THE WORLD VIEW OF C. S. LEWIS IMPLICIT IN HIS RELIGIOUS WRITINGS

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PREFACE

This is a study of the world view of C. S. Lewis as found in his religious writings. The study attempts to accomplish two tasks. The primary objective is to extract from the writings the major themes that constitute a world view and organize them in a systematic fashion. The second task is to in some sense analyze those elements from the perspective of the discipline of current philosophy of religion.

I am especially indebted to Dr. Walter Scott, my major adviser, for his guidance throughout this study. His patience has been remarkable and his diligence in my behalf deeply appreciated. Dr. John Susky, chairman of my advisory committee, has been most helpful in his guidance and faithful in the execution of his duties. I owe to him a debt of thanks. Appreciation is also expressed to the other committee members, Dr. Robert Bumstead and Dr. William Adrian, for their willingness to serve and their helpful suggestions.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

Any serious study of the religious writings of Clive Staples Lewis is confronted with two significant facts. One of them, quite external to the works themselves, is the fact of their enormous popularity and resultant influence upon the reading public. The other fact, resident in the writings, is the distinct similarity of many of the topics Lewis treats and some of the central concerns of modern philosophy of religion.

Concerning Lewis' influence Meilander quotes the statement of Walsh

> . . . that between 1943 (the year of the American publication of The Screwtape Letters) and 1963 (the year of C. S. Lewis' death) Lewis 'had an impact on American religious thinking and indeed on the American religious imagination which has been rarely, if ever, equalled by any other writer.'[1]

The influence of Lewis claimed by Walsh for the 1940's and 1950's evidently has not abated but rather increased in the 1970's. According to a report in a recent news magazine, "Sales of Lewis' works in Britain and the U.S. have increased sixfold since his death."[2] The report goes on to say that he

is "the only author in English whose Christian writings combine intellectual stature with bestseller status."[3]

Trying to account for the popularity of Lewis' writings is an interesting and probably impossible task. One explanation is offered by Walter Hooper, an Episcopal priest who is the literary executor of the Lewis estate. It is Hooper's opinion that Lewis' influence comes from the fact that "the West is moving away from materialism and liberalism and needs 'a coherent, universal faith, something permanent in a world of seeming chaos.'"[4]

There is no certain way of testing Hooper's assessment for truth. But the statement does correctly point up that Lewis was dealing with issues of wide concern and was making conclusions that challenged some current patterns of thought such as the aforementioned materialism and liberalism. It is in the process of reaching his conclusions that the second characteristic of Lewis' writings emerges; that being his dealing with concerns of philosophy of religion. Beyond that there is in the Lewis religious writings a recognizable system of thought that could be termed either a religious world view or a type of philosophy of religion.

In other words, Lewis takes what Burtt considers to be two approaches to the philosophy of religion.[5] He does "philosophical thinking about religion"[6] when he clarifies, evaluates facts and analyzes various religious problems. But he also fashions a system of religious philosophy, a religious Weltanshauung, where there is an interrelationship

between convictions, and beliefs are allied with other beliefs.

Therein lies the problem of this study. What are the particulars of the religious world view embedded in the religious writings of C. S. Lewis? Along with that, what conclusions does he arrive at concerning particular problems in religion? Is the system of religious philosophy that seems to be in his writings consistent throughout? Are there untenable presuppositions in the bedrock of his thought? The study will attempt to provide an integrated and systematic exposition of themes which are prominent in his thought and in analyzing those themes will try to find and test the central conclusions that make up the world view implicit in his religious writings.

It should be kept clearly in mind that Lewis makes no direct claims to being a philosopher of religion. Indeed most of the studies of his religious thought have approached him as a theologian though he repeatedly insisted he was not one or at best was an amateur theologian. He was primarily, by his own intention, a man of religion; a practitioner of faith not just a student of religion. But there was in Lewis a drive to understand and articulate the faith he was practicing, and if Temple is correct that "philosophy seeks knowledge for the sake of understanding, while religion seeks knowledge for the sake of worship,"[7] then Lewis was a worshipper in his private life and a philosopher of religion in his public religious writings. He uses,

skillfully, the philosophical, dialetical method in trying to find insight, meaning, and understanding to what for him was reality. Clearly his writings bear witness to his early training and activity in philosophy and also give evidence that he remained an avid student of philosophy and philosophers throughout his life.[8]

It is, therefore, the intention of this study to concentrate on those claims in Lewis that are obviously philosophical in nature and to analyze the underlying network or system of themes in the religious writings that can properly be classified as a world view.

Justification of the Study

The twofold characteristic of Lewis' writings, (their popularity and their content) already mentioned, constitute two importnat reasons why a study of Lewis' world view should be undertaken. The fact of his enormous influence in the realm of religion creates a definite responsibility for philosophy of religion if that activity is going to have any utility at all. When any system of thought is presented and accepted as having answers to life's problems or even, more modestly, offering signposts along the way, then it is imperative that someone critically examine those claims rather than brushing them off as "too popular." Philosophy claims for its essential function that of criticism and analysis,[9] so philosophy of religion to serve its stated purpose needs to look at the religious claims of C. S. Lewis.

A mention of some of the specific themes of Lewis' writings makes it quite obvious why his Philosophy of Religion should be studied. Many of his concerns parallel the concerns of current philosophers of religion. Lewis, for instance, according to White, was "intensely concerned about the problem of religious language throughout most of his life."[10] His concept of God is the spinal cord of the whole body of his thought about the universe and life. His understanding of man is largely from the perspective of man's relationship to God. In other words, what philosophy of religion talks about Lewis talks about, and he has the added ingredient of involvement described by Tillich.

> Unconcerned detachment in matters of religion (if it is more than a methodological self-restriction) implies an a priori rejection of the religious demand to be ultimately concerned. It denies the object which it is supposed to study objectively.[11]

Lewis was ultimately concerned and deserves a fair hearing of what he was trying to say.

Another reason for considering Lewis' views is related to the sometimes pungent criticisms he has of modern thought and life. Indeed, it may be impossible to fully understand or to test his world view unless there is some comprehension of his complaints against some of the thought patterns in modern life. His objections to modern thought can be conveniently listed in three basic categories. He objects to some of the methods of today's thinkers; he objects, strenuously, to some of the presuppositions found in modern

thought; and predictably, given the first two categories, he objects to many of the conclusions arrived at by the thinkers of this age.

One of his methodological concerns is highlighted by a descriptive term of his own invention that he calls "Bulverism," this practice discounts a man's arguments before showing reasons why. If you accomplish it successfully,

> you must show that a man is wrong before you start explaining why he is wrong. The modern method is to assume without discussion that he is wrong and then distract his attention from this (the only real issue) by busily explaining how he became so silly. . . . Attempt to prove that he is wrong or (worse still) try to find out whether he is wrong or right, and the national dynamism of our age will thrust you to the wall. That is how Bulver became one of the makers of the Twentieth Century.[12]

His pet aversion to modern thinking is probably what he calls "chronological snobbery." It is actually a presupposition expressed by a prevailing attitude defined as "the uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate common to our own age and the assumption that whatever has gone out of date is on that account discredited."[13] Lewis seems especially repulsed by what seems to him to be the smug superiority of this modern age. He more than once insists that our only hope of even partially escaping the enslavement of our own ideological age is to have an intimate knowledge of the past.

> Not that the past has any magic about it, but because we cannot study the future, and yet need something to set against the present, to remind us that the basic assumptions have been

> quite different in different periods and that much which seems certain to the uneducated is merely temporary fashion.[14]

Lewis' objections to modern thought are certainly not limited to questions of method or presuppositions, he is equally disenchanted with many of the conclusions of our day. Some of his specific concerns are the tendency to abandon traditional ethics in an age of technology.

> I agree Technology is per se neutral: but a race devoted to the increase of its own power by technology with complete indifference to ethics does seem to me a cancer in the Universe.[15]

He also is concerned with the destruction of individuality by modern collectivism, the myth of progress in philosophical evolution and its false profession of a scientific basis in biological evolution, and the danger of modern science including man in its deterministic bias.

These (and other) elements of modern criticism in Lewis' thought have created their share of controversy.

Cunningham, without identifying the source, claims Lewis has been accused of advocating "medievalism with a vengeance."[16] Walsh records that after some rereading of Lewis he began to have some doubts about his former admiration of Lewis especially along the lines of Lewis' tendency to ignore the present in favor of the past and also the "backward-looking way of facing the primal questions of God, man, society, and the meaning of the Christian faith."[17] Another critic shrugs off Lewis' attacks on modernity by accusing him of "simply using the Church as an

excuse for his dreary attacks on everything he hasn't bothered to understand."[18]

The difficulty of shrugging off what Lewis had to say about modernity is that other thinkers have also taken note of some of the same weaknesses. The problems of technology, dehumanization of man, pollution and destruction of nature are hardly things that can be easily dismissed. Lewis, in the Abolition of Man and in other criticisms of modern science, psychology, and art forms was one of the first to point out the weaknessess of those areas of progress, so called. Certainly there should be some effort to discern whether what he had to say was the grumble of a disgruntled "old world" man or the perceptive insight of one who was able to surmount the confusion caused by "chronological snobbery."

Previous Work on this Topic

In preparation for this study a search of bibliographical material was undertaken to determine what prior work had been done in this area of interest. The Comprehensive Dissertation Query Service of University Microfilms International in Ann Arbor, Michigan, reports thirty-three dissertation studies on the works of C. S. Lewis. Of the thirty-three, only eight are studies having to do with his religious thought and only two of the eight have direct bearing on this study.

One of the two works is The Image of Man in C. S. Lewis by William Luther White, a dissertation for the Ph.D. degree submitted to the faculty of Northwestern University in 1968 and later published under the same title by Abingdon Press in 1969. While the work is not specifically aimed at Lewis' philosophy of religion, White does deal with some of the concerns of this study such as Lewis' view of the problem of religious language and his belief in the religious nature of man. The work has served as an important secondary source in preparation for this study. The bibliography has been especially helpful.

Another is A Study of the Religious Writings of Clive Staples Lewis and Their Contributions to Selected Problems in Philosophy of Religion. This is a dissertation for the Th.D. degree submitted to the faculty of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1967 by William Graydon Tanner. A copy of the work has been obtained and has served as a reference source and a guide for setting the perimeters for the present study. It is in its aim and conclusions considerably different from this present study.

There have been many other works published on the religious thought of C. S. Lewis that by their nature touch on his philosophy of religion and world view but are not focused primarily on that aspect of his thought.[19]

Proposed Methodology of the Study

The nature of this study is primarily critical from the standpoint that it will be investigating and clarifying ideas and examining the basis of those ideas. The approach will be primarily expository where Lewis' thought is explicated in matters related to his world view. The exposition will investigate his writings in search of explanations of these topics and in that sense systematize what he has to say about such things as his concept of religion, his concept of God, his view of the religious nature of man, and his notion of the nature of religious language.

Limitations

This study will not attempt to label Lewis' views with any particular philosophic "ism," a custom that he objected to. As nearly as possible there will be an effort made to allow Lewis to speak for himself rather than viewing his work from any particular interpretive perspective.

The study will confine itself to a concentration on Lewis' religious works. Lewis was a prolific writer and his interests touched a number of areas. There is a disagreement among students of Lewis as to whether there was an undercurrent of the didactic in everything he wrote. Meilaender refers to the fact that the many genres in which Lewis expressed his ideas has "seduced many into commenting

on Lewis' works in piecemeal fashion."[20] White, on the other hand, believes that to look for a message in Lewis' fictional works is contradictory to Lewis' own view of the nature of literature, though he (White) does see that it "is helpful to consider Lewis' works as a whole."[21] Kreeft's position in this regard is "there is no need to read a 'world and life view' into or out of Lewis' fiction: it stares us in the face in his essays and systematic books."[22]

Since the purpose of this study is expressly his world view in the light of philosophy of religion and since the elements of that world view are definitely stated in his religious works, the study will concentrate on those works rather than the works that may or may not contain these elements. Secondary to the religious works are some of Lewis' works on literary criticism which give an insight into what he considered to be the mind set of medieval thought and, therefore, influences his view of the thought patterns of this modern day.[23]

The study will make no attempt to give even a cursory biographical summary of Lewis since many existing works abound with biographical material. The only exceptions may be isolated biographical references necessary to the commentary on some aspect of his thought.

Approach

Sire suggests that a well rounded world view contains answers to five basic questions.

> (1) What is prime reality--the really real? . . . (2) Who is man? . . . (3) What happens to man at death? . . . (4) What is the basis of morality? . . . (5) What is the meaning of human history?[24]

This study will not specifically look at each of those questions in relation to Lewis' world view but they are certainly reflective of concerns that he speaks to.

Before looking at answers to the questions, it is necessary to understand what kind of language Lewis uses and what he means when he uses particular words. Therefore Chapter II concentrates on a study of his use of religious language as well as explaining his use of the words "religion" and "reality" which are key words in his thought.

Chapter III is a study of his interpretation of God. If there is any central theme to Lewis' world view it is certainly his concept and understanding of God. It is in that interpretation that the answer is found to the first questions, "what is prime reality--the really real?".

The second most important theme in Lewis' religious writings is man. Therefore Chapter IV is an explication of his view of man and man's relationship to God, the Ultimate Reality. Chapters III and IV, by nature of their subject, include his answers to the questions of man's afterlife and the basis of morality.

Chapter V is a discussion of Lewis' view and interpretation of Christianity. The Christian interpretation of the world and of life has a profound influence in his thinking and becomes the framework he uses to pull the various

elements of his world view into an integrated whole. It is therefore impossible to clearly understand Lewis' world view without some basic understanding of how he interprets Christianity.

The final chapter is a summary and conclusion concentrating on an analytical summary of Lewis' world view as well as his use of philosophical methodology in his religious writings.

ENDNOTES

[1]Gilbert Carl Meilander, Jr., "The Social and Ethical Thought of C. S. Lewis" (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1976), p. 1.

[2]"C. S. Lewis Goes Marching On," Time, Vol. 110, December 5, 1977, p. 92.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Edwin A. Burtt, Types of Religious Philosophy (New York & London: Harper & Brother's Publishers, 1939).

[6]John Hick, Philosophy of Religion (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice - Hall, Inc., 1973, 1963), p. 1.

[7]William Temple, Nature, Man, and God (London: Macmillan, 1934), p. 30.

[8]Lewis' first teaching assignment was in philosophy and lasted only one year. Interestingly upon the change from teaching philosophy at University College to teaching English at Magdalen College, Lewis wrote to his father, "I have come to think that if I had the mind, I have not the brain and nerves for a life of pure philosophy. A continual search among the abstract roots of things, a perpetual questioning of all the things that plain men take for granted, a chewing the cud for fifty years over inevitable ignorance and a constant frontier watch on the little tidy lighted conventional world of science and daily life--is this the best life for temperaments such as ours? Is it the way of health or even of sanity?" from Roger Green and Walter Hooper, C. S. Lewis: A Biography (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), p. 83.

Concerning the continuing influence of philosophers on Lewis, Carnell sees Lewis "to be Thomist, Aristotelian, Platonist, or Neo-Kantian (though rarely the latter). MacDonald and Williams were most important, /after Lewis' conversion/ but Aquinas, Augustine, Traherne, and Coventry Patmore were influential too." Corbin Scott Carnell, Bright Shadow of Reality (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974), p. 71.

Kreeft believed the major influences to be "Plato, Augustine, Kant, English mystics such as Law and Temple, George MacDonald, William Morris, G. D. Chesterton, Owen Barfield, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Charles Williams (these last three close personal friends)." Kreeft, op. cit., p. 4.

White gives a similar list adding individual works by Rudolf Otto (Das Heilige), Anders Nygren (Agape and Eros), Adrian Bevan (Symbolism and Belief) and the works of William Butler Yeats. White, op. cit., p. 32.

[9]Basil Mitchell, The Philosophy of Religion, a part of a series, Oxford Readings in Philosophy edited by G. J. Warnock (London: Oxford University Press, Ely House, 1971), p. 1.

[10]William Luther White, The Image of Man in C. S. Lewis (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969), p. 13

[11]Trueblood, op. cit., p. 21.

[12]C. S. Lewis, God in the Dock (Essays on Theology and Ethics), ed., Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), p. 273.

[13]C. S. Lewis, Surprised by Joy (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1955), p. 207.

[14]C. W. Lewis, The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1958), pp. 50-51.

[15]Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper, C. S. Lewis: A Biography (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), p. 173.

[16]Richard B. Cunningham, C. S. Lewis: Defender of the Faith (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967), p. 133.

[17]White, op. cit., from the Foreword by Chad Walsh, p. 7.

[18]Cunningham, op. cit., p. 14.

[19]Those kinds of works that have also been especially helpful to the beginning of this study are listed below:

Corbin Scott, Bright Shadow of Reality (a published dissertation), (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1974).

Richard B. Cunningham, C. S. Lewis: Defender of the Faith (a published dissertation), (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967).

Jocelyn Gibb (ed.), Light on C. S. Lewis (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, Inc., 1965).

Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper, C. S. Lewis: A Biography (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974).

Peter Kreeft, C. S. Lewis in Contemporary Writers in Christian Perspective (series), edited by Roderick Jellema. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1969).

Clyde A. Kilby, The Christian World of C. S. Lewis (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1969).

Chad Walsh, C. S. Lewis, Apostle to the Skeptics (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949).

[20]Meilaender, op. cit., p. 3.

[21]White, op. cit., p. 74.

[22]Kreeft, op. cit., p. 17.

[23]See Bibliography for complete listing of Lewis' religious works.

[24]James W. Sire, The Universe Next Door: A Basic World View Catalog (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity, 1976), p. 18.

CHAPTER II

RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE, RELIGION, AND REALITY

One of the current issues in philosophy of religion is the problem of the use of religious language. Basically the problem is a matter of interpretation and verifiability. That is, when common terms are used in talking about religion and God do they change meaning, and when the assertion of fact is made by religion(s) how will these facts be verified or proven by empirical experience. Is there any verification possible for religious assertions?[1] It is not the purpose of this study to get into the details of the religious language problem but the debate does underline one very important guideline: that is, you must have some understanding of how a man is using language, or at least what he thinks about language, when he talks about religion to understand what he is trying to say. We therefore turn to a consideration of C. S. Lewis' view of religious language.

Lewis was a philologist, language was his life and work. He had no particular interest in limiting language to a technical level where only a few trained specialists could have a monopoly on meaning. His stated purpose was to write his religious view so that the populace could

understand; and that certainly influences how he uses language. "We must, after all, speak the language of man", was one of his defenses in his Rejoinder to Dr. Pittenger.[2] And when men judged what he was saying, Lewis felt it was only fair that they also look at his intended audience.

