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FOREWORD

The Great Divorce (GD) first came before the public in weekly installments as “Who Goes Home” or “The Grand Divorce,” published by *The Guardian*, from November 1944 through April 1945. But the Anglican newspaper was not the only voice for Clive Staples Lewis during these two years. *Beyond Personality* also appeared in 1944, plus eighteen articles in a variety of magazines, and the first eight installments of “Who Goes Home.” In 1945 *That Hideous Strength* and sixteen articles on a variety of topics were published, plus the remaining fifteen installments of “Who Goes Home.” Finally, in January 1946, the twenty-three installments were published in book form as *The Great Divorce*. (Hooper, *C. S. Lewis*: 804-5, 823-828).

Clearly, Lewis was in his prime during the war years, being in his mid-forties. *The Screwtape Letters* began to appear weekly in 1941 (also in *The Guardian*), and this imaginary correspondence reveals his preoccupation with the fragility of human life. Not only did the aggressors of World War II threaten civilization itself, mankind must also struggle against temptations of all sorts devised by sinister beings of the spirit world.

Lewis was also profoundly interested in the condition of souls between death and the resurrection, as many of his writings show. After all, the choices souls make there, and back on earth, eventually lead to one of two possible destinations. To explore human existence in the intermediate state, and also what Christ accomplished when He descended into Hades, Lewis decided to go there himself, as did Dante before him, and Virgil* before Dante.

It is not surprising then, that GD is a summation of these and other theological issues that Lewis was working through since his conversion more than a decade ago. Add to his theology a rich background in mythology, his enjoyment of and deep familiarity with Dante and Milton,* the impact of the revelations of Julian* of Norwich, to mention just a few influences, and the result is one of the most powerful expressions of the twentieth century of an outstanding intellect at the height of its powers.

An interesting anecdote from someone who had the opportunity to speak to Lewis about GD shows that he found personal satisfaction in what he had

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written. On Friday, July 20, 1956, Kathryn Lindskoog met with Lewis and his brother Warren for some seventy-five minutes at the Royal Oxford Hotel. When she commented that *The Great Divorce* was her favorite book of his, Lewis was pleased and said that it was his “Cinderella” (Lindskoog, *Meeting*, 14). Like the story book character, he felt it was suffering from undeserved neglect. And yet, he told Kathryn, it was in his opinion a “far better book” than *The Screwtape Letters*, whose popularity surprised him.

Today, more than fifty years after that conversation, *The Screwtape Letters* has become a classic; translated into many languages and one of the most well-known works by Lewis. But Cinderella still labors in obscurity, eclipsed by her more popular sister and still waiting for her fairy godmother to appear. And yet these two “daughters” of Lewis arrived only a few years apart, both first appeared in weekly installments, and even in the same Anglican newspaper. Why has one become the favored child and the other not?

Let’s begin with *The Screwtape Letters*. The novelty of the approach, skillful writing, and much good advice have given this correspondence wide appeal. Readers willingly suspend their disbelief and enjoy pretending to overhear what devils write to each other. Their humorous names, scarcely-concealed dislike for each other, and the many problems they have with the human race have given hope to millions of readers. Fallen angels may be more powerful than any human, but with God’s help and knowing the secrets Screwtape meant to conceal, Hell’s deceptions can be avoided and temptations overcome.

Lewis paid a heavy price for his success. His technique (“diabolical ventriloquism” SOT: 152) was a brilliant idea, but it also produced in him “...a spiritual cramp. The work into which I had to project myself while I spoke through Screwtape was all dust, grit, thirst, and itch. Every trace of beauty, freshness, and geniality had to be excluded” (SL: xiv). His personal life was also impacted by the readers who found their lives encouraged and strengthened by the lessons they learned from Screwtape’s letters. Many of them regarded Lewis as their spiritual mentor, and hundreds wrote to him. Lewis felt obliged to respond to each; he could (and did) reach many through this ministry, but it cost him many valuable hours until his death.

On the other hand, *The Great Divorce*, as Lewis himself noted, slumbers in relative obscurity. The vivid imagery and dramatic conversations together make *The Great Divorce* a remarkable *tour de force* of the imagination in service of theology. But because that theology arrives through his tour guide, through the dialogues between the Spirits and the Ghosts, by means of many historical figures and literary references, and is even embedded within the landscapes of Hell and Heaven, sorting out all these aspects can be a formidable challenge. The frequent allusions to the Bible and other (often obscure) sources also require an educational background many readers do not have nowadays. I

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believe this book will help sort things out.

To assist the reader who is not familiar with *The Great Divorce*, or does not have a copy handy, I have provided in Part I a narrative that summarizes the experiences of Lewis throughout his journey. These brief descriptions are given in italicized font for easy recognition.

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INTRODUCTION

THE DREAM

The Great Divorce consists of a wealth of details and descriptions built upon a very simple plot. Lewis imagines, as if in a dream, that he finds himself in a rather seedy part of a town that is empty and seems to stretch on endlessly. He finally comes to a bus stop and there joins a small group of people waiting to board. When the bus arrives, most of them find a seat and the journey begins; others have already quarreled and left the bus stop.

The bus soon leaves the ground, flying for hours through an empty void. Lewis meets several passengers during the trip and learns from them more about the grey town that now lies behind and below them. The bus finally approaches land and the passengers disembark to find themselves in a beautiful countryside that ought to be enjoyable and yet is not, since everything is incredibly hard, sharp, solid and dense. Before long, the permanent residents (Spirits) of this place approach, and the passengers (Ghosts) are met by someone they once knew in their earthly lives, or, in one case at least, by an angel. The conversations are gentle (most of the time) but also direct confrontations that are meant to help the Ghosts recognize their sins and ask for Heaven's help in removing them. Each Spirit is ready to assist a Ghost make spiritual progress but few souls are willing to surrender their pride, hatred or unbelief. Nearly all choose to return to the bus for the ride back to the grey town.

An unexpected surprise comes to Lewis in the midst of these experiences; he is hailed by an aged Spirit whose face is both simple and wise. On earth he was George MacDonald,* and Lewis is thrilled to have as his tour guide the Scottish minister who so profoundly influenced him throughout his life, even during his pre-Christian days. Now Lewis has someone to ask about the meaning of his dream, and through his guide, he can both ask and answer his own theological questions. Above all, he learns that the purpose of the journey is not to answer his questions about time, eternity or even to reveal what Heaven and Hell are really like, but to watch human souls determine their own destiny by the choices they make.

The dream comes to a dramatic climax in three parts. Lewis watches

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breathlessly the final encounter between a husband and wife and describes how Heaven truly blesses those who yield to God. Next Lewis has a vision in his dream of gigantic figures watching pieces move about on a chess board. These represent immortal human souls as they live out their earthly lives. And finally from the east come the first rays of dawn. All nature begins to celebrate, the resurrection is about to... well, Lewis never sees what follows because he is still only a Ghost and the full glory of God is far too much for him to endure. He cries out in terror, the dream is over, and Lewis awakes to find himself on the floor of his office.

THE GENRE OF THE DREAM

One of the reasons Lewis remains so popular with a great number of readers is that he used a wide variety of genres to express himself. Those who like children's stories will find them among the works of Lewis, while those who prefer poetry, correspondence, articles or books will find these also. In brief, Lewis carefully weighed both what he wanted to write, and the literary form that would most effectively convey his thoughts to the readers he wished to reach. *The Great Divorce* well illustrates this harmony between content and form.

