poet. It was he who, in response to the poetry of others, made me a critic, and, in defence of that response, sometimes a critic controversialist. It was he who after my conversion led me to embody my religious belief in symbolical or mythopoeic forms, ranging from *Screwtape* to a kind of theologised science-fiction. And it was of course he who has brought me, in the last few years, to write the series of Narnian stories for children; not asking what children want and then endeavouring to adapt myself (this was not needed) but because the fairy tale was the genre best fitted for what I wanted to say...¹⁴³

In the twentieth century, the defence of orthodox belief in Protestant contexts has been greatly influenced by Karl Barth, centred on a return to Reformation principles, and a rejection of modern philosophy, including the entire Romantic enterprise. In radical contrast, Lewis believed Romanticism not to be part of the problem (for modern orthodox Christianity), but part of the answer. Louth has characterised the Romantic movement as acutely conscious of what T.S. Eliot called the 'dissociation of sensibility' of modernity, and with the purpose of groping after a lost unity of mind and heart.¹⁴⁴ He contends, however, that Romanticism is merely another example of that dissociation of sensibility, rather than the beginnings of a cure. I will here briefly outline the currents of thought which have shaped modern theology, and attempt to place Lewis and his group within them. My aim is to show that Lewis stood passionately against what he described as the 'pathological anti-romanticism'¹⁴⁵ of his age, in defence of a view of epistemology which encompassed both the rational and the imaginative. Ultimately I will argue that Lewis was endeavouring to address the division between theology and spirituality (between thought about God and the movement of the heart towards God) by reviving certain aspects of Romanticism and attempting to integrate them into a coherent theological construct.

'**R**OMANTICISM' is a notoriously difficult term to define, but broadly speaking, it can be seen as an intellectual and artistic reaction to the Enlightenment inheritance. In theology; for example, Schleiermacher's legacy can certainly be viewed

¹⁴³ L, p.260.

¹⁴⁴ Andrew Louth; *Discerning the Mystery*, p.1:

¹⁴⁵ TAH, p.112.

as an attempt to rescue religion from intellectual discredit. The Enlightenment, developing Reformation and Renaissance emphases, ushered in an 'Age of Reason', in which the 'Academy' (as opposed to the Church) was the prime arbiter of truth. All human traditions and beliefs were to submit to the universal light of Reason - true religion must be clearly true to all, and not dependent on doctrines inaccessible to rational inquiry. The result in terms of spiritual belief was a simple, ideal abstract - 'Natural Religion', of which Voltaire's 'true' religion of Christ is an example.

Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* questioned the very possibility of rational metaphysics, by asserting that human knowledge is the knowledge of phenomena and appearances, rather than noumena or 'things-in-themselves'. Kant vindicated religious belief by analysing the moral consciousness - to assume morality or to behave in a moral way we must postulate three things - God, free will, and immortality (interestingly this argument develops along roughly similar lines as the foundation of Lewis' *Mere Christianity*).

The central thesis of the Romantic Movement was roughly the assertion that human beings are creatures of emotion and feeling, as well as thought and will. The irrational way of apprehending reality, which was taken to be the mode of understanding of children, savages, and peasants, was reassessed as valid - feeling was a way of knowing. Intellectuals, dissatisfied by a culture which appeared to be losing its faith, embraced these ideas in various ways. Some, as Halsted puts it:

...envied and aped children, primitives (and) those supposedly happy irrational peasants...Others, such as Schleiermacher, sought to express the important truths implicit in these views.¹⁴⁶

Schleiermacher's *Speeches on Religion to its Cultured Despisers* addressed an imaginary audience of Enlightenment proponents of Natural Religion, rejecting the importance of dogma, and advocating a relativist approach that advocated religion as a form of private, individual feeling as opposed to discursive knowledge.¹⁴⁷ At the same time, a revival in liturgy was taking place, in reaction to the sterile rationalism of worship in the aftermath of the *Aufklärung*.¹⁴⁸ The Romantic emphases can be characterised as elevating the content above the form, the concrete over the abstract, and the aesthetic before the moral.

THE most important *artistic* factor of the movement was surely the new conception of the *imagination* - as a creative, transforming force.¹⁴⁹ It was Coleridge's assertion that the creative imagination was superior to reason in apprehending reality, and could create art in accord with that reality.¹⁵⁰ The objective of Romantic art was to express the Ideal in the Real - to make the transcendent apparent. As Schlegel contended, this was only possible through symbol - through images and signs. Note, for example, Coleridge's defence of symbol as opposed to allegory as a means of expressing truth:

¹⁴⁶ John B. Halsted (ed.); *Romanticism*, p.21.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.139.

¹⁴⁸ K.S. Latourette; *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age II*, p.77.

¹⁴⁹ Furst, Lilian R.; *Romanticism*, p.53.

¹⁵⁰ John B. Halsted; *Op. Cit.*, p.13.

Allegory is but a translation of abstract notions into a picture-language which is itself nothing but an abstraction of objects of the senses; the principle being more worthless even than its phantom proxy, both alike insubstantial, and the former shapeless to boot. On the other hand a Symbol (ο εστιν αι ταυτηγορικον) is characterised by a translucence of the Special in the Individual or of the Universal in the General. Above all by the translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal. It always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that Unity, of which it is the representative.¹⁵¹

In passing, it is worth remarking that a more concise summary of Lewis' doctrine of transposition would be hard to find! (Or indeed a more compelling clue as to the vigour with which both Lewis and especially Tolkien distinguished between allegory and other forms in their work). With regard to the Romantic Movement, the function of the Image in poetry thus changes radically from one of peripheral and decorative adornment (its 18th century role) to the status of the operative carrier of meaning.¹⁵²

IN theology, one of the most significant developments of the Romantic movement was the notion of Historicism, or Historical Consciousness, as a way of understanding the past and interpreting the biblical texts. This hermeneutical approach also had its roots in the Enlightenment, and is a clear example of the failure of Romanticism to achieve its goals. As Louth has noted, it was writers such as Descartes and Locke who influenced the modern idea that there is a *method* by which we may attain knowledge or truth. According to Descartes there are no such things as 'innate understandings'. These must be seen as prejudices, in the pejorative sense of the word - unfounded judgements to be discarded. Humanity begins in ignorance and confusion, yet with the application of the correct method, may discover knowledge.¹⁵³ Thus the notion of tradition is destroyed altogether.

Historical criticism, as a discipline, tended to be sceptical about the transcendent,¹⁵⁴ and was used to explain away that which is not encompassed within its own particular, rationalistic basis. The process was initially used as a method to rationalise the miraculous elements of the religious tradition, which otherwise violated premises concerning the laws of nature. Voltaire advocated the criterion of experience, in terms of modern understanding, to determine what was to be rejected or accepted of the tradition. That which was incongruent with contemporary perceptions was simply discarded as false.¹⁵⁵ Spinoza, instead of rejecting the miraculous as plainly incredible, suggested that imaginative conjecture was required to view the world through the eyes of the ancients, and thus explain away the stories by 'natural causes'. The position of the Romantics, who inherited the Enlightenment legacy, was to generalise this principle. Instead of restricting this method of understanding to incongruous texts, the notion of 'historical consciousness' was developed as a way of explaining away the past altogether.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ John Spencer Hill; *The Romantic Imagination*, p.42.

¹⁵² Furst, Lilian R.; *Op. Cit.*, p.56.

¹⁵³ Andrew Louth; *Op. Cit.*, p.7.

¹⁵⁴ Brown, Raymond E.; *The Critical Meaning of the Bible*, p.25.

¹⁵⁵ Andrew Louth; *Op. Cit.*, p.12.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.13.

THE curious distinctiveness of Lewis, Tolkien, Williams, and before them Chesterton, lies in the double-edged nature of their philosophy, and the way in which they communicated Christianity. On the one hand they were vehemently opposed to the Romantic *legacy* in theology - to all forms of historicism, modernism and liberalism, to the divinising of the human and the humanising of the divine, and to the emphasis on an immanent faith in accord with the Spirit of the Age. In that sense they stood with Barth and the orthodox reaction in condemning the inadequacy, sentimentality, and intellectual bankruptcy of the liberal inheritance of the nineteenth century. In stark contrast, however, to Barth's attempt to lead theology away from erroneous modern philosophy and return it to Reformation principles, Lewis and his group were attempting to *correct*, and not *reject* the errors of their predecessors.

Emil Brunner, in his response to Barth's criticisms of him (in *Nature and Grace*), suggested that the search for a true *theologia naturalis* should be the task of twentieth century theology. Without denying the damage of false natural theologies both to 19th and 20th century Protestantism, he contended that the Church could bear the rejection of *theologia naturalis* as little as its misuse.¹⁵⁷ Evangelical Theology, and Barth in particular had, concluded Brunner, missed a vital opportunity in rejecting *theologia naturalis* entirely, in favour of a theology solely of Revelation.¹⁵⁸

It was in addressing this very 'missed opportunity', perhaps, in which we can place C.S. Lewis and his school, and evaluate their contribution. Fascinating in particular is the contribution of Lewis, the Ulster Protestant, to an orthodoxy which embraced natural theology, and even (after Schleiermacher and Hegel) a religion grounded in experience. For Lewis, the yearnings of the Romantics after lost unity, expressed in Romantic Love, Longing, Inwardness, Music and Poetry, were *religious* experiences - no less valid for being misinterpreted or misdirected.

LEWIS described the experience of reading George MacDonald's *Phantastes* as the 'baptism' of his imagination, which had earlier been shaped by the music of Wagner, and by Norse and Teutonic mythology. Reilly has indicated nineteenth century romanticism as the 'ultimate source' of the Inklings' ideas,¹⁵⁹ and with Lewis one could certainly trace a line of inheritance from Spenser through to his immediate predecessor, G.K. Chesterton. Reilly goes on to characterise the romantic identity as seeking *inward* in the conscious or subconscious mind for the meaning of the world outside it. Coleridge, for example, suggests:

In looking at objects of nature, I seem rather to be seeking, as it were asking for, a symbolical language for something within me that already and forever exists, than observing anything new.¹⁶⁰

Compare this with Lewis in his famous sermon, *The Weight of Glory* (in which he describes Wordsworth's interpretation of romantic experience as a 'cheat'):

¹⁵⁷ E. Brunner; *Natural Theology*, p.59.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.60.

¹⁵⁹ R.J. Reilly; *Op. Cit.*, p.9.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.7.

We want something else which can hardly be put into words - to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it. That is why we have peopled air and earth and water with gods and goddesses and nymphs and elves - that, though we cannot, yet these projections can, enjoy in themselves that beauty, grace, and power of which Nature is the image.¹⁶¹

As Thorlby asserts, the essential weakness of the Romantic movement lay in this very inwardness - in the instability and insubstantiality of the subjective realm it attempted to make its own. Lewis' grappling with this essential problem, and with the attempt to reconcile the rational and irrational sides of human nature, are evident in his poem *Reason*:

Oh who will reconcile in me both maid and mother,
Who make in me a concord of depth and height?
Who make imagination's dim exploring touch
Ever report the same as intellectual sight?
Then could I truly say, and not deceive,
Then wholly say, that I BELIEVE.¹⁶²

It was T.E. Hulme who defined Romanticism as 'spilt religion'.¹⁶³ Lewis' response appears in the Preface to the Third Edition of *The Pilgrim's Regress*:

I accept the description. And I agree that he who has religion ought not to spill it. But does it follow that he who finds it spilled should avert his eyes? How if there is a man to whom those bright drops on the floor are the beginning of a trail which duly followed, will lead him in the end to taste the cup itself? How if no other trail, humanly speaking, were possible? Seen in this light my ten years' old quarrel both with the counter-Romantics on the one hand and with the sub-Romantics on the other (the apostles of instinct and even of gibberish) assumes, I trust, a certain permanent interest. Out of this double quarrel came the dominant image of my allegory - the barren, aching rocks of its 'North', the foetid swamps of its 'South', and between them the Road on which alone mankind can safely walk.¹⁶⁴

For Lewis, Williams, and Tolkien, those 'bright drops on the floor' were romantic experiences of different forms. Charles Williams' preoccupation, as we have seen, was with romantic love. For Tolkien it was to be found in Faerie and myth, and for Lewis it was evoked by *Sehnsucht*, or the eternal longings.

The sort of 'Argument from Desire', which Lewis used as a kind of ontological proof of God's existence, was certainly not an innovation. It finds its expression first in Plato, who argued that our earthly attachments provide 'inklings' of an ultimate good which we really desire. St Augustine later gave it Christian validity - "Thou hast created us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee". Like the writer to the Hebrews, Augustine identifies a sense of exile and longing in the human heart which cannot find satisfaction in things temporal. In the Romantic period, the idea of Joy which Lewis sought to express appears in Schlegel:

¹⁶¹ SPT, p.107.

¹⁶² "Reason" in P, p.81.

¹⁶³ M.H. Abrams; *Natural Supernaturalism*, p.68.

¹⁶⁴ PR, p.16. Interestingly Lewis places Barth among his 'Pale Men' of the North - as a species of Negativist.

Only in longing do we find our rest. Indeed, such spiritual calm comes only when our mind is free to indulge its longing undisturbed, and to seek, where no higher goal may be attained than longing itself.¹⁶⁵

Another good example is this poem of Lermontov:

In the arms of an angel a young soul was born
To this world of sorrow and tears,
And the soul kept the sound of that angel's song
Deep within, without words, but alive.