Besides taking the audience into account, it is also important to understand what a man is trying to accomplish when you inspect his religious language. In a discussion of the early Christians' use of man-like images for God Lewis observes,

> The difficulty here is that they were not writing as philosophers to satisfy speculative curiosity about the nature of God and of the universe. They believed in God; and once a man does that, philosophical definiteness can never be the first necessity. A drowning man does not analyse the rope that is flung him.[3]

There is no more important key to the analytical understanding of Lewis' religious writings and his use of religious language, than the middle sentence of that quote. It places him in the age old discussion of which comes first faith or reason, theology or philosophy. Lewis' position (along with Augustine) is clearly belief (faith) comes first, reason tags along to aid and encourage belief. That is not to say that reason is unimportant but it will influence how Lewis uses reason. There are several religious issues upon which Lewis applies the use of reason on a secondary level, he leaves the presuppositions untouched as if they were an indisputable given. That kind of practice, whether excusable or not, is understandable if a thinker is viewing

philosophical definiteness as something other than a "first necessity."

As far as imagery being present in religious language is concerned, it is readily admitted. The more central point is: does that imagery reduce in any way the truth or factual content?; is there language that would serve the purpose better? It is Lewis' position that all language has this element of imagery in it.

> All language, except about objects of sense, is metaphorical through and through. To call God a 'Force' (that is, something like a wind or a dynamo) is as metaphorical as to call Him a Father or a King. On such matters we can make our language more polysyllabic and duller: we cannot make it more literal. The difficulty is not peculiar to theologians. Scientists, poets, psychoanalysts, and metaphysicians are all in the same boat.[4]

The imagery of religious language is to be recognized but not considered to be inferior in conveying truth. The vulgarity (crudeness) of some of the images may even be an advantage;

> for there is much sense in the reasons advanced by Aquinas (following Pseudo-Dionysius) for preferring to present divine truth /under the figures of vile bodies!/ (Summa Theologica, Qu. I, Art. 9 ad tertium.)[5]

Lewis thereby identifies himself with the doctrine of "analogical prediction" as found in the works of Aquinas.[6]

The language of religion (which may be different from theological language) is not a specialized language. "In my opinion, there is no specifically religious language."[7] To understand that statement we must understand that human language can be divided into three classifications, Ordinary,

Scientific and Poetic.

> Scientific and Poetic language are two different artificial perfections of Ordinary: artificial, because they depend on skills: different, because they improve Ordinary in two different directions.[8]

Poetic language is often limited, in the minds of man, to the expression of emotion and the arousal of emotion in others. But just because it does that does not mean that it should be limited to that. "Poetic language often expresses emotion not for its own sake but in order to inform us about the object which aroused the emotion."[9] It often has, in its own way, some legitimate information to bear. Those who would limit Poetic language to the expression of emotion will suffer the loss of that information. Poetic language has the ability furthermore of conveying something about reality that may be outside our experience.

Poetic language does suffer from two disabilities in comparison with Scientific.

> (1) It is verifiable or falsifiable only to a limited degree and with a certain fringe of vagueness. . . . (2) Such information as Poetic language has to give can be received only if you are ready to meet it half-way.[10]

The first drawback is offset, somewhat, by the fact that scientific statements are limited to giving us "only 'the common measurable features'" of anything when actually concrete reality has a "teeming complexity" about it that Poetic language recognizes. The second disability can be offset by acknowledging that in most realms of human testimony you must trust the person first before you can find

out whether he is trustworthy or not. So it must be with the claims of religion.

The language used to express religious beliefs and experiences is "something that ranges between the Ordinary and the Poetical."[11] And it is rightly so because other types of language are limited in expressing the fullness of religious reality. An example of that is the expression that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

> Now of course the statement cannot mean that He stands to God in the very same physical and temporal relation which exists between offspring and male parent in the animal world. It is then a poetical statement. And such expression must here be necessary because the reality He spoke of is outside our experience.[12]

Poetic language also is useful in expressing the richness that is in the nature of religious experience. It is in the richness of this experience that believers feel that they have a kind of verification or falsification but it is impossible to communicate those experiences in something other than Poetic language. To conclude that such language is never expressive of anything but emotions, is to miss the point that in every other part of life emotional reaction is a reaction to some thing. Observation will indicate

> all our joys and sorrows, religious, aesthetic, or natural, . . . are <u>about</u> something. They are a by-product of the (logically) prior act of <u>attending to</u> or <u>looking towards</u> something! We are not really concerned with the emotions: the emotions <u>are</u> our concern about something else.[13]

So then,

> the very essence of our life as conscious beings, all day and every day, consists of something which

> cannot be communicated except by hints, similes, metaphors, and the use of those emotions (themselves not very important) which are pointers to it.[14]

If we allow ourselves this latitude of poetic expression and understanding in our daily living there is no reason that we should not extend the same consideration to the language of religious belief and experience.

Lewis makes an excellent point about emotions always being a reaction to some thing. He uses the striking illustration of how he would have an emotional reaction if he should receive word that Russian troops had landed on the coast of England. His point is well taken but he also somewhat misses the point of the verification/falsification debate. That debate has never denied (to my knowledge) that religious language is connected to some kind of claims of facts, the question has been what kind of claims?; objective, empirically verifiable claims?; or claims that are rooted only in the history of human numinous feelings and religious reports? To use Lewis' own example, the emotional reaction in relation to a Russian invasion would be present regardless of the truth of the report if the person receiving the report believed it. Only upon receiving some kind of empirical evidence would the person know whether his reaction was related to objective fact. This is the question of verification: are there empirically <u>provable</u> facts behind the claims of religious experience and the use of religious language?

Lewis, appears to make a modest claim for religious language.

> I have not tried to prove that the religious sayings are true, only that they are significant: if you meet them with a certain good will, a certain readiness to find meaning. For if they should happen to contain information about real things, you will not get it on other terms.[15]

But in another context he is bold to claim more than significance for religious statements, there is also meaning and truth. To understand that meaning one must start by realizing that the critics of religious statement attack them at the point of their natural content. That is, the terms used by religious language are the terms used by natural language.

> If we have really been visited by a revelation from beyond Nature, is it not very strange that an Apocalypse can furnish heaven with nothing more than selections from terestrial experience (crowns, thrones, and music), that devotion can find no language but that of human lovers, and that the rite whereby Christians enact a mystical union should turn out to be only the old familiar act of eating and drinking?[16]

The problem is not limited to religious language since the lower and higher levels of the natural life seem to contain the same problem (love and lust end in the same physical act). The critics do have a point, "religious language and imagery, and probably religious emotion too, contains nothing that has not been borrowed from Nature."[17] The implication, from the critics' standpoint, is that there really is nothing there then except the natural content with some emotion added, in other words no real meaning.

> The key to refuting the critic
>
> is to show tha/ t/ the same prima facie case is equally plausible in some instance where we all know (not by faith or by logic, but empirically) that it is in fact false. Can we find an instance of higher and lower where the higher is within almost everyone's experience?[18]

That instance is at hand in the fact that all of us experience similar sensations for different emotions. For Lewis the sensation was a flutter in the diaphram. It was present during moving aesthetic experiences but it was also present when he received very bad news. It was the same sensation for two very different emotions.

> And I likewise love this internal flutter in one context and call it pleasure and hate it in another and call it misery. It is not a mere sign of joy and anguish: it becomes what it signifies.[19]

The point is the "emotional life /is/ 'higher' than the life of our sensations--not, of course, morally higher, but higher, more varied, more subtle."[20] The tendency to go wrong is in deciding that there is a one to one correspondence between the higher level and the lower one. If we are to descend from the higher to the lower then the lower form would have to have some flexibility.

> The transposition of the richer into the poorer must, so to speak, be algebraical, not arithmetical. If you are to translate from a language which has a large vocabulary into a language that has a small vocabulary, then you must be allowed to use several words in more than one sense.[21]

If on the other hand you approached the higher level from the lower it would appear that there was nothing different there at all.

The application, then, for religious language is that when it is expressed in natural terms those terms will have meanings other than normal values; but only those who have experienced something on the spiritual level will be able to understand that. And we have come full circle, back to the point that first of all something must be accepted (believed) and only then does it give itself to understanding. On the other hand the sceptic or the naturalist is limited to seeing only facts and no meaning.

> He is therefore, as regards the matter in hand, in the position of an animal. You will have noticed that most dogs cannot understand pointing. You point to a bit of food on the floor: the dog, instead of looking at the floor, sniffs your finger. A finger is a finger to him, and that is all. His world is all fact and no meaning. And in a period when factual realism is dominant we shall find people deliberately inducing upon themselves this doglike mind. . . . As long as this deliberate refusal to understand things from above, even where such understanding is possible, continues, it is idle to talk of any final victory over materialism. The critique of every experience from below, the voluntary ignoring of meaning and concentration on fact, will always have the same plausibility. There will always be evidence, and every month fresh evidence, to show that religion is only psychological, justice only self-protection, politics only economics, love only lust, and thought itself only cerebral biochemistry.[22]

The important thing for Lewis is that communication must be made. He recognizes that the terms for religious communication are borrowed from nature and have a certain inadequacy and impreciseness. But despite those drawbacks he accepts at face value the claims made by religious experience and communicates from that perspective. There is

a sense in which Lewis' approach is a kind of honest "going to the thing itself" and from what he finds there he explains the meaning as he understands it in the best fashion his considerable ability will allow. Religious language for him was primarily an effective tool for the communication of significant truth and eternal meaning, not just an object of analytical dissection. By his insistence on first accepting the claims before you can know the truth behind them, he is claiming an existential element for religious truth, he may be also implying that religion is somewhat esoteric in nature.

Religious language is emotional, but the emotional content does not rule out reality content, it rather indicates that the meaning is deeply important and the content is fuller and richer than ordinary language can convey. A less emotional language would be inadequate for the expression of religious meaning. Whether Lewis is right or wrong in his understanding of religious language, his understanding must be kept in mind for any study of his world view.

Just as religious language has a reality content beyond its borrowed natural images so does religion have a reality content beyond its practices and facts that is best communicated by myth. The human animal is constantly working with a dichotomous knowing apparatus.

> Human intellect is incurably abstract. . . . Yet the only realities we experience are concrete--this pain, this pleasure, this dog, this man. While we are loving the man, bearing the pain, enjoying the pleasure, we are not intellectually apprehending Pleasure, Pain or Personality.[23]

Myth is a partial bridge over that considerable chasm. "In the enjoyment of a great myth we come nearest to experiencing as a concrete what can otherwise be understood only as an abstraction."[24] In the use of myth it is possible to taste without knowing. If meaning is translated out of the myth then the myth is no longer a myth but an allegory.

> The moment we state this principle, /any universal principle that is found in myths/ we are admittedly back in the world of abstraction. It is only while receiving the myth as a story that you experience the principle concretely.[25]

By the use of myth a person comes in contact with, or experiences, reality in a way that is superior to the more basic perception of truth. "What flows into you from the myth is not truth but reality (truth is always about something, but reality is that about which truth is)."[26] The use of myth, then, in religion is to produce a direct comprehension of reality, and myth becomes "the isthmus which connects the peninsular world of thought with that vast continent we really belong to."[27]

By his position on religious language and myth Lewis seems to be saying that religious experience is a reality that is beyond the ability of exact verbal communication. His interest is to recognize the reality and not to limit it by imposing restrictions upon the expressions of that reality.

Religion

When Lewis speaks of religion he recognizes the possibility of at least two different meanings. There is the meaning of being religious.

> To be religious is to have one's attention fixed on God and on one's neighbour in relation to God. Therefore, almost by definition, a religious man, or a man when he is being religious, is not thinking about religion; he hasn't time.[28]

There is therefore an existential aspect to being religious, that is, a sense of commitment and application of the attention to God and God's will in everyday life. Only the spectator on the outside would view that commitment as "religion."

On the other hand the outside view of being religious is appropriately called "religion" and is unfortunately attractive to a significant number of people. It is unfortunate because they tend to make it one department of their lives and never reach the stage of really being religious.

> Religion, nevertheless, appears to exist as a department, and, in some ages, to thrive as such. It thrives partly because there exists in many people a 'love of religious observances,' which I think Simone Weil is quite right in regarding as a merely natural taste.[29]

It was Lewis' belief that if anyone compartmentalized their "religion" off from their real life in this way, their religious life was actually the irreligious part of their life.

At times Lewis is especially impatient with this manifestation of "religion."

> 'Religion' as it is called--the vague slush of humanitarian idealism, Emersonian Pantheism, democratic politics and material progressiveness, with a few Christian names and formulae added to taste like pepper and salt--is almost the great enemy.[30]

In other contexts he recognizes that the word "religion," though applied by the outside observer, has a legitimate use as a term when referring to the practitioners of the great religious systems throughout the world.

In the developed religions of the world, there are three strands or elements. 1) There is the experience of the Numinous; 2) there is the acknowledgement of some kind of morality; 3) and there is the stage where "the Numinous Power of which they feel awe is made the guardian of the morality to which they feel obligation."[31] Christianity has a fourth strand (a historical event) that will be discussed later in this study.

The existence of the world religions and the elements stated above pose a problem, especially a problem for the pessimist. It is a problem related to the origin of the religions. "If the universe is so bad, or even half so bad, how on earth did human beings ever come to attribute it to the activity of a wise and good Creator?"[32] Lewis continues to claim that man has always been impressed with a sense of hostile immensity in the universe and concludes,

> at all times, then, an inference from the course of events in this world to the goodness and

> wisdom of the Creator would have been equally preposterous; and it was never made. Religion has a different origin.[33]

His own inference is that the origin is from reality outside of man's mind and emotion.

Reality

"Reality" is a term that Lewis uses in many contexts and it is therefore necessary to attempt some understanding of what he means by the term. Any definition will of necessity be in the nature of an approximation since he uses the term rather freely and in different ways.

The major emphasis in Lewis' concept of reality is that there is objective existence outside of and in spite of man's experience of things. There is something "real" out there beyond man's mind. In a complaint against authors of theological works who discuss positions from the perspective of whether those positions relate to contemporary thought or have bearing on social problems Lewis identifies their fault as: they "never squarely ask what grounds we have for supposing them to be true accounts of any objective reality." He concludes by asking, "Have we no Other to reckon with?"[34]

Reality because of its otherness, has certain characteristics. "Besides being complicated, reality, in my experience, is usually odd. It is not neat, not obvious, not what you expect."[35] "Reality never repeats. The exact same thing is never taken away and given back."[36] Despite

its oddness, despite the fact that reality is always something a little different from what we expected, it does have a unity or consistency about it even when we allow the idea of the unusual interruption of reality called miracles.

> The rightful demand that all reality should be consistent and systematic does not therefore exclude miracles: but it has a very valuable contribution to make to our conception of them. It reminds us that miracles, if they occur, must like all events, be revelations of the total harmony of all that exists. Nothing arbitrary, nothing simply 'stuck on' and left unreconciled with the texture of the total reality, can be admitted. By definition, miracles must of course interrupt the usual course of Nature: but if they are real they must, in the very act of so doing, assert all the more the unity and self-consistency of total reality at some deeper level.[37]

Man's ability to comprehend total reality is severely limited by his being locked into a stream of consciousness.

> One never meets just Cancer, or War, or Unhappiness (or Happiness). One only meets each hour or moment that comes. All manner of ups and downs. . . . One never gets the total impact of what we call 'the thing itself.' But we call it wrongly. The thing itself is simply all these ups and downs: the rest is a name or an idea.[38]

Indeed it is this consciousness that is, under some conditions, the awful blossom of reality itself.

> Reality, looked at steadily, is unbearable. And how or why did such a reality blossom (or fester) here and there into the terrible phenomenon called consciousness? Why did it produce things like us who can see it and, seeing it, recoil in loathing? Who (stranger still) want to see it and take pains to find it out, even when no need compels them and even though the sight of it makes an incurable ulcer in their hearts?[39]

Reality is, then, different from our consciousness of it and our mental constructs may even mislead us. Nevertheless there is a drive in man to know reality.

There is a two-fold aspect to reality. There is a material reality which man participates in and calls nature but there is also

> a New Nature, a Nature beyond Nature, a systematic and diversified reality which is 'supernatural' in relation to the world of our five present senses but 'natural' from its own point of view.[40]

Both aspects of reality must be taken into account if we are going to know the real and we must also recognize the limitations of our knowing apparatus and what approaches to take.

> As regards material reality, we are now being forced to the conclusion that we know nothing about it save its mathematics. The tangible beach and pebbles of our first calculators, the imaginable atoms of Democritus, the plain man's picture of space, turn out to be shadow: numbers are the substance of our knowledge, the sole liaison between mind and things. What nature is in herself evades us; what seem to naive perception to be the evident things about her, turn out to be the most phantasmal. It is something the same with out knowledge of spiritual reality. What God is in Himself, how He is to be conceived by philosophers, retreats continually from our knowledge. The elaborate world-pictures which accompany religion and which look each so solid while they last, turn out to be only shadows. It is religion itself--prayer and sacrament and repentance and adoration--which is here in the long run, our sole avenue to the real.[41]

For Lewis then, the practice of religion, what he calls in another place being religious, is the approach to the real. There is, once again, an existential note in the song that he sings. It is little wonder that his world view is a religious world view given the fact that he sees that as the genuine approach to the real. And while the practice of seeking God is especially identified as the

approach to the spiritual real, reality for Lewis is one. It has two aspects, spiritual and material, but those aspects have a common source and a common sustainer. Lewis is well aware that there are those who see reality different than does he. Some see only the natural side.

> The difference between the two views might be expressed by saying that Naturalism gives us a democratic, Supernaturalism a monarchial, picture of reality. The Naturalist thinks that the privilege of 'being on its own' resides in the total mass of things, just as in a democracy sovereignty resides in the whole mass of the people. The Supernaturalist thinks that this privilege belongs to some things or (more probably) One Thing and not to others--just as, in a real monarchy, the king has sovereignty and the people have not. And just as, in a democracy, all citizens are equal, so for the Naturalist one thing or event is as good as another, in the sense that they are all equally dependent on the total system of things. Indeed each of them is only the way in which the character of that total system exhibits itself at a particular point in space and time. The Supernaturalist, on the other hand, believes that the original or self-existent thing is on a different level from, and more important than, all other things.[42]

Lewis is obviously a Supernaturalist in his picture of reality. We look then at his view of the one original, self-existent thing that he considers to be more important than all other things. It is, of course, God, the Ultimate Reality.

ENDNOTES

[1]For an excellent introductory discussion of these problems see John H. Hick, Philosophy of Religion (second edition) Foundations of Philosophy Series (Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963).

[2]C. S. Lewis, "Rejoinder to Dr. Pittenger," God in the Dock, op. cit., p. 131.

[3]C. S. Lewis, Miracles in The Best of C. S. Lewis (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1969), p. 248.