The genre of *The Great Divorce* is an open question, because the book has so many unique features. Booksellers classify it as fiction, but many kinds of books are "fiction," so that label is not very helpful. Dante gave his journey to the Spirit World the title of "Comedy," a word that today's reader would interpret as a humorous story. But in Dante's time, a comedy was a sympathetic treatment of the lower classes of society and a plot describing their escape from difficult situations (Parker: 28). Dante gave that genre a transcendent quality by taking his readers to spiritual places not on the earth, and Lewis followed his example.

Today, "comedy" has a very different meaning for us, so I won't use this term to describe Lewis' *Divorce*. Journeys into the spirit world are much closer to the genre known as "apocalypse"; the Book of Daniel and the Revelation of John are two examples of apocalyptic literature in the Bible. In essence, apocalyptic literature is revelatory literature, because the author claims to have received supernatural information about places in the spirit world and/or the future of the world. Typically these revelations come in the form of dreams and/or visions, and there is always a "mediator" (usually an angel) who explains the meaning of the revelations to the human recipient.

Some apocalypses, including the book of Revelation, also feature a Heavenly "tour," wherein the human is taken up into the spirit world and there sees many wonderful (and sometimes frightening) things. The human is led

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around by a “tour guide”; again, usually an angel, who can answer his questions about the meaning of what he sees. Neither Dante nor Lewis claimed to have experienced an actual trip, but both had their tour guides who “revealed” (so to speak) to them biblical truths concerning God’s redemptive purposes and human responses to them.

SOURCES THAT INFLUENCED LEWIS

*THE REFRIGERIUM**

Walter Hooper documents that Lewis read the works of Jeremy Taylor* in 1931. In his sermon on “Christ’s Advent to Judgement,” Taylor quotes from Prudentius, a fourth century Christian poet who wrote about times of refreshment (Latin “refrigerium”) in Hell. The basic idea which fascinated Lewis and provided the initial impetus for *The Great Divorce* is “holidays” in Hell, when the fires cool down somewhat, the torments lessen, and the damned are able to relax for a time. (Hooper, CSL: 279)

This interesting tradition plays only a minor role, if any, when Lewis describes his journey to the grey town. He never refers to holidays in Hell, and since his description of the place does not include the traditional fires and torments, there is no place in the dream for them to subside temporarily. Lewis’ nod to Prudentius consists of souls being able to leave the grey town, journey to Heaven, give the Spirits a piece of their mind, and then return to Hell. If they choose to return, at least they have had a brief respite from the depressing atmosphere of the grey town. But it’s hardly a holiday since Heaven proves to be even more uncomfortable than the grey town.

*WILLIAM BLAKE**

Lewis openly reveals his indebtedness to a number of other sources as he writes. In fact, the first word of the Preface to *The Great Divorce* is “Blake”. He was referring to William Blake (1757-1827), who wrote *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, a satire of Emanuel Swedenborg* whose teachings of morality actually crippled man’s energy and genius in Blake’s opinion. Lewis is not sure he even understands Blake’s *Marriage*, and after reading it more than once myself, I cast my vote with Lewis.

But Lewis had no intention of discussing Blake’s views; the title was the starting point Lewis wanted, and Blake represented for him all those who have attempted to blur the distinction between Heaven and Hell. No such “marriage” or even close proximity is possible; Heaven and Hell can never meet, argues Lewis. “If we insist on keeping Hell (or even earth) we shall not see Heaven: if we accept Heaven we shall not be able to retain even the

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smallest and most intimate souvenirs of Hell” (10).

This insistence upon an absolute “either or” is one of the core principles of the book. Lewis describes a variety of people from all walks of life who have one thing in common; they each must choose between Heaven and Hell. Each of them has a different sin that must be removed, but they, and all of humanity, choose between the same two destinations. No one has been or ever will be exempt from that all-important decision.

Naturally, some have already made many moral choices during their earthly lives, and perhaps those choices have so shaped them that no further choice is possible. Only God knows when all hope is gone. Others, perhaps most humans, are still choosing, and Lewis is particularly interested in souls that have not yet made their final decision. Heaven is a very difficult choice for them because life on earth, a fallen planet, tends to shape souls so that they become reluctant to surrender completely by owning up to faults that have become embedded in their personalities. But if the eternal destiny of a soul is still undecided, Lewis believed that Heaven would lend its assistance to anyone willing to confess his sins and accept the divine grace needed to remove them.

VIRGIL

Lewis is by no means the first writer to envision a trip to the realm of the dead. The great Latin poet Virgil also described such a visit in his *Aeneid*, an unfinished work of twelve books. The first six books of the epic are the Latin counterpart to Homer’s *The Odyssey*, and the final six books constitute Virgil’s version of Homer’s *Iliad*. The epic tells how the Trojan hero Aeneas escapes from the sacking of Troy and makes his way to Italy. During the voyage, a storm drives him to the coast of Carthage, where the queen Dido welcomes him, and under the influence of the gods falls deeply in love with him.

Jupiter recalls Aeneas to his duty, however, and he slips away from Carthage, leaving Dido to commit suicide, heart-broken and cursing Aeneas. But the gods must be obeyed. On reaching Cumae, in Italy, Aeneas consults the Cumaean Sibyl, who tells him his future holds “grim wars” with much bloodshed, and urges him to face them with courage.

Aeneas tells her why he has come; he wishes to visit Anchises his father in the underworld. The Sibyl tells him the preparations he will need to make, and he sets out to complete them. After he has found a golden bough from a tree in the forest to bring to Proserpine, and after they have sacrificed many animals to the gods of Hades, Aeneas descends with her into the realm of the dead. Virgil describes this remarkable tour in Book VI of the *Aeneid*, lines 262-898. The journey is not for the faint-hearted; Aeneas sees “Centaur and

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double-shaped Scyllas, and the hundredfold Briareus, and the beast of Lerna, hissing horribly... Gorgons and Harpies, and the shape of the three-bodied shade" (*Aeneid*, Book VI. 285-290).

Aeneas also sees the boatman, Charon, ferry across the river Styx those shades whose bones were buried, while those without a funeral and proper burial must do penance for 100 years before they can cross over to the various places of the dead. He finds Dido, the queen who killed herself when he left her to continue his journey and tries to make peace with her, but she spurns him. Moving on, he hears within a mighty stronghold the agonies of those who did evil on earth, and sees many other places in the underworld. Finally he comes to the Elysian fields, where the souls of the good and brave abide; spending their time relaxing, exercising, reciting poems, singing, and enjoying other pleasant pursuits.

Here in the Paradise of Elysium Aeneas meets Anchises and they embrace. With his father as guide, Aeneas beholds the vast multitude of souls that will once again be born up on earth when their purification is complete. Among them are those who will be his own descendants and he watches in wonder as the future heroes and founders of Rome pass before him. Finally, Anchises escorts him to the two gates of Sleep, and there dismisses Aeneas and the Sibyl. Their journey through the underworld is safely concluded, and Aeneas returns to the ships and still more dangers that await him on his quest to settle in Italy and so fulfill the prophecies that foretold the rise of the Roman Empire.

DANTE

Some twelve hundred years after Virgil described the regions of the dead, Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) decided to visit there as well, but now from a Christian perspective. The great Italian poet paid tribute to Virgil by enlisting him as his guide through the Purgatory and Inferno (Hell) parts of his *Commedia*, later called *La Divina Commedia*, or *The Divine Comedy*, perhaps the last great piece of literature from the Middle Ages. Dante blended together Catholic theology, Aristotelian philosophy, geography, and his own great insights into human nature into a magnificent epic written to call the corrupt Italian society around him to righteousness.