How weary the time that the soul spent on earth,
By a wondrous longing consumed;
But the heavenly echoes could not be replaced
By the tedious tunes of the world.¹⁶⁶

The embodiment of religious truth in works of imaginative fantasy can thus be seen as a very deliberate strategy by the 'Oxford Romantics'. Behind *Screwtape*, *Narnia*, or *Middle-Earth* in the case of Tolkien, there is a definite and highly developed philosophy of meaning, imagination, and communication. In eulogising his friend Charles Williams, Lewis here outlines a perspective which applied equally to himself and Tolkien:

A romantic theologian does not mean one who is romantic about theology but one who is theological about romance, one who considers the theological implications of those experiences which are called romantic. The belief that the most serious and ecstatic experiences either of human love or of imaginative literature have such theological implications and that they can be healthy and fruitful only if the implications are diligently thought out and severely lived, is the root principle of all his (Williams') work.¹⁶⁷

LEWIS drew a sharp distinction between Reason, as the organ of truth, and Imagination, as the organ of meaning - meaning which "is the antecedent condition of both truth and falsehood, whose antithesis is not error but nonsense". He set out his key ideas concerning the imagination in an essay entitled "Bluspels and Flanasferes", which were later refined in *An Experiment in Criticism*. Colin Duriez attempts a summary as follows¹⁶⁸:

- 1.) There is a distinction between reason and imagination as regards roles - reason has to do with theoretical or conceptual truths, imagination has to do with the very conditions of truth.
- 2.) There are standards of correctness, or norms, for the imagination, held tacitly and universally by human beings, just as there are for the mind.
- 3.) There was originally a unity between image and reality which reflects an objective state of affairs. The idea of an ancient unity of consciousness is relevant here - what Barfield called 'original participation'.
- 4.) The framing of truths in propositions necessitates the employment of metaphors supplied by the imagination. Language and thought necessarily rely upon metaphor.

¹⁶⁵ F.F. Schlegel, *Lucinde* (1799) in Thorlby, A.K.; *The Romantic Movement*, p.149.

¹⁶⁶ M. Lermontov, *The Angel* (1931) in Thorlby, A.K.; *Op. Cit.*, p.150.

¹⁶⁷ Colin Duriez, "The Theology of Fantasy in Lewis and Tolkien" in *Themelios* vol. 23 no.2, p.40.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.50.

This is true in scientific as in religious or in ordinary discourse. Imagination is a maker of meaning, a definer of terms in a proposition, and as such is a condition of truth.

It is in the relationship between the conceptual and the imaginative that Lewis makes his distinctive contribution, suggests Duriez. If we 'win' truth by employing metaphors or models, then good imagining is as vital as good thinking (if not more so), and each is impoverished without the other.¹⁶⁹ Thus imaginative fiction for Lewis is concerned with the making of meaning rather than the literal restating of truths - with going 'further up and further in'.

THE relationship between the concrete and the abstract is explored by Lewis in his essay *Myth became Fact*. The human intellect, he contends, is incurably abstract - yet the only realities we experience are concrete. Our dilemma is that as thinkers we are cut off from that which we think about, and conversely, the more deeply we enter into reality, the less we can think. We cannot study Pleasure, for instance, in the moment of nuptial embrace, or analyse the nature of humour whilst laughing. Lewis contends that to this problem Myth is the partial solution - only in the enjoyment of a great myth do we come nearest to "experiencing as a concrete what can otherwise be understood only as an abstraction".¹⁷⁰

Lewis defines myth (in his sense) as having an 'extra-literary' quality to it - of being the kind of story which has a value in itself, independent of its embodiment in a particular literary form, or by the employment of literary devices. Lewis illustrates this by comparing bare synopses of the story of Orpheus, and the epic of the Odyssey - the first affects us in its own right, the second requires the narrative genius of Homer to be compelling.¹⁷¹ Other characteristics include gravity (there is no such thing as 'Comic myth'), the 'fantastic', and the awe-inspiring. As Lewis puts it:

We feel it to be numinous. It is as if something of great moment had been communicated to us. The recurrent efforts of the mind to grasp - we mean, chiefly, to conceptualise - this something, are seen in the persistent tendency of humanity to provide myths with allegorical explanations. And after all the allegories have been tried, the myth itself continues to feel more important than they.¹⁷²

As myth transcends thought, so the Incarnation transcends Myth - Lewis' conversion and subsequent profession of faith rested on a realisation that Christianity was a myth which was also a historical fact; as the completion, the actualisation, the entelechy, of something which had never been wholly absent from the mind of man.¹⁷³ To be truly Christian was to assent to the historical fact whilst imaginatively embracing the myth. Babbitt's denigration of Romanticism captures precisely that attitude of mind which Lewis believed had 'lost its tap-root to Eden':

In general a thing is romantic when, as Aristotle would say, it is wonderful rather than probable; in other words, when it violates the normal sequence of cause and effect in favour of

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p.38.

¹⁷⁰ GID, p.42.

¹⁷¹ EIC, p.40.

¹⁷² Ibid., p.44.

¹⁷³ TAH, p.88.

adventure. The whole movement is filled with the praise of ignorance, and of those who still enjoy its inappreciable advantages - the savage, the peasant, and above all the child.¹⁷⁴

The Incarnation, for Lewis, was the marriage of heaven and earth - of Perfect Myth and Perfect Fact, and therefore was addressed not only to the moralist, the scholar, and the philosopher, but also *no less* to the savage, the poet, and the child. Thus in Lewis' allegory, *The Pilgrim's Regress*, his antagonism towards T.S. Eliot expresses itself in satire - Eliot is portrayed as Neo-Angular, a character comprised entirely of intelligence, without room for emotion or desire. Those who preach against the romantic experience (Sweet Desire), whether Stoic, Ascetic, Rigourist, Realist or Classicist, are on the Enemy's side 'whether they know it or not'. Conscience and Sweet Desire (or *Sehnsucht*) must come together to create a complete man. This Romantic vision of individual unity was also a microcosm, Lewis believed, of the divine action in human history (a perspective he had inherited from Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man*). The moral conscience, represented by the Jews, and the romantic imagination, represented by Pagan myth, came together to find their fulfilment in Christianity.¹⁷⁵

LEWIS is, of course, not unaware of the pitfalls of Romanticism, or of the Freudian critique, which for writers such as F.L. Lucas links together all its characteristics, whether morbid or healthy. Lucas suggests that Goethe's assessment that "Romanticism is disease" is too often proved right:

Again and again the Romantic who drinks too deep, who surrenders too much to the Unconscious, who becomes too completely a child once more, has fallen a victim to the neurotic maladies that beset the childish adult who cannot cope with life but falls between two ages. Then the 'clouds of glory' have changed to the nightmares of ego-maniac perversion; to the love of sensation even in torture; to the pursuit of strange fruit even in the Garden of Proserpine, whose beauty is Death.¹⁷⁶

Lewis would dispute none of this, and indeed would probably agree with Lucas' assessment of such a writer as D.H. Lawrence, in whom Lucas saw an 'hysterical over-stimulation' of emotions normal in themselves - using the analogy of the healthy and unhealthy use of alcohol. D.H. Lawrence represented, for Lewis, possibly the most unbalanced expression of the irrational in modern literature.¹⁷⁷ What was important for human unity was a balance between the 'Northern' and 'Southern' types. In theology the Northern tendency was to exaggerate the distinctness between Grace and Nature into sheer opposition, and to vilify the higher levels of Nature. The Southern tendency was to blur the distinction altogether - so that mere kindness is perceived as charity, or vague optimisms or pantheisms are seen as faith.¹⁷⁸

LEWIS has been described as a twentieth century Milton, but this is not an entirely accurate description. Milton simply retold the Christian myth, but, as Reilly

¹⁷⁴ Furst, Lilian R.; *Romanticism*, p.3. T.S. Eliot described himself as 'having begun as a disciple of Mr Babbitt', and was prominent in the critical attack upon Romanticism in the 1920s and 30s (particularly against Shelley). In this light it is not hard to understand Lewis' antipathy towards him.

¹⁷⁵ R.J. Reilly; *Op. Cit.*, p.108.

¹⁷⁶ Thorlby, A.K.; *Op. Cit.*, p.63.

¹⁷⁷ *PR*, p.18.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.18.

observes, Lewis saw it as no longer sufficient to carry the 'tenor' of religious truth.¹⁷⁹ Though this is the very premise from which Bultmann and the demythologisers began, Lewis' purpose, as well as to defend orthodox Christianity, was to *mythologise* it. Lewis and Tolkien especially of the Oxford Romantics were Christian myth-makers, using the fairy-tale form to communicate truths about God and humanity.

It is here that we can see the immense influence of Tolkien as a creator of fairy tales, and a co-conspirator with Lewis in 'smuggling' Christian truth past the modernist prejudices of their reading audiences. The 'Perilous Realm' of Faerie was his especial concern, and his philosophy of the fairy story can be found in his essay 'On Fairy Stories'. The qualities of Faerie are such that it is elusive by its very nature - it cannot be caught in a net of words. Faerie is indescribable, but not imperceptible, and may most nearly be translated by Magic, though of a very particular mood and power.¹⁸⁰ Tolkien refutes the suggestion that there is any organic connection between fairy stories and children - the association is a purely cultural one. Tolkien uses the metaphor of old-fashioned furniture which has been relegated to the play-room, which the adults do not want, or mind being misused, to describe the place of fairy stories in modern literature.¹⁸¹ A good story-teller should, he contends, be capable of producing *literary belief* in both children and adults by his skill in sub-creation - as opposed to the idea of a 'willing suspension of disbelief', which Tolkien thought more accurately described the somewhat sentimental reception of fairy tales by most modern adults.

Tolkien, like Lewis, found the scornful or pitying accusations of 'escapism' particularly irritating in regard to the fairy story. "Why should a man be scorned," he asks, "if, finding himself in prison, he tries to get out and go home? Or if, when he cannot do so, he thinks about other topics than jailers and prison-walls?" The modern world confuses the escape of the prisoner with the flight of the deserter as a sort of intellectual treachery against the Spirit of the Age. This appears to have been the inspiration for Lewis' poem *The Prudent Jailer*:

Always the old nostalgia? Yes.
We still remember times before
We had learned to wear the prison dress
Or steel rings rubbed our ankles sore.

Escapists? Yes. Looking at bars
And chains, we think of files; and then
Of black nights without moon or stars
And luck befriending hunted men.

Still when we hear the trains at night
We envy the free travellers, whirled
In how few moments past the sight
Of the blind wall that bounds our world.

Our Jailer (well he may) prefers
Our thoughts should keep a narrower range.
'The proper study of prisoners

¹⁷⁹ R.J. Reilly; *Op. Cit.*, p.223.

¹⁸⁰ J.R.R. Tolkien; *Tree and Leaf*, p.17.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.38.

Is prison,' he tells us. Is it strange?

And if old freedom in our glance
Betrays itself, he calls it names
'Dope' - 'Wishful thinking' - or 'Romance',
Till tireless propaganda tames.

All but the strong whose hearts they break,
All but the few whose faith is whole.
Stone walls cannot a prison make
Half so secure as rigmarole.¹⁸²

Tolkien viewed Christianity as the ultimate fairy tale - 'true' in the Primary World as well as the Secondary (in the same sense as Lewis' 'true myth'). The consolation of fairy tales was in the sudden turn - the *eucatastrophe*, or 'happy ending'. Tolkien contends that:

...this joyous 'turn' ...which is one of the things which fairy-stories can produce supremely well, is not essentially 'escapist', nor 'fugitive'. In its fairy-tale - or otherworld setting, it is a sudden and miraculous grace: never to be counted on to recur. It does not deny the existence of *dyscatastrophe*, of sorrow and failure: the possibility of these is necessary to the joy of deliverance; it denies (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat and in so far is *evangelium*, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief.¹⁸³

The Birth of Christ is thus, according to Tolkien, the eucatastrophe of Man's history, and the Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the story of the Incarnation. Tolkien concludes his essay with the contention that advent of the Kingdom of God has hallowed, rather than abrogated legends. In the creation of good Fantasy, the Christian is using God-given faculties to assist in the 'effoliation and multiple-enrichment' of creation.¹⁸⁴

As we have already seen, Lewis regarded fairy tale as the Form best fitted for communicating what he wanted to say. His own assessment included the observations that fairy tale, as a form, excluded love interest and close psychology, and that it was characterised by brevity, severe restraints on description, a 'flexible traditionalism', and an inflexible hostility to analysis.¹⁸⁵ Again, as a form, fairy tale was particularly well suited to performing certain tasks. Essentially, for Lewis, this was the communication, *in as concrete a fashion as possible*, of certain theological emphases - Transcendence, The Numinous, and Joy. In addition, Lewis was an adherent of Tolkien's doctrine of Recovery - the idea that myth or fantasy could restore things to their rich significance by removing the 'veil of familiarity'. Thus for a child who has enjoyed stories of enchanted forests, all 'real' forests thereafter become a little enchanted. A boy enjoys his otherwise dull dinner by imagining it is a buffalo he has shot with his own bow and arrow. Why (Lewis asks) does one need to talk about a 'phantasmagoric never-never land' in order to make a serious comment on 'real life'? Because (in the case of *The Lord of the Rings*) the author wants to say that the real life

¹⁸² P, pp.77-78.

¹⁸³ J.R.R. Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf*, p.68.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.72.

¹⁸⁵ OTOW, p.73.

of men and women has a mythic and heroic quality.¹⁸⁶ Chesterton's comment is a good summary of Tolkien's approach:

It is not earth that judges heaven, but heaven that judges earth; so for me at least it was not earth that criticised elfland, but elfland that criticised the earth.¹⁸⁷

C.S. Lewis wrote in the way he did because he extends this idea of Recovery to the Christian myth itself. The real business of Narnia was in 'stealing past watchful dragons' - in stripping Christian truths of cultural associations and presenting them in their true power. The following passage from *The Dawn Treader* encapsulates the entire approach:

"Dearest," said Aslan very gently, "you and your brother will never come back to Narnia."
"Oh, *Aslan!*!" said Edmund and Lucy both together in despairing voices.
"You are too old, children," said Aslan, "and you must begin to come close to your own world now."
"It isn't Narnia, you know," sobbed Lucy. "It's *you*. We shan't meet *you* there. And how can we live, never meeting you?"
"But you shall meet me, dear one," said Aslan.
"Are - are you there too, Sir?" said Edmund.
"I am," said Aslan. "But there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there."¹⁸⁸

In tracing this strategy to its roots in the Romantic movement, we observe with Abrams the Romantic tendency to revert to the 'stark drama' and suprarational mysteries of the Christian story, after the rationalism and 'decorum' of the Enlightenment.¹⁸⁹ However, in a post-Enlightenment context, the revival of Christian doctrine is now a different matter:

Romantic writers...undertook to save the overview of human history and destiny, the experiential paradigms, and the cardinal values of their religious heritage, by reconstituting them in a way that would make them intellectually acceptable, as well as emotionally pertinent, for the time being.¹⁹⁰

Coleridge, for example, was motivated by the task of maintaining an irreducible minimum of Christian dogma within an essentially secular metaphysical system.¹⁹¹

As to the business of sub-creation in fantasy, Lewis wrote in *On Stories* that the world of the spirit is the only source upon which we can draw to construct plausible and moving 'other worlds'. Thus, according to Duriez, the very well of fantasy and imaginative invention is every person's direct knowledge of the ultimate Other - God himself.¹⁹² The experience of the Numinous (in Otto's sense) is captured best by suggestion and allusion rather than analysis, and its appeal, when encountered in literature, is primarily to the imagination. Of Joy, we have already spoken, and thus it

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p.120.