[4]C. S. Lewis, "Horrid Red Things," God in the Dock, op. cit., pp. 70-71.

[5]C. S. Lewis, "Rejoinder to Dr. Pittenger," p. 182.

[6]An abbreviated explanation of this doctrine may be found in Hick, op. cit., pp. 69-70.

[7]C. S. Lewis, "The Language of Religion," Christian Reflections, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967), p. 129.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid., p. 132.

[10]Ibid., p. 135.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Ibid., p. 137.

[13]Ibid., p. 139.

[14]Ibid., p. 140.

[15]Ibid., p. 141.

[16]C. S. Lewis, "Transposition," The Weight of Glory, op. cit., p. 18.

[17]Ibid., pp. 18-19.

[18]Ibid., p. 19.

[19]Ibid., p. 20.

[20]Ibid., pp. 20-21.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid., pp. 28-29.

[23]C. S. Lewis, "Myth Became Fact," God in the Dock, op. cit., p. 65.

[24]Ibid., p. 66.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid.

[28]C. S. Lewis, "Lilies that Fester," The World's Last Night and Other Essays (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1960), p. 32.

[29]C. S. Lewis, Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1964), p. 30.

[30]Green and Hooper, op. cit., p. 226.

[31]C. S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1962), p. 22.

[32]Ibid., p. 15.

[33]Ibid., p. 16.

[34]Lewis, Letters to Malcolm, p. 104.

[35]C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1952), p. 47.

[36]C. S. Lewis, A Grief Observed (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1961), p. 29.

[37]Lewis, Miracles, p. 259.

[38]Lewis, A Grief Observed, pp. 12-13.

[39]Ibid., p. 32.

[40]Lewis, Miracles, pp. 351-352.

[41]C. S. Lewis, "Dogma and the Universe," God in the Dock, op. cit., p. 46.

[42]Lewis, Miracles, pp. 210-211.

CHAPTER III

GOD: THE ULTIMATE REALITY

The core of Lewis' world view is his Theism. God is the center of all that is. Lewis' main purpose in talking about God is apologetic, but in his apologetic writings there is found his philosophy--a philosophy that sees an all-embracing theism at the core of the universe and is therefore through and through a religious view.

The Existence and Nature of God

Lewis believes God to be the great underlying, cohesive fact of the universe and of existence, and while he does not spend a great amount of time proving the existence of God, his writings reflect that he is aware of, and in sympathy with, some of the classical arguments for God's existence. The statements regarding proofs for the existence of God appear first in the report of his conversion from atheism to theism.

In his early life, Lewis was atheistic. He reported in a letter to a friend that his first literary production, a book of poems, was about to be published and that its main theme was "that nature is wholly diabolical and malevolent and that God, if he exists, is outside of and in opposition

to the cosmic arrangements."[1] It was this apparent cruelty of nature that caused Lewis to question the existence of God and it was that same apparent fact that presented him with a paradox that eventually caused him to call into question his atheism.

> My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust? If the whole show was bad and senseless from A to Z, so to speak, why did I who was supposed to be part of the show, find myself in such violent reaction against it? . . . Of course I could have given up my idea of justice by saying it was nothing but a private idea of my own. But if I did that, then my argument against God collapsed too--for the argument depended on saying that the world was really unjust, not simply that it did not happen to please my private fancies. Thus in the very act of trying to prove that God did not exist--in other words, that the whole of reality was senseless--I found I was forced to assume that one part of reality--namely my idea of justice--was full of sense. Consequently atheism turns out to be too simple. If the whole universe has no meaning, we should never have found out that it has no meaning; just as, if there were no light in the universe and therefore no creatures with eyes, we should never know it was dark. Dark would be without meaning.[2]

The important point of the above quotation is that Lewis comes to the conclusion that ideas have objective existence, that is, existence apart from the mind of man. The absence of something cannot be noticed or even claimed unless the thing itself does exist. The implication is that man cannot originate concepts like "justice" and project them as organizing principles onto the world outside but instead those types of concepts are a reflection of some reality in the universe. Lewis reports that he had

maintained, along with the popular thinking of his day,

> that abstract thought (if obedient to logical rules) gave indisputable truth, that moral judgement was 'valid' and . . . aesthetic experience not merely pleasing but 'valuable.'[3]

The point was that these claims could not be made if thought were a purely subjective event; but he discovered he could not abandon the claims. There was no alternative but to "admit that mind was no late-come epiphenomenon; that the whole universe was, in the last resort, mental, that our logic was participation in a cosmic Logos."[4] This acceptance of an Absolute Mind or simply the Absolute was the first step in a journey that eventually led to a position of Christian Theism.

Lewis sees the laws of nature as being indicative of an intelligence that produces the material upon which the laws function. The laws never produce anything, they are simply the pattern to which every event must conform. Science is limited to the study of the pattern and not the impulse that fills that pattern out or feeds real events into the pattern. "The smallest event . . . leads us back to a mystery which lies outside natural science."[5] Such reasoning does not lead us to know what kind of "impulse" feeds real events into the pattern but "if it is not God, we must at the very least call it Destiny--the immaterial, ultimate, one-way pressure which keeps the universe on the move."[6]

The matter of the description of the "originator of the natural order" is not left open for speculation. The nature of all things establishes the existence of a concrete individual God. The steps in Lewis' reasoning process are:

1. There do exist concrete, individual, determinate things like "flamingoes /sic/, German generals, lovers, sandwiches, pineapples, comets and kangaroos."[7]

2. Their "opaque brute fact of existence,"[8] their concreteness can never be accounted for by the laws of nature. The laws of nature only give us connections and series of connections. "But in order for there to be a real universe the connexions must be given something to connect; a torrent of opaque actualities must be fed into the pattern."[9]

3. The final and conclusive step is in the fact that from experience we know that only like produces like so that

> unless the origin of all other things were itself concrete and individual, nothing else could be so; for there is no conceivable means whereby what is abstract or general could itself produce concrete reality.[10]

Therefore, "God Himself must be concrete and individual in the highest degree."[11]

Lewis points out that bookkeeping continued into infinity could never produce income, nor is it meaningful without real money; likewise, "metre, of itself, could never produce a poem."[12] Similarly, the laws of nature are not creators. They are merely discoverable principles of the regular operation of nature and "the Original Thing must be,

not a principle nor a generality, much less an 'ideal' or a 'value,' but an utterly concrete fact."[13]

These arguments for the existence and determinate character of God are arguments that are recognizably in the framework of the classic proofs for the existence of God. Especially do cosmological and teleological elements exist in the statements. The cosmological arguments rest heavily on a causal foundation and the idea that there cannot be an endless regression of cause and effect; that is, somewhere there had to be an uncaused cause and/or a prime mover. The theleological argument, or argument from design, insists that since there is recognizable order (design) in the universe there has to be intelligence behind it. Order does not arise from disorder without intelligent direction. When Lewis talks about the need of something outside to feed into the laws of nature and when he talks about like begetting like as we look at particular concrete things about us, he is involving himself in these traditional forms of proof. His arguments are susceptible then to the same strengths and weaknesses of those historical claims.[14]

God's Centrality to All Existence

The argument for the existence of God is very closely connected to an understanding of the nature of God for Lewis. Once it is understood <u>what</u> God is there is no problem believing whether God is. <u>What</u> God is can be indicated by saying He is "the opaque centre of all existence,

the thing that simply and entirely is, the fountain of facthood."[15] In other words, God not only exists, He is existence itself.

This position regarding God's centrality to all other existence raises the question of God's ontological relationship with the other existences. Indeed, would it be proper to say "other existences" or is God all in all in a pantheistic sense? Lewis is aware of the problem and is careful to disclaim any tinge of pantheism. He is consciously and decidedly anti-pantheistic. It is his belief that pantheism is the most common error when people think of God and that it is congenial to our minds because it is the oldest and most primitive of religions. "It is the attitude into which the human mind automatically falls when left of itself"[16]. The explanation of God's relationship to other existences must be different from the pantheistic one. The answer to the problem is in God's

> positive perfection which Pantheism has obscured; the perfection of being creative. He is so brimfull of existence that He can give existence away, can cause things to be, and to be really other than Himself.[17]

God is such basic actuality that, not only is our language too vague to express His reality, but also, our physical and psychic energies are "mere 'metaphors' of the real life which is God."[18] This is further explained by the claim that God "is the most concrete thing there is, the most individual, organized and minutely articulated."[19] Our bodies and our personalities are negatives--in the

photographer's sense--"they are what is left of positive being when it is sufficiently diluted to appear in temporal or finite forms."[20] So there is the idea of God's existence being the source out of which our existence arises and yet our existence is a unique and separate expression of His existence so that we (God and I) are two different entities though my existence is dependent upon His. Tillich's phrase when referring to God was "the ground of all being" and this phrase comes to mind upon reading Lewis' explanation. According to Hick's explanation of Tillich's statement, Lewis may be saying something similar.[21] He is certainly saying that God is the Absolute Being in the sense that He exists in His own right, but God is not a universal being, because there are things God is not. There is an actuality in God's existence, there is also an otherness.

The actuality and the otherness of God have a corollary category for our understanding and that category is personness. The word "personness" refers to the qualities of personality including reflection, self-expression, extension, self-consciousness, etc. God is a person and more than a person. He has the qualities of a person, but those qualities are not the limit of his character or existence. Lewis' position on the personness of God is in opposition to what he believed was the popular concept of God, i.e. that a vague, all pervasive indwelling principle of beauty, truth and goodness, "a pool of generalized spirituality to which we can all flow."[22] In contrast to that view, God is

a God "who has purposes and performs particular actions, who does one thing and not another, a concrete, choosing, commanding prohibiting God with a determinate character."[23]

This determinate character of God is two-fold--"He is righteous; not a-moral /sic/; creative, not inert."[24] This two-fold character is summed up in the Hebrew scriptures by the oft repeated statement, "I am the Lord." That statement is God saying, "I, the ultimate Fact, have this determinate character, and not that."[25]

Lewis uses the phrase "beyond personality" to express that God is a person and more, or that there is "that in Him which is Person."[26] The phrase is expressive of what Christians mean when they refer to God as trinity or three Persons in One. There is no claim to understand how this can be or even why it is, but there is an analogy suggesting how we might understand the mystery of three Persons in One. The analogy is that of a three-dimensional cube made up of one-dimensional straight lines and two-dimensional squares. The point is,

> As you advance to more real and more complicated levels, you do not leave behind you the things you found on the simpler levels: you still have them, but combined in new ways--in ways you could not imagine if you knew only the simpler levels.[27]

The Divine side of the analogy is that in God

> you still find personalities; but up there you find them combined in new ways which we, who do not live on that level, cannot imagine. In God's dimension, so to speak, you find a being who is three Persons while remaining one Being, just as a cube is six squares while remaining one cube.[28]

This analogy gives us at least some idea "of something super-personal--something more than a person."

The analogy also is an example of a strength and weakness characteristic of Lewis' religious writings. He has great facility for vigorous and striking expression but that ability can at times camouflage a serious philosophical problem with an ingenious analogy. In the cube/trinity analogy, the possibility of understanding things more fully at a higher level is a viable insight. But the problem surfaces when a simple line, constructed for the purpose of being a component, is compared to a complex entity like personality whose nature is to be exclusive.

It is at the level of Person where God meets man. God is adaptable to man's approach,

> The door in God that opens is the door he knocks at. . . . The Person in Him--He is more than a person--meets those who can welcome or at least face it. He speaks as 'I' when we truly call Him 'Thou.' (How good Buber is!).[29]

Lewis recognizes anthropomorphic content when he talks about man meeting God but is quick (and possibly unique) to point out that anthropomorphic figures of speech are not less literal truth than metaphysical and theological abstractions. Anthropomorphic terms and the more sophisticated abstractions are useful for our understanding of God, but "both are equally concessions /to our weakness/ each singly misleading, and the two together mutually corrective."[30] Thus what we can know of God is only a part and any language we use when we speak of God is in some sense inadequate.

Relation to Creation

A recurring theme in Lewis' writings is the relationship that the creator God, as the all-embracing and underlying fact of the universe, has with His creation. Lewis draws upon his literary background to find figures of speech adequate to express what he believes about this relationship. He is especially fond of such figures of speech as author and artist, because they convey the ideal of an overall purpose in a work headed for completion. God "is related to the universe more as an author is related to a play than as one object in the universe is related to another."[31]

The act or process of creating should not be couched in terms such as "emanating." Those terms come too close to allowing something involuntary. Words such as "uttering" and "inventing" are preferable because they suggest acts.[32] When God creates he creates ex nihilo if that concept is restricted to the meaning of "not out of any pre-existing material."[33] That restriction is imposed because God could not make what God has not thought of, nor could He give "His creatures any powers or beauties which He Himself does not possess."[34] This is a position that implies that the basic reality of the universe is mental and also sees the universe as reflecting some aspects of the personality or character of God. These same implications are resident in the arguments for the existence of God as was mentioned earlier in

this study. It is at the point of God's ability in creating that His work must remain "totally inconceivable" because man never in the ultimate sense makes anything, we only build from preexistent materials.[35]

There is an emphasis on the separateness of God from what God creates even to the extent of suggesting that "perhaps there is an anguish, an alienation, a crucifixion involved in the creative act."[36] But there is also a continuity between God and His creation. Creation is other than God but He is in it as "the ground and root and continual supply of its reality."[37] This "separate yet one" emphasis is a paradox of sorts, or at least an existential tension between creator and creation. But what Lewis has to say about anything else must be understood in the light of this his cardinal metaphysical principle, that is, God is the reality-base of everything and yet things are other than God. God is the fuel our spirit was designed to burn on and at the same time there is a great distance between Him and us--God is the Unimaginably and Insupportably Other. We should be "simultaneously aware of closest proximity and infinite distance."[38]

The continuity between God and His creation has its greatest potential in man. "The ontological continuity is . . . unchangeable, and exists between God and reprobate . . . no less than between God and a saint."[39] However, the highest level of continuity is when man makes the effort, however feeble, to submit his will to God. This is true

because God chooses to express Himself in and through man. The summary of God's self-expression in his creatures is:

> Creation seems to be a delegation through and through. He will do nothing simply of Himself which can be done by creatures. I suppose this is because He is a giver. And He has nothing to give but Himself. And to give Himself is to do His deeds--in a sense, and on varying levels to be Himself--through the things He has made.[40]

God's continuity with non-human creation is God's presence in particular objects. There is a conscious choice to think in those terms rather than the concept of "omnipresence" because that concept allows some people to have the idea of spatial extension, like a gas. Also, the idea of omnipresence prevents people from realizing the truth that God is present in each thing in different modes. In this there is another paradox: "The higher the creature, the more, and also the less, God is in it; the more present by grace, and the less present (by a sort of abdication) as mere power."[41]

This being so, there is worth in having specific holy places, things and days to remind us of God's special presence in things, but if they detract from our understanding that all things are holy, then they do harm. So religion is both a necessity and a perennial danger. Because God is present in all creation, there is value in changing the terms of opposition, "holy" versus "secular," that are often used to designate things for the comparative concepts of "more holy" and "less holy."

Another aspect of the continuity of God and creation is the aspect of direct, specific action God may take in creation. The relationship of Supernature and nature is the relationship of cause and effect. "God created her. God pierces her whenever there is a human mind. God presumably maintains her in existence."[42] Therefore, God has the option to introduce into nature events that are "simply the working out of the general character which He gave to Nature as a whole in creating her."[43] This Divine prerogative of interference, when it is exercised, is what Lewis calls miracles. He does not believe miracles to be something contrary to nature, but something that supercedes nature.

Therefore, miracles are understood to be consistent with other things that we know about the universe.

> Each miracle writes for us in small letters something that God has already written or will write, in letters almost too large to be noticed, across the whole canvas of Nature.[44]

Furthermore, if it is a miracle that reproduces past actions of God, it is a miracle of the Old Creation; in other words, things that have already happened through the process of nature like healing of disease and changing water to wine. When it is a miracle that concentrates on what is still to come, like the resurrection of Christ is indicative or promise of a general resurrection, it is a miracle of the New Creation. But regardless of old or new, each miracle "carries the signature of the God whom we know through conscience and from Nature."[45]

The reason God can be considered consistent in performing miracles that from our perspective may seem like an interruption of or even an interference with nature is because of the inner harmony of His deeper, greater work that is beyond our understanding. "In other words there are rules behind the rules, and a unity which is deeper than uniformity."[46] So though God does do specific, particular things like miracles, there is an underlying unity to all of them. "Divine reality is like a fugue. All His acts are different but they all rhyme or echo to one another."[47] His acts are similar but varying, making a texture of reality that intertwines and yet shows a "multidimensional fertility of God."[48] The miracles of the Gospels then, express not a magic worker but a God who "is outside Nature, not as a foreigner, but as her sovereign."[49]

Lewis deals also with the question of Divine providence: does God arrange events for man? The answer is an emphatic "yes" and furthermore the concept of providence includes more than events affecting man. The Deistic idea of a Mangerial God and His general laws is especially repugnant. "If there is Providence at all, everything is providential and every providence is a special providence."[50] This being the case, instead of the figure of God governing the course of events like a ruler over a state, Divine providential governance is more like a work of art to which everything in the picture makes its contribution. The further explanation of universal or total providence is

> the 'naturalness' of natural events does not consist in being somehow outside God's providence. It consists in their being interlocked with one another inside a common space-time in accordance with the fixed pattern of the 'laws.'[51]

In other words, the apparent consistency of events does not exclude the special direction of those events.

The concept of space-time is very important to what Lewis understands about God's relationship to his creation and especially to what he believes about providence. Indeed he contends that a false idea of providence comes about if it is believed that God and Nature inhabit a common time. God, from God's perspective, does not change things in sequence since sequence is a concept related to time. Rather all things are present to God in the eternal now.

> There is therefore in reality no question of God's at one point in time (the moment of creation) adapting the material history of the universe in advance to free acts which you and I are to perform at a later point in Time. To Him all the physical events and all the human acts are present in an eternal Now. The liberation of finite wills and the creation of the whole material history of the universe (related to the acts of those wills in all the necessary complexity) is to Him a single operation. In this sense God did not create the universe long ago but creates it at this minute--at every minute.[52]

Time to man is different than it is to God. It "is probably (like perspective) the mode of our perception."[53] Or, the whole concept of space-time "is to the universe as the metre is to a poem or the key is to the music."[54] God is the author of the poem and the inventor of the music; he cannot, then, in any sense be limited within the framework of something which He, Himself, invented.