As Dante was influenced by Virgil, Lewis followed in the footsteps of Dante, though he wrote in prose rather than poetry. Dante influenced Lewis in too many ways to list here, so I'll just mention two of the more important nods to Dante. Both writers make their journey after the descent of Christ and both agree that Christ is the only one who was able to conquer Hades. Now those souls who submit to be purified by Christ are able to leave and

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and accompany them into deeper Heaven. They once were Ghosts themselves, but Lewis refers to the souls in the fourth group as “Spirits” to indicate they have been cleansed of sins and are now at home in their new “environment.” The pagination of GD seems to vary with each new edition, so in this section, my chapters will follow those of the book. Most of the chapters of GD are quite brief, so the reader can easily follow the discussion no matter which edition is being used.

PART TWO: THE “GEOGRAPHY” OF THE GREAT DIVORCE

After we have made the acquaintance of the people Lewis observed, the discussion will return to the beginning of the book to study the places he visited. Lewis described these places in the spirit world as if they were places on earth, since (as he knew full well) humans have no other vocabulary at their disposal. But since Lewis never had an actual “tour” of the spirit world, do his imaginings have any value? In the opinion of this author, they have great value. Not because Lewis revealed how Hell or Heaven actually looks, sounds and feels, but because he created his landscapes to convey theological truths, as I will demonstrate.

Three landscapes are described in this journey. Lewis first found himself in a dreary slum that seemed to go on forever. Its tremendous size, its emptiness, the climate and even the time of day all work together to convey what Lewis wanted to say about that part of the spirit world. Then he got on a bus and rode (flew, actually) across a vast abyss that separated the slum from his destination. Finally, he (and the other passengers) disembarked into a beautiful setting even larger than the slum. Part II will be the “Geography” section of this book, with a chapter each for the grey town, the Abyss and Heaven.

PART THREE: THE THEOLOGY OF THE GREAT DIVORCE

After I have explained the theological implications of the choices people make and the places Lewis described, it will be time to join together the rest of the pieces of Lewis’ theology in this book. More specifically, the central discussion will include how Lewis understood the descent of Christ into Hades, what he accomplished there, the implications of his descent for all humanity, and the parts both humans and Heaven play in the process of sanctification. Even the bus itself, “heraldically coloured,” and the Driver who seemed “full of light,” have their theological meanings in the dream. All of these subjects, and others, are spokes radiating outward from the central issue; the final and most important choice every human must make.

Lewis clearly believed Christ descended into Hades, and that sanctification continues after death, but what precisely were his views, and

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can they be supported by the Scriptures? Does his theology imply the doctrine of Purgatory, and if so, does Lewis agree with the Catholic understanding of Purgatory or does he have his own views? Do people really get a “second chance,” and if so, would that remove the urgency of the Great Commission? And even if the Church does someday carry out the instructions of Jesus so that everyone alive hears about the good news of salvation in Christ, what of the untold billions who didn’t hear because they happened to live before Christ or before the Gospel came to their cultures? Will they be lost or will God somehow reach them as well? Much of this discussion will reflect my earlier treatment of sanctification after death in *C. S. Lewis: A Guide to His Theology*, and I am grateful to Blackwell Publishing Ltd. for their generous permission to use material from this book.

Lewis faced these and similar questions with all the Scriptures, imagination and logic at his disposal. He was honest enough to acknowledge the limits of his understanding, even while he arrived at conclusions so far-reaching they pertain to every son of Adam and every daughter of Eve who have ever lived and ever will live. Read on, and I think you will agree with me that *The Great Divorce* may be the most important theological book Lewis ever wrote.

Part I

The “Sociology” of *The Great Divorce*

Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! (Joel 3:14)

Chapter 1:

At the Bus Stop

THE OFFENDED WOMAN

Lewis dreams that he has been walking for hours through a dingy, deserted town that seems to stretch on forever. Rain is falling and an unchanging dusk adds to the gloomy setting. He finally notices a small group of people waiting at a bus stop. Hungry for some human companionship, he joins the queue, wondering if there will be room on the bus for everyone.

No sooner does Lewis get in line, but a “waspy” woman leaves, remarking to the man (perhaps her husband) next to her, “Very well, then. I won’t go at all. So there.” Then the man departs as well, protesting that he had only been trying to please her (14).

The first impression Lewis gives of the people in the grey town is their tendency to quarrel with each other. Indeed, their inability to get along is the chief characteristic of the place. One wonders, even on earth are there any marriages immune from the “wounded pride” syndrome? (And not just marriages are affected.)

Lewis touched on this subject in *The Screwtape Letters*. Screwtape explains this as unselfishness gone bad and tells Wormwood to strive for this result:

In discussing any joint action, it becomes obligatory that A should argue in favour of B’s supposed wishes and against his own, while B does the opposite. It is often impossible to find out either party’s real wishes; with luck, they end by doing something that neither wants, while each feels a glow of self-righteousness and harbours a secret claim to preferential treatment for the unselfishness shown and a secret grudge against the other for the ease with which the sacrifice has been accepted (SL: 122).

What led to this falling out between the woman and the man? Lewis doesn’t reveal their prior conversation, but the man does say “Pray don’t imagine that I care about going in the least. I have only been trying to please *you*, for

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peace sake” (14). His words imply that he is willing to sacrifice his own desires to please her, a noble act which will earn him the “glow of self-righteousness” that Screwtape was advocating. She in turn would rather be the martyr than let him sacrifice for her and gain moral superiority over her. Neither is happy, they both feel justified in nursing a secret grudge against the other, they miss the bus, and Screwtape scores another victory.

THE SHORT MAN AND THE BIG MAN

The quarreling couple leaves and Lewis moves up in the line. But this brings him next to a Short Man who is scowling at him with obvious disapproval. Before long, a Big Man comes to his rescue.

We aren't told what the Short Man dislikes about Lewis; only that he tells the man in line before him that he is not used to this “sort of society”. (14) But the Big Man takes Lewis's side, and seems to think the Short Man was referring to both of them. When Lewis doesn't respond to the insult, the Big Man acts, striking the Short Man in the face and knocking him into the gutter. “Let him lay” he says in his own defense, “I'm a plain man... and I got to have my rights same as anyone else, see?” (14) Just where his “rights” come in isn't clear, unless the Big Man thinks he has the “right” to dispense his version of justice wherever needed. But there is no doubt about how the life he led on earth has shaped his soul. He is a bully who insists on his own “rights” and will use force to preserve them. He has replaced the Golden Rule with rule by might.

THE UNISEX COUPLE

The line continues to shrink when another couple steps away. They are so unisex in dress, voice and mannerisms that Lewis is not sure of the gender of either one. More interested in each other than catching the bus, they leave—perhaps to a secret rendezvous somewhere (15). There is, of course, nothing wrong with being in love. But spiritual matters should have the highest priority.

THE CHEATED WOMAN

Just before the bus arrives, the line shrinks again when a man offers a woman who is concerned about there not being enough seats on the bus five bob to exchange places with him. (A “bob” is a shilling; in 1945 five shillings would be worth approximately ten dollars today.) He takes her money, but then refuses to give her his place when she leaves her own. The others laugh and refuse to let her back in line.

The bus arrives, painted in vivid colors, and operated by a figure of imposing

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authority. The passengers complain to each other about his radiant appearance; one even wants to strike him. Nevertheless, they do embark, fighting “like hens” (15) to get on, and yet the bus is only half full after everyone has taken a seat. Lewis enters the bus last, and takes a seat in the back hoping to avoid the others, but to no avail.