¹⁸⁷ G.K. Chesterton; *Orthodoxy*, p.49.

¹⁸⁸ VDT, p.188.

¹⁸⁹ M.H. Abrams; *Op. Cit.*, p.66.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p.66.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p.67.

¹⁹² Colin Duriez; *Op. Cit.*, pp.40,41.

is straightforward to deduce the appeal to Lewis of fantasy, as a vehicle for communicating his own apprehension of Christian orthodoxy.

At first glance, C.S. Lewis appears as simply another conservative preserver of traditional Christianity. This is true to an extent (he certainly saw himself as fulfilling this role to some degree), but perhaps his phenomenal popularity is due more to his very distinctive approach to orthodoxy, and the way in which he presented it. As we have seen, Lewis was a Romantic by his very nature, and certainly owed much, consciously or unconsciously, to the nineteenth century movement and to Coleridge in particular.

It seems clear that Lewis was indeed in the business of reviving the distinction between the Practical and the Speculative Intellect, in order to apprehend and defend Christian truth. Romantic experience in its various forms was not escapism, but the truest indicator of our 'real' position. Glimpses of joy, the pangs of longing, the apprehension of the 'holy' - all pointed towards a Reality of which we grasp only partially, if at all. In the same way that writers often speak of the 'religious genius' of the Jews in associating the universal experiences of the numinous and of the moral law in one and the same Being, so Lewis saw in Christianity the source also of these most intense of human experiences.

In the modern situation, the tired familiarity of 'stained-glass' and 'Sunday-school' associations required a new and radical approach to the transmission of Christian truth. Theology had largely failed to address the new situation because, though it defended something which was conceptually 'true', had starved its audience of 'imaginative' or 'emotional' Christian truth. Note Coleridge, for example:

Evidences of Christianity! I am weary of the word. Make a man feel the *want* of it; rouse him, if you can, to the self-knowledge of his *need* of it; and you may safely trust to its own Evidence.¹⁹³

Lewis put his belief in the importance of good imagination into practice in embodying Christianity in new myths or fantasies of his own creation. Narnia is categorically *not* an allegory, but an imagination exploration of what would happen if the Word of God became incarnate in such a world. By casting Christian truth into imaginary worlds, Lewis believed it would appear, to modern ears, in its real potency for the first time. In enjoying Tolkien's *Aimulindale*, for example, we are experiencing the 'truth' of the myths of Creation, Fall, and Divine Love much more deeply than had we gone to an analytical discussion of them. In a post-modern context, Lewis' fresh approach to the medieval pattern of nature and grace may have more to say to us than we may have thought on first impression.

¹⁹³ Coleridge, Samuel T. in Thorlby, A.K.; Op. Cit., p.146

Chapter 3

Heaven & Hell

THE imagination of heaven is a much neglected area of modern Christian theology. The Pauline assertion that “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed to us”¹⁹⁴ was an important perspective on theodicy in the medieval period, for example. Traditionally heaven has been conceived of as a place of perfect supernatural happiness, where the saved enjoy an immediate vision and love of God.¹⁹⁵ C.S. Lewis represents a strand of twentieth century Christian thought for whom that perspective is all-pervasive and all-encompassing; and offers much to the problems of pain and of suffering in creation. The denial of Hell, in addition, was a dangerous error of the Liberal movement for the group of lay orthodox Christians to which Lewis belonged. There is a school of thought which sees the First World War as an historical denial of Liberal optimism concerning the human condition, and Lewis was certainly conducive to this.

As a natural and indispensable part of Lewis’ spirituality and outlook, I will here attempt to outline the most important features of his doctrines of heaven and of hell. These are characterised, I believe, by three principal themes - the Fulfilment of Sweet Desire, Holiness, or God-centredness; and Hierarchy. In addition, a distinctive and creative feature of Lewis’ writing concerning heaven is the idea of Transposition, as a way of imagining greater realities than our own.

C.S. LEWIS offers an insight into the paucity of our imagination about heaven, in the context of a discussion of the Satanic predicament in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Satan is the best drawn of Milton’s characters, he contends, not because he is intended to be the ‘hero’ of the poem, but because he is the easiest to draw. To create a ‘bad’ character we have only to release imaginatively from control the bad passions which are at work in each of us. To create a character better than ourselves we are attempting to portray virtues which we do not possess, and are thus forced to depict prolonged and consistent expressions of our own best moments:

We do not really know what it feels like to be man much better than ourselves. His whole inner landscape is one we have never seen, and when we guess it we blunder...Heaven understands Hell and Hell does not understand Heaven, and all of us, in our own measure, share the Satanic, or at least the Napoleonic blindness.¹⁹⁶

Our imagination concerning heaven is similarly stunted. To try to picture that which is eternal and inexpressible we are limited to symbolic representations drawn from our temporal and spatial experience. The Bible itself does not describe heaven except in terms of parable and allegory, using the symbols of a dinner party, a wedding, a concert and a city to picture the life to come. Lewis believed that a faith mistaking symbol for reality was not mistaken in apprehending heaven in terms of joy, plenitude

¹⁹⁴ Romans 8:18.

¹⁹⁵ Adels, J.H.; *The Wisdom of the Saints*, p.199.

¹⁹⁶ PPL, p.98.

and love. The problem in speaking about heaven philosophically, however, is that we are continually engaged in negations - there will be no food, no drink, no sex, no events, no time - as we now understand them. There will be the vision and enjoyment of God; but deprived of meaningful analogy it is almost impossible for the believer to desire or even to comprehend such a state - we cannot hope for what we cannot desire.

Lewis advanced the doctrine of *transposition*, in the sense of a higher medium expressing itself in a lower, as a way of better imagining heaven. To take the simplest example; the relation between writing and speech, or between musical notation and music itself, is a purely symbolic one. The relation between a painting and the reality it represents is a more complicated, for both share the same visibility. The reality of the higher medium floods the representation with meaning, and thus the relationship is more sacramental than symbolical. To take a higher instance still; the subtlety and complexity of our emotional life is played out in the more limited notation of our sensory experience. To put it more simply, the same physical sensations often accompany conflicting emotional responses. A flutter of nerves, for example, may indicate great fear, or the state of being in love. The same physical sensation is in the one case highly desired, in the other avoided at all costs. In this case, the higher medium of the emotional life enters into the lower, and transforms and transubstantiates it so that the physical sensation *is* joy, or *is* anguish.

The idea of transposition, Lewis believed, was an effective answer to self-defeating reductionism. The cynic might suggest that love and lust, since they end in the same physical act, are one and the same. Similarly, human rationality can be seen as a mere by-product of material and biological processes, since thought is physiologically only a movement of the grey matter. In our spiritual life, all the natural elements of our life seem to recur, but this is what we should expect if a higher medium is flooding and transforming our present experience with a greater reality. We cannot comprehend what we shall be, but we know that it will be infinitely greater than that which we have now. Our sensory, emotional and imaginative experience is like the lead marks on paper which will disappear as a drawing disappears in the presence of the reality which it represents:

Heavenly bounties are embodied in this life in our temporal experience. Present life is the diminution, the symbol, the etiolated substitute. If flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom, that is not because they are too solid, too gross, too distinct, too 'illustrious with being', it is because they are too flimsy, too transitory, too phantasmal.

Thus in Lewis' meditation on the afterlife, *The Great Divorce*, the day-tripping spirits visiting heaven from hell are represented as ghostly and indistinct. Heaven is too solid, too real for them to inhabit until they have submitted to the death of the natural self. A similar speculation has been made concerning the appearances of the risen Christ. It is not that the resurrection body, in appearing and disappearing, or in passing through locked doors, is ghostly or unreal. It has a new quality, particularly with regard to time and space, and it is rather that the door itself is 'too flimsy, too transitory, too phantasmal'.

FOR Lewis, the surrender of self is a fundamental key to the understanding of the awful mysteries of heaven and hell. Human integrity and wholeness of being entails the passions subject to the will, and the will obediently offered up to God. This system of self-giving, he believed, was central not only to the created order, but to the Divine Nature itself:

...in self-giving, if anywhere, we touch a rhythm not only of all creation but of all being. For the Eternal Word also gives himself in sacrifice; and that not only on Calvary. For when he was crucified He "did that in the wild weather of His outlying provinces what He had done at home in glory and gladness". From before the foundation of the world He surrenders begotten deity back to begetting deity in obedience. And as the Son glorifies the Father, so also the Father glorifies the Son.¹⁹⁷

The characteristic of lost souls, therefore, is the rejection of all that is outside of the self. The cardinal sin, through which Satan was expelled from heaven, and through which humanity fell, is pride. Lewis uses the word not in the sense of pleasure in being praised (in which the pleasure lies in pleasing another), nor in admiration, but in its traditional sense. Pride is by its nature competitive, it is the placing of the self at the centre rather than the periphery. Thus pride *is* enmity, it is the complete anti-God state of mind. The mystery of free will allows the possibility that the self may be elevated above its proper place, it may in effect take the place of God. The damned are those in whom the taste for the *other* (and thus the capacity to enjoy good) has been quenched.¹⁹⁸ Thus damnation is not simply a sentence imposed by God, but an inevitable consequence of the rejection of God. The unrepentant egoist wishes to "lie wholly within the self and make the best of what he finds there. And what he finds there is hell".

Heaven, by contrast, is not a bribe:

Heaven offers nothing that a mercenary soul can desire. It is safe to tell the pure in heart that they shall see God, for only the pure in heart want to. There are rewards which do not sully motives.¹⁹⁹

The idea of holiness as a prerequisite to the ability to enjoy or even to comprehend the Divine is prevalent in Lewis' thought. There are strong links here with the biblical idea that one needs "eyes to see and ears to hear" in order to perceive deeper realities than the material world. This occurs throughout his imaginative works.²⁰⁰ In his Narnia stories, for example, the unrepentant dwarves of *The Last Battle* are unable to perceive

¹⁹⁷ PP, p.121.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.; p.98.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.; p.116.

²⁰⁰ There are many examples of this in Lewis' children's books. Uncle Andrew, the pseudo-magician, hears the speech of the Talking Beasts of Narnia as a cacophony of unintelligible noise, ironically because of his rationalistic prejudices (*The Magician's Nephew*). Only Lucy, of the four Pevensie children, can initially see Aslan (a Christ figure) in *Prince Caspian*; the others are only able to do so as their faith increases. The dwarves of *The Last Battle*, who could be described as religious sceptics, have so hardened their minds that they are unable to perceive heaven. Another example is found in Lewis' meditation on the afterlife - *The Great Divorce*. The liberal bishop has committed "sins of the intellect", which render him incapable of distinguishing between religious jargon and realities which theological language can only hint at.

the beauty and bounty of heaven other than in terms of the drab contents of a dingy stable. This idea of holiness finds a clear echo in a saying of Catherine of Genoa:

I see that the Being of God is so pure (far more than one can imagine) that should a soul see in itself the least mote of imperfection, it would rather cast itself into a thousand hells than go into the presence of that Divine Majesty.²⁰¹

Lewis illustrates this central theme with great potency in *The Great Divorce*. The visitors to heaven from the city of endless twilight have in common one fatal failing - the enthronement of the self at the centre of consciousness. The Tousel-headed Poet has committed suicide after a life in which his talent and temperament were repeatedly 'misunderstood'. He hopes to find in heaven 'Recognition', 'Appreciation' and a congenial environment for his finely critical spirit.²⁰² The Intelligent Man bewails the fact that none of the city's souls have any Needs (You get everything you want (not very good quality of course) by just imagining it). Without dependency upon one another, the self-centred gravitate further and further apart (the passengers on the bus are perpetually quarrelling). The town will go on spreading indefinitely, unless someone "can do something about it".²⁰³ It is here that the necessity of self-giving for the existence of a heavenly *community* is perhaps best illustrated.

Lewis' cosmology included a belief in devils and the devil, and was a famous proponent of their activity and evil influence on the created order. He did not, however, (as he is often accused) subscribe to a dualistic notion of good and evil, but to an Augustinian view of the universe, which conceived of them as fallen angels. Thus God created all things good, and accordingly, no Nature (i.e. positive reality) is evil. An evil thing is a good thing which has become perverted, through a conscious self-centredness. The good and bad angels in Milton's *Paradise Lost* have the same Nature; "happy when it adheres to God and miserable when it adheres to itself". The excellence of Satan's Nature is insisted upon in contrast to the perversion of his will. Evil, therefore, is essentially parasitic. It cannot exist in and of itself, but requires existence, intelligence and a will, which are of themselves good.