Because God is timeless, His acts are not in time, even His answers to prayer are granted from the foundation of the world. The intercourse between God and man occurs at particular moments for man, but not for God. "If there is . . . an adaptation between the free actions of men in prayer and the course of events, this adaptation is from the beginning inherent in the great single creative act."[55]

God does not occupy space "in the sense that parts of Him are in different parts of space, excluding other objects from them. Yet He is everywhere--totally present at every point of space."[56] The inference is that rather than God occupying a place in space, space occupies a place in God.

The concept of God above space-time (especially time) is quite important for two reasons. First, if God is not above the time-line, He then has a personal history and that is unthinkable because God

> is too completely and utterly real to have one. For . . . to have a history means losing part of your reality (because it had already slipped away into the past) and not yet having another part (because it is still in the future).[57]

Second, God must be above the time-line in order to insure our free acts.

> If God <u>foresaw</u> our acts, it would be very hard to understand how we could be free not to do them. But suppose God is outside and above the Time-line. In that case what we call 'tomorrow' is visible to Him in just the same way as what we call 'today.' All the days are 'now' for Him.[58]

So the days that are sequential to us are always and at all times present to God.

This explanation of God and the time-space is not original with Lewis as he readily admits. He also admits that it is a difficult concept to grasp. He appears to be correct in that admission. His time-space position, besides being difficult to understand, raises some questions about the cleavage between our perception and reality if time is just a mode of perception. Lewis' position implies that man has an epistemological problem of being deceived by our mode of perception. It certainly seems to the ordinary person that time is referring to an actual sequential line of changing events; that perception of time is so forceful that bodily changes occur with the passing of what we call time. Furthermore, religious people have assumed the reality of prayer and results in a time-sequence frame of reference. The crucial question is whether our sensory perception of reality can be trusted. Does God let us believe something that in reality He knows is not true, or at least is fundamentally different from what we perceive? To say that God cannot or at least does not act in time as Lewis seems to imply, appears to be as limiting as to say that God does act in time. Perhaps this is not Lewis' meaning when he states that "God and His acts are not in time,"[59] but it does seem to imply some limitation and the exact meaning is not made clear.

God's Revelation of Himself

Lewis' belief that God is the core of all existence and his belief that God is person have a logical culmination in the belief that God makes Himself known in His works. There are two sources of evidence for our knowledge of God, one outside of us and one inside of us. The outside evidence is the universe God has made which bears his likeness in some sense. "Space and time, in their own fashion, mirror His greatness; all life, His fecundity; animal life, His activity."[60] If the outside evidence is all the evidence of God we have, then we would have to conclude that God is a merciless and great artist, for there is both great beauty and great terror or danger in the universe. The most important likeness to God is man's rationality and within that rationality is the inner evidence which is better evidence because it is inside information. Specifically, the inner evidence "is that Moral Law which He has put into our minds."[61]

The fact that we constantly make moral judgements means that the conscience of man is not simply an outgrowth of nature. "It can be valid only if it is an offshoot of some absolute moral wisdom."[62] Non-moral, non-rational nature could never produce ideas of good and evil, such ideas must come from a supernatural source. But since such ideas do come, it indicates to us that God has one other attribute than rationality, that being moral judgement.

The assertion that our moral sense is from a supernatural source does not mean that our goodness is on a level with God's goodness. God's goodness is so superior to ours that there is often a sense of shame and guilt on our part, but that does not indicate that our moral standard is wrong and we will be asked to reverse the standard. Our idea of goodness as expressed in our moral standards is inferior to God's but does come from God. It is different in degree or intensity or purity, but it is not different in kind.

God and goodness are ontologically related. "God is not merely good, but goodness; goodness is not merely divine but God."[63] The central thrust is that God neither obeys nor creates the moral law because He is the moral law. A further observation is that "the good is uncreated; it never could have been otherwise, it has in it no shadow of contingency; it lies . . . on the other side of existence."[64] So good has objective reality, it is not relative and this is how and why it is at the heart of other religious and ethical systems.

The standard of essential goodness in God affects the goodness and reality of His universal laws. "Hence His laws have emeth 'truth,' intrinsic validity, rock-bottom reality, being rooted in His own nature, and are therefore as solid as that Nature which He has created."[65] God's will "is determined by His wisdom which always perceives, and His goodness which always embraces the intrinsically good."[66]

Lewis' position concerning the meeting place of God's goodness and man's moral sense is in some ways surprising. He says specifically that "the rational and moral element in each human mind is a point of force from the supernatural working its ways into Nature."[67] Then comes the surprising element in that nature limits supernature instead of supernature modifying nature,

> exploiting at each point those conditions which Nature offers, repulsed where the conditions are hopeless and impeded when they are unfavorable. A man's Rational thinking is just so much of his share in eternal Reason as the state of his brain allows to become operative.[68]

Given the meaning of the two terms, one would assume that supernature would be not only above but superior to nature and would therefore modify nature, but Lewis implies that nature limits supernature even to the point of excluding it in some instances. He goes on to say,

> The various and complex conditions under which Reason and Morality appear are the twists and turns of the frontier between Nature and supernature. That is why, if you wish, you can always ignore Supernature and treat the phenomena purely from the Natural side.[69]

There is no explanation offered as to why nature modifies supernature instead of vice versa, but there is offered a reason for the fact that people miss the supernatural. It is because they have been occupied in thinking about Nature so much that they have not spent any time thinking about thinking. Thinking is a part of supernature because if it were a part of nature then nature would not be subject to modification by thought--as it obviously is when

man builds things out of nature, e.g. a bridge to span a chasm. Therefore, instead of supernature being remote and impenetrable, it is so near and so obvious that it is taken for granted, just as you are not always thinking about windows when you are looking at gardens or always thinking about eyes when you are reading.

Thus, it is in the realm of the rational and moral functions ("moral judgement is a kind of reasoning"[70]) that man begins to encounter the supernatural inside himself. In the same vein the moral sense is the corrective for becoming overly abstract in our consideration of God. There is utility in the use of the abstract, but abstract explanations are not the only and especially the ultimate explanations. It is in the moral and devotional life that

> we touch something concrete which will at once begin to correct the growing emptyness /sic/ our idea of God. One moment even of feeble contrition or blurred thankfulness will, at least in some degree, head us off from the abyss of abstraction.[71]

Reason herself will tell you there are some things that (abstract) reason cannot answer.

If Lewis sees God as the core of existence and the universe, and if he sees God's basic nature as goodness with that goodness communicated, however feebly, to man in the presence of a moral sense, then he has also to account for the presence of evil and pain in this world made by a good God.

He does, of course, recognize that there is evil in the world but contends that it is not co-equal or even co-existent with God. The struggle between evil and good must take place somewhere on a level below God because in such a struggle, if one is really right and one really wrong, "this must mean that they stand in two different relations to somebody or something . . . further back, to the ultimate ground of reality itself,"[72] which would be the guarantor of some kind of moral order.

Therefore, evil is not a power separate from God and equal to Him, it is rather spoiled or misused goodness so that the power of the bad is derived power.[73] There is a sense in which that position only moves the problem back one notch, the persistent question simply takes a different form as: Why has God created the capacity for good to be misused? In answer, Lewis makes a two-fold response.

The first response is that pain is one of the shaping instruments that God uses to bring man to the level of development that God desires. If God has the power to deliver man from pain, He still would not since it would thwart His plan or loving purpose for man.

In order to arrive at this position of "soul making," it is necessary to clarify some definitions of terms. The formulation of the problem of pain is:

> If God were good, He would wish to make His creatures perfectly happy, and if God were almighty, He would be able to do what He wished. But the creatures are not happy. Therefore God lacks either goodness, or power, or both.[74]

In that formulation, the terms "good," "almighty," and possibly "happy" are viewed as equivocal. If the popular meanings of those terms are accepted, then there may not be an answer to the problem of pain.

The popular mind defines "good" and "happiness" as "what I want to do and how I want to feel." The implication is then that God if He is good (according to this definition) will allow me to do and feel as I want. Another implication of that kind of thinking is that love is nothing more than kindness and man is the center of the universe and everything should revolve around man's wishes.

This is where Lewis differs. He sees God's love as more than kindness, it is also purposive. That is, it intends good for man from God's perspective rather than from man's definition. Resident in this position is the belief that God rather than man is the center of existence. Man is created that God may love him and therefore God will make the object of His love worthy of His love.

The second response to the problem of pain is that the guarantee of man's freedom calls for a stable and independent environment that in turn has the potential to cause man pain and seemingly produces evil. There are two implications of note in this response: 1) that once again God is purposive in his creation, and 2) that this is the best possible world God could make to accomplish the purpose He has for man.

The problem of man's environment is its relative "independent and 'inexorable' Nature /sic/."[76] This independence and consistency to the point of unyieldedness causes pain, but it is necessary for two reasons; it insures man's freedom and it enables man to identify himself. The nature of freedom calls for some kind of fixed environment so that there are things to choose between. "A creature with no environment would have no choices to make."[77] Freedom is evidently always relational and if a free will is going to be exercised there must be legitimate choices which would include the possibility of wrong choices, i.e. evil. There must also be a consistent environment which does not conform to every wish or whim and which holds the potential of bumping the head hard and causing pain if the person chooses to stand up in the wrong place even if the choice is made in ignorance or as a reflex. The question of why freedom? or why free will? is anticipated and answered, "Because free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having."[78]

A reasonably fixed environment is also mandatory if a creature is going to recognize itself. Selfness comes into consciousness only in relation to or against a stable environment and preferably in a social environment.

> There is no reason to suppose that self-consciousness, the recognition of a creature by itself as a 'self,' can exist except in contrast with an 'other,' a something which is not the self.[79]

This, then, is not only the best possible world but the only possible world where these advantages (free will and self-consciousness) can be assured. Without this fixed environment "not even Omnipotence could create a society of free souls."[80] Does not that limit Omnipotence? In answer to that question it is pointed out that for the statement "God can do anything" to have meaning it must refer to anything intrinsically possible.

> If you choose to say 'God can give a creature free will and at the same time withhold free will from it,' you have not succeeded in saying anything about God: meaningless combinations of words do not suddenly acquire meaning simply because we prefix to them the two other words 'God can.' It remains true that all things are possible with God: the intrinsic impossibilities are not things but nonentities.[81]

The application is that things could not be fundamentally different in our environment and there still be free will; it is not possible. Therefore, to suggest that things could not be different is not a limitation on God but is rather avoiding a nonsensical combination of words. This implicit definition of omnipotence, the ability to do anything intrinsically possible, is especially helpful in setting boundaries for discussion about the power of God.

There is one time that Lewis wavers in his insistence that God is essentially good. It is during the time of his intense personal suffering in grief upon the death of his wife. He acknowledges that there are times when the idea that God is good seems to be meaningless. He concedes that "all the prima facie evidence suggest exactly the

opposite,"[82] and that perhaps the only reason for believing God to be good is "our own desperate wishes."[83] Lewis also observes that in his time of great loss God seemed absent from him and that it would be easy enough to say that God seems absent because He is absent, i.e. non-existent. But instead of embracing that conclusion, he comes back rather begrudgingly to the conclusion that God's goodness is evidently not inconsistent with hurting us. This wavering on the part of Lewis from his earlier definiteness and calm rationality should probably be interpreted as less a change of position and more an existential cry of a suffering, wounded human being. If anything, it adds credence to the sincerity of his convictions in that he faced the problem of pain in more than an intellectual exericse.

While Lewis does believe that God reveals Himself through the universe generally and man's moral sense in particular, he also believes that man "has no direct 'knowledge about' . . . the ultimate Being,"[84] and what we can know we know by analogies. "Statements about God are extrapolations from the knowledge of other things which the divine illumination enable us to know."[85]

God, very much like other persons, is iconoclastic in the sense that He is constantly breaking our ideas of Him. The paradigm example of that is the incarnation, "it leaves all previous ideas of the Messiah in ruins." This is not different from the experience we have with those we love because they are constantly triumphing over or differing

from our ideas of them, ruining our expectations and our interpretations.

God also reveals Himself in history though that revelation is especially opaque. Because all things happen either by the Divine will or at least by Divine permission, it follows that the total content of time must in its own nature, be a revelation of God's wisdom, justice and mercy. So in that sense, God is the director of history, but no one else can understand the meaning of history or even discern the pattern since we do not have the script.[86] Whether the pattern is imperceptible because of man's faulty understanding or the enigma of God's ways is not made clear.

Another evidence or revelation of God is the presence of love in man, it (love) is the footprint of the Divine in human experience. That love was the motivating force behind the creation of man. "God, who needs nothing, loves into existence wholly superfluous creatures in order that He may love and perfect them."[87] The description of God as having no needs is a familiar one in orthodox theologies but seems to be difficult to support given Lewis' theodicy. His rationale for the existence of pain in the world is purposive theism and yet God's creation of man results in a "wholly superfluous" being. There is some attempt to show that God created man because He is a giving God and man needs love. But the need, which is given to man, did not exist until God brought it into existence--which makes it difficult to escape the conclusion that God <u>needed</u> to give.

Lewis faces the issue but his explanation ("If He who in Himself can lack nothing chooses to need us, it is because we need to be needed"[88]) appears to skirt the central problem.

The presence of love in man indicates that God has implanted in man "gift loves" which are natural images of Himself and "need loves" which are correlatives or opposites of the Love which God is.[89] This is proven in that all other loves cannot "remain themselves and do what they promise without God's help."[90]

The Divine love revealed in man does not exclude the possibility of Divine wrath and pardon. The analogies of wrath and pardon are very important analogies to retain when we talk about God's love because wrath or anger "is the fluid that love bleeds when you cut it."[91] Anger is also the path of reconciliation for lovers, so the analogy must be retained because it belongs in "the circle of life, and love and deeply personal relationships."[92]

The important emphasis, however, is that what God does for and in man is a communication or even a transfer of Divine gift-love. A gift-love that enables men to love the normally unattractive, enables men to give their wills to God, enables man to minister to other men who have need. Thus God revealing Himself in man helps him become more man and to increase the sense of community both with God and other men.

To understand this creature more fully--man who can become "more man"--we turn to a consideration of Lewis' view of man.

ENDNOTES

[1]Green and Hooper, op. cit., p. 58.

[2]Lewis, Mere Christianity, pp. 45-46.

[3]Lewis, Surprised by Joy, p. 208.

[4]Ibid., p. 209.

[5]Lewis, God in the Dock, p. 79.

[6]Ibid., pp. 78-79.

[7]Lewis, Miracles, p. 284.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Ibid., pp. 284-285.

[11]Ibid., p. 284.

[12]Ibid., p. 285.

[13]Ibid.

[14]For a fuller discussion of the classic proofs for belief in God, see John Hick, Philosophy of Religion (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), pp. 15-30.

[15]Lewis, Miracles, p. 286.

[16]Ibid., pp. 280-281.

[17]Ibid., p. 286.

[18]Ibid., p. 289.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Hick, op. cit., p. 7, points out that Tillich uses the phrase "source or ground of all being" instead of the term "exists," in order to emphasize "that the creator and the created cannot be said to exist in precisely the same way." There is no evidence that Lewis would object to the phrase "God exists," but he is interested in showing that God's existence is different from all other existences. Indeed, Lewis states in at least one place that "He (God) is ground of our being." Lewis, Letters to Malcolm, p. 68.

[22]Lewis, Miracles, p. 279.

[23]Ibid., p. 280.

[24]Ibid., p. 285.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Lewis, Letters to Malcolm, p. 21.

[27]Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 142.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Lewis, Letters to Malcolm, p. 21.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Lewis, Christian Reflections, p. 168.

[32]Lewis, Letters to Malcolm, p. 73.

[33]Ibid., p. 72.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Ibid., p. 73.

[36]Ibid., p. 44.

[37]Ibid., p. 74.

[38]Ibid., p. 13.

[39]Ibid., p. 69.

[40]Ibid., p. 70.

[41]Ibid., p. 74.

[42]Lewis, Miracles, pp. 241-242.

[43]Ibid., p. 242.

[44]Ibid., p. 332.

[45]Ibid., p. 333.

[46]Ibid., p. 294.

[47]Lewis, God in the Dock, p. 37.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Ibid., p. 32.

[50]Lewis, Letters to Malcolm, p. 55.

[51]Lewis, Miracles, pp. 372-373.

[52]Ibid., pp. 374-375.

[53]Ibid.

[54]Lewis, Christian Reflections, p. 168.

[55]Lewis, Letters to Malcolm, p. 48.

[56]Lewis, The Weight of Glory, p. 48.

[57]Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 184.

[58]Ibid.

[59]Lewis, Letters to Malcolm, p. 48.

[60]C. S. Lewis, The Four Loves (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1960), p. 15.

[61]Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 37.

[62]Lewis, Miracles, p. 236.

[63]Lewis, Christian Reflections, p. 80.

[64]Ibid.

[65]C. S. Lewis, Reflections on the Psalms (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1958), p. 61.

[66]Lewis, The Problem of Pain, p. 100.

[67]Lewis, Miracles, p. 237.

[68]Ibid., p. 239.

[69]Ibid.

[70]Ibid., p. 236.

[71]Ibid., p. 238.

[72]Lewis, God in the Dock, p. 24.

[73]Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 50.

[74]Lewis, The Problem of Pain, p. 26.

[75]Ibid., p. 48.

[76]Ibid., p. 29.

[77]Ibid.

[78]Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 52.

[79]Lewis, The Problem of Pain, p. 29.

[80]Ibid.

[81]Ibid., p. 28.

[82]Lewis, A Grief Observed, p. 34.

[83]Ibid., p. 33.

[84]Lewis, The Four Loves, pp. 174-175.

[85]Ibid., p. 175.

[86]Lewis has an essay on God and history in the book Christian Reflections under the title "historicism," pp. 100-113.

[87]Lewis, The Four Loves, p. 176.

[88]Lewis, The Problem of Pain, p. 50.

[89]Lewis, The Four Loves, p. 176.

[90]Ibid., p. 166.

[91]Lewis, Letters to Malcolm, p. 97.

[92]Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

MAN: THE GOD CAPACITY CREATURE

White points out that Lewis believes man to be a composite creature. "He is an animal rationale, akin to both angels and tomcats. Although closely related to nature, man cannot be understood solely in natural terms."[1]

Another central emphasis in Lewis' concept of man, and related to man's composite makeup, is the idea of potential. Man has the potential of living on the animal level or he can choose to be an animal and more than an animal.

> He is an animal; but an animal called to be, or raised to be, (if you like), doomed to be, something more than an animal. On the ordinary biological view (what difficulties I have about evolution are not religious) one of the primates is changed so that he becomes man; but he remains still a primate and an animal. He is taken up into a new life without relinquishing the old.[2]

Man on the animal level has a biological type of life that comes through Nature,

> and which (like everything else in Nature) is always tending to run down and decay so that it can only be kept up by incessant subsidies from Nature in the form of air, water, food, etc.[3]

This kind of life on a strictly animal level Lewis calls "Bios."