THE POET

No sooner is Lewis seated than a “tousle-headed youth” joins him, eager to talk to someone. He seems to identify with Lewis, as did the Big Man, and expects him to share his feeling of superiority to the others. Things are now reversed. The Short Man in the line didn’t like the company of Lewis, while this youth prefers it to the other passengers. Either way, Screwtape would be proud. He reassures Wormwood in his third letter that even though his patient has started attending church, all is not lost since he thinks “he is showing great humility... in going to church with these... commonplace neighbours” (14).

Few themes carry so much personal meaning to Lewis as this tendency of people to choose favorites, or enemies; often simply on appearance. His recollections of his time at Wyvern College were chiefly focused on the misery caused by all the cliques. The younger boys were abused by the older, including sexually, and Lewis would later write “I believe that in all men’s lives at certain periods, and in many men’s lives at all periods between infancy and extreme old age, one of the most dominant elements is the desire to be inside the local Ring and the terror of being left outside” (“The Inner Ring” in WG: 146). He adds in the same essay, “Of all passions the passion for the Inner Ring is most skillful in making a man who is not yet a very bad man do very bad things” (154). No wonder Screwtape reminded his nephew that for his patient, “The idea of belonging to an inner ring, of being in a secret, is very sweet to him” (SL: 113).

The young ghost next tells Lewis he can’t understand why the passengers on the bus want to come at all, since they have become used to the cinemas and shops of the grey town and now find life there comfortable. He claims that he missed the first bus because he was trying to “wake people up.” But, as it turns out, his intention was not to send them to the bus stop but to start a “little circle” of people who would listen to what he had written and give him intelligent feedback. Now the unfortunate Lewis is cornered, and the would-be author pulls out a sheaf of papers hoping that he will look at them.

For all his faults, the young ghost functions as the first “tour guide” for Lewis. His complaints about the lack of intellectual life in the grey town help Lewis understand the flavor of the place. To his credit, he still has some interest in the life of the mind, though he is mistaken in his belief that the intellectual pursuits he can provide will help reform the grey town. Just then, the bus begins its journey and Lewis is spared the role of poetry critic.

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CHAPTER 2

On the Bus

THE POET'S STORY

As soon as the bus begins to move it leaves the ground and climbs higher and higher over the grey town. As far as the eye can see, the rooftops reach to the horizon.

Before a violent quarrel on the bus rescues Lewis from this would-be “literary giant,” he learns that the young man regards himself as a poet who has been singularly “ill-used” in life (18). None of the five schools he attended recognized his capabilities, appreciated his unique talents or provided examinations that were fair to him. Once he received a university education, he came to understand that his schooling had been biased because capitalism “vulgarized” the intellect, with the result that his genius did not receive due recognition (18).

Next came the war and when Russia joined forces with capitalist countries he had no choice but to become a conscientious objector. This was not a popular status, and so he decided to move to America, until that country also joined the war. Seeking a just society, he wanted to settle in Sweden but funds were lacking. The allowance from his Victorian father was grossly inadequate, and his girl friend proved to be possessive and a “mass of ... monogamic instincts” (she wanted to marry him and thought he should be faithful to her) and tight with her money. Only one option was left to him; suicide. Even then, he was sent to the wrong place.

Oh, the poor man – so mistreated! But beyond his self-centeredness, what is really interesting about the Poet ghost is that Lewis could easily be describing himself. The specific details about the Poet’s life reveal Lewis’ special interest in this person. And there are many points of correspondence. His father, Victorian in outlook and standards, meant well, but communication between the two was difficult and often strained after the death of Lewis’ mother. He also was sent to five schools: Wynyard School or “Belsen” for two years, 1908-1910; one term at Campbell College from September to

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December 1910; then Cherbourg House from 1911-1913 (called Chartres in SBJ); Malvern College (called Wyvern College in SBJ) from 1913-1914, and finally Oxford University, beginning in April 1917. He returned to his studies in January 1919 after military service and finished in 1923. (I'm not including his private tutelage under Kirkpatrick from 1914-1917 since he was the only student, he was not at a school with other students, and his studies there were much to his liking.)

Like the poet, Lewis didn't "fit" into any of these schools, though in all fairness, their influence upon him was often for the good. He disliked the emphasis upon sports, the cliques that excluded others, and the mistreatment of the younger boys by the older. He also suffered under at least one cruel (later certified as insane) headmaster, and many of his interests were outside of the prescribed studies.

His great youthful passion was to be a poet. There were obstacles, to be sure. Exams at Oxford required mathematics, Lewis's worst subject, and he was spared failure only because he was exempted from that (unfair!) part of the tests because he had served in the military. His father's allowance was inadequate, though in all fairness to him, Lewis did not tell him that he was supporting Mrs. Moore* and her daughter when he returned to his studies at Oxford after military service. And when Lewis wrote about the educational system in the west, he agreed (through Screwtape) with the Poet on the bus that the brightest students were being squelched because "democracy" was now interpreted (thanks to the philological experts of Hell) to mean that no student should excel over the others, lest the others be traumatized (SPT: 161-165).

The Poet ended his own life; did Lewis ever contemplate suicide? There is not much evidence either way, but his diary does reveal that his programs at Oxford were so fatiguing that at times death seemed more inviting than continuing with his studies. (AMR, 8 Sept 1923: 265) And just like the Poet, Lewis was at the center of the Inklings for many years; a small literary group that read portions of poetry or books in progress to each other. But by then the drive for fame had given way to the desire to place God above his own reputation, and to mentor the many people who wrote to him for spiritual advice.

And so Lewis has told part of his personal story through the Poet ghost; but only a part, thanks to the grace of God. Perhaps the Poet ghost will indeed stay, as he assured Lewis. But since he is looking forward to a place where his "finely critical spirit" will at last find "Recognition" and "Appreciation" (19), the environment of Paradise will not be to his liking until he makes the story of Lewis his own.

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IKEY'S PLAN

Before the Poet can inflict his poetry on Lewis, a quarrel breaks out. Knives are drawn, pistols are fired ("Make my day! Make my day!"), but since everyone is already dead, no harm is done. When the dust clears, Lewis finds himself in a different seat, next to an "intelligent-looking man with a rather bulbous nose and a bowler hat" (20).

Ikey is Lewis' new companion and he also serves as a tour guide, telling Lewis even more than the Poet did about the people in the grey town. The place is so empty, he explains, because people are constantly quarreling with each other. Unable to get along, they simply move away from everyone else. Those who have been there the longest are now light years away from the bus stop and there is no chance they will ever get on the bus.

But Ikey has a solution. The way he sees things, the problem is not just the quarrels people have with each other. After all, that's only human nature. Life back on earth was just the same. No, the real problem is that the souls in the grey town have no genuine needs. People can get whatever they want just by imagining it. And so Ikey has gotten on the bus so that he can bring back something real from Heaven. That way, with something to buy, people will start coming together again. He'll turn a profit and benefit society at the same time. Lewis wonders out loud if this economic reform will result in fewer quarrels, and Ikey isn't sure about that. Anyway, if he can bring people together, it may be possible to form a police force to keep order.

Lewis has certainly asked the right question, and he knows from experience what the answer will be. Communism at first certainly seemed promising from an economic standpoint, asking "from each according to his ability" and promising "to each according to his need," but history has shown that the system doesn't work. The industrious person loses the incentive to produce, since the state will take most of it and distribute it to others who are less motivated. And why should people be motivated since the state will provide for them even if they are poor workers?