Richard Harries provides a critique of this kind of demonology, on philosophical, theological and moral grounds. He argues that such a view in no way reconciles a belief in a God of love with the existence of evil in the world. Further, he advances the objection that the fall of a perfect being in a perfect environment is fundamentally contradictory. Lastly he suggests the idea of hordes of evil spirits hovering over us, and ready to lead us astray is morally intolerable.²⁰⁴

The first two of these objections are really non-arguments. The essential problem of evil remains where it is, whether or not one believes in the devil. If the problem of the fall of a perfect being is removed by doing away with a belief in devils, it only reappears again with Adam and Eve. As to how a perfect being in a perfect environment could go wrong, Lewis thought this must remain a mystery of free will. Rather than a world of automata, he believed that a goodness or love worth the name

²⁰¹ Adels, J.H.; Op. Cit., p.200.

²⁰² GD, p.18.

²⁰³ Ibid.; p.21.

²⁰⁴ Harries, R.; *C.S. Lewis: The Man and his God*, p.38.

required the risk of allowing the possibility of evil²⁰⁵. With this in mind, Lewis felt that the difficulty became less problematic - the facts of experience showed that the better, more intelligent, and freer a being was, the greater scope for good *and* evil existed. In foreknowing that some creatures will make themselves bad, God also foreknows what use he will make of their badness. Thus His benevolence is shown in creating good Natures, His justice in exploiting evil wills.²⁰⁶

The angelic guide in the Valley of Life is a portrayal of Lewis' great inspiration, the Scottish preacher George MacDonald, who reiterates Lewis' core belief:

'Milton was right,' said my Teacher. 'The choice of every lost soul can be expressed in the words "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven"'²⁰⁷

That which will not be given up, even at the price of misery, has its adult names - Achilles' wrath, Coriolanus' grandeur, self-respect and tragic greatness - but in children it is imply called the Sulks.²⁰⁸ In the end there are only two sorts of people. Those who say to God 'Thy will be done'; and those to whom God ultimately says 'Thy will be done'.

Many have criticised Lewis for an over-simplistic view of human nature and of good and evil. A common criticism is that he draws too sharp a distinction between the righteous and the unrighteous, and that his literary characters are caricatures. Harries, for instance, writes:

...The honest thief, the tender murderer. I don't think Lewis would have denied the possibility of such people. But his calling as a combative Christian apologist, and his chosen weapon of myth and allegory, hardly allowed for the public recognition of such ambiguities. In his world black needed to be black and white white.²⁰⁹

Yet this is hardly fair. The tender murderer, for one, appears in the Great Divorce. For Lewis it was the little marks on the soul, the infinitesimal choices of day to day life, that moved a soul towards one of two awesome possibilities - an everlasting splendour or a horror and a corruption.²¹⁰ The act of murder, in the sense of a crime of passion, is counted much less than the systematic murder by hatred (There is a resonance here with Jesus' teaching on 'murder' as an attitude of the heart, as well as a physical act). His allegories gain their imaginative power and emotional potency from the depiction of evil and goodness which exists in each of us taken to its logical extreme. We shudder at the pitiful depravities of the Great Divorce because we feel the danger ourselves: We are transported by hope by the Ghost who is saved because we too acknowledge the poverty of our lusts and vain attachments

A fundamental tenet of Lewis' worldview was the idea of the Hierarchical conception. He defines this in the following way:

²⁰⁵ MC, p.48.

²⁰⁶ PPL, P.66.

²⁰⁷ GD, p.64.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.; p.64.

²⁰⁹ Harries, R.; Op. Cit., p.42.

²¹⁰ SPT, p.109.

According to this conception degrees of value are objectively present in the universe. Everything except God has some natural superior; everything except unformed matter has some natural inferior. The goodness, happiness, and dignity of every being consists in obeying its natural superior and ruling its natural inferiors. When it fails in either part of this twofold task we have disease or monstrosity in the scheme of things until the peccant being is either destroyed or corrected. One or other it will certainly be; for by stepping out of its place in the system it has made the very nature of things its enemy. It cannot succeed.²¹¹

Lewis' sharp antipathy to 'modernity' is derived primarily from this source. He was deeply suspicious of the contemporary *zeitgeist* - in particular modern understandings of human nature and relationships.

Lewis uses his Screwtape character, for instance, to critique the modern understanding of 'Democracy'. This has only a tenuous connection with that system of government whose principle was that all should be treated equally. Screwtape's aim is to engineer the subtle progression to the tacit belief that all *were* equal. The word democracy thus comes to sanction the most degrading and least enjoyable of human feelings, which articulates itself as "I'm as good as you".²¹² For Lewis, this statement represented the outward expression of a seething inner resentment of a perceived inferiority, which ultimately suspects mere *difference* to be a claim to superiority. The Hellish tendency is towards a homogenous conformity in which human excellence, or differences in clothes, manners or recreation are denigrated and resented. The Heavenly tendency is towards a joyous acceptance of diversity and place - the man who does not delight to bow the knee is no more than a prosaic barbarian. As Screwtape puts it:

I'm as good as you is a useful means for the destruction of democratic societies. But it has a far deeper value as an end in itself, as a state of mind, which necessarily excluding humility, charity, contentment, and all the pleasures of gratitude or admiration, turns a human being away from almost every road which might finally lead him to Heaven.²¹³

For Lewis, there was something profoundly heavenly in the sort of harmonious union portrayed in Kenneth Graham's *Wind in the Willows*. In Mole, Ratty, Badger and Toad there is a diversity of character which he felt "we know intuitively to be our refuge both from solitude and the collective"²¹⁴.

'Membership' was, for Lewis, a word emptied of meaning by the modern world. Instead of the Pauline *μελη*, implying organs or interdependency; it had come to mean items or particulars of a homogenous class. For Lewis, true 'membership' was best analogised by the family. Grandfather, parents, grown-up son, child, dog, cat - these are not interchangeable. By subtracting a member the family is not only reduced in number, but has suffered an injury upon its structure. It is a unity of unlikes or incommensurables.²¹⁵ For Lewis the modern legal fiction of equality was just that - a medicine to remedy the effects of the Fall. There was also to be no question of God as a kind of employment committee - finding souls a place in the temple which would do justice to their inherent value or natural idiosyncrasy:

²¹¹ PPL, p.72.

²¹² SPT, p.18.

²¹³ *Ibid.*; p.26.

²¹⁴ FE, p.16.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*; p.16.

Christianity cuts across the antithesis of individualism and collectivism. It sets its face relentlessly against natural individualism, but gives back to those who abandon it eternal possession of their own being. As separate wills we are of no account, but as stone and pillars in the temple we are assured of eternal self-identity. Individualism is a parody or shadow of this.²¹⁶

One of the problems of Lewis' approach has been highlighted by Chad Walsh. He makes the fairly just accusation that Lewis was overly anthropocentric in his cosmology - he seems to suggest, for instance, that animals will only be saved through the quality of their relationships with human beings, rather than as having a distinctive God-given value of their own.²¹⁷

THESE then, are some of the themes and ideas which underlay Lewis' thinking concerning the life to come and of the Divine Nature. For many, perhaps, the deepest problems with his cosmology lie with the belief in Hell as a place of final damnation - in the inconceivability of a perfect happiness in heaven which admitted the final loss and deprivation of even one soul. I think Lewis would have much to say here concerning the nature of Time and of Eternity which could fruitfully be explored further. In addition he strongly believed that evil could not be allowed to blackmail good forever - lest "a dog in a manger" become the tyrant of the universe. Again, there is more to be said here upon the mystery of free will and the Fall, and of the interrelationship between Justice and Mercy, which could be further developed.

²¹⁶ Ibid.; p.22.

²¹⁷ Walsh, C.; Op. Cit., p.119.

Chapter 4

The Abolition of Man

WE have observed the main tenets of Lewisian orthodoxy, and the features which made it distinctive. By his own estimation, Lewis saw himself as 'merely' restating timeless Christian truths. This was genuinely his attempt, I believe, but it is also fair to see in him a reaction and interaction with the ideologies and trends of his day, both secular and sacred. Principally among these, Lewis saw the greatest challenge to humanity as Scientific Materialism ('scientism', as he termed it), and the negation of absolute value which it appeared to champion. Lewis attacked this perceived assault on value and values in his *Abolition of Man*. This treatise provided moral and philosophical themes for his cosmic trilogy, particularly his "fairy-tale for grown-ups" *That Hideous Strength*. In this chapter I will examine the attempt by Lewis to contextualise his version of Christian orthodoxy to what he saw as this major modern threat to human beings and human society. The idolatry of science, and the confidence in human ability to bring about 'progress', were to a large degree propagated *and* critiqued by a literary genre - that of utopia and dystopia. Given Lewis' gifts as a writer of fiction, and his ability to use this medium as a vehicle for his theology of orthodoxy, it seemed an ideal arena for his talents.

I believe that many of the preoccupations of this genre of writers were central to Lewis also, and to which he brings a unique and compelling approach. Not least of these is the tension between the rational and irrational sides of human nature, which are seen polarised in Huxley's *Brave New World*, for example. In addition to this there are recurring themes such as cosmic futility, the dangers of totalitarianism, the literary conflict between City and Country, and the crisis of morality, all of which were of deep concern to Lewis. I will examine two examples of the genre, which I believe between them raise all the pertinent ideological issues, and will then turn to Lewis' own distinctive contribution, seen in the context of his argument with Scientific Materialism. These examples are H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*, and Zamyatin's *We*, which was the source of George Orwell's later *1984*. Lewis himself considered *1984* to be an indifferent work (much inferior to *Animal Farm*, for example), considering its major fault to be the over-indulgence of the author's own psychology, to the detriment of the main themes of the book.²¹⁸

²¹⁸ OTOW, pp.133-137.

4.1 H.G. Wells

LILITH, CREATOR OF ADAM AND EVE:

"Let them dread, of all things, stagnation. Of life only there is no end. My seed shall one day master its matter to its uttermost confines."

Back to Methuselah
George Bernard Shaw

SCIENCE plays a prominent role in the utopian or dystopian visions of many writers, and is seen in both positive and negative terms. It is rarely viewed, however, as anything less than a powerful and dominant force, if not *the* dominant force, in shaping a future of misery or ideal happiness for humanity.²¹⁹ It was against a nineteenth century background of optimism and faith in science that writers such as Wells and Huxley conceived their utopian and dystopian creations. Science was seen by many to have superseded religion as the authority in all affairs of human knowledge, and was the tool with which an ever-improving, ever-evolving humanity would finally subjugate the material universe to its purpose and general good.²²⁰

Scientists, as the high priests of the new faith, have been represented in a variety of ways by Utopian writers. At one extreme they are the willing functionaries of a totalitarian elite; single-mindedly pursuing, formulating and applying human knowledge in the interests of those who wield power. At the other, they are the prophets and the visionaries of a new dawn; the harbingers of the long-awaited triumph of Humanity.

The portrayal of scientists in the genre of dystopia is in itself illuminating. The Time Traveller of H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*, and D-503 (the mathematician of Zamyatin's *We*) give an interesting contrast. Wells' inventor is an Empiricist and a Natural Scientist; observing, experimenting and inferring, in a disinterested pursuit of the advancement of human understanding. The Mathematician of *We*, on the other hand, is a Pure Scientist, who attempts to apply the self-evident truths of his field of expertise to the much more ambiguous nature of his human experience.

WELLS, himself a trained scientist, attempted to convey scientific concepts and their import for society through the medium of narrative fiction (in much the same way as Lewis used fiction as a vehicle for romantic theology). *The Time Machine*, in its essentials, is a forceful presentation of the possible consequences of Natural Selection and the Second Law of Thermodynamics. His inheritance in this regard was the intellectual climate of the late nineteenth century, which was, to quote Zahrnt:

...an age of bourgeois idealism, an age which was inspired by an optimistic faith in the human mind and in progress in history.²²¹

²¹⁹ As J.B.S. Haldane has argued, it is scientific advances that have enduring and fundamental significance for the human future, above achievement in any other sphere (such as military conquest or political change). Cited in: O'Neill, Gerard K.; 2081: *A Hopeful View of the Human Future*, p.23.

²²⁰ Huxley himself stated categorically that: "It is only by means of the sciences that life can be radically altered." Quoted in: O'Neill, Gerard K.; 2081: *A Hopeful View of the Human Future*, p.30.

²²¹ Zahrnt, H.; *The Question of God*, p.15.

Moral and spiritual consciousness were viewed as the development of an inevitable evolutionary process, and the dominant characteristic of the age was a pervasive optimism in an ever-improving human race progressively attaining new heights of morality and civilisation.²²² In contrast, Wells paints a bleak future picture of a species divided, and the stagnation and redundancy of all that his contemporaries valued. As a final denial of nineteenth century *Zeitgeist*, he introduces an apocalyptic vision of the outworking of Entropy and the death-throes of the universe.

The Time Traveller is introduced by means of a framing narrative - a storyteller telling the story of a storyteller. This effect is used by Wells to lend credulity to the incredible idea of Time Travel. The Time Traveller demonstrates, in argument with a group of rational sceptics, the theoretical possibility at least of Time as a Fourth Dimension:

Clearly, any real body must have extension in four directions: it must have Length, Breadth, Thickness, and - Duration...Space, as our mathematicians have it, is spoken of as having three dimensions - why not another at right angles to the other three?²²³

Wells' intention is to 'domesticate the impossible hypothesis'; to trick the reader into an unwary concession of a plausible assumption and get on with the story while the illusion holds.²²⁴ Having established The Time Machine as a dramatic device, Wells can proceed with the main business of the book, which, as we shall see, is to speculate upon the destiny of the human race.

The Time Traveller himself is presented as an idealistic inventor, caught up in the spirit of his age. As time goes by, however, he is forced to revise continually his optimistic assumptions. His first expectation, in common with his contemporaries, is that the humanity of futurity must naturally be immeasurably advanced in art, knowledge and technological sophistication.²²⁵ His belief in the perfect conquest of Nature by humanity is not something which he will readily discard. He holds fast to it in his initial speculations upon the intellectual demise to 'indolent serenity' of the Eloi, through the lack of the stimuli of hardship and freedom:

Nature...is shy and slow in our clumsy hands. Some day all this will be better organised, and better...The whole world will be intelligent, educated, and co-operating; things will move faster and faster towards the subjugation of Nature.²²⁶

Finally, however, the true consequences of Natural Selection become unavoidably evident. It is the 'inhuman' Morlocks who are the inheritors of humanity - the dominant society of the two sub-species. Better adapted to their environment, they exist in a ruthless, functionalist, supremacy over the Eloi, whom they tend and cultivate as food.