What makes man unique in comparison to other kinds of biological life is the potential of a different kind of

life, a spiritual quality of life called "Zoe." This Zoe is the life that exists

> in God from all eternity. . . . Bios has, to be sure, a certain shadowy or symbolic resemblance to Zoe: but only the sort of resemblance there is between a photo and a place, or a statue and a man. A man who changed from having Bios to having Zoe would have gone through as big a change as a statue which changed from being a carved stone to being a real man.[4]

Man's potential, then, lies in the fact that there is within him a capacity for God and God likeness. The options in life are quite clear. "To be God--to be like God and share in His goodness in creaturely response--to be miserable--these are the only alternatives."[5] This does not mean that man has to live an unnatural life in any sense, rather it means that the natural will be offered to God. "All our merely natural activities will be accepted, if they are offered to God, even the humblest: and all of them, even the noblest, will be sinful if they are not."[6] The central point is man is not really himself, he is not really human until the Zoe has taken up into itself the Bios and that is accomplished when the God part of man is acknowledged and declared to be in charge.

One of the important steps in man's pilgrimage to this potential humanity is to recognize his limitations, for in them is his nature (which is dependency) and his destiny (which is to glorify the One who made him.)

> Man is a finite creature who has sense enough to know that he is finite: therefore, on any conceivable view he finds himself dwarfed by reality as a whole. He is also a derivative being: the

> cause of his existence lies not in himself but (immediately) in his parents and (ultimately) either in the character of Nature as a whole or (If there is a God) in God.[7]

His place in the universe is also important for man to grasp. The fact that his size is relatively insignificant in the universe has no bearing on the significance of his value. The size of the creature has nothing to do with its importance in the scheme of things, the brain is smaller than the leg, but a man can manage to function without his leg or legs but never without his brain. Just so man may be the smallest of the creatures of the universe, but his size and importance have no direct correlation. The awesome vastness characteristic of the universe makes man "feel his own derived existence to be unimportant, irrelevant, almost accidental."[8] But the very fact that man feels those emotions indicates something of his own greatness, "for light years and geological periods are mere arithmetic until the shadow of man, the poet, the maker of myths, falls upon them."[9]

The true value of man is realized in that unique potential of the Divine being united with a natural being. Lewis believed that "in every human being a wholly supernatural entity is . . . united with a part of nature: so united that the composite creature calls itself 'I' and 'Me'."[10] Nowhere is there clearer evidence of this composite unity than in man's knowing capacity and abilities.

The God Capacity in Man's Knowing Abilities

Lewis believes man to be a knowing creature, a creature who can have at least a minimal degree of certain knowledge. In one of his more pensive moods, he uncharacteristically registers doubts about man's ability to know reality when he says:

> Five senses; an incurably abstract intellect; a haphazardly selective memory; a set of preconceptions and assumptions so numerous that I can never examine more than a minority of them--never become even conscious of them all. How much of total reality can such an apparatus let through?[11]

Usually, however, there is an optimistic view of man's drive to know. It is a distinguishing mark that man "wants to know things, wants to find out what reality is like, simply for the sake of knowing."[12] Besides that, "when that desire is completely quenched in anyone, I think he has become something less than human."[13] True to his theistic centered tendencies, Lewis believes that this appetite for knowledge (and also the appetite for beauty) is implanted in man by his creator and in turn, when properly used, will point man back to his creator. The fact is that

> an appetite for these things exists in the human mind, and God makes no appetite in vain. We can therefore pursue knowledge as such, and beauty as such, in the sure confidence that by so doing we are either advancing to the vision of God ourselves or indirectly helping others to do so.[14]

One of the major avenues to knowledge is man's rational abilities or human thought. The term "human thought" is used advisedly. The term "human reason" is disclaimed in

its highly technical sense but is used interchangeably with "human thought" in other places when man's rational processes are discussed. There is a cosmic Reason that exists totally independent of man's conception.

> As I have said, there is no such thing (strictly speaking) as human reason: but there is emphatically such a thing as human thought--in other words, the various specifically human conceptions of Reason, failures of complete rationality, which arise in a wishful and lazy human mind utilizing a tired human brain. The difference between acknowledging this and being sceptical about Reason itself, is enormous. For in the one case we should be saying that reality contradicts Reason, whereas now we are only saying that total Reason--cosmic or super-cosmic Reason--corrects human imperfections of Reason. Now correction is not the same as mere contradiction. When your false reasoning is corrected you 'see the mistakes'; the true reasoning thus takes up into itself whatever was already rational in your original thought. You are not moved into a totally new world; you are given more and purer of what you already had in a small quantity and badly mixed with foreign elements. To say that Reason is objective is to say that all our false reasonings could in principle be corrected by more Reason. I have to add 'in principle' because, of course, the reasoning necessary to give us absolute truth about the whole universe might be (indeed, certainly would be) too complicated for any human mind to hold it all together or even to keep on attending. But that, again, would be a defect in the human instrument, not in Reason.[15]

There is a rationality, an objective, universal rationality totally independent of whether man admits it or not, and man's logic can in some sense make contact with that reality.

> I conclude then that logic is a real insight into the way in which real things have to exist. In other words, the laws of thought are also the laws of things: of things in the remotest space and the remotest time.[16]

The process of encountering reality--rational reality--is the process of reasoning.

> All possible knowledge, then, depends on the validity of reasoning . . . if /our/ certainty is merely a feeling in our own minds and not a genuine insight into realities beyond them . . . then we can have no knowledge. Unless human reasoning is valid no science can be true.[17]

Therefore, the knowledge that we have of the universe is knowledge we reach by inference.

> Everything I know is an inference from sensation (except the present moment). All our knowledge of the universe beyond our immediate experiences depends on inferences from these experiences.[18]

Experience, then, is the raw material with which human thought works in order to prove things.

> Experience by itself proves nothing. If a man doubts whether he is dreaming or working, no experiment can solve his doubt, since every experiment may itself be part of the dream. Experience proves this, or that, or nothing, according to the preconceptions we bring to it.[19]

That does not mean that experience and/or the senses do not have a very special function independent of thinking as far as the knowing process is concerned. Angels and seraphim are entirely intellectual and spiritual creatures without the senses as we know them and therefore

> something of God which the Seraphim can never quite understand flows into us from the blue of the sky, the taste of honey, the delicious embrace of water whether cold or hot, and even from sleep itself.[20]

These kinds of things come to created beings only through sensuous experience.

There is some tension, for Lewis, between thinking and experience, especially thinking about the experience itself.

> Human intellect is incurably abstract . . . yet the only realities we experience are concrete--this pain, this pleasure, this dog, this man--while we are loving the man, bearing the pain, enjoying the pleasure, we are not intellectually apprehending Pleasure, Pain or Personality. . . . This is our dilemma--either to taste and not to know or to know and not to taste--or, more strictly to lack one kind of knowledge because we are in an experience or to lack another kind because we are outside.[21]

Those who feel like they experience and think about the experience at the same time are mistaken. Actually what seems to be simultaneous knowing actions are very rapid changes, back and forth, from experience to thought to experience etc. This theme of the inside (experience) and outside (thinking about) view of human knowing is expanded to show that both are needed to get a full view of truth.

> We must, on pain of idiocy, deny from the very outset the idea that looking <u>at</u> is, by its own nature, intrinsically truer or better than looking <u>along</u>. One must look both <u>along</u> and <u>at</u> everything. . . . We do not know in advance whether the lover or the psychologist is giving the more correct account of love.[22]

Each case must be decided upon its own merits but both experiencing and analyzing experiences have a contribution to make in human knowledge.

Authority is also an important factor in the knowing process.

> Do not be scared by the word authority. Believing things on authority only means believing them because you have been told them by someone you think trustworthy. Ninety-nine per cent of the things you believe are believed on authority.[23]

There are then, three sources of knowledge, "authority, reason, experience; on these three, mixed in varying proportions all our knowledge depends."[24]

Lewis' position on man's knowing faculties raises some questions, especially in relation to his emphasis on the central role in the knowing process that reason serves and his belief that reason is the indication of supernature invading nature. Human rationality "is the telltale rift in Nature which shows that there is something beyond or behind her."[25] His basic assumption is reason cannot come from non-reason and therefore there must be some eternal, self-existent Reason other than man because man's reason is not without interruption. There are no proofs offered to support this basic assumption. There is simply the implication that the old axiom "like produces like" is true of reason.

An implied proof of the divine origin of reason that is highly suspect is Lewis' reference to nature's effect on Reason and vice versa. One specific statement to this effect is "Nature can only raid Reason to kill; but Reason can invade Nature to take prisoners and even to colonise."[26] Reason builds shelter, makes clothing, and generally accommodates nature for its own protection and use. Conversely the examples of nature invading reason are such things as a toothache or some anxiety that keeps reason from functioning properly. For Lewis, the contrast clearly demonstrates the superior quality as well as the non-natural origin of productive, creative reason over destructive nature.

Actually, his examples seem to be a rather obvious (and uncharacteristic for him) case of choosing only the evidence that fits his preconceived idea. For there also seems to be ample evidence that nature is helpful to reason and reason is damaging to nature. For example, the imposition of sleep, by nature, on man's rational faculties certainly has a positive effect on the function of reason as does the proper use of a balanced diet. On the other hand, the environmental imbalance that is at the root of the ecological problems of today come from the tendencies of man's reason to accommodate nature beyond her limits.

An important part of man's rationality, as has already been noted, is his moral sense. Man is an incurably moral creature, he is constantly making judgements of right and wrong. "The important point is to notice that Moral Judgements raise the same sort of difficulty for Naturalism as any other thoughts."[27] That is, there must be an outside (of nature) source for morality because this moral sense judges nature and indeed compels man to go counter to nature in some cases.

> The actual behaviour of that universe which the Numinous haunts bears no resemblance to the behaviour which morality demands of us. The one seems wasteful, ruthless, and unjust; the other enjoins upon us the opposite qualities.[28]

Therefore, the moral sense certainly cannot come from nature.

The sense of morality is universal in two ways. It is universal in that it is present in all men everywhere,

> all the human beings that history has heard of acknowledge some kind of morality; that is, they feel toward certain proposed actions the experiences expressed by the words 'I ought' or 'I ought not'. . .[30]

But beyond that expression of morality in human beings there is the moral law that "is something above and beyond the ordinary facts of men's behaviour, and yet quite definitely real--a real law, which none of us made, but which we find pressing on us."[31]

This universal moral law is a kind of reality, other than material reality, that finds its expression in man by way of a code of conduct that Lewis (without explanation) chooses to call the Tao.

> This thing which I have called for convenience the Tao, and which others may call Natural Law or Traditional Morality or the First Principles of Practical Reason or the First Platitudes, is not one among a series of possible systems of value. It is the sole source of all value judgements. If it is rejected, all value is rejected. If any value is retained, it is retained. The effort to refute it and raise a new system of value in its place is self-contradictory. There never has been, and never will be, a radically new judgement of value in the history of the world. What purport to be new systems or (as they now call them) 'ideologies,' all consist of fragments from the Tao itself, arbitrarily wrenched from their context in the whole and then swollen to madness in their isolation, yet still owing to the Tao and to it alone such validity as they possess. If my duty to my parents is a superstition, then so is my duty to posterity. If justice is a superstition, then so is my duty to my country or my race. If the pursuit of scientific knowledge is a real value, then so is conjugal fidelity. The rebellion of new ideologies against the Tao is a rebellion of the branches against the tree: if the rebels could suceed they would find that they had destroyed themselves. The human mind has no more power of inventing a new value than

> of imagining a new primary colour, or, indeed, of creating a new sun and a new sky for it to move in.[32]

The universality (and even eternity) of the Tao does not mean there are no contradictions or absurdities in the various cultural expressions. It does not rule out some real development in our understanding and perception of this universal moral code. But Lewis correctly points out that in order to criticize traditional morality there has to be offered some sort of reason, and implicit in that reason is some degree of oughtness that in essence will point back to the sense of obligation engendered by the Tao. Beyond that an objective standard is pragmatically necessary for the preservation of the human race. If morality is just an expression of how we feel about something, a subjective feeling that can be changed at will, then there is no basis to criticize the idea of justice propagated, for example, by the Third Reich.

> If 'good' and 'better' are the terms deriving their sole meaning from the ideology of each people, then of course ideologies themselves cannot be better or worse than one another.[33]

The aim of this moral sense in man and the moral rules in the Tao is to give "directions for running the human machine. Every moral rule is there to prevent a breakdown, or a strain, or a friction, in the running of that machine."[34] The implication of this moral aim is found in three areas: harmony inside the individual, harmony between individuals and "the general purpose of human life as as a whole."[35]

The moral sense in man is a regulator, a govenor. He (man) does not always live up to this sense of oughtness but it is there nonetheless to point him in the direction he should go. Those who would deny the presence of the Tao in reality and in man by relegating the moral sense to the realm of emotion have their own bill of moral goods to sell and worse yet, are taking away man's chest[36] and making him something less than real man.

Man's God Capacity Filled

There are two phases present in the process of man filling his God capacity and being transformed from animal to human. There is the self surrender, renunciation phase and there is the taking up or appropriating phase.

The act of self surrender is necessary because of the negative fact that human nature in and of itself "is fallen, it must be corrected and the evil within it must be mortified."[37] This does not mean that man is totally depraved, it simply means that the potential within man is weighted in the direction of man's self-will and the nature of that self-will calls for renunciation. "We are not merely imperfect creatures who must be improved: we are . . . rebels who must lay down our arms."[38] There is furthermore something indemic in being a dependent creature that calls for submission to the creator. Indeed,

> the proper good of a creature is to surrender itself to its Creator--to enact intellectually,

> volitionally, and emotionally, that relationship which is given in the mere fact of its being a creature.[39]

That does not mean that surrender is an easy thing to accomplish or that it seems to be the right or natural thing to do.

> For all the time this illusion to which nature clings as her last treasure, this pretence that we have anything of our own or could for one hour retain by our own strength any goodness that God may pour into us, has kept us from being happy. We have been like bathers who want to keep their feet--or one foot--or one toe--on the bottom, when to lose that foothold would be to surrender themselves to a glorious tumble in the surf.[40]

One of the aids to the self surrender so necessary for the submission of man's will to God is the presence and persistence of pain. Man finds it hard to think of God when everything is going well. "We 'have all we want' is a terrible saying when 'all' does not include God."[41] Pain shatters man's illusion of well being and self sufficiency, it accomplishes two things in that it captures his attention away from the "all is well" mentality and it points him to a sufficiency outside himself. "It is just here, where God's providence seems at first to be most cruel, that the Divine humility, the stooping down of the Highest, most deserves praise."[42]

Pain serves a third function, it insures and/or assures us that the surrender man makes to God is voluntary.

> If the thing we like doing is, in fact, the thing God wants us to do, yet that is not our reason for doing it; it remains a happy coincidence. We cannot therefore know that we are acting at all, or primarily, for God's sake, unless the material of

> the action is contrary to our inclinations, or (in other words) painful, and what we cannot know that we are choosing, we cannot choose. The full acting out of the self's surrender to God therefore demands pain: this action, to be perfect, must be done from the pure will to obey, in the absence, or in the teeth, of inclination.[43]

It is the pain of making the choice of self surrender that insures its voluntary nature, it is not choosing to live in pain that Lewis speaks about. Because once the choice of self surrender is made, or more appropriately, once the life of self surrender is decided upon then man may or may not live in pain, the central result is that in self surrender to God, man is fulfilled as a real human being.

The second, and positive, phase of man realizing his God capacity potential is the taking up or appropriating phase. While man's nature is fallen his essence is good and the "human will becomes truly creative and truly our own when it is wholly God's."[44] In accepting God's will into his life man accepts his destiny because man's highest good lies "in being as little as possible ourselves, in acquiring a fragrance that is not our own but borrowed in becoming clean mirrors filled with a face that is not ours."[45]

Man's destiny here is to be a unique person, to be a unique reflection or expression of the God capacity, and to express that uniqueness in his proper setting of community. That does not mean that the individual exists for the community rather the community or collective life exists for the purpose of the protection of the uniqueness and

fulfillment of the individual. "The secular community . . . has no higher end than to facilitate and safeguard the family, and friendship and solitude."[46] It is also true in the spiritual life of the Christian since it is "in this way the Christian life defends the single personality from the collective, not by isolating him but by giving him the status of an organ in the mystical Body."[47] There is, then, a balance between individuality and community, the community protecting the individual and the individual person serving his function in the setting that highlights his uniqueness best. "We shall then first be true persons when we have suffered ourselves to be fitted into our places."[48]

There is, however, a heavy burden laid on the individual for his neighbors. In one of his most widely quoted statements Lewis explains.

> It may be possible for each to think too much of his own potential glory hereafter; it is hardly possible for him to think too often or too deeply about that of his neighbour. The load, or weight, or burden of my neighbour's glory should be laid daily on my back, a load so heavy that only humility can carry it, and the backs of the proud will be broken. It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealing with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no <u>ordinary</u> people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures,

> arts, civilization--these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit--immortal horrors or everlasting splendours. This does not mean that we are to be perpetually solemn. We must play. But our merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind) which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously--no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption. And our charity must be a real and costly love, with deep feeling for the sins in spite of which we love the sinner--no mere tolerance or indulgence which parodies love as flippancy parodies merriment. Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbour is the holiest object presented to your senses.[49]

The uniqueness of the person in the setting of community is not limited to this life alone. Man is a creature with destiny that extends into a life to come. The strongest most persistent indication of that after-life is the secret longing that is in man for something he cannot explain.

> If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud.[50]

One of Lewis' words for this unexplained longing is Sehnsucht ("longing" or "yearning").[51] The occasional moments in man's experience when he briefly realizes a taste of that reality is called "Joy." But primarily it is "an unattainable ectasy . . . just beyond the grasp of your consciousness."[52] This experience of nostalgia or desire which no natural happiness will satisfy is an experience that all men are conscious of at one point in their lives.

> But is there any reason to suppose that reality offers any satisfaction to it? 'Nor does the hungry prove that we have bread.' But I think it may be urged that this misses the point. A man's physical hunger does not prove that that man will get any bread; he may die of starvation on a raft in the Atlantic. But surely a man's hunger does prove that he comes of a race which repairs its body by eating and inhabits a world where eatable substances exist. In the same way, though I do not believe (I wish I did) that my desire for Paradise proves that I shall enjoy it, I think it a pretty good indication that such a thing exists and that some men will.[53]

This longing for paradise is not a longing just for release from this life nor for some escapist type of painless, sensual eternal vacation retreat. It is, true to Lewis central core of things, a desire to know and be accepted by God, Himself.