Ikey means well, but economic systems exist to manage the production of goods and services. They can't magically transform people into model citizens willing to sacrifice for others. And the state that controls the distribution of goods and services all too often becomes corrupted by so much power. Economic reforms can certainly improve the living standards of a nation, but they do not bring salvation of souls. If they did, wealthy societies would have little need for police and prisons. The only hope for the earth, not to mention Purgatory, is the transformation of the soul that only God can accomplish. Until then, quarrels will continue to produce ill-will and separation.

NAPOLEON AND OTHERS

Through Ikey, Lewis learns the names of several historical people who now live a great distance from the bus stop. Tamberlaine* is there, a Mongol conqueror with a reputation for cruelty, and Genghis Khan* another Mongol ruler of the same repute. Much earlier than either of these is Julius Caesar*, the first dictator of Rome, and then forward again in time to Henry the Fifth* (21).

The last member of the “old chaps” is Napoleon*. Since he lived fairly recently compared to the others, his house (huge and built, logically enough, in the Empire style) can still be seen from the bus stop, though only as a tiny pin-prick of light. Since his arrival, he has gone downhill. Unable to stop pacing back and forth, he blames his defeats upon Josephine*, the English, and his generals Soult* and Ney*. Ikey is able to provide Lewis with this description of Napoleon because he spoke to two people who went to see him; a trip that required fifteen thousand years.

Napoleon is the only one of this group that Lewis actually describes (the others are too far away, so to speak), and the constant pacing of the French emperor reveals that he is no longer able to change and accept responsibility for his plight. He is truly in Hell. Dante leads the way here; all those in his Hell never rest. Their activities reflect their sins, and are “without rhyme or reason, which alternate only with a meaningless monotony or a sterile fixity. In all it does and is, damnation is without direction and purpose. Why not? It has nothing to do and all eternity to do it in” (*Purgatory*: 61).

THE EPISCOPAL GHOST

When Ikey tells Lewis that dusk in the grey town will become night, a fat, clean-shaven man in the seat in front of Lewis turns around to refute Ikey's belief. And so Lewis discovers that one of the passengers is a theologian. In fact, back on earth he was a bishop in the Episcopalian Church. The old theology of Hell and judgment are only outdated superstitions in the bishop's opinion, and Lewis learns from him that dawn will soon come, not night, symbolizing the grey town inhabitants turning toward spirituality. Not immediately, of course, but the bishop insists that change, that dawn, will come, adding a literary quotation to support his hope:

And not through “Eastern windows”* only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light.

Furthermore, now that the souls in Purgatory are freed from their bodies and the world of matter, the Episcopal Ghost believes the grey town is actually a spiritual city in which humanity can begin fully to realize its

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creative potential. In his opinion, Ikey's materialism will take humanity in the wrong direction. Spirituality, not economic reform, will release the "creative functions" of mankind.

Lewis used Ikey and the bishop to represent the two most important paths toward the reformation of human society that have been repeatedly tried throughout history. Ikey represents all those who have attempted to address the evils of society through economic reform. The twentieth century saw two major expressions of reform through economics (and revolution, if necessary), and both were reactions against ecclesiastical corruption. First, Communism appeared, doing away with the Russian tsar, characterizing religion as "the opiate of the masses," and promising to help people here and now. Later, in Latin America and Africa, Liberation Theology also called for economic reform, again rejecting any version of religion that promised Heaven to its followers but gave them little or no help in this life.

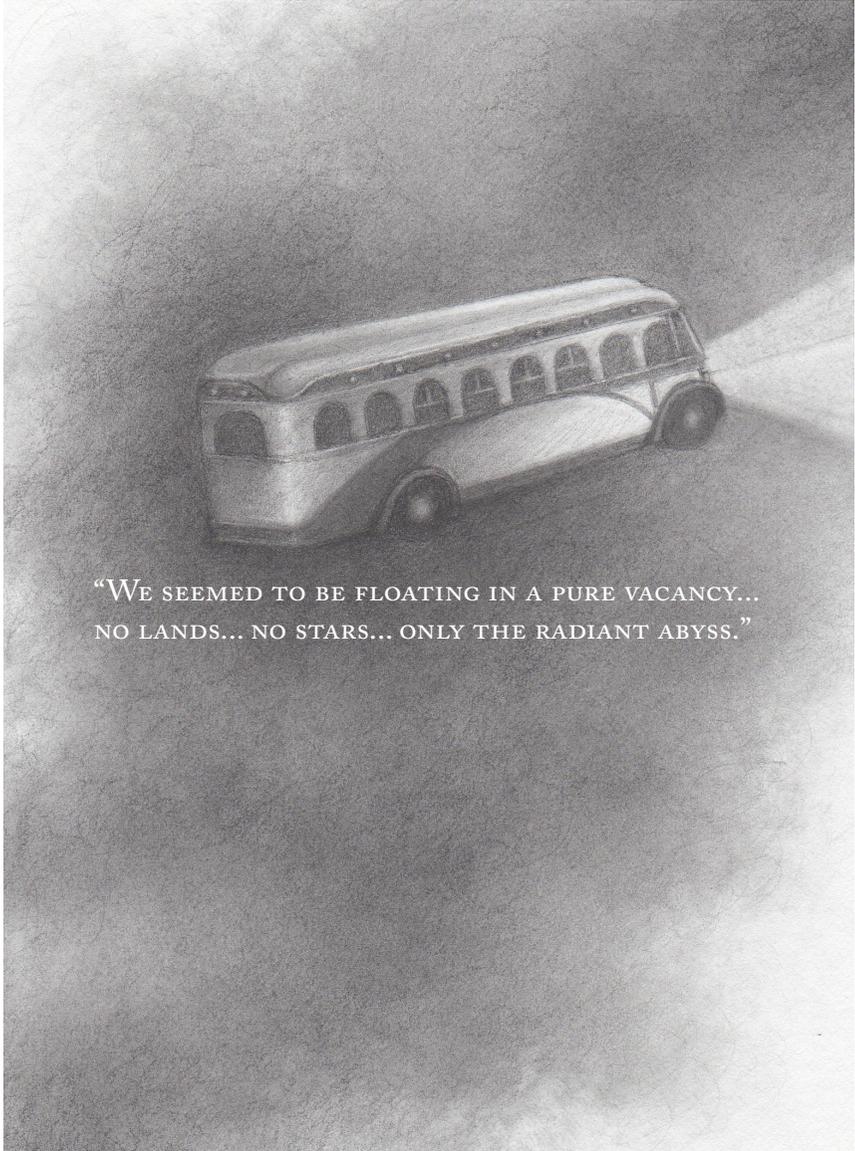
On the other hand, the theology of the Episcopal Ghost has its roots in ancient Gnosticism, which held that matter is evil and spirit good. The path toward spirituality is denial of the body and many in the early church turned to asceticism under the influence of Gnostic thought. Some even lived in caves or perched on top of pillars for many years in their struggle for purity. Now that the souls in the grey town have finally escaped their bodily "prisons," they are free from the sinful desires of the body and spiritual progress will no longer be held back by the struggle between body and soul.

Gnosticism became so strong an alternate version of Christianity emerged, teaching that Christ could not truly have been God in the flesh, since God as pure Spirit would not contaminate himself with matter. Rather, the man Jesus became divine when the Spirit came upon him at his baptism. Later, the Spirit departed during the crucifixion, leaving the man Jesus to die on the cross. In the recently discovered Gospel of Judas, a very Gnostic document, Judas did Jesus a favor by betraying him. The betrayal led to his death and death brought freedom from his body, the prison of flesh that Jesus needed to escape.