The assumptions of his age are evident in the Time Traveller's evaluation of this scenario. "I tried to face the thing in a scientific spirit"; he says, yet his conclusion is

²²² Dunn, J.D.G.; 2H New Testament Theology Lecture Notes, (1994).

²²³ Wells, H.G.; "The Time Machine", in *The Science Fiction*, pp.3-7.

²²⁴ Wells, H.G. Quoted in Hillegas, M.R.; *The Future as Nightmare: H.G. Wells and the Anti-utopians*, p.18.

²²⁵ Wells, H.G.; "The Time Machine", in *The Science Fiction*, pp.20,41.

²²⁶ *Ibid.* p.24.

not purely Darwinian. He first regards the degradation of the Eloi as a *moral* fault - a 'rigorous punishment for human selfishness':

Man had been content to live in ease and delight upon the labour's of his fellow-man, had taken necessity as his watchword and excuse, and in the fullness of time necessity had come home to him. I even tried a Carlyle-like scorn of this wretched aristocracy in decay.²²⁷

It is here that the Time Traveller displays an underlying emotive irrationality. With his mind revolting against a logical acceptance of this state of affairs, he protests:

...this attitude of mind was impossible. However great their degradation, the Eloi had kept too much of their human form not to claim my sympathy, and to make me perform a sharer in their degradation and fear.²²⁸

Ultimately, the Time Traveller cannot disengage himself from a sentimental identification with the Eloi, even after their aesthetic and familiar qualities prove to be hollow illusions. He cannot view natural selection without colouring it with his own prejudices and cultural values. The science itself emerges not as a tool with which humanity may master and control "Nature"; but as a ruthless and capricious force, with humanity at its whim.

The senselessness of existence is further reinforced by the penultimate chapter. The Time Traveller is afforded a brief glimpse of another inescapable force of Nature - that of Entropy. The sun is dying, and the energy of the earth is ebbing away into a desolate, lifeless senility. Evolution's final offering is a regression to a primitive, crustacean form of life, which itself is doomed. Bright dawns for humanity here are fanciful pipe-dreams. The Second Law of Thermodynamics (the dissipation of energy into equilibrium) spells the slow death and stagnation of the universe into 'eternal sunset'.²²⁹

It is the naked reality of the dynamic of Evolution that Wells lays bare, stripping it of its rose-tinted nineteenth century hue. Art, beauty, civilisation, culture - these highly prized abstracts count for nothing in the struggle to survive and adapt, and are portrayed as ultimately meaningless in the light of Entropy. In doing so, Wells strikes at the very heart of the optimism of his age. There is no Ideal to which humanity can aspire - progress itself is an empty word. History is marching inexorably to a final, apocalyptic conclusion, in which humanity is an accident, a random chapter in the formless dance of blind matter. C.S. Lewis' 'Evolutionary Hymn' makes for pungent satire on the Time Traveller's utopian hopes:

To whatever variation
Our posterity may turn
Hairy, squashy, or crustacean,
Bulbous-eyed or square of stern,
Tusked or toothless, mild or ruthless,
Towards that unknown god we yearn.

²²⁷ Ibid. p.48.

²²⁸ Ibid. p.48.

²²⁹ Ibid. p.64.

Far too long have sages vainly
Glossed great Nature's simple text;
He who runs can read it plainly,
'Goodness = what comes next.'
By evolving, Life is solving
All the questions we perplexed.²³⁰

4.2 Yevgeny Zamyatin

My love
she said
that when all's
considered
we're only
machines.

I chained
her to my
bedroom wall
for future use
and she cried.

STEVE TURNER

IN common with *The Brothers Karamazov*, and the tradition of many Russian novels, Zamyatin's *We* represents conflict not so much between individuals as between the ideas they embody.²³¹ The work shares with Orwell's *1984*, and Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, the identical assumption that socialism would sweep humanity to a universal, irreversibly static condition.²³² OneState is ruled on the absolute principle that Freedom and Happiness are opposites - every particular of human existence is regulated, including waking, sex, and sleep.

Zamyatin's major theme is the struggle between Energy and Entropy - between the OneState ideal of absolute 'happiness' in final and irreversible equilibrium,²³³ and the 'torment of perpetual movement'²³⁴ to which the revolutionary Mephis strive. He associates this theme with another, characteristic of his work - that of the City and the Country.²³⁵ OneState is symbolic of decrepitude, obsolescence, and entropic death. Beyond the Green Wall lies vitality, life and energy. The distinctive and pervasive imagery of *We* is mathematical, which Zamyatin uses as a medium to examine this ongoing struggle, and to evaluate the dangers posed to humanity by totalitarianism.²³⁶

²³⁰ P, p.55.

²³¹ Brown, C.; Introduction to: Zamyatin, Yevgeny; *We*, p.xxiii.

²³² O'Neill, Gerard K.; *Op. Cit.*, p.30.

²³³ Zamyatin, Yevgeny, *We*, p.176.

²³⁴ *Ibid.* p.159.

²³⁵ Brown, E.J.; "Brave New World, 1984, and We: An Essay in Anti-Utopia" in: Kern, G. (Ed.); *Zamyatin's We: A Collection of Critical Essays*, p.213.

²³⁶ Cooke, L.B.; "Ancient and Modern Mathematics in Zamyatin's *We*" in: Kern, G.; *op. cit.* p.149.

We should not be seen as a simple opposition between the rational and the irrational; between scientific and unscientific conceptions of life and society. Rather, it is a criticism of a closed and limiting worldview. As Habgood puts it:

It is the perennial temptation of scientists to become immersed in some tiny fraction of the whole field of knowledge, and then to derive all their criteria of judgement from this one fraction...the narrowing down of the quest to one particular kind of truth, the abstract, impersonal, mathematical kind of truth found at one end of the scientific spectrum.²³⁷

Zamyatin does not use mathematical imagery to denigrate mathematicians, but to demonstrate that OneState is naive, ignorant and incomplete in its understanding of the science, with consequent implications for the society which this mindset evolves. There are several significant clues indicating this in the text itself.

Firstly, the names of the mathematicians revered by OneState are very telling. Pythagoras, Euclid, Newton and Maclaurin are all, from the point of view of the narrator, names from the distant past. There is the suggestion of a void of millennia in which no progress in the field of science has taken place. Secondly, there is the suggestion that the leaders of OneState are uncomfortable with advanced mathematical notions. The mathematician and narrator, D-503, expresses himself to be familiar with concepts such as calculus asymptotes, n-dimensional spaces, and multiple unknowns.²³⁸ The ideologists of OneState seem comfortable only with the simplest ideas of arithmetic and geometry - the city is composed of squares, circles and other such forms, and personal names are replaced with alphanumeric.²³⁹

The sense of naiveté permeating OneState is reinforced by D-503's lapses into gross mathematical error. On three occasions this is quite blatant: he miscalculates both the probability of receiving an order to attend a particular auditorium, and the net effect of ten deaths upon OneState.²⁴⁰ Furthermore, the disturbing association of the idea of $\sqrt{-1}$ with his irrational leads him to use incorrect mathematical terminology.²⁴¹

It is this personal association of the concept of $\sqrt{-1}$ that is perhaps Zamyatin's most brilliant piece of analogy. The imaginary root takes on an emotional quality, symbolising D-503's irrational behaviour,²⁴² and the unchartable domain of his 'soul'. The mathematical ideology of OneState is governed by integers, by real numbers that can be grasped, comprehended and manipulated. It is simple mathematical fact, however, that this class of numbers represents only a subset of the whole.²⁴³ D-503's

²³⁷ Habgood, J.; *Soundings*, pp.38-41.

²³⁸ Cooke, L.B.; *Op. Cit.*, p.151.

²³⁹ *Ibid.* p.150.

²⁴⁰ Zamyatin, Yevgeny; *We*, pp.14,104. Assuming, given the symmetrical design of OneState, that auditoriums are of identical size, the correct probability is simply 1/1500 (1500 = The number of auditoriums). Secondly, the population of OneState is given as 10 million (*We*, p.16). The fraction of the population that 10 deaths represents is therefore 1 millionth and not 100 millionth.

²⁴¹ The correct term for $\sqrt{-1}$ is *imaginary*. An irrational number is simply one which cannot be given a precise mathematical ratio, such as π or $\sqrt{2}$ (and therefore may be real).

²⁴² White, J.J.; "Mathematical Imagery in Musil's *Young Torless* and Zamyatin's *We*" in Kern, G.; *Op. Cit.*, p.230.

²⁴³ Churchill, R.V. & Brown J.W.; *Complex Variables & Applications*, (New York, 1990). In mathematical terms, the complete set of numbers is described as $z = (x,y)$, where x and y are the real

dawning realisation that there is a world of experience and truth beyond the confines of OneState is analogised by his meditation on complex numbers:

For every equation, every formula in the superficial world, there is a corresponding curve or solid. For irrational formulas, for my $\sqrt{-1}$, we know of no corresponding solids, we've never seen them...But that's just the whole horror - that these solids, invisible, exist. They absolutely, inescapably must exist. Because in mathematics their eccentric prickly shadows, the irrational formulas, parade in front of our eyes as if they were on a screen. And if we don't see these solids in our surface world, there is for them, there inevitably must be, as whole immense world there, beneath the surface.²⁴⁴

The 'Numbers' of OneState are thus stunted and incomplete - the assigning of integers as monikers indicates an ideology which views human beings in rational, mechanistic terms. The reduction of humanity to the level of machinery is indicated by D-503's machine-like conception of himself. He speaks of the "fly-wheel of logic humming contentedly in me"²⁴⁵ and of his brain as a machine requiring the lubrication of logic.²⁴⁶ He finds 'innumerate pity' over the deaths of the workers humorous and irrational.²⁴⁷ As physicist Walter Heitler warns:

When once we have got to the stage of seeing in man merely a complex machine, what does it matter if we destroy him?²⁴⁸

Just as every mathematical number is complex - possessing 'real' and 'imaginary' parts; Zamyatin makes the case by analogy that in reality, humans possess both reason and the irrational. The mysterious, incomprehensible side of human nature, evoked by D-503's 'world beneath the surface' (strongly reminiscent of Plato's Cave), and its rational and logical counterpart, are thesis and antithesis, which must be synthesised to produce a properly integrated humanity.²⁴⁹ As I-330 appeals to D503:

You grew numbers all over your body, numbers that crawled about on you like lice. You have to be stripped naked and driven into the forest. You should learn to tremble with fear, with joy, insane rage, cold - you should learn to pray to the fire.²⁵⁰

I-330, and the Mēphis organisation, are not advocating an anti-mathematical or even an anti-rational revolution. Cooke has observed that the statements of I-330 demonstrate a much deeper understanding of mathematics than the supporters and ideologists of OneState. The aim of the revolutionaries can be seen as wishing to liberate mathematical thought from the bonds placed upon it by the obscurantist totalitarians.²⁵¹ Through his conversations with the 'heretic' I-330, D-503 develops an

and imaginary parts of the complex number z . The set of real numbers, $z = (x,0)$ (having no imaginary part), is therefore merely a subset of the whole set of complex numbers.

²⁴⁴ Zamyatin, Yevgeny; *We*, p.98.

²⁴⁵ Collins, C.; *Evgenij Zamjatin: An Interpretative Study*, p.65.

²⁴⁶ Zamyatin, Yevgeny; *We*, p.31.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p.104.

²⁴⁸ Cited by Wink, W.; *Unmasking the Powers*, p.29.

²⁴⁹ Cooke, L.B.; *Op. Cit.*, p.165.

²⁵⁰ Zamyatin, Yevgeny; *We*, p.158.

²⁵¹ Cooke, L.B.; *Op. Cit.*, pp.150-152.

awareness of the implications of knowledge he has always possessed.²⁵² She appeals to him first as a *mathematician* to refute the idea of a final revolution:

My dear, you are a mathematician. You're even more, you're a philosopher of mathematics. So do this for me: tell me the final number.²⁵³

When D-503 protests that the number of numbers is infinite, I-330 responds:

And how can there be a final revolution? The number of revolution is infinite.²⁵⁴

The revolt of Mephis is against the idea of Entropy. The very name of the spaceship that D-503 has designed suggests an attempt to quantify the universe - to 'put a little wall around infinity'.²⁵⁵ The aim of OneState is to bring a final equilibrium to all humanity. Again, I-330's appeal against this is based on scientific reason:

That is precisely what we are talking about - entropy, physiological entropy. You're a mathematician. Surely you can see that only differences, differences of temperature, only contrasts in the degree of heat, only that makes for life?

We is the diary of a fanatic, whose dogmatic belief system is hammered into pieces by the growing and unwelcome recognition of truths beyond his comfortable vision of reality. His psychological conditioning has prepared him for a completely knowable universe,²⁵⁶ yet the very form of the book itself reflects the mental turmoil in which D-503 finds himself. Ostensibly a scientific journal of events, the 'Records' become increasingly disconnected, chaotic, and incoherent - the account of a zealot reluctant to surrender cherished ideas. The focus of attention within *We* shifts rapidly, with wildly fluctuating changes of mood.²⁵⁷ The effect is to give the impression of a true believer 'losing his religion'. This is strikingly pictured by such outbursts as his first encounter with the imaginary root:

...I remember how I cried, I beat my fists on the table and bawled: "I don't want $\sqrt{-1}$! Take it out of me, this $\sqrt{-1}$!" That irrational root grew in me like some alien thing, strange and terrifying...and you couldn't make any sense of it or neutralise it because it was completely beyond *ratio*.²⁵⁸

It is this attitude which Zamyatin links with the idea of Entropy - a scientific small-mindedness, terrified to venture beyond the bounds of that which may be rationally understood. Science is the infallible religion of OneState, yet it is revealed to be a stunted, incomplete, pseudo-science, which in the hands of a totalitarian state contrives to enslave humanity.²⁵⁹

²⁵² Ibid. p.151.