> The sense that in this universe we are treated as strangers, the longing to be acknowledged, to meet with some response, to bridge some chasm that yawns between us and reality, is part of our inconsolable secret. And surely, from this point of view, the promise of glory, in the sense described, becomes highly relevant to our deep desire. For glory means good report with God, acceptance by God, response, acknowledgement, and welcome into the heart of things. The door on which we have been knocking all our lives will open at last.[54]

The central key to the understanding of the nature of man is that what is done about the God capacity in man is dependent upon a God-like quality or ability in man, the exercise of a free will. As a unique individual man has free will as a gift from God who thus surrenders

> a portion of His omnipotence . . . because He saw that from a world of free creatures, even though they fell, He could work out . . . a deeper and a fuller splendour than any world of automata would admit.[55]

This surrender of omnipotence on God's part is a kind of Divine abdication and should result in man not only surrendering his free will voluntarily back to God but also giving himself to the real business of life which is the glory of God "and, as our only means to glorifying Him, the salvation of human souls."[56]

Man, in the exercise of his free choice, has an alternative (and only one) to the destiny of being completed in God. The alternative is to choose self over God or to set self up as an idol of worship. "From the moment a creature becomes aware of God as God and of itself as self, the terrible alternative of choosing God or self for the centre is opened to it."[57] This is the essential nature of sin; "the act of self-will on the part of the creature, which constitutes an utter falseness to its true creaturely position, is the only sin that can be conceived as the Fall."[58] So, as evil is a corruption or misuse of what God has created good so sin in man stems from a selfish decision to deny the "creaturely position" and to fashion one's own destiny contrary to the destiny that God has commissioned. If that is interpreted as the defeat of omnipotence, Lewis has no quarrel with the interpretation.

> In creating beings with free will, omnipotence from the outset submits to the possibility of such defeat. What you call defeat, I call Miracle: for to make things which are not Itself, and thus to become in a sense, capable of being resisted by its own handiwork, is the most astonishing and unimaginable of all the feats we attribute to the Deity.[59]

The result of sin is the forfeiture of true personality. Man becomes less than man if he chooses his own way. Indeed the Christian concept of Hell is best interpreted

> not as a sentence imposed on him /the bad man/ but as the mere fact of being what he is. The characteristic of lost souls is 'their rejection of everything that is not simply themselves.' Our imaginary egoist has tried to turn everything he meets into a province or appendage of the self. The taste for the other, that is, the very capacity for enjoying good, is quenched in him except in so far as his body still draws him into some rudimentary contact with an outer world.[60]

The gift of the free will and proper exercise of that function is what determines whether man will be man. God gives man a share in omnipotence, God uses pain and suffering to break man's attention away from self centeredness to the appropriate fulfillment of creaturely surrender, but the final decision is left to that ability to choose. The choice clearly set forth, is whether man will submit to the reality of the Creator's universe and values or whether he will choose his own way and become something other than man. It is a positive anthropology with attainable fulfillment but the potential is also there for confusion and loss of the bright image.

For a clearer understanding of how man can be his true self and fulfill the destiny that is implied in his God capacity we turn to Lewis' interpretation of Christianity.

ENDNOTES

[1]White, The Image of Man in C. S. Lewis, p. 88.

[2]Lewis, "The Psalms," Reflections on the Psalms, pp. 115-116.

[3]Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 139.

[4]Ibid., p. 140.

[5]Lewis, The Problem of Pain, p. 54.

[6]Lewis, The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses, p. 48.

[7]Lewis, Miracles, p. 248.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid., p. 251.

[10]Ibid., p. 308.

[11]Lewis, A Grief Observed, pp. 74-75.

[12]Lewis, "Man or Rabbit?" God in the Dock (Essays on Theology and Ethics), p. 108.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Lewis, The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses, p. 49.

[15]Lewis, "De Futilitate," Christian Reflections, p. 68.

[16]Ibid., p. 63.

[17]Lewis, Miracles, p. 217.

[18]Lewis, "Bulverism," God in the Dock (Essays on Theology and Ethics), pp. 274-275.

[19]Lewis, "Miracles," God in the Dock (Essays on Theology and Ethics), pp. 25-26.

[20]Lewis, "Scraps," God in the Dock (Essays on Theology and Ethics), p. 216.

[21]Lewis, "Myth Became Fact," God in the Dock (Essays on Theology and Ethics), pp. 65-66.

[22]Lewis, "Meditation in a Toolshed," God in the Dock (Essays on Theology and Ethics), pp. 65-66.

[23]Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 63.

[24]Lewis, "Religion: Reality or Substitute?" Christian Reflections, p. 41.

[25]Lewis, Miracles, p. 227.

[26]Ibid., p. 224.

[27]Ibid., p. 223.

[28]Lewis, The Problem of Pain, p. 22.

[29]Ibid., p. 21.

[30]Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 30.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Lewis, The Abolition of Man, pp. 56-57.

[33]Lewis, "The Poison of Subjectivism," Christian Reflections, p. 73.

[34]Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 69.

[35]Ibid., p. 71.

[36]In discussing this element (the chest) in man, Lewis refers to the spirited element explained in Plato's Republic. "As the king governs by his executive, so Reason in man must rule the mere appetites by means of the 'spirited element.' The head rules the belly through the chest--the seat as Alanus tells us of Magnanimity, (Alanus ab Insulis. De Planctu Naturae Prosa, iii.) of emotions organized by trained habit into stable sentiments. The chest--Magnanimity--Sentiment--these are the indispensable liaison officers between cerebral man and visceral man. It may even be said that it is by this middle element that man is man 'for by his intellect he is mere spirit and by his appetite mere animal.'" The Abolition of Man, p. 34.

[37]Lewis, "Some Thoughts," God in the Dock (Essays on Theology and Ethics), pp. 148-149.

[38]Lewis, The Problem of Pain, p. 91.

[39]Ibid., p. 90.

[40]Lewis, The Four Loves, pp. 180-181.

[41]Lewis, The Problem of Pain, p. 95.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Ibid., p. 99.

[44]Ibid., p. 102.

[45]Lewis, "Christianity and Literature," Christian Reflections, pp. 6-7.

[46]Lewis, The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses, p. 32.

[47]Ibid., p. 38.

[48]Ibid., p. 40.

[49]Ibid., pp. 14-15.

[50]Ibid., p. 120.

[51]An excellent discussion of Lewis' position on Sehnusucht is found in Corbin Scott Carnell, Bright Shadow of Reality: C. S. Lewis and the Feeling Intellect (Eerdmans, 1974).

[52]Lewis, The Problem of Pain, p. 148.

[53]Lewis, The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses, p. 6.

[54]Ibid., p. 11.

[55]Lewis, Miracles, p. 319.

[56]Lewis, "Christianity and Culture," Christian Reflections, p. 14.

[57]Lewis, The Problem of Pain, pp. 75-76.

[58]Ibid., pp. 80-81.

[59]Ibid., p. 127.

[60]Ibid., p. 123.

CHAPTER V

CHRISTIANITY: THE MYTH-FACT

The various lines of Lewis' world view converge in his interpretation of Christianity. Christianity furnishes the frame or the outline of the world picture as Lewis understands it. God, the ultimate reality, and man, the God capacity creature, come together in the God-man, Christ. The many common themes that Lewis sees in most religions demand an expression in a complete or perfect religion which he finds in Christianity. That inexpressable quality of reality that is intuitively communicated only by myth finally is expressed in the myth that became fact, the Christian story. It is Walsh's belief that even Lewis' writing gained the strength it has through his Christian beliefs.

> From a purely literary point of view of /sic/ the most fortunate thing that ever happened to Lewis was his embrace of Christianity in his early thirties. He now had the symbols by which he could say anything he wanted to say.[1]

While the central element in Lewis' world view, as has been stressed, is his concept of God as the ultimate reality, it is Lewis' Christianity that gives this understanding of God expression. "God Himself comes into focus by becoming a Man."[2] That occurrence is not just a

theophany similar to appearances of God or gods in the myths of other religions, but it is an actual becoming, a transposition, where the Higher takes up the lower for its use and expression. There is purpose in this event, a purpose that is directed towards man's God capacity, and which makes it possible for that capacity to be filled and all of life to be meaningful.

The event is, of course, the coming into history of Jesus Christ and includes the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension. It is for Lewis the Myth that culminates all myths.

> Now as myth transcends thought, Incarnation transcends myth. The heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact. The old myth of the Dying God, without ceasing to be myth, comes down from the heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history. It happens--at a particular date, in a particular place, followed by definable historical consequences. We pass from a Balder or an Osiris, dying nobody knows when or where, to a historical Person crucified (it is all in order) under Pontius Pilate. By becoming fact it does not cease to be myth: that is the miracle. I suspect that men have sometimes derived more spiritual sustenance from myths they did not believe than from the religion they professed. To be truly Christian we must both assent to the historical fact and also receive the myth (fact though it has become) with the same imaginative embrace which we accord to all myths.[3]

It is in its nature as myth that the Christian Fact communicates content that could not be communicated otherwise, e.g. "God is more than a god, not less; Christ is more than Balder, not less."[4] As myth the story also hits a responsive chord in man that mere fact could not, as well as reaching every audience with its message.

> From this is the marriage of heaven and earth: Perfect Myth and Perfect Fact: claiming not only our love and our obedience, but also our wonder and delight, addressed to the savage, the child, and the poet in each one of us no less than to the moralist, the scholar, and the philosopher.[5]

Lewis accepts the details of the Myth-Fact at face value. That is, the historical events recorded in the Bible surrounding the beginning of Christianity are just that, historical events, they did happen. Jesus, called Christ, is the Son of God as he professed to be. To Lewis, you must accept that fact or reject it out of hand. There is no middle ground.

> A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic--on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg--or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.[6]

The facts of Christianity are not isolated, invasion from totally foreign out of space, kinds of facts. They are rather the final culmination of principles that are resident in the universe around us. For instance the concept of Transposition, which is a concept that explains a "possible mode whereby a poorer medium can respond to a richer"[7] and a higher level can express itself in a lower, is the explanation of how things work together such as sensation and emotion, mind and body, and Spirit and

and Nature. But it may be also an explanation of the Incarnation, "humanity, still remaining itself, is not merely counted as, but veritably drawn into Deity"[8] and may throw light also on the doctrine of the resurrection.

All through Lewis' writings on Christianity there is this undertow of two strong parallel currents. The one is that there is the presence of mystery or mythical elements in reality and the other is that the mystery is not a mystery in the sense of an unreal, otherworld quality in things, but rather in the sense of a deeper meaning in all things that can on occasion be discovered and even understood. His writings are therefore characterised by, on the one hand, overtones of wonder and on the other hand detailed, almost pedantic, explanations of some things.

Nowhere is this double character of Lewis' writings better illustrated than in his discussion of Holy Communion. He refers to the fact that any explanation leaves the mystery still a mystery and uses the suprising term "magic" in the discussion. His explanation is,

> I should define magic in this sense as 'objective efficacy which cannot be further analysed.'
>
> Magic, in this sense, will always win a response from a normal imagination because it is in principle so 'true to nature.' Mix these two powders and there will be an explosion. Eat a grain of this and you will die. Admittedly, the 'magical' element in such truths can be got rid of by explanation; that is, by seeing them to be instances or consequences of larger truths. Which larger truths remain 'magical' till they also are, in the same way, explained. In that fashion, the sciences are always pushing further back the realm of mere 'brute fact.' But no scientist, I suppose, believes that the process

> could ever reach completion. At the very least, there must always remain the utterly 'brute' fact, the completely opaque datum, that a universe--or, rather, this universe with its determinate character--exists; as 'magical' as the magic flower in the fairy-tale.
>
> Now the value, for me, of the magical element in Christianity is this. It is a permanent witness that the heavenly realm, certainly no less than the natural universe and perhaps very much more, is a realm of objective facts--hard, determinate facts, not to be constructed a priori, and not to be dissolved into maxims, ideals, values, and the like. One cannot conceive a more completely 'given,' or, if you like a more 'magical,' fact than the existence of God as causa sui.[9]

In his treatment of the stories that form the basis of Christianity Lewis emphasizes their reality as objective one time happenings and also the continuity they share with the objective reality of this universe.

Another emphasis in Lewis' interpretation of Christianity is the practical emphasis of application to man. God through or in Christ, enables man to become really human. The "taking up" phase in the God capacity creature is accomplished only through Jesus Christ. This is possible because Christ is the Son of God in a way that man is not.

> What God begets is God; just as what man begets is man. What God creates is not God; just as what man makes is not man. That is why men are not Sons of God in the sense that Christ is. They may be like God in certain ways, but they are not things of the same kind. They are more like statues or pictures of God.[10]

In other words man does not in his Bios or biological life possess Zoe or spiritual life; but Christ did and does.

> Now the whole offer which Christianity makes is this: that we can, if we let God have his way, come to share in the life of Christ. If we do, we shall then be sharing a life which was begotten, not made, which always has existed and always will exist. Christ is the Son of God. If we share in this kind of life we also shall be sons of God. We shall love the Father as He does and the Holy Ghost will arise in us. He came to this world and became a man in order to spread to other men the kind of life he has--by what I call 'good infection.' Every Christian is to become a little Christ. The whole purpose of becoming a Christian is simply nothing else.[11]

Christianity begins its aid to man with a diagnosis, a diagnosis that is not designed to be popular. The diagnosis is that man is bad, that his potential good has gone the wrong direction. It is a badness (sin) that is a consequence of the misuse of man's free will, and its recognition is essential for men in turn to recognize their need of God.

> . . . when men attempt to be Christians without this preliminary consciousness of sin, the result is almost bound to be a certain resentment against God as to one who is always making impossible demands and always inexplicably angry. . . . Now at the moment when a man feels real guilt--moments too rare in our lives--all these blasphemies vanish away.[12]

The goal of Christianity is to set right this misdirection of our nature, not to obliterate it; but the misdirection does have to be acknowledged.

The cure Christianity offers is to submit the will to God and, as has been mentioned, to be drawn into the life of Christ and to become "little Christs." Lewis means by

that phrase to begin to imitate Christ with the ability imparted by the Zoe.

> Not in an idiotic sense--it doesn't mean that every Christian should grow a beard, or be a bachelor, or become a traveling preacher. It means that every single act and feeling, every experience, whether pleasant, or unpleasant, must be referred to God. It means looking at everything as something that comes from Him and always looking to Him and asking His will first, and saying: 'How would He wish me to deal with this.'[13]

This goal of imitation is accomplished and Zoe is imparted to the believer because of what Christ himself has accomplished by his death and resurrection. Though he presents and explains a particular theory of atonement, Lewis believes that no theory may be quite adequate to the reality. "The central Christian belief is that Christ's death has somehow put us right with God and given us a fresh start. Theories as to how it did this are another matter."[14] He is in no sense embarrassed by the insufficiency of explanation at this point. He shows how figurative explanations of the atom are likewise insufficient, and indeed there is the sense of ultimate reality in the unexplainable.

> We believe that the death of Christ is just that point in history at which something absolutely unimaginable from outside shows through into our own world. And if we cannot picture even the atoms of which our own world is built, of course we are not going to be able to picture this. Indeed, if we found that we could fully understand it, that very fact would show it was not what it professes to be--the inconceivable, the uncreated, the thing from beyond nature, striking down into nature like lightening.[15]

One of the reinforcements, for Lewis, of the truth of the myth-fact is that you find the same general themes in nearly all of the religions of the world. He is well aware of the fact that the interpretation of these similar themes rests on the presuppositions you bring to the interpretation.

> if my religion is erroneous then occurrences of similar motifs in pagan stories are, of course, instances of the same, or a similar error. But if my religion is true, then these stories m/a/y well be a preparation evangelica, a divine hinting in poetic and ritual form at the same central truth which was later focussed and (so to speak) historicised in the Incarnation. To me, who first approached Christianity from a delighted interest in, and reverence for, the best pagan imagination, who loved Balder before Christ and Plato before St. Augustine, the anthropological argument against Christianity has never been formidable. On the contrary, I could not believe Christianity if I were forced to say that there were a thousand religions in the world of which 999 were pure nonsence and the thousandth (fortunately) true. My conversion, very largely, depended on recognizing Christianity as the completion, the actualization, the entelechy, of something that had never been wholly absent from the mind of man.[16]

This is not to say that Christianity is one among many of several true religions. There is objective truth about God and it culminates in Christianity but is foreshadowed and reflected in other religions and has an unmistakable numinous quality as well as ethical character.

> If there is no God then we have no interest in the minimal religion or any other. We will not make a lie even to save civilization. But if there is, then it is so probable as to be almost axiomatic that the initiative lies wholly on His side. If He can be known it will be by self-revelation on His part, not by speculation on ours. We, therefore, look

> for Him where it is claimed that He has revealed Himself by miracle, by inspired teachers, by enjoined ritual. The traditions conflict, but the longer and more sympathetically we study them the more we become aware of a common element in many of them: the sacrifice, of mystical communion through the shed blood, of death and rebirth, of redemption, is too clear to escape notice. We are fully entitled to use moral and intellectual criticism. What we are not, in my opinion, entitled to do is simply to abstract the ethical element and set that up as a religion on its own. Rather in that tradition which is at once more completely ethical and most transcends mere ethics--in which the old themes of the sacrifice and rebirth recur in a form which transcends, though there it no longer revolts, our conscience and our reason--we may still most reasonably believe that we have the consummation of all religion, the fullest message from the wholly other, the living creator, who, if He is at all, must be the God not only of the philosophers, but of mystics and savages, not only of the head and heart, but also of the primitive emotions and the spiritual heights beyond all emotion.[17]

Because of this culmination factor of all religion in Christianity the ethical qualities and maxims found in many other religions are found in Christianity. Furthermore,

> There are people in other religions who are being led by God's secret influence to concentrate on those parts of their religion which are in agreement with Christianity, and who thus belong to Christ without knowing it.[18]

But there is a dividing line at the point of differences, "being a Christian does mean thinking that where Christianity differs from other religions, Christianity is right and they are wrong."[19]

Lewis claims to present "an agreed, or common, or central, or 'mere' Christianity"[20]; he avoids the more controversial term orthodox.[21] It is not the burden of this study to test his claim of holding a "common" position

since the determination of the boundaries of Christianity would be a formidable task in itself. But he does further identify himself as "a Christian, and even a dogmatic Christian untinged with Modernist reservations and committed to Supernaturalism in its full rigour."[22] Reflected in that identification, and certainly present in much of Lewis' writings on Christianity, is an entrenchment of position that may throw some light on his complaints against modern thought forms.

> The standard of permanent Christianity must be kept clear in our own minds and it is against that standard that we must test all contemporary thought. In fact, we must at all costs not move with the times.[23]

The objection to moving with the times is that the times, i.e. modern thought forms, are so unconsciously materialistic that they will not so much as admit the possibility of the truth of the myth-fact.