Both approaches have their strengths. Economic reforms do improve the lot of people, and the appetites of the body do need controlling. But escaping poverty through economic reform will not change the sinful nature of mankind. And the sins of the soul have a greater potential for evil than those of the body. Nor did Christ teach that the material universe is evil. Mankind must exercise stewardship over the earth, not reject it; use the physical body for His glory, not renounce or abuse it. The body will, after all, share in God's redemption through the resurrection. In the end, mankind's only hope is the inner transformation that comes through the divine life the believer has through Christ.

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Lewis now rides for hours in silence as the bus floats in a "pure vacancy" (26). The light grows stronger and the air sweeter, but the other passengers object when Lewis attempts to lower a window to let in some fresh air. "Want us all to catch our death of cold?" Finally the bus ascends to the top of a cliff and glides to a stop. Fighting and cursing, the passengers exit the bus until only Lewis is left.



CHAPTER 3

Arriving at Heaven

You have come to Mount Zion... and to the spirits
of just men made perfect. (Heb 12:22-23)

Where human spirits purge themselves,
and train to leap up into joy celestial.
(*Purgatory*, Canto i. line 506: 73)

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Lewis is the last one off the bus and when he steps outside, he finds himself in a space so huge that the solar system is an “indoor affair” by comparison (28). The pastoral landscape is beautiful in appearance, but everything is so solid and heavy that the blades of grass are as sharp and hard as diamonds. Even a single leaf is too heavy for Lewis to lift. In stark contrast to the landscape, the ghosts appear as transparent bubbles; mere stains on the countryside. One of the passengers is overcome by such real surroundings and darts back into the bus. And for the first and only time the bus driver speaks, telling the Big Man (who only wants his “rights”) that everyone may stay there as long as they wish (29).

A RESPECTABLE GHOST

One of the more respectable ghosts interrupts Lewis’s contemplation of the new world around him, and wonders if the management of the place has made a mistake in allowing the ghosts to come here, since they find their surroundings so uncomfortable. He soon drifts away, displeased to find himself in the company of his inferiors, and expecting someone to meet him. Lewis does not see his fate, but how will he respond when he meets others so superior to himself?

Alone once more, Lewis scans the distant horizon and sees forests, hills and valleys. Still farther away, mountains loom so high their tops are lost to sight. Hours later, bright objects appear and as they come closer, he can see that they are people; very solid, ageless in appearance, some robed and others not, but all of them glorious in appearance. Two more ghosts run for the bus in terror at the sight of them. Even Lewis becomes uneasy, and huddles together with the other passengers.

CHAPTER 4

The Big Man and Len

As the solid people arrive, they move with purpose toward the ghosts and Lewis minds his manners by moving away so as not to overhear. But the Big Man follows him, and in turn a spirit follows the Big Man, so Lewis has no choice but to follow the conversation.

The Big Man recognizes the spirit who has come to meet him as Len and is amazed to find him in Heaven, since back on earth Len had murdered Jack, a mutual acquaintance. Len readily acknowledges his crime: “Of course I did. It is all right now” (33); in fact Jack is there too and the Big Man will soon meet him.

But the Big Man cannot accept the fact that things are “all right now” and that Len admits such a serious crime so easily. Len is a “bloody murderer,” (but now redeemed by blood) and the Big Man is outraged to find him enjoying life in Heaven while he was down on earth living as best as he could in a place “like a pigstye” (33).

Forget about things being “all right,” it’s high time Heaven gave him his *rights*, insists the Big Man. That’s not a good idea, Len cautions him, because you really weren’t all that good and God has something better than what you (really) deserve. In fact, you were a cruel boss and you made things difficult for all of your employees, your wife and your children. Len confesses his hatred of him back on earth, adding that he murdered him many times in his heart. “That is why I have been sent to you now; to ask your forgiveness and to be your servant as long as you need one” (35-36).

Len does his best to persuade the Big Man to acknowledge his faults, but he wants no part of a Heaven that allows murderers to become citizens of Heaven. As for himself, admitting his faults and asking for grace would be too demeaning. “I’m not asking for anybody’s bleeding charity.” Len replies (with a wonderful pun), “Then do. At once. Ask for the Bleeding Charity” (35). But

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Len's invitation means giving up entering Heaven by his own efforts, and, just as bad, relying on Len (a murderer, after all) to help him get there. Encouraged by his ability to resist both Heaven's charity and Len's "apron strings" (36), the Ghost returns to the bus, grumbling and whimpering along the way.

CHAPTER 5

The Episcopal Ghost and Dick

Lewis is alone once again, but not for long. Two lions appear and begin playing together. He moves away to find the river he had seen before, hoping it will be a safer environment. Once there, he overhears another conversation; this time, between a blindingly white Spirit named Dick and the Episcopal Ghost who told Lewis on the bus that the grey town was a spiritual city and that morning would soon arrive. (from Chapter 4 on, Lewis capitalized “Spirit” and “Ghost”)

The clerical Ghost cheerfully greets Dick, expecting that his theological views will have mellowed since their discussions back on earth when he seemed rather narrow in his theology. But Dick hasn’t changed, and says that the Ghost has been in Hell, sent there for being an apostate. The Ghost takes offense at this, surprised that people would be punished for honest opinions. The soul-searching begins as Dick reminds him...

You know that you and I were playing with loaded dice. We didn’t want the *other* to be true. We were afraid of crude salvationism, afraid of a breach with the spirit of the age, afraid of ridicule, afraid (above all) of real spiritual fears and hopes... Having allowed oneself to drift, unresisting, unpraying, accepting every half-conscious solicitation from our desires, we reached a point where we no longer believed the Faith (41-42).

Lewis tasted many philosophies, including atheism, and no doubt “crude salvationism” struck him as distasteful before he finally gave in to God. He and the clerical Ghost trod the same path for a time. But now, to his credit, he plainly tells the Ghost (and so the readers of his book) through the Spirit named Dick to “repent and believe” (43). There is no other way but crude salvationism, and it begins with repentance, followed by accepting the “Bleeding Charity” the Big Man Ghost found so offensive. Why “Bleeding”? Because crude salvationism means trusting in the blood (death) of Christ for the forgiveness of sins and forsaking all the modern attempts to remove from Christianity the primitive concept of atonement by blood.

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Repentance, of course, means sincere regret for the sins of one's past, but Lewis takes a healthy approach to this difficult chore: ask forgiveness and move on. He almost makes it seem easy as the Spirit counsels the Episcopal Ghost: "I have been talking of the past (your past and mine) only in order that you may turn from it forever. One wrench and the tooth will be out. You can begin as if nothing had ever gone wrong" (42).

The yanking of a tooth metaphor would later become one of Lewis' preferred ways of describing Purgatory.

My favourite image on this matter comes from the dentist's chair. I hope that when the tooth of life is drawn and I am "coming round," a voice will say, "Rinse your mouth out with this." *This* will be Purgatory. The rinsing may take longer than I can now imagine. The taste of *this* may be more fiery and astringent than my present sensibility could endure. But More and Fisher shall not persuade me that it will be disgusting and unhallowed. (LTM: 109)

This view is certainly more encouraging than years and years of penitential suffering. But speculations of what Purgatory might be like should not obscure what is more important; Lewis' healthy approach to repentance. "We should, I believe, distrust states of mind which turn our attention upon ourselves. Even at our sins we should look no longer than is necessary to know and to repent them: and our virtues or progress (if any) are certainly a dangerous object of contemplation" (CLIII, "To Walter Hooper," November 30, 1954; 535).