²⁵³ Zamyatin, Yevgeny; *We*, p.167.

²⁵⁴ Ibid. p.167.

²⁵⁵ Ibid. p.40.

²⁵⁶ Edwards, T.R.N.; *Three Russian writers and the irrational*, p.58.

²⁵⁷ Proffer, C.R.; "Notes on the Imagery in Zamyatin's *We*" in Kern, G.; *Op. Cit.*, p.95.

²⁵⁸ Zamyatin, Yevgeny; *We*, p.39.

²⁵⁹ Edwards, T.R.N.; *Op. Cit.*, p.52.

We ends inconclusively, with D-503 too weak to resist a return to scientific fundamentalism, through the operation to remove his imagination. The final Record hints at an ongoing struggle between the totalitarians and the revolutionaries. In this way Zamyatin suggests a Hegelian 'dialectic of progression'²⁶⁰ - the ceaseless battle between the forces of energy against the stagnation of entropy, embodied in I-330's idea of infinite revolutions.

WE is a vastly contrasting portrait of science and scientists, in the context of human destiny, to Wells' *The Time Machine*. *We* is generally classed with that genre of dystopias which parodied Wells as naively optimistic. This includes the writings of Huxley, Orwell, Forster and C.S. Lewis. Lewis himself characterises Wells in *That Hideous Strength*, as a conceited and dangerous fool who does not realise where the science he champions is taking humanity.²⁶¹ Zamyatin himself, however, admired Wells as a writer of 'social-scientific' fantasy, and saw his purpose as:

...almost exclusively to uncover the defects in the existing social order, not to create a picture of some paradise to come.²⁶²

H.G. Wells, in Zamyatin's eyes, belonged to the 'tiny band of heretics', whose function was to lead the world into the next stage of the dialectical process, and who were to be understood as combating the chronic disease of humanity - Entropy.²⁶³ Science is not necessarily a negative force, therefore - the possibilities of reason and mathematics as tools for productive and creative thought are suggested in *We*. Zamyatin warns, however, that in the wrong hands science can be misused to subjugate humanity into machine-like nonentity - the price to be paid for a world view in which all human experience is lawful and orderly.

Against this valuation it must be remembered that the works which Zamyatin most admired were among Wells' earliest (*The Time Machine* was his first scientific romance). As Hillegas suggests:

Zamyatin probably did not understand the drift of Wells' work well enough to see that the rationalism and regimentation he opposed in *We* was at least a strong element in Wells' thought.²⁶⁴

The Time Traveller is a novel permeated with deep disillusionment in the ideals of science and progress in history, which preceded Wells' later optimism in such works as *A Modern Utopia*. Science here can barely influence human destiny, let alone control it. There is an undergirding 'cosmic pessimism', motivated by the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which suggests that any endeavour will be finally negated by the demise of the universe into entropic death.

In conclusion, it seems to me that whilst the energy/entropy conflict is skilfully explored by Zamyatin as an *analogy* of the scientific task, the full implications of

²⁶⁰ White, J.J.; Op. Cit., p.232.

²⁶¹ Hillegas, M.R.; Op. Cit., p.138.

²⁶² Zamyatin, Yevgeny; quoted in: Hillegas, M.R.; Op. Cit., p.103.

²⁶³ Hillegas, M.R.; Op. Cit., p.104.

²⁶⁴ Ibid. p.105.

entropy as a *scientific concept* are most forcefully expounded in *The Time Traveller*. Zamyatin's mathematician is a pawn in the ideological struggle between the forces of Energy and Entropy. *We* is a passionate attempt to present the case for the freedom of scientific enquiry and humanity itself, against the possibilities of stagnation and death imposed by a rigid and limited understanding of the universe. Wells' *Time Traveller*, by contrast, is an optimist motivated by those very notions, whose optimism is finally confounded by the realisation that Entropy is the more potent of the two forces, and that ultimately its victory is inescapable.

4.3 That Hideous Strength

"There was a thing called the soul and a thing called immortality."

Brave New World (Aldous Huxley)

“ANTI-UTOPIA assumes a new and different appearance in C.S. Lewis' cosmic *A*trilogy” (*Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra, That Hideous Strength*), writes Mark Hillegas. Instead of a reaction to utopia from a “disillusioned left”, the trilogy represents an attack from a conservative Christian right.²⁶⁵ In this chapter we will investigate the clash of two fundamentally opposing utopian positions that these novels represent. Lewis was inspired to write in response to what he saw as a “ghastly materialistic philosophy”, present in the works of H.G. Wells, Olaf Stapledon and J.B.S. Haldane particularly. He castigated these writers for championing an ethic of ‘survivalism’ - the perpetuation of the species at the expense of all else - believing this position to be logically incoherent.

HILLEGAS has described the trilogy as a kind of *Paradise Lost* for the twentieth century, defending and instructing Christian doctrine in mythical form.²⁶⁶ The first book begins with the abduction of a Cambridge philologist (Ransom) by a survivalist scientist (Weston) and his ruthless accomplice. The trio journey by spacecraft to Mars, whose inhabitants Weston mistakenly believes to require a human sacrifice of some kind. Weston (who appears to be a caricature of Haldane) is driven by the desire to subjugate the universe to humanity, and envisages the conquering of a ‘primitive’ civilisation. Ransom escapes, however, and discovers that the three distinct races of ‘Malacandrians’ are denizens of an unfallen world, benignly ruled by the archangel figure of Oyarsa. Earth, or ‘Thulcandra’ has been subject to a sort of heavenly quarantine due to its fallen, sinful state, which Weston has broken through “enginry and natural philosophy”.²⁶⁷

Perelandra is the story of a second Eve in another Paradise,²⁶⁸ and is perhaps the most self-contained novel of the trilogy. Ransom is sent to Venus to repel Weston, who has become an instrument of evil, and plays the part of the serpent in Eden. Ransom is successful, and the corruption of *Perelandra* is averted.

²⁶⁵ Hillegas, M.R.; *The Future as Nightmare*, p.133.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.134.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.134.

²⁶⁸ Urang, Gunnar; *Shadows of Heaven*, p.16.

It is the final book of the trilogy (*That Hideous Strength*) which is most explicitly anti-utopian, and in which Lewis' most virulent attacks on scientific materialism are to be found. The dangers are represented by the seemingly benevolent N.I.C.E., a global institute dedicated to the betterment of humanity through science. Against the sinister (and diabolical) cosmic forces which it represents are ranged a small company of Christians, headed by Ransom. They are aided by the 'good' planetary spirits, who may now enter the tellurian arena through the breaking of the 'quarantine' by Weston. Into this story Lewis weaves elements of the Arthurian legend - Merlin awakes from his enchanted sleep to join Ransom, who is revealed to be the Pendragon of ancient Logres. The central characters of the book are a young married couple; Mark (initially an employee of the N.I.C.E.) and Jane Studdock, who has clairvoyant powers and aligns herself with the Christian company. As Urang observes, Lewis for the most part filters the narrative alternately between their two consciousness', to create a parable of sin, repentance and regeneration.²⁶⁹

THE conflicting philosophies of scientific materialism and the religious worldview represented by Lewis were clearly antagonistic.²⁷⁰ Haldane's antipathy towards Lewis' Christian faith was characteristic of the champions of scientific progress. H.G. Wells described Catholic Christianity as a "strange heap of mental corruption", which he saw as the chief obstacle to human readjustment.²⁷¹ Haldane himself saw religion as incurably reactionary, and antagonistic to social change - describing Lewis as a "most useful prop to the existing social order".²⁷² The philosophy of Lewis' opponents could find no room for religious utopia, in the form of a belief in life after death. The only hope of improving the lot of humanity, therefore, lay in the application of mind through science. The goal of this enterprise was the subjugation of nature, and the ability to control human evolution.²⁷³

There was certainly no place in this philosophy for objective value. Haldane believed human ideals to be products of natural processes that did not conform to them,²⁷⁴ and saw the traditional distinction between mind and matter as false (a belief he shared with Wells).²⁷⁵ Science for the materialists was inevitably reductionist - committed to explaining the complex in terms of the simple - Mind was therefore a by-product of material and organic systems.²⁷⁶

Lewis attacked this philosophy on both practical and intellectual grounds. Firstly, he believed the logical consequence of a final conquest of human nature by science was a "Hell Incarnate".²⁷⁷ Secondly, he believed the materialist account of thought to be

²⁶⁹ Ibid., pp.24-25.

²⁷⁰ Haldane compared his opponent to the substance Lewisite, a toxic chemical nullified by British Anti-Lewisite. Haldane hoped to perform a similar task in the mental sphere, negating the poisonous effects of Lewis' ideas, which, as he believed "muddied the stream of human thought". Haldane, J.B.S.; *Everything has a History*, p.259.

²⁷¹ Wells, H.G.; *The Fate of Homo Sapiens*, pp.154,169.

²⁷² Haldane, J.B.S.; *Everything has a History*, pp.232-233.

²⁷³ Hillegas, M.R.; *Op. Cit.*, p.140.

²⁷⁴ Haldane, J.B.S.; *Possible Worlds and other Essays*, p.310.

²⁷⁵ Wells, H.G.; *Mankind in the Making*, p.75.

²⁷⁶ Haldane, J.B.S.; *The Causes of Evolution*, pp.155-156,164.

²⁷⁷ THS, p.204.

contradictory, inadequate, and in the case of the champions of scientific progress, plagued by double standards.

FOR Lewis, "Man's power over Nature" inevitably had to mean the power of some men over other men, with Nature as their instrument.²⁷⁸ The conquest of human nature must lead to the rule of the conditioners over the conditioned, of the scientific planners over the masses. As Lord Feverstone explains to Studdock in *That Hideous Strength*:

"Man has got to take charge of Man. That means, of course, that some men have got to take charge of the rest."²⁷⁹

Feverstone goes on to emphasise the desirability of being among the former group - one of those taking charge, rather than one of those being taken charge of. This appears to be a satire on Haldane's quip that evolution was a process "more pleasant to direct than to undergo".²⁸⁰ What this process will entail is suggested by Feverstone's outline of the aims of the N.I.C.E.:

"...sterilisation of the unfit, liquidation of backward races, selective breeding. Then real education, including pre-natal education. By real education I mean one that has no 'take-it-or-leave-it' nonsense. A real education makes the patient want it infallibly: whatever he or his parents try to do about it. Of course, it'll have to be mainly psychological at first. But we'll get onto biochemical conditioning in the end and direct manipulation of the brain."²⁸¹

Haldane himself had suggested in scientific essays that the blind, deaf, feeble-minded and other disabled were of limited social value.²⁸² "Doubtless," he concluded, "complete idiots should be prevented from breeding."²⁸³

THE surrender of the individual to the collective is a recurrent theme in both utopian and dystopian literature. For H.G. Wells the sense of individual self-hood was a biological illusion - once convenient, but now redundant in the search for a human superorganism.²⁸⁴ A revealing criticism that Haldane made of *Out of the Silent Planet* was concerned with the grammar of the Malacandrians. He suggested that linguistically, sinless beings should necessarily have no equivalents of 'I', 'my', or other personal pronouns and inflexions.²⁸⁵ A dystopia utilising a similar idea that springs immediately to mind is Zamyatin's *We*. Lewis himself felt that Haldane was fundamentally mistaken, and was unable to see that there were two opposite solutions to the problem of human selfishness. The first of these was the *abolition* of persons in materialist or totalitarian philosophy. The second (Christian) solution was love - the *relation between* persons. Nothing but a *Thou* can be loved, and a *Thou* can only exist for an *I*.²⁸⁶

²⁷⁸ AOM, p.35.

²⁷⁹ THS, p.42.

²⁸⁰ Haldane, J.B.S.; *Possible Worlds and Other Essays*, p.296.

²⁸¹ THS, p.42.

²⁸² Haldane, J.B.S.; *Possible Worlds and Other Essays*, p.23.

²⁸³ Haldane, J.B.S.; *The Possibilities of Human Evolution*, p.88.

²⁸⁴ Parrinder, P.; *H.G. Wells*, p.13.

²⁸⁵ Haldane, J.B.S.; *Everything has a History*, p.255.

²⁸⁶ OTOW, p.108.

In Haldane's *Last Judgement* (which Lewis described as "brilliant, but depraved"²⁸⁷), the individual is valued as negligible in comparison with the destiny of the human race in "eternity and infinity".²⁸⁸ This termite-like conception of humanity is also present in his essay *The Inequality of Man*. Haldane envisaged a eugenically engineered society of the future in which humanity is divided into castes with particular functions, much as Huxley imagined the citizens of *Brave New World*. It is here we reach the crux of the disagreement between C.S. Lewis and the proponents of scientific materialism.

For Lewis, the fundamental point of contention was the rival conceptions of humanity. The materialist must necessarily view an individual with a finite lifespan of several decades as subservient to the State or society, which will outlast him or her.²⁸⁹ For the Christian, the individual lives on in eternity, and is of incomparably more value than temporal institutions. Lewis pillories the materialist outlook in the character of Weston, who defends his philosophy to Ransom:

"...infinity, and therefore perhaps eternity, is being put into the hands of the human race. You cannot be so small-minded as to think that the rights or the life of an individual or of a million individuals are of the slightest importance in comparison with this."²⁹⁰

We meet this issue again and again within the genre of anti-utopianism. Zamyatin's mathematician views the deaths of ten 'Numbers' in purely mathematical terms - as a minute diminution of the mass of society.²⁹¹ Orwell's totalitarians assert the fallible, mortal individual to be subservient to the collective, eternal State.²⁹² In *Brave New World* the Director's remarks on anti-social activities sum up well that philosophy which Lewis sought to attack:

"...no offence is so heinous as unorthodoxy of behaviour. Murder kills only the individual - and after all, what is an individual?... We can make a new one with the greatest of ease - as many as you like. Unorthodoxy threatens more than the life of a mere individual; it strikes at Society itself."²⁹³

The ideological shift which Lewis wrote against was in his view already present in contemporary language and practice. The most dangerous manifestation of that ideology (that humanity is to be regarded as so many specimens determined by impulse and conditioning), was to be found in modern understandings of criminal punishment. In 1949 Lewis published a paper attacking 'The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment', arguing against Haldane's assertion that an enlightened, scientific approach should be

²⁸⁷ FST, p.88.