> We can make people (often) attend to the Christian point of view for half an hour or so; but the moment they have gone away from our lecture or laid down our article, they are plunged back into a world where the opposite position is taken for granted. It is not the books written in direct defence of Materialism that make the modern man a materialist; it is the materialistic assumptions in all other books.[24]

Lewis' intransigence at the point of his Christian beliefs does not mean that he rejects all new knowledge out of hand. Rather his position is that the truth of Christianity is so grounded in reality that new knowledge will not destroy that truth but only expand our understanding of it.

> I claim that the positive historical statements made by Christianity have the power, elsewhere found chiefly in formal principles, of receiving, without intrinsic change, the increasing complexity of meaning which increasing knowledge puts into them.[25]

At the same time there must be the acceptance of doctrines that knowledge cannot assimilate into understanding. They are accepted on the basis of authority and serve the important function of troubling our minds and causing us to continue seeking truth. Just as

> Science progresses because scientists, instead of running away from . . . troublesome phenomenon or hushing them up, are constantly seeking them out, /so/ there will be progress in Christian knowledge only as long as we accept the challenge of the difficult or repellent doctrines.[26]

The central fact is that the Christian understanding of truth will not and indeed cannot be explained away by the analytical approaches of modern thought. The precepts (fact) must remain as an expression of reality but the form (myth) also must be present as an expression of the complete otherness of the origin and nature of that reality.

> Even assuming (which I most constantly deny) that the doctrines of historic Christianity are merely mythical, it is the myth which is the vital and nourishing element in the whole concern. Corineus wants us to move with the times. Now, we know where times move. They move away. But in religion we find something that does not move away. It is what Corineus calls the myth, that abides; it is what he calls the modern and living thought that moves away. Not only the thought of theologians, but the thought of anti-theologians. Where are the predecessors of Corineus? Where is the epicureanism of Lucretius, the pagan revival of Julian the Apostate? Where are Gnostics, where is the monism of Averroes, the deism of Voltaire, the dogmatic materialism of the great

> Victorians? They have moved with the times. But the thing they were all attacking remains: Corineus finds it still there to attack. The myth (to speak his language) has outlived the thoughts of all it defends and of all its adversaries. It is the myth that gives life. Those elements even in modernist Christianity which Corineus regards as vestigal, are the substance: what he takes for 'the real modern belief' is the shadow.[27]

ENDNOTES

[1]Chad Walsh, Literary Legacy of C. S. Lewis (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1979), cited in Christianity Today, June 8, 1979, Vol. XXIII, No. 17, p. 21.

[2]Lewis, "Answers to Questions on Christianity," God in the Dock, p. 48.

[3]Lewis, "Myth Became Fact," God in the Dock, pp. 66-67.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 56.

[7]Lewis, "Transposition," The Weight of Glory, p. 24.

[8]Ibid., p. 28.

[9]Lewis, Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer, pp. 103-104.

[10]Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 138.

[11]Ibid., p. 153.

[12]Lewis, Problem of Pain, pp. 57-58.

[13]Lewis, "Answers to Questions on Christianity," God in the Dock, p. 50.

[14]Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 57.

[15]Ibid., p. 58.

[16]Lewis, "Religion Without Dogma," God in the Dock, p. 132.

[17]Ibid., p. 144 cf. Reflections on the Psalms, pps. 104. ff.

[18]Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 176.

[19]Ibid., p. 43.

[20]Ibid., p. 8.

[21]For a recent discussion of Lewis' theological position see Donald T. Williams, "A Closer Look at the 'Unorthodox' Lewis," Christianity Today, December 21, 1979, Vol. XXIII, No. 28., p. 24.

[22]Lewis, "On Ethics," Christian Reflections, p. 44.

[23]Lewis, "Christian Apologetics," God in the Dock, p. 92.

[24]Ibid., p. 93.

[25]Lewis, "Dogma and the Universe," God in the Dock, p. 45.

[26]Lewis, "Christian Apologetic," God in the Dock, p. 91 Cf. The Weight of Glory, pp. 43-44.

[27]Lewis, "Myth Became Fact," God in the Dock, pp. 64-65.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Any summary of Lewis' world view must begin with his view of God because for Lewis God is the prime reality, the stable point of reference for everything that exists. It is a world view, therefore, that is clearly theistic in emphasis. His theism might be termed a purposive theism. That is, he understands God to be a Person who exists and who creates things other than Himself to accomplish the project or purpose He has for them. God is an author who is writing His story around a well conceived plot that includes all the created characters. It is impossible, however, for anyone else to know the exact plot because only God has the manuscript.

Central to God's purpose in the universe is man, who is the highest created being. If there is any one word that characterizes what Lewis believes man to be, it is the word "potential." Man has potential for good or ill in respect to his embrace of or rejection of God's purpose. If man freely submits to that purpose as it is revealed in Christ, then he (man) is enabled to realize his God-like destiny in this life and in the life to come. Man becomes really human only as he is taken up into the Divine. This

participation in the "Zoe" means that for the first time man is truly alive and in tune with the reality of God and His creation. It does not mean that man will meet no resistance or trouble, but it does mean that he will recognize the redeeming quality, "the severe mercy,"[1] in every and all negative experience. Conversely, if man uses his God given power of choice to reject God's purpose, he (man) sinks to the animal level of his existence and becomes entangled in a smothering egocentrism that eventually cuts him off from God. To be cut off from God means that man is also cut off from beauty, purpose, and the true understanding of the universe around him. Man without God eventually comes to the place where he is shut into the awful isolation of himself.

The above summary is admittedly skeletal but it does serve as a framework for some interpretive observations about the world view taken as a whole.

The view is positive in nature emphasizing the goodness of God and the basic goodness of His creation. But it also recognizes that all is not well in this good creation because some elements of God's creation have chosen their own purpose over God's. This explains the need for religion. Religion is not an isolated response on the part of man in his effort to cope with an oversized, frightening reality. Rather, religion is the discovery of Who made the universe, the way the universe functions, and how man best fits into the pattern of things

in spite of the fact of his rebelliousness. So Lewis' view can accurately be called a religious view.

Another overall characteristic of the world view is that it manifests the obvious, though implicit, themes of stability and order in the universe. Lewis longs for, even insists on something that will not change or move as the foundation for the other elements of his world view. His assertion is that God is that stable point of reference. Once that kind of essential stability is recognized then everything else can be placed into orderly relationship with it.

It could be argued that Lewis' emphasis on stability and order arise from some psychological need within himself and thus he reads them into the universe. A more reasonable claim is that these qualities are characteristics of the universe and therefore become a part of his philosophical insight into the way things really are.

Predictably, (given his emphasis on stability and order) there is a discernible consistency in Lewis' religious writings. There is a consistency of approach to the elements of his world view. His later writings expand his treatment of certain themes but he rarely, if ever, contradicts himself. But there is a consistency of another sort and that is a consistency of emphasis in reference to his purposive theism. Lewis believes that if there is a God in the true sense of what most people have called God and if He has a purpose for His creation then God must not

only be the central fact of the universe but also of every man's life. His consistency is evident in that the centrality of God is apparent in all his religious writings. He sees the drama of God's revelation in practically every process of life. Everything good in life is communicative of God, everything bad is a corruption of the good that comes from God. God is all in all and yet his omnipotence is such that He has the ability to create things other than Himself which share in the divine ability of choosing. And though choosing can result in going against God's purpose, that alternative is necessary to guarantee the highest good for his creatures--choosing to live in harmony with God's purpose. These are just some of the examples of the God saturated character of Lewis' view and writings.

Analysis of Lewis' World View

There is the possibility that an objection could be raised to any philosophical or analytical examination of Lewis' religious writings since he makes no claim to being a philosopher. There are two answers to that possible objection.

The first reason for examining his world view from the perspective of philosophy is that while his view is primarily a religious view, the philosophical attitude and approach is also present. His mind is presented with the problem of the universe and man's place in it, and he

cannot seem to rest without reasoning toward a solution. That solution turns out to be primarily a religious one but the philosophical attitude informs and explains his religious conclusions. Indeed, in one article, Lewis gives a specific rationale for doing philosophy.

> Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered. The cool intellect must work not only against cool intellect on the other side, but against the muddy heathen mysticisms which deny intellect altogether.[2]

It is therefore appropriate to apply some kind of test to see if what Lewis offers is "good philosophy."

A second reason for examining the world view from the perspective of critical thinking is that when assertions are made for the purpose of influencing others, those assertions must be examined to see what truth they carry. This is especially true of religion since most religious claims by their very nature carry the weight of a superior authority. Religious systems have on occasion used their authority to operate a closed system and in those times have gone to harmful extremes.

Religion therefore needs the critical examination of an objective and hopefully sympathetic, clear eyed philosophy. Thus we examine Lewis' world view.

Lewis' system rests on four interrelated key thoughts. They are: 1) That the language of religion must be flexible (his term is "poetic") because reality has dimensions beyond our ability to communicate accurately.

2) That the truth of religion must be in some sense accepted first to be understood and proven. 3) Transposition, the assertion that there are two levels of reality, supernature and nature, and the communication between the two must come from the higher to the poorer in algebraic like terms. 4) Experience and analysis of experience (thinking) must both be credited as viable means of understanding reality.

The assertion that religious language must be flexible has both strengths and weaknesses. On the strength side of the ledger, experience does indicate that much of life has a richness of content that words can only approximate and thus are inadequate for expression. By recognizing that fact, Lewis gives credence to the enormous weight of religious testimonies that exist now and are also recorded from all of man's history. It seems a bit presumptuous to view the vast forest of reported religious experience and with one swing of the linguistic axe to say it isn't really there at all, there is nothing to it but feeling. Lewis corrects this tendency somewhat by his insistence that religious language communicates both content and feeling because reality itself exceeds our ability to talk and communicate directly to our emotions.

One practical effect of Lewis' allowing some poetic latitude in religious language is that he rescues "God talk" from the private domain of a few language experts. Some thinkers have implied that the great difficulty in

talking accurately about God indicates that we can't or shouldn't talk about Him at all. Lewis, on the other hand, recognizes the difficulties but insists that we must talk about God because He is there and we must deal with Him. Furthermore, some have implied that God, if there is a God, has to be so different from our words and thoughts that we can never really know anything certain about Him, and if we make the effort, we are ipso facto limiting Him to the boundaries of our language and understanding. Lewis, in contrast to that attitude, believes that our language about God has the value of minimum communication but that does not make a minimum God. That is, God is more than our language but our language does convey some truth about Him. Therefore our language must be granted some freedom of poetic expression not for accurate communication, necessarily, but as an indicator of a reality too great to express.

The allowance of this latitude for poetic expression is a weakness at the point of definiteness of concepts. If poetic language is an approximation as is implied, how do we recognize the reality content? If it (religious language) conveys some truth about reality that is outside our experience, in what way can we receive it? If philosophical definiteness can never be the first necessity, how far down the scale of necessity does it fall? Is it first in some areas of religion and second in others or even third, and how are we supposed to know where it comes in?

These are some of the questions that Lewis' position raises and they are questions of substance. The reason they are important is that there is an alternative to the assertion that reality is richer than language can communicate. That alternative is a psychological one, it is that we may wish our experience to have more meaning than reality can furnish. Imagination may be contributing the richness to religious experience rather than vice versa. Indeed, when Lewis likens the man in search of religious truth to a drowning man in search of a rope, he is acknowledging that deep psychological/spiritual feelings and needs are involved. He lacks a formula to assure us that this need comes from reality and not from imagination. He merely asserts that because the need is expressed, reality has planted it and will respond. Perhaps his assertion is correct, but he has not adequately demonstrated that fact.

When Lewis contends that the truth of religious claims must be accepted and acted upon before it can be understood and demonstrated, he is joining an age old discussion. It was Saint Augustine's position that there must first be faith in the sense of acceptance before the understanding was equipped to grasp and assimilate the truth.[3] Augustine believed that faith conditioned the mind to operate. Faith was seen almost as a lubricant without which reason could not function. He felt it was an epistemological principle that was demonstrated in areas of life other than religion. Lewis writes in that same tradition though he is not as

insistent upon its acceptance as an epistemological necessity as he is on giving religion the benefit of the doubt almost as a matter of courtesy.

This request to meet religion on its own ground has behind it the implication that so many testimonies to the same kinds of religious experience must have some kind of reality to them. Although all religions have had adherents who were obviously dishonest in their religious convictions and practices, there have been many more adherents who were sensible, honest, and worthy citizens of any society. The suggestion that these people should be given an honest hearing when they make religious claims has merit, and that is basically what Lewis is asking. There is a sense in which his request to accept first and examine later is an invitation to a closed system. But it is also true that there is an inescapable esoteric quality in many human experiences that can mislead the objective inquirer unless he takes into account that quality. Lewis is saying to those who would judge religion from without, "have the courtesy to respect the claims enough to examine from the inside before you make a decision from the outside." He exemplifies that principle in that the practice of religion is a foundation stone for the superstructure of his world.

The concept of Transposition becomes a very important interpretive instrument in Lewis' hands. He has an essay by the title of "Transposition" but the basic principle will surface again and again in much of his religious

writing and in different forms.[4] Simply put, Transposition is the "mode whereby a poorer medium can respond to a richer" and also it can occur "whenever the higher reproduces itself in the lower."[5] It is an important concept to Lewis because he believes that it is at least a part of the explanation of how the two levels of one reality can experience and express themselves in the other respective level without there being a one to one correspondence. For instance if the higher level (spiritual) were to express itself in the lower level (natural) it would use the lower level terminology but that terminology would have to allow fuller and richer meaning than the terms would allow on their merely natural level. A possible example is that the man living on a totally natural level would never perceive anything other than lust in love. On the contrary, the person who was alive to the spiritual realm could see beauty, oneness and even giving of self in love. Lewis sees this Transposition principle as explaining not only the differences of interpretation of life and religion among men, but also he believes it might be helpful in explaining such events and/or doctrines as the Incarnation and the resurrection. It is a somewhat fascinating interpretative concept and is embellished by a strikingly clever illustration of how a dog (representative of the lower level) can not understand a man (representative of the higher level) pointing at an object but instead sniffs the finger that points.

Unfortunately for the concept, Lewis puts the whole burden of proof on one example that he believes everyone will agree to but the example has some rather glaring weaknesses and thereby makes the whole argument suspect. The proposed empirical example is the relationship between physical sensation and the emotion that accompanies the sensation. In his understanding, the emotions are higher than sensation in the sense of being richer, more varied, and more subtle and the higher level expresses itself in the lower by using the same sensation to express not only more than one emotion, but even opposite emotions. The weakness of the example is in confusing the two terms "sensation" and "emotion" and in the contention that the same sensation is present for two different emotions. The two terms are so closely related in popular usage that the dictionary will at times list a third term, "feeling," as a synonym for both. It is most difficult not to believe that they are so closely related that it is impossible for them to be on two different levels. Most people who feel a sensation would not hesitate to call it emotion, and vice versa. There would be also, from human experience, possibly different testimony about the same sensation for two different emotions. Lewis may have the same flutter in his diaphragm when he has very different experiences, but some may not be aware of that. It is conceivable that some would have very different sensations for different emotions. The point is not that Lewis is wrong about his own

experience, the point is that his empirical example of one of his fundamental interpretive concepts is so subjective that it is exceedingly confusing. Thus something (transposition) that might have afforded some insight into the nature of reality sputters and dies because of the confusion of an inadequate example.

The insistence on the balance between experience and thinking about experience is a valuable emphasis in Lewis. His position enables him to avoid some of the obvious empirical inconsistencies of an extreme rationalism on the one hand, and on the other hand to avoid the changeable tendencies of an empirical existentialism. There is some equivocation on his part about when the experience should be the authoritative voice. But his central emphasis that both experience and thinking have important epistemological contributions to make is well taken.

The four foundational principles in Lewis' world view are interrelated in two ways. They are first related by the fact that all four are methodological in nature rather than being metaphysical principles. That means that they are methods of approaching or explaining or viewing the universe. They are not themselves unchangeable principles of reality so much as they are ways of understanding principles of reality. Lewis, when he proposes them, seems to be saying, "here are four ways of approaching reality, if you do not observe them or allow them you will not understand reality." The second relationship which each

principle has with the other is that they are all four defensive (apologetic) in tone. They are offered as helps in understanding positions that have been under attack or at least open to question. He seems to believe that once these interpretive keys are accepted then his world view will be basically accepted. Their tone indicates that they are not so much steps in a personal search for universal truth as they are perspectives from which to explain a body of truth that has been given.

The implication of Lewis' methodological principles is that he does not find truth to be the piecemeal result of a personal philosophical search but rather finds it to be a given body that must be accepted and assimilated into life. His mission, then, is to understand and explain the various facets of that body of truth.

This does not mean that Lewis made no honest quest for truth. He at one time considered himself an atheist and in his spiritual autobiography, Surprised By Joy, he traces his step by step journey to a position of Christian theism. But that journey is made less on the basis of overwhelming proofs for the existence of God than it is on his conviction of the untenableness of his former philosophical position.[6] Coupled with a shift from realism to a personalized blend of idealism there came an understanding of the relationship between the emotion, joy, and the thing to which the emotion points. The basis of his conversion was interior intellectual and emotional conflict leading to surrender and change,

rather than exterior evidence and logical proofs leading to altered ways of reasoning.

His biographers underline the experience-centered aspects of his conversion by referring to a note in an unpublished early account of the conversion.

> In this book I propose to describe the process by which I came back, like so many of my generation, from materialism to a belief in God. If that process had been a purely intellectual one, and if I were therefore simply giving a narrative form to a work of apologetic, there would be no place for my book. The defence of Theism lies in abler hands than mine. What makes me bold to contribute my own story is the fact that I arrived where now I am, not by reflection alone, but by reflection on a particular recurrent experience. I am an empirical Theist. I have arrived at God by induction.[7]

His religious writings, therefore, reflect his conversion experience. The acceptance of God as the answer to human need is consciously asserted and then philosophical proofs are added as evidence. Lewis nowhere systematically examines the presupposition that God is. Rather he accepts that God is and that the Christian interpretation of God is the correct interpretation and then he uses the dialectical method to show how reasonable it is to make the claim. In that sense, then, though he sometimes appears to be rationalistic in approach, there are rather substantial elements of fideism in his thought. His heart is with the Hebrews who accepted the existence of God intuitively, feeling there were <u>prima facie</u> proofs in the universe that God was there. That profoundly affects his writings about God and explains why he spends much more time exploring the

various aspects of God than he does examining the arguments for God's existence and other basic presuppositions.

With the understanding, then, that Lewis uncritically accepts large segments of truth and then proceeds to enlarge and explain them, attention will be given to some of the specific elements of his view.