Evidently, Dante helped Lewis on this point.

We must beware of the Past, mustn't we? I mean that any fixing of the mind on old evils beyond what is absolutely necessary for repenting our own sins and forgiving those of others is certainly useless and usually bad for us. Notice in Dante that the lost souls are entirely concerned with their past. Not so the saved (CLIII, "To Mary Willis Shelburne," June 5, 1961; 1274).

The Ghost still maintains that he "believes," despite the fact that he has abandoned the central doctrines of the faith, so Dick tries to make things easier by asking if the Ghost can at least believe in him, knowing that if they set off together toward the mountains, full faith will eventually be attained. The Ghost finally seems willing to consider this, but on one condition: a guarantee that he will be able to utilize his talents in "an atmosphere of free inquiry" (43). No, replies Dick, "you are not needed there," and besides, Heaven is a place of answers, not inquiry.

The Episcopal Ghost cannot accept this version of Heaven; such finality would be stagnation. In his opinion, "to travel hopefully is better than to arrive" (44). To counter this mistaken opinion, the Spirit repeatedly describes

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the wonders of “arriving;” of finding God himself. “You are in sight of Heaven” (43), “I will bring you to the land not of questions but of answers” (43), “Your thirst will be quenched” (44), “I will bring you to the Eternal Fact, the Father of all other facthood” (45), and the greatest of all promises, “You shall see the face of God” (43. To see God is also known as the Beatific Vision*). Sadly, none of these seem to outweigh the attraction of traveling hopefully, even with no destination in sight.

A little more probing by Dick uncovers just how liberal the Ghost's theology has become. He no longer views God as a Real Person but as an abstract concept, a “Supreme Value.” The Ghost describes Him as “purely spiritual. The spirit of sweetness and light and tolerance—and, er, service” (45). Other essential Christian doctrines have suffered the same fate.

In that spirit of service to others, the Episcopal Ghost suddenly remembers that he can't accompany Dick into Heaven; he has a paper to read next Friday for the theological society down there. His topic will explore how the theology of Jesus would likely have been more tolerant had he lived longer. What a waste; Jesus never had the chance to become more mellow with age. And the crucifixion was not the atonement for the sins of the world but a “disaster”. The conversation, and with it, all hope for the Episcopal Ghost, comes to an end. Unperturbed, and full of plans for his Theological Society, the Ghost departs while singing “City* of God, how broad and far” (47).

Lewis devoted more space to this sad encounter than any other conversation between a Ghost and a Spirit save one (Sarah Smith and Frank; Chapters 12-13). The importance of the Ghost is that he represents liberal theologians who find “crude salvationism” offensive and barbaric in an age of tolerance “Whatever works for you” is a much more enlightened perspective on life. What used to be regarded as sin is now simply an “alternate lifestyle.” “Spirituality” is the thing now, and Christianity does not have a monopoly on that. Besides, hasn't the modern Church left behind more the primitive concept of gods who demand blood sacrifices? And so the bishop found the path to popularity when he replaced the gospel of salvation with the social gospel: service to others.

Yes, service to humanity has been (and should be) one of the strengths of Christianity and Jesus Himself set an example of service when He washed the feet of His disciples. Service to others is the way many people first begin to grasp the love God has for them, but service is not salvation. Those who are served may become more receptive to the message of salvation, but all the deeds of loving kindness cannot bring forgiveness of sins and new life. Forgiveness comes from God, and that new life must also come from above. “This is the whole of Christianity. There is nothing else... the Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs”

OTHER BOOKS OF INTEREST

C. S. Lewis

C. S. Lewis: Views From Wake Forest – Essays on C. S. Lewis

Michael Travers, editor

Contains sixteen scholarly presentations from the international C. S. Lewis convention in Wake Forest, NC. Walter Hooper shares his important essay “Editing C. S. Lewis,” a chronicle of publishing decisions after Lewis’ death in 1963.

“Scholars from a variety of disciplines address a wide range of issues. The happy result is a fresh and expansive view of an author who well deserves this kind of thoughtful attention.”

Diana Pavlac Glyer, author of *The Company They Keep*

The Hidden Story of Narnia:

A Book-By-Book Guide to Lewis’ Spiritual Themes

Will Vaus

A book of insightful commentary equally suited for teens or adults – Will Vaus points out connections between the *Narnia* books and spiritual/biblical themes, as well as between ideas in the *Narnia* books and C. S. Lewis’ other books. Learn what Lewis himself said about the overarching and unifying thematic structure of the *Narnia* books. That is what this book explores; what C. S. Lewis called “the hidden story” of *Narnia*. Each chapter includes questions for individual use or small group discussion.

Why I Believe in Narnia:

33 Reviews and Essays on the Life and Work of C.S. Lewis

James Como

Chapters range from reviews of critical books, documentaries and movies to evaluations of Lewis’ books to biographical analysis.

“A valuable, wide-ranging collection of essays by one of the best informed and most acute commentators on Lewis’ work and ideas.”

Peter Schakel, author of *Imagination & the Arts in C.S. Lewis*

Shadows and Chivalry:

C.S. Lewis and George MacDonald on Suffering, Evil, and Death

Jeff McInnis

Shadows and Chivalry studies the influence of George MacDonald, a nineteenth-century Scottish novelist and fantasy writer, upon one of the most influential writers of modern times, C. S. Lewis—the creator of *Narnia*, literary critic, and best-selling apologist. This study attempts to trace the overall affect of MacDonald’s work on Lewis’s thought and imagination. Without ever ceasing to be a story of one man’s influence upon another, the study also serves as an exploration of each writer’s thought on, and literary visions of, good and evil.

C. S. Lewis & Philosophy as a Way of Life: His Philosophical Thoughts

Adam Barkman

C. S. Lewis is rarely thought of as a “philosopher” per se despite having both studied and taught philosophy for several years at Oxford. Lewis’s long journey to Christianity was essentially philosophical – passing through seven different stages. This 624 page book is an invaluable reference for C. S. Lewis scholars and fans alike

C. S. Lewis: His Literary Achievement

Colin Manlove

“This is a positively brilliant book, written with splendor, elegance, profundity and evidencing an enormous amount of learning. This is probably not a book to give a first-time reader of Lewis. But for those who are more broadly read in the Lewis corpus this book is an absolute gold mine of information. The author gives us a magnificent overview of Lewis’ many writings, tracing for us thoughts and ideas which recur throughout, and at the same time telling us how each book differs from the others. I think it is not extravagant to call C. S. Lewis: His Literary Achievement a tour de force.”

Robert Merchant, *St. Austin Review*, Book Review Editor

*Mythopoeic Narnia: Memory, Metaphore, and Metamorphoses
in C. S. Lewis’s The Chronicles of Narnia*

Salwa Khoddam

Dr. Khoddam, the founder of the C. S. Lewis and Inklings Society (2004), has been teaching university courses using Lewis’ books for over 25 years. Her book offers a fresh approach to the *Narnia* books based on an inquiry into Lewis’ readings and use of classical and Christian symbols. She explores the literary and intellectual contexts of these stories, the traditional myths and motifs, and places them in the company of the greatest Christian mythopoeic works of Western Literature. In Lewis’ imagination, memory and metaphor interact to advance his purpose – a Christian metamorphosis. *Mythopoeic Narnia* helps to open the door for readers into the magical world of the Western imagination.