²⁸⁸ Haldane, J.B.S.; *Possible Worlds and Other Essays*, p.312.

²⁸⁹ Haldane himself was originally a Marxist, and published an introduction to Engels' *Dialectics and Nature*, in which he claimed that Engels had anticipated the progress of science in the sixty years since his death. He was therefore reluctant to accept the embarrassing verdict of Albert Einstein, the greatest scientist of the generation, upon Engels' work (Einstein described it as entirely worthless, and suggested that Engels himself would have found his own "modest attempt" ridiculous in the light of scientific advance). See: Hook, S.; *Dialectical Materialism and Scientific Method*, p.30.

²⁹⁰ OSP, p.29.

²⁹¹ Zamyatin, Y.; *We*, p.104.

²⁹² Orwell, G.; *1984*, p.214.

²⁹³ Huxley, A.; *Brave New World*, p.133.

based upon reform and deterrent, and not retribution.²⁹⁴ In *That Hideous Strength* Lewis presents the N.I.C.E. as bringing about this state of affairs by propaganda - Lord Feverstone explains to Studdock that it is only a matter of words:

“...if it were even whispered that the N.I.C.E. wanted powers to experiment on criminals, you’d have the old women of both sexes up in arms and yapping about humanity. Call it re-education of the mal-adjusted, and you have them all slobbering with delight that the brutal era of retributive punishment has at last come to an end.”

To do this, Lewis believed, was to remove punishment from the province of justice, and into the realm of the ‘technical experts’ - the psychoanalysts and behavioural specialists.²⁹⁵ Thus society no longer kills or punishes bad people, but “liquidates unsocial elements”.²⁹⁶ The approach therefore has the effect of dehumanising the criminal. Instead of treating an offender as a rational being capable of free choice between moral alternatives, the modern tendency views crime as a sickness or disease. The logical conclusion could be far from humane, as Mark Studdock discovers:

...the Fairy pointed out that what had hampered every English police force up to date was precisely the idea of deserved punishment. For desert was always finite: you could do so much to the criminal and no more. Remedial treatment on the other hand, need have no fixed limit; it could go on till it had effected a cure, and those who were carrying it out could decide when that was.²⁹⁷

The N.I.C.E. would soon control anyone who had ever been in the hands of the police, and ultimately every citizen.

As has been stated previously, Lewis felt that relativist accounts of thought were flawed. To answer ‘yes’ to the question: “Is the thought that no thoughts are true, itself true?”, was to contradict oneself. Knowledge of the universe is arrived at only by inference, and therefore if thought is valid at all:

...we are not reading rationality into an irrational universe but responding to a rationality with which the universe has always been saturated.²⁹⁸

The materialists, for whom ‘knowledge’ and ‘value’ must necessarily be illusory, could have no rational reason for holding any ethic to be binding or authoritative, yet this is what Lewis accused them of. The survival of the species was the supreme ethic, to which all else must be subjugated. For Haldane, characteristics such as pity or happiness were useful only insofar as they contributed to this end - the price paid by the individual was to the gain of the race.²⁹⁹ Thus Weston, when justifying the intended conquest of Malacandria before the angel Oyarsa, is made to say:

²⁹⁴ Haldane, J.B.S.; “Scientific Calvinism” in *Possible Worlds and Other Essays*, pp.141-142. Haldane asserted in this essay that moral indignation was “out of date”.

²⁹⁵ FST, p.104. Haldane himself suggested that such bodies as the Medical board, or the magistrates were “unfit to direct the evolution of the human race”. Haldane, J.B.S.; *The Inequality of Man*, p.88.

²⁹⁶ AOM, p.45.

²⁹⁷ THS, p.69.

²⁹⁸ AOM, pp.84-89.

²⁹⁹ Haldane, J.B.S.; *Possible Worlds and Other Essays*, p.303.

"I may fall, but while I live I will not...consent to close the gates of the future on my race. What lies in the future, beyond our present ken, passes imagination to conceive: it is enough for me that there is a Beyond."³⁰⁰

Another feature of this belief which Lewis attacked was the deification of Mind. It was accepted scientific fact that the general tendency of natural selection was to degradation, not to 'progress'. Improvement in evolutionary terms was a rare exception. However, Haldane among others believed that for the first time it was possible for Mind (itself a product of evolution) to take charge of the process.³⁰¹ Evolution could now be controlled by eugenics.³⁰² Despite protestations to the contrary, the scientific utopians could perhaps be accused of a philosophical belief they often attacked - the dichotomy of mind and matter.

The idea that organic life is somehow insanitary or 'inferior' appears in Wells' *War of the Worlds*, for example. The superior Martians have evolved to the point where they are almost pure brain, a "...selfish intelligence, without any of the emotional substratum of the human being".³⁰³ Martian sanitary science has eliminated all micro-organisms, and therefore disease, fevers, contagions and other morbidities. Other authors using this idea include Arthur C. Clarke, whose *Overmind* "long ago left the tyranny of matter behind".³⁰⁴ Another is Huxley, whose scientifically planned society of *Brave New World* exhibits distaste with such processes as childbirth, and much of whose energy is consumed in the sanitising of the human condition to an artificial, clinical conclusion.

This theme appears in *That Hideous Strength* when the N.I.C.E. scientist Filostrato postulates the abolition of organic life, as a matter of simple hygiene. The impure and the organic, he suggests to Mark, are interchangeable conceptions:

"In us organic life has produced Mind. It has done its work. After that we want no more of it. We do not want the world furred over with organic life, like what you would call the blue mould - all sprouting and budding and breeding and decaying. We must get rid of it."³⁰⁵

His work is concerned with the sanitising of human experience, with learning how to construct bodies directly with chemicals, and with removing copulation from the process of reproduction. When the Moon appears in the sky he exclaims:

"There is a world for you, no? There is cleanness, purity. Thousands of miles of polished rock with not one blade of grass, not one fibre of lichen, not one grain of dust. Not even air."³⁰⁶

Here Lewis is alluding to certain post-Enlightenment forms of mentality that he characterised in his allegory, *The Pilgrim's Regress*.³⁰⁷ Lewis warns against confusing

³⁰⁰ OSP, p.160.

³⁰¹ Haldane, J.B.S.; *Possibilities of Human Evolution*, p.164.

³⁰² Parrinder, P.; *Op. Cit.*, p.10.

³⁰³ Wells, H.G.; *The War of the Worlds*, p.136.

³⁰⁴ Clarke, Arthur C.; *Childhood's End*, pp.159-60. C.S. Lewis praised Clarke as "...an author who understands there may be things that have a higher claim on humanity than its own "survival"."

³⁰⁵ THS, p.173.

³⁰⁶ THS, p.173.

³⁰⁷ These are first personified in the Three Pale Men; Neo-Angular, Neo-Classical and Humanist, whose ascetic fare is free from any "lingering flavour of the old romantic sauces" (PR, p.125). Later

repentance of sin (his major theme) with its diabolical counterpart - perversion or disgust of human nature. Against the view that Nature is somehow impure, and from which humanity must break the ties of dependence, Lewis sets the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. Thus the created order, though distorted and beset by sin, is seen as inherently good. As the angelic guide remarks to the pilgrim in the *Regress*:

“Has no one told you that that Lady (Mary) spoke and acted for all that bears, in the presence of all that begets?...Be sure that the whole of this land, with all its warmth and wetness and fecundity, with all the dark and the heavy and the multitudinous for which you are too dainty, spoke through her lips when she said that He had regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden.”³⁰⁸

This theme appears in *That Hideous Strength*, in the scene where Venus hovers over St. Anne's. The mysteries of erotic love and of passion overtake both beast and man, somewhat offending the sensibilities of the rationalist MacPhee. Ransom's admonition to him echoes that of the angel of the *Pilgrim's Regress*, who suggests that whatever virtues are to be attributed to God, “decency is not one of them”.³⁰⁹

LEWIS utilises other religious themes to demonstrate the inadequacy of materialism. One of these (familiar in his writings) is the idea that one needs ‘eyes to see’ and ‘ears to hear’³¹⁰ in order to perceive deeper realities than the material world. This occurs throughout his imaginative works.³¹¹ When the Thulcandrians meet the ruling spirit of Malacandria (Oyarsa), their perceptive experiences are very different. The following is Ransom's apprehension of the angel:

He never could say what it was like. The merest whisper of light - no, less than that, the smallest diminution of shadow...some difference in the look of the ground, too slight to be named in the language of the five senses, moved slowly towards him. Like a silence spreading over a room full of people, like an infinitesimal coolness on a sultry day, like a passing memory of some long-forgotten sound or scent...³¹²

on in the tale, they take the form of Superbia, a skeletal dragon who has polished the land to a mirror-like rock, “scraped clean of every speck of dust and fibre of lichen”. This tough-mindedness is revealed as pride - the desire to be self-sufficient and a god to oneself. “I have a mineral soul” exclaims Superbia (minerals eat no food and void no excrement):

“So I, borrowing nothing and repaying
Nothing, neither growing nor decaying,
Myself am to myself, a mortal god, a self-contained
Unwindowed monad, unindebted and unstained.” (PR, p.235).

³⁰⁸ PR, p.232.

³⁰⁹ PR, p.232.

³¹⁰ Mk. 13:15.

³¹¹ There are many examples of this in Lewis' children's books. Uncle Andrew, the pseudo-magician, hears the speech of the Talking Beasts of Narnia as a cacophony of unintelligible noise, ironically because of his rationalistic prejudices (*The Magician's Nephew*). Only Lucy, of the four Pevensie children, can initially see Aslan (a Christ figure) in *Prince Caspian*; the others are only able to do so as their faith increases. The dwarves of *The Last Battle*, who could be described as religious sceptics, have so hardened their minds that they are unable to perceive heaven. Another example is found in Lewis' meditation on the afterlife - *The Great Divorce*. The liberal bishop has committed “sins of the intellect”, which render him incapable of distinguishing between religious jargon and realities which theological language can only hint at.

³¹² OSP, p.138.

Weston and his companion Devine fail to see Oyarsa completely. When the angel speaks, Devine conjectures that the Malacandrians have a loudspeaker, whilst Weston assumes the voice is the result of a witch-doctor's ventriloquism.³¹³ The unfallen Malacandrians are aware of and relate freely to the 'eldils' or angels. Ransom, who has some faith, can dimly perceive them, but Weston and Devine have shut themselves off from the supernatural. Weston and the N.I.C.E. are products of:

"...a cold scientific intellect topped by dark superstition, helpless against the revenge of emotional depths ignored."³¹⁴

The contrast between the opposing positions is further established artistically within *That Hideous Strength*. The N.I.C.E. represents blight and perversion of the natural, which is suggested by the names of the major players within its inner circle - Wither, Frost and Feverstone. A twisted and distorted sexuality is represented by the masculine, sadistic, cigar-chewing head of the secret police (the "Fairy"), and the effeminate, treble-voiced Filostrato. The employees of the N.I.C.E. exist in an atmosphere of uncertainty, secrecy, and undefined threats.³¹⁵

By contrast, the homely company of St. Anne's are an open, ordered community of merriment and good fellowship. Gunnar Urang draws attention to the two gardens described in the book. The one at St. Anne's, in its naturalness, reminds Jane of the garden in *Peter Rabbit*. The "Ornamental Pleasure Grounds" of the N.I.C.E. have the appearance of a municipal cemetery.³¹⁶ There are also, perhaps, echoes of Zamyatin's theme of the Country and the City, although not so neatly constructed. The opponents of the N.I.C.E. are characterised by a pervading mysteriousness which the 'good atheist' MacPhee is unable to penetrate.³¹⁷ The N.I.C.E. represents the regimented artificiality of totalitarianism, and its brutish disregard for the aesthetic. This is demonstrated by the destruction of Bragdon Wood, the village of Cure Hardy, and the pastoral way of life, for the utilitarian ends of the Institute.

Ultimately Lewis is concerned to lay bare the sheer futility of the materialist worldview, which he saw as bereft of value, or of purpose other than 'survival' - itself meaningless in the light of Entropy. Stapledon hints at this cosmic futility in *Last and First Men*, when the remote descendants of humanity question the forlorn battle of Life against the approaching frost - "Our labour will at best sow for death an ampler harvest".³¹⁸ Haldane rather incoherently suggests that even if the world is running

³¹³ OSP, pp.146-47.

³¹⁴ OSP, p.99. The element of devil worship portrayed in *That Hideous Strength* appears to draw on Lewis' earlier ideas in *The Screwtape Letters*. A senior devil writes to his junior that the perfect work of Hell would be the "Materialist Magician". Screwtape tells his nephew: "I have great hopes that we shall learn in due time how to emotionalise and mythologise their science to such an extent that what is, in effect, a belief in us (though not under that name) will creep in while the human mind remains closed to belief in the Enemy. The "Life Force", the worship of sex, and some aspects of Psychoanalysis, may here prove useful."

³¹⁵ Urang, Gunnar; Op. Cit., pp.24-25.

³¹⁶ Ibid., pp.24-25.

³¹⁷ This character appears in another guise in Lewis' *Till We Have Faces*, as The Fox; a personification of rationalism whose philosophy is in itself insufficient to unlock the mysteries of reality.