In his writings about God the outline of the so-called traditional Christian view of God can be recognized. James Sire's brief summary of Christian Theism's view of God as "infinite and personal (triune), transcendent and immanent, omniscient, sovereign and good,"[8] could serve as a topical index to Lewis' writings about God. The uniqueness of the writings lie, not in the topics dealt with, but in the exposition of the familiar topics.

In his discussion and explanation of the existence of God, there are three inferences that bear investigation. The first inference is that for the idea of justice to exist it must have an originator or guarantor outside the mind.[9] He reasons to that position by the analogy that a man would not recognize a line to be crooked unless he had some idea of straight. So his conclusion is that he could not have recognized that the universe was unjust if there was no idea of justice; and the idea of justice could not come from within himself since he was a part of the system he was calling unjust. If, however, it was a matter of a private idea then his argument against God's existence collapsed since it was predicated on the idea of the universe being

unjust and senseless. Another way of putting it is that it would be impossible to decide the universe is without meaning unless there is some idea of meaning, but where does that idea of meaning come from?

Three observations can be made about this inference. First, there are some helpful insights in the argument. It seems to be true that the idea of justice does correspond to some originator outside man for him to have such an idea, and that it does correspond to some kind of truth in relation to man for it (the idea of justice) would not endure through the ages otherwise. The second observation is that there might be ways of explaining the origination of justice other than the way Lewis explains it. If there is, indeed, another viable way of explaining the existence of ideas such as justice then Lewis' argument is greatly weakened. There is, for example, the possibility that the idea of justice is an idea produced through the psychological evolution of man. That is, man may have learned early on that if he was going to survive as a species, he would need to protect himself from himself and thus the growth of the idea of justice. A third observation is that much of the strength of Lewis' argumentation lies in skilled analogical reasoning that nevertheless may have flaws in that one side of the analogy may be materially different, causing the analogy to be misleading. In the discussion of the idea of justice and meaning Lewis uses two analogies or illustrations. He says one would have no idea of a crooked

lines unless there did exist some idea of a straight line; he says that if there had been no light in the universe and therefore no creatures with eyes then the idea of dark would not exist. The problem is that both of these examples are empirically verifiable, one can see a line whether straight or crooked, and one can see and feel light and darkness. Justice and meaning are much more abstract terms, they may both have empirical consequences, but they are not verifiable in the same empirical way as are crookedness and darkness. Thus the analogies are somewhat deficient.

A second inference in Lewis' discussion on the existence of God is that the existence of the laws of nature requires the presence of an impulse to feed events into them.[10] The laws of nature are simply the pattern of the way things look; they actually tell us nothing about the impulse that fills in the pattern. In making that inference, Lewis is implying that the laws of nature have objective existence. The alternative to that view is that the laws of nature are mental constructs that men build to explain and investigate the way the universe works. They are, therefore, one and the same with the real events in the universe. If the alternative view is accepted, that does not negate the impact of Lewis' inference that there has to be an impulse or drive towards destiny in all things, but it does effectively cripple the idea that the existence of the laws of nature makes necessary the presence of a separate power to fill them out.

A third major inference in Lewis' discussion of the existence of God is that the existence of concrete individual things indicates that the creator of the natural order is therefore a concrete individual God. A major premise in the foundation of that argument is that like produces like. The exact statement is

> Unless the origin of all other things were itself concrete and individual, nothing else could be so; for there is no conceivable means whereby what is abstract or general could itself produce concrete reality.[11]

This is a very difficult argument to understand. The difficulty is resident in the fact that while there are concrete, individual, determinate things those things are also diverse. A flamingo is considerably different from a German general. The difficulty then is how is God like both of them if like produces like. Lewis seems to be saying that the connection is something he calls the "opaque brute fact of existence" or another way of saying it is to say "concreteness." The problem is when one extracts from things common qualities such as "existence" and/or "concreteness" one is talking in general terms not in concrete individual terms. Thus, either Lewis is not understood at this point or he is wrong when he says there is no conceivable means by which what is abstract or general can produce concrete reality.

In his discussion of God's relationship to all existence, Lewis arrives at some traditional conclusions. His emphasis that God is the ground of all existence, that He

has the ability to create things other than Himself, that all creation is in some sense reflective of qualities or characteristics in God, are not unique to Lewis and are offered from a stance of authority rather than from a process of either inductive or deductive reasoning. In those areas in which he does look for basic reasons Lewis takes refuge in the position that one can only know in part and any language is in some sense inadequate since God is so much greater than the reach of man's understanding. His writings in this area, then, have the net effect of being primarily devotional rather than dialectical.

There are some philosophical problems raised by some of his assertions in this section. His concept of God's relationship to space/time is understandable in its intent but actually raises more questions than it answers. Besides those questions noted earlier,[12] there is the more essential question of man's relationship to reality. If God is reality per se and if He is outside of and completely unaffected by time, then what is the reality content of the passing of time as man perceives it? Why is there the cycle of maturation and deterioration in all living things? Is that cycle the impermanent illusion of Buddhist thought while reality is the invisible universals? If that is true, then how can Lewis say that God is in all things or that all things are in God, whichever may be the more accurate? If ultimate reality is beyond human experience in time or materially different from experience in time, then is what

is called experience non-reality? It is no small question for if the time sequence (and its cyclic effect demands that it is more than a mode of perception) is reality, then God is not outside of it, and if it is non-reality, one is forced to a position of either an illusory material world or a dualism that Lewis goes on record as opposing.

The theodicy in Lewis' world view is an area of some strength. While it is not as extensive and comprehensive as some later works on the subject, what is said is significant and helpful in his basic definition of omnipotence as the ability to do what is intrinsically possible or self consistent. Furthermore, he wastes no time speculating about what might have been and though he implies that this is the best possible world, he also acknowledges that one can have only vague ideas of any world that would be essentially different from this one and such a world is therefore so hypothetical as to be meaningless for discussion. The assertion that an independent and "other" environment is necessary for man by which he may identify himself is supported by psychological research; and that that same kind of environment is necessary to insure man's freedom is a well reasoned position on Lewis' part.

The parts of his theodicy which appear less certain from a critical point of view are the emphasis on "soul making" and the insistence that God has no needs. The theoretical foundation of God allowing man to suffer for man's own good is speculative in nature. The speculation is

that God accomplishes the refinement of man by allowing him to suffer. Thus man is improved by suffering; but all people are aware of examples of suffering having the opposite effect. That is, they are aware of men who have become petulant, atheists and even unconscious (and in that sense, useless) vegetables through suffering. There is no way of calibrating either the effects of suffering on the individuals or even the percentage of those who are helped or hindered by pain, but the problem still remains, if suffering is for man's refinement, why does it often appear to have a somewhat opposite effect?

The second area of the theodicy that is suspect is not directly a part of the problem of pain but is related to it in Lewis' writings. It is his insistence that God does these things for man as a result of a nature that is wholly giving and that has no needs of its own. As discussed above, it is very difficult not to believe that God needs to give.[13] To say, as Lewis does, that if God chooses to need man, it is because man needs to be needed, is to skirt the issue (because man is God's creation). He precedes man in existence as creator and therefore it is impossible for man to need to be needed unless He created that within man, and if He created that within man, it was so that it would correspond to something already in the universe (to use Lewis' kind of reasoning) and that "something already there" must be the need in God to give.

There are a number of questions that Lewis' view of man is designed to answer--the why of man's good and bad

potential, the balance between the individual needs and his place in community, his place in the universe in relation to the rest of creation, and man's knowing abilities and capacity. The answers given from these questions are consistent, even predictable, given his bias of purposive theism. Man is a creature who rises or falls as he accepts or refuses God's purpose in his life. His ability to refuse is predicated on a shared omnipotence that God grants because it is the only way of guaranteeing a love that is freely given, and no other kind of love is worthy of the name. This is a position that is admittedly debatable.

There is a great deal of emphasis put on man's reasoning powers, the emphasis being that reason is not just an ability isolated in man but that something in the universe corresponds to the ability. The universe responds to man's knowing attempts because it is logical at heart. There seems to be a major equivocation at this point in some of Lewis' writings because at times he indicates that reason is quite limited and at other times he indicates it is not. In some respects that equivocation can be explained by the fact that he believed that man's ability to reason is limited by the capacity of his brain, and that capacity can be extremely small. But, on balance, the seeming equivocation is directly due to the fact that Lewis was an epistemological dualist. He was a rationalist but he was a romantic as well. Christensen has summed it up in these

words,

> Reason and imagination for Lewis are the complementary human faculties for knowing. In the realm of facts, empirical evidence, sense objects, particulars, and so on, truth is known through reason. But transcendent Reality--knowledge of universals in the eternal realm--if it is to be known at all, must be grasped by imagination. In this respect Lewis was a romantic and his imagination primary.[14]

There are two areas in Lewis' exposition of man that are especially insightful and helpful, his exposition on the moral sense in man and his explanation of his relationship between the individual and his society.

The emphasis on the universal moral sense is empirically verifiable. Not that all men recognize the same things are right and wrong, but all men do have a sense of rightness and wrongness and even further make judgments of right and wrong. This is a fact that is too often either overlooked or discredited by moral philosophers but is emphasized by Lewis.[15] Other aspects of his moral philosophy that are well reasoned are: 1) that there must be an outside source for morality because this moral sense judges nature and even compels man to go counter to nature at times, 2) that in order to criticize traditional morality there has to be offered some kind of reason and implicit in that reason is some degree of oughtness that will point back to basic morality, 3) if morality is nothing other than a subjective feeling that can be changed at will, then there is no basis to criticize any idea of justice, and 4) moral rules are for man's intrinsic good and will

prevent a breakdown in the human machine. This position on morality is recognizably akin to the Ethical Idealist interpretations of men such as John Baillie though there is no indication in Lewis' religious writings that he is consciously embracing a moral school of thought. Nonetheless his is a vigorous and effective presentation of the position.

The attraction of Lewis' position on man's individuality in relation to society is in its balance. The tendency of man's view of himself has been to emphasize either his individuality to the neglect of his social setting or vice versa. Lewis steers a course between those two extremes by recognizing the predominance of the individual but also insisting that the nature of individuality includes the need to highlight its uniqueness in a social setting. The community, in turn, has the responsibility to safeguard the unique needs of the individual. To call the view a middle course would probably be a misnomer for it has a decided leaning toward the individual but it is at least a balanced view in that it incorporates the contributions of society to the individual and the individual expression in society.

Because of the integrated nature of Lewis' works, much that has been said about his view of God and Man applies also to his interpretation of Christianity. His view of God is intended to be a Christian understanding of God, his view of man, likewise is from the Christian perspective.

One of the things that makes Lewis' expression of his interpretation of Christianity unique is his conscious effort to retain the numinous quality. Much of modern thought has so subjected Christianity to rational analysis that the result has been a mix of humanistic ethics with a vague or highly abstract metaphysics, and sometimes the metaphysical element is completely missing. With his penchant for the literary forms of poetry and myth, Lewis restores the lost sense of wonder to a prominent place in Christianity. His success in doing so is considerable. There are here, as in many places in his writings, some obvious unexamined presuppositions, but he at least protects himself somewhat in showing how any interpretation of the universe, including scientific ones, must make many assumptions.[16]

The often quoted demand for decision concerning the divinity of Christ is rather simplistic and even unrealistic.[17] That is not to say that Lewis is wrong when he indicates that the Christ of the gospels presented himself as the Son of God. It is not even meant to indicate that Christ was not the Son of God. But to say he either must be accepted as that or else a madman does not necessarily follow; nor does it follow that he could not be a great teacher if he was wrong about his own identity. History would indicate that human nature is fluid enough that mixtures of truth and error not only may, but often do, live side by side within the same person. Indeed, Augustus

Caesar, a contemporary of Christ, allowed himself to be worshipped as Dominus et Deus and his accomplishments in administration, consolidation of empire and reforms were manifold. By Lewis' arbitrary standard, one would have to decide that Augustus was indeed Lord and God, or he was a madman and he must be rejected even as a good administrator. If Lewis would follow his own valuable guideline in listening to the voices of an age through the thought-forms of that age, he would remember that the claim to deity was a rather commonly tolerated claim in the ancient Mediterranean world.

The interpretation of Christianity as the culmination of all other religions has special merit.[18] Its merit lies not so much in the superiority of its argument as it does in the practical effects of the argument. Anytime the superiority of one religion over another is claimed, ethnocentristic premises are almost inevitably involved. The reason is that the claim usually begins from a basis of values and the values are the ones that that particular religion or religious culture identifies. The net effect is a circular argument which is very difficult to avoid when one is trying to assert the superiority of a religion. The problem is complicated by the fact that it is the nature of most religions to demand personal commitment to what they have identified as ultimate truth, thus they, by their very nature, have an exclusive tone to them. Where religions make no such demands, their truth seems unimportant and

their adherents few. Lewis' understanding of Christianity's superiority does not avoid the circular aspect of religious claims but does manage to make them less exclusive. He accomplishes this by looking for the universals in all religions and then showing Christianity as the culmination or the perfection of the various strands. There is still the ethnocentric value base, but there is the wholesome effect of allowing the superiority of a deeply held faith without denying the recognized values in other religions.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to accomplish two specific tasks in relation to the world view of C. S. Lewis. First, the major portion of the study has been given to the explication and the systematization of the elements of the world view implicit in his religious writings. In that task it is evident that Lewis' major metaphysical model is the universe as a single reality with a two level expression. There is the material reality that is called nature, and there is the spiritual reality that is supernatural in relation to the world of the five present senses. His major epistemological premise is that man responds to and comprehends the two levels of reality by his rational and imaginative abilities.

The second task the study has attempted is to test the world view in the light of philosophy and especially the discipline of philosophy of religion. In that regard some

conclusions are now warranted.

Lewis' world view is so filled with unexamined presuppositions that one can understand (and even appreciate) why he never claimed to be doing philosophy of religion. He shares large areas of interest with modern philosophy of religion, but his reasons for looking into those areas are primarily devotional and even evangelistic rather than philosophical. Therefore, while his writings are quite helpful in furnishing pointers toward truth and creative explanations of accepted truth, they do not really furnish proofs for foundational truth. His writings are most helpful for the Christian in explaining what Christians believe, but they offer little real help in explaining why they believe what they believe.

One of the areas of some confusion in Lewis' writings comes from the fact that he has no clearly identified hierarchy of religious and/or philosophical authority. Sometimes he appears to accept man's reason as final, sometimes experience and imagination. At other times he accepts scripture and church doctrine as authority and bends the back of reason and imagination to their service. Consequently, his readers are not always sure what vehicle he will ride next and especially why one will be chosen. One would imagine that Lewis would claim that reality is too "other" to be captured in one epistemological vehicle; and the point is well taken. But it would be most helpful to those who study his religious writings to have some formula

that would indicate when and why a particular way of knowing is selected. His insistence on the validity of reasoning, even to the point of claiming reason to be a supernatural element in man, does not rest comfortably beside his mild depreciation of philosophical definiteness in religious matters. His retreating to the ignorance imposed by a human limitation of understanding in the case of some accepted difficult doctrines is a bit inconsistent with his urging the settling of the philosophical question in a work like Miracles.

One of the reasons why the religious writings may fail to have a systematic quality about them is that they appear to be written in a defensive mood. He appears to choose most of his subjects in reaction to some (real or imagined) attack on Christianity. Indeed his criticism of modern thought forms seems to be based on a reaction to their criticism of Christianity, and he correctly sees that it is not just conclusion opposed to conclusion, but it is a whole system of thought warring against another system of thought.

This defensive tone in the writings has led some writers to conclude that there is a strident dogmatism in Lewis' religious writings. While he does not hesitate to speak positively about those things of which he is convinced, the tone of his claims is hardly strident. Despite his rather extensive body of writings, he claims that he knows very little, and if he is read carefully, it will be discovered that there is an unconscious humility in his

search to know, as well as an insatiable and even joyful curiosity.

Lewis' insistence upon knowing thought forms of other ages in order to have some objective basis for judging the present appears to have value. Especially admirable is the respect he gives to the voices of the past. He makes an effort to give them a careful hearing from the perspective of scholarly humility rather than from the smug superiority of an "advanced" age.

The broad appeal of Lewis' religious writings is some indication that he deals with substantive issues. He is like the classical philosophers in that sense. In Surprised by Joy, Lewis recounts part of a conversation he had one day with one of his pupils and Own Barfield. Lewis happened to refer to philosophy as "a subject." "It wasn't a subject to Plato," said Barfield, "It was a way."[19] Lewis refers to that conversation as an important indicator that he needed to do more than think or say or feel or imagine; truth was calling for commitment. Whether the truth is as he interprets and understands it or not, one has to appreciate the intensity of commitment Lewis brings to his understanding of what the universe and life is all about.

It was that sense of Lewis' commitment that inspired a reviewer of his last book (Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer) to observe that Lewis had a "grasp of the reality of God, the determination to put truth before passing fashion, the apprehension of the mystery and the glory of grace."[20]

It was the same sense of commitment that caused Lewis to patiently respond to hundreds of letters that came to him from many different world-wide sources asking help with personal, religious problems. It was that commitment that gave him the sense of urgency to say, "All that is not eternal is eternally out of date."[21]

The world view of C. S. Lewis therefore commands respect. It is not just an intellectual structure designed by a disinterested, dispassionate observer. It is rather a picture of reality from the perspective of a person who was engaging questions of ultimate meaning to him and to all others who seek to understand their universe.

ENDNOTES

[1]This phrase was used by Lewis in corresondence with his friend, Sheldon Vanauken, who was working through his grief over his wife's death. Vanauken uses the term as the title for the book recounting his experience.

[2]Lewis, "Learning in War Time," The Weight of Glory, p. 50.

[3]St. Augustine, "Treatise on the Profit of Believing," translated by Rev. S. D. F. Salmond, D.D., Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), Vol. III, p. 362, paragraph 31.

[4]Lewis, "Transpositions," The Weight of Glory, pp. 16ff.

[5]Ibid., p. 24.

[6]Lewis, Surprised by Joy, pp. 208-229.

[7]Green & Hooper, op. cit., p. 113.

[8]Sire, op. cit., p. 24.

[9]Cf. supra, p. 40.

[10]Cf. supra, p. 41.

[11]Cf. supra, p. 42.

[12]Cf. supra, p. 53ff.

[13]Cf. supra, p. 66.

[14]Michael J. Christensen, C. S. Lewis on Scripture (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1979), p. 100.

[15]Cf. supra, p. 81.

[16]Cf. supra, p. 34.

[17]Cf. supra, p. 97.

[18]Cf. supra, p. 101ff.

[19]Lewis, Suprised by Joy, p. 225.

[20]Green & Hooper, op. cit., p. 297.

[21]"C. S. Lewis Goes Marching On," Time, Vol. 110, December 5, 1977, p. 92.

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