³¹⁸ Stapledon, O.; *Last and First Men*, p.352.

down, and is not governed by good and evil: "...it is up to us to inject some goodness into it."³¹⁹ Lewis, meanwhile, asserts that:

It is the creative evolutionist, the Bergsonian, or Shavian, or the Communist (those systems which place the whole meaning of existence in biological or social evolution on our planet) who should tremble when they look up at the night sky. For they are really committed to a sinking ship...For entropy is the real cosmic wave, and evolution only a momentary tellurian ripple within it.³²⁰

FOR C.S. Lewis, therefore, the utopian ideals of the champions of modern science held little attraction. The majority of people in most modern countries respected science and desired to be planned, he believed, and he therefore suspected that an invitation to Hell would appear under the guise of scientific planning.³²¹ It is often suggested that the rationalistic influence of Wells and others weakened the defences against totalitarianism and Hitler³²² - Orwell once said that Wells was "too sane to understand the modern world of militarism and organised evil".³²³ It is interesting, therefore, that Wells himself appears in the trilogy. He is caricatured as Horace Jules, the puppet director of the N.I.C.E.; a conceited fool, blind to the dangers of the science he promotes. A similar character on the 'other' side is MacPhee, who for Lewis represented the tradition of 19th century objective materialism.³²⁴ He can perhaps be compared to the 'genteel scientists' inhabiting the New Age of Reason described by Wells in *Men Like Gods*.³²⁵ The inherited morality of that tradition would prevent them from "touching dirt", Lewis believed, yet once the notion of objective value had been discarded, only wickedness could result:

What should they find incredible, since they no longer believed in a rational universe? What should they regard as too obscene, since they held that all morality was a mere by-product of the physical and economic situations of men?³²⁶

For Lewis, Scientific Materialism represented slavery, perversion, and the destruction of anything resembling worthwhile meaning. To conquer human nature by science represented freedom from moral values - the conditioners would no longer be subject to, but would *produce* conscience.³²⁷ As far as Lewis was concerned, this represented emancipation into a void - human beings were either rational spirits obliged to obey absolute moral values, or they were mere nature (and therefore not human at all). Lewis concludes in *The Abolition of Man*:

A dogmatic belief in objective value is necessary to the very idea of a rule which is not tyranny, or an obedience which is not slavery.³²⁸

³¹⁹ Haldane, J.B.S.; *Everything has a History*, p.266.

³²⁰ GID, p.34.

³²¹ OTOW, p.102.

³²² Parrinder, P.; *Op. Cit.*, p.2.

³²³ Quoted in: Parrinder P.; *Op. Cit.*, p.2.

³²⁴ THS, p.203.

³²⁵ Parrinder, P.; *Op. Cit.*, p.7.

³²⁶ THS, p.203.

³²⁷ AOM, pp.38-40.

³²⁸ AOM, p.44.

Conclusions

IN summarising the present study, we should return to the observation of R.J. Reilly which we noted in the Introduction - that is, that the work of the 'Oxford Romantics' can be seen as a literary and religious construct. The purpose of this construct, writes Reilly, is to defend romanticism by showing it to be religious, and to defend religion by traditionally romantic means.³²⁹ The purpose of this thesis has been to investigate the nature of C.S. Lewis' defence of Christian orthodoxy, in the context of the lay discovery of orthodoxy in the mid-twentieth century. As such, Lewis can be seen as the foremost exponent of this literary and religious enterprise. I have attempted to illuminate Lewis' ideas by an investigation of some of the sources and influences which shaped his ideas, to outline the main tenets of his 'orthodoxy', and to demonstrate areas where I believe he had something distinctive to contribute. I shall now attempt to summarise this discussion, and suggest areas for further study.

LEWIS was an anomalous figure in many ways, even among the movement of lay Orthodox which we have been considering. Alone among the major figures of the Inklings, or the wider group which included Dorothy Sayers and T.S. Eliot, he was the only character with no real Catholic sympathies. From a Protestant point of view, however, he is a curious champion of orthodoxy, also. He seems to have been able to make little of Karl Barth (this may be due to Barth's initial lack of influence in Britain, as opposed to the continent), and he wholeheartedly embraced the romantic principles which the Protestant Barth and the Anglo-Catholic Eliot had rejected as part of the problem for modern Christian orthodoxy.

As we have seen, Lewis often seems to see himself as primarily presenting a timeless deposit of Christian faith to a public he believed were being misled by the 'professional' Christians - the theologians and the clergy:

When I began, Christianity came before the great mass of my unbelieving fellow countrymen either in the highly emotional form offered by revivalists or in the unintelligible language of highly cultured clergymen. Most men were reached by neither. My task was therefore simply that of a *translator* - one turning Christian doctrine, or what he believed to be such, into the vernacular, into language that unscholarly people could attend to and could understand.³³⁰

However, it is impossible to divorce Lewis from the 'history of ideas' which had preceded him and in which he wrote. His orthodoxy was of a very distinctive kind, and very definitely shaped by the context of philosophy and history in which he found himself. Chief among these influences were the intellectual inheritance of the 1900s, and the Modernist and Idealist movements of the twentieth century.

In the pre-World War II period, a form of Idealism held sway in philosophy, represented by Bradley, Bosanquet and Green, among others, which radically rejected Realism. British Idealism was liberal in religion, and in figures such as Russell and

³²⁹ Reilly, R.J.; Op. Cit., p.5.

³³⁰ TAH, p.117.

Eyre, was explicitly anti-Christian. In contrast, orthodoxy of the Chestertonian type was implicitly anti-idealist, and Chesterton himself was explicitly anti-idealist. The thesis of the religious strand of this form of idealism was that the primary spiritual reality was an all-inclusive experience of the Absolute - an Idealism which was essentially one of immanence rather than transcendence. For a Chesterton or a Lewis, Realism must be deeply bound up with Christianity - for otherwise a doctrine such as the Incarnation must be meaningless as traditionally understood.

The appeal of von Hügel lay in his emergence from the Modernist crisis as a protagonist for 'thoroughgoing supernaturalism', as Lewis termed it. The common ground of Modernism in Catholicism and Anglicanism was in biblical criticism, but the entire attempt to bring Catholic belief into closer relation with contemporary philosophy, history and science was, as we have seen, inimical to Lewis. H.D.A. Major, a strategist of Anglican modernism, here expresses the gulf between the new trends in theology and what Lewis and his school believed to be 'real' Christianity:

We believe that there is only one substance of the Godhead and the Manhood, and that our conception of the difference between Deity and Humanity is one of degree. The distinction between Creator and creature, upon which...the older theologians place so much emphasis, seems to us to be a minor distinction.³³¹

SO what was 'real' Christianity to C.S. Lewis? I have tried to show that his Orthodoxy was a complex construct, and rests on several key tenets. The first of these is the affirmation of a real and basic distinction between the Natural and the Supernatural, between Humanity and Deity. Furthermore, there is basic to all human beings the experience of the 'ought' and 'ought not' of morality, and for Lewis, these are intuitions of an absolute Moral Law, and consequently of a Law-giver. Further to this, Lewis follows Otto in making the case for the 'numinous' as a fundamental religious experience. In direct contrast to the 19th century characteristic of analysing religion by taking Christianity as the ideal, Otto reverses the approach, instead concentrating on the Holy or the numinous as the essence of religion - the enticing and fearful, the overwhelming. The numinous experience is common to Hinduism, Buddhism, Monotheism - i.e. to religions of pantheism, monotheism and religions with no specific deity, but interestingly, this 'sense of the beyond' is excluded from modern secularism. This, as I shall show later in my conclusions, has ramifications for my treatment of Lewis and modern utopian literature.

From these two religious 'givens', I would argue that Lewisian orthodoxy demands the assertion of 'the Holy' as an *a priori* category, again following Otto:

We conclude then, that not only the rational but also the non-rational elements of the complex category of 'holiness' are *a priori* elements and each in the same degree. Religion is not in vassalage either to morality or teleology, 'ethos' or 'telos', and does not draw its life from postulates; and its non-rational content has, no less than its rational, its own independent roots in the hidden depths of the spirit itself.³³²

It was from Chesterton that Lewis initially gained his sense of *Heilsgeschichte*, and thus this association of the rational and non-rational elements in the divine is seen for

³³¹ Quoted in Hooper, Walter; *C.S. Lewis: A Companion & Guide*, p.25.

³³² Rudolf Otto; *Op. Cit.*, p.140.

him in the context of the progressive revelation of God to the Jews, and finally in the joining of the parallel rivers of philosophy and mythology in the Person of Christ:

With Otto...I would find the seed of religious experience in the Numinous. In an age like our own such experience does occur but, until religion comes and retrospectively transforms it, it usually appears to the subject to be a special form of aesthetic experience. In ancient times I think experience of the Numinous developed into the Holy only in so far as the Numinous (not in itself at all necessarily moral) came to be connected with the morally good. This happened regularly in Israel, sporadically elsewhere. But even in the higher Paganism, I do not think this process led to anything like *fides*. There is nothing credal in Paganism. In Israel we do get *fides* but this is always connected with certain historical affirmations. Faith is not simply in the numinous Elohim, nor even simply in the holy Jahweh, but in the God "of our fathers", the God who called Abraham and brought Israel out of Egypt. In Christianity this historical element is strongly reaffirmed. The object of faith is at once the *ens entium* of the philosophers, the Awful Mystery of Paganism, the Holy Law given of the moralists, and Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and rose again on the third day.³³³

Essentially, then, Christianity is thus for Lewis not the conclusion of a philosophical debate on the origins of the universe; rather it is a catastrophic historical event following on from a long spiritual preparation of humanity.

As a specifically 'Romantic' theologian, Lewis revives Coleridge's assertion that Reason has two aspects, which includes the imaginative. Coleridge uses Reason (as does Newman) in a sense which includes the intuitive. Imagination is the perception of reality which is connected with the real - i.e. participating as a way of knowing. Lewis describes his experience of reading George MacDonald's *Phantastes* as a defining experience:

I had already been waist deep in Romanticism; and likely enough, at any moment, to flounder into its darker and more evil forms, slithering down the steep descent that leads from the love of strangeness to that of eccentricity and thence to that of perversity. Now *Phantastes*...had about it a sort of cool, morning innocence...What it actually did to me was to convert, even to baptise...my imagination.³³⁴

Lewis was to describe the defining quality of *Phantastes* as 'holiness' - a synthesis, which, as we have seen, represented *transcendent* moral goodness.

It is upon the assertion that imagining is a way of knowing, and therefore that good imagining is as important as good thinking, that Lewis embarks on much of his apologetic enterprise, and why, following Chesterton, he employs fiction as a way of conveying his beliefs. I have tried to demonstrate that Lewis reintroduces the doctrines of Heaven and Hell as not only important Christian truths, but central perspectives to the Christian life. In addition to this, I would argue that he *transcends* much theological debate through the use of imaginative fiction. The objections to a doctrine of Hell which McCord Adams cites, for instance, have the sense of non-questions in the light of an imaginative appreciation of *The Great Divorce*, or of Psyche's encounter with the Court of the Gods in *Till We Have Faces*. Michael Vasey argues that a major cultural reorienting of human Desire has taken place between the medieval period and the present, shifting in focus from God to sexuality, and in the light of this

³³³ TAH, p.108ff.

³³⁴ Quoted in Hooper, Walter; Op. Cit., p.568.

discussion, I believe that Lewis has much to contribute to the debate both from an imaginative perspective and from the perspective of a medieval scholar.

LEWIS' engagement with the literary genre of Utopia, I believe, remains relevant and pertinent to many twentieth century human concerns. Not least among these is the preoccupation in literature with the rational and irrational sides of human nature, as explored in Zamyatin's *We* or Huxley's *Brave New World*. One can feel the sense of tension in much of Ernest Hemingway's writing - in *Death in the Afternoon*, for example. Hemingway concedes at the outset that the bullfight cannot be justified by what he dismissively terms 'Christian morality', and yet he is strangely and eloquently drawn to its gore and beauty, its dark blood, high drama, danger, and death. In *Brave New World*, there seems an irreconcilable gulf between Huxley's ordered, logical, and antiseptic 'utopian' society, and the passions, jealousies, violence, and superstitions of the Reservations - and yet the two seem curiously unfulfilled without the other. Zamyatin, again, through the character of I-330, expresses to the incomplete rationalist D-503 the need to "tremble with fear, with joy, insane rage, cold...to pray to the fire".

Here I would argue that, just as many see in the controversies of the Reformation the echoes of patristic disputes, so Lewis seems to suggest that this tension between the rational and the irrational in modern literature represents the pale secular shadow of a much greater dichotomy. To draw on the earlier discussion of transposition, the twentieth century writers have mistaken the limited notation of human passions and moral intuitions for the greater Realities which they point towards. It is, for Lewis, an echo of the tension in religious experience between the demands of the moral law-giver and the 'dread' and numinous *mysterium tremendum*. The first without the second results in cold, emotionless self-righteousness, the second without the first in madness, obscenity, and barbarity. The reconciliation between the myth-makers and the philosophers is to be found in Christianity.

Other issues raised by Lewis' secular contemporaries include cosmic futility, evolution, and the nature of Value. H.G. Wells raises these concerns extremely skilfully in *The Time Machine*, and Zamyatin ultimately can find no logical solution to the struggle between Energy and Entropy in his dystopia. Lewis was, of course, writing at a time in which the logical outworkings of a denial of absolute value seemed to be coming painfully to fruition in Nazi Germany and in the Soviet Union. Perhaps his achievement in this regard was to highlight the implications of our present scientific understanding of the universe, coupled with a rejection of traditional values and morality. His argument that a belief in absolute value was fundamental to a just and humane society seems more pertinent than ever, in an age of tenuous pragmatism concerning human rights, and of continuing technological evolution, particularly in the field of genetics.

THE attempt to restate orthodox Christian belief is a concern in every age. C.S. Lewis, in summary, represents the foremost exponent of a lay defence of orthodoxy which arose out of particular historical circumstances, and a particular ideological context. His apologetic approach was at once defensive - in the sense of removing misconceptions surrounding the Christian faith, aggressive - in the sense of a combative approach to his opponents and the logical conclusion of their own positions, and constructive - in the sense of his distinctiveness. This

distinctiveness lay in the way in which he synthesised many disparate approaches into a coherent construct, which was at once romantic and rational.

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