Speaking of Jack: A C. S. Lewis Discussion Guide

Will Vaus

C. S. Lewis Societies have been forming around the world since the first one started in New York City in 1969. Will Vaus has started and led three groups himself. *Speaking of Jack* is the result of Vaus’ experience in leading those Lewis Societies. Included here are introductions to most of Lewis’ books as well as questions designed to stimulate discussion about Lewis’ life and work. These materials have been “road-tested” with real groups made up of young and old, some very familiar with Lewis and some newcomers. *Speaking of Jack* may be used in an existing book discussion group, Sunday school class or small group, to start a C. S. Lewis Society, or as a guide to your own exploration of Lewis’ books.

George MacDonald

Diary of an Old Soul & The White Page Poems

George MacDonald and Betty Aberlin

The first edition of George MacDonald's book of daily poems included a blank page opposite each page of poems. Readers were invited to write their own reflections on the "white page." MacDonald wrote: "Let your white page be ground, my print be seed, growing to golden ears, that faith and hope may feed." Betty Aberlin responded to MacDonald's invitation with daily poems of her own.

Betty Aberlin's close readings of George MacDonald's verses and her thoughtful responses to them speak clearly of her poetic gifts and spiritual intelligence.

Luci Shaw, poet

George MacDonald: Literary Heritage and Heirs

Roderick McGillis, editor

This latest collection of 14 essays sets a new standard that will influence MacDonald studies for many more years. George MacDonald experts are increasingly evaluating his entire corpus within the nineteenth century context.

This comprehensive collection represents the best of contemporary scholarship on George MacDonald.
Rolland Hein, author of *George MacDonald: Victorian Mythmaker*

In the Near Loss of Everything: George MacDonald's Son in America

Dale Wayne Slusser

In the summer of 1887, George MacDonald's son Ronald, newly engaged to artist Louise Blandy, sailed from England to America to teach school. The next summer he returned to England to marry Louise and bring her back to America. On August 27, 1890, Louise died leaving him with an infant daughter. Ronald once described losing a beloved spouse as "the near loss of everything". Dale Wayne Slusser unfolds this poignant story with unpublished letters and photos that give readers a glimpse into the close-knit MacDonald family. Also included is Ronald's essay about his father, *George MacDonald: A Personal Note*, plus a selection from Ronald's 1922 fable, *The Laughing Elf*, about the necessity of both sorrow and joy in life.

A Novel Pulpit: Sermons From George MacDonald's Fiction

David L. Neuhouser

"MacDonald's novels are both stimulating and thought-provoking. This collection of sermons from ten novels serve to bring out the 'freshness and brilliance' of MacDonald's message."
from the author's introduction

Behind the Back of the North Wind: Essays on George MacDonald's Classic Book

Edited and with Introduction by John Pennington and Roderick McGillis

The unique blend of fairy tale atmosphere and social realism in this novel laid the groundwork for modern fantasy literature. Sixteen essays by various authors are accompanied by an instructive introduction, extensive index, and beautiful illustrations.

Pop Culture

To Love Another Person: A Spiritual Journey Through Les Miserables

John Morrison

The powerful story of Jean Valjean's redemption is beloved by readers and theater goers everywhere. In this companion and guide to Victor Hugo's masterpiece, author John Morrison unfolds the spiritual depth and breadth of this classic novel and Broadway musical.

Through Common Things: Philosophical Reflections on Popular Culture

Adam Barkman

"Barkman presents us with an amazingly wide-ranging collection of philosophical reflections grounded in the everyday things of popular culture – past and present, eastern and western, factual and fictional. Throughout his encounters with often surprising subject-matter (the value of darkness?), he writes clearly and concisely, moving seamlessly between Aristotle and anime, Lord Buddha and Lord Voldemort. . . . This is an informative and entertaining book to read!"

Doug Bloomberg, Professor of Philosophy, Institute for Christian Studies

Spotlight:

A Close-up Look at the Artistry and Meaning of Stephenie Meyer's Twilight Novels

John Granger

Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* saga has taken the world by storm. But is there more to *Twilight* than a love story for teen girls crossed with a cheesy vampire-werewolf drama? *Spotlight* reveals the literary backdrop, themes, artistry, and meaning of the four Bella Swan adventures. *Spotlight* is the perfect gift for serious *Twilight* readers.

Virtuous Worlds: The Video Gamer's Guide to Spiritual Truth

John Stanifer

Popular titles like *Halo 3* and *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess* fly off shelves at a mind-blowing rate. John Stanifer, an avid gamer, shows readers specific parallels between Christian faith and the content of their favorite games. Written with wry humor (including a heckler who frequently pokes fun at the author) this book will appeal to gamers and non-gamers alike. Those unfamiliar with video games may be pleasantly surprised to find that many elements in those "virtual worlds" also qualify them as "virtuous worlds."

Memoir

Called to Serve: Life as a Firefighter-Deacon

Deacon Anthony R. Surozenski

Called to Serve is the story of one man's dream to be a firefighter. But dreams have a way of taking detours – so Tony Surozenski became a teacher and eventually a volunteer firefighter. And when God enters the picture, Tony is faced with a choice. Will he give up firefighting to follow another call? After many years, Tony's two callings are finally united – in service as a fire chaplain at Ground Zero after the 9-11 attacks and in other ways he could not have imagined. Tony is Chief Chaplain's aid for the Massachusetts Corp of Fire Chaplains and Director for the Office of the Diaconate of the Diocese of Worcester, Massachusetts.

Harry Potter

The Order of Harry Potter: The Literary Skill of the Hogwarts Epic

Colin Manlove

Colin Manlove, a popular conference speaker and author of over a dozen books, has earned an international reputation as an expert on fantasy and children's literature. His book, *From Alice to Harry Potter*, is a survey of 400 English fantasy books. In *The Order of Harry Potter*, he compares and contrasts *Harry Potter* with works by "Inklings" writers J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis and Charles Williams; he also examines Rowling's treatment of the topic of imagination; her skill in organization and the use of language; and the book's underlying motifs and themes.

Harry Potter & Imagination: The Way Between Two Worlds

Travis Prinzi

Imaginative literature places a reader between two worlds: the story world and the world of daily life, and challenges the reader to imagine and to act for a better world. Starting with discussion of Harry Potter's more important themes, *Harry Potter & Imagination* takes readers on a journey through the transformative power of those themes for both the individual and for culture by placing Rowling's series in its literary, historical, and cultural contexts.

Repotting Harry Potter: A Professor's Guide for the Serious Re-Reader

Rowling Revisited: Return Trips to Harry, Fantastic Beasts, Quidditch, & Beedle the Bard

Dr. James W. Thomas

In *Repotting Harry Potter* and his sequel book *Rowling Revisited*, Dr. James W. Thomas points out the humor, puns, foreshadowing and literary parallels in the Potter books. In *Rowling Revisited*, readers will especially find useful three extensive appendixes – "Fantastic Beasts and the Pages Where You'll Find Them," "Quidditch Through the Pages," and "The Books in the Potter Books." Dr. Thomas makes re-reading the Potter books even more rewarding and enjoyable.

Deathly Hallows Lectures:

The Hogwarts Professor Explains Harry's Final Adventure

John Granger

In *The Deathly Hallows Lectures*, John Granger reveals the finale's brilliant details, themes, and meanings. *Harry Potter* fans will be surprised by and delighted with Granger's explanations of the three dimensions of meaning in *Deathly Hallows*. Ms. Rowling has said that alchemy sets the "parameters of magic" in the series; after reading the chapter-length explanation of *Deathly Hallows* as the final stage of the alchemical Great Work, the serious reader will understand how important literary alchemy is in understanding Rowling's artistry and accomplishment.

Hog's Head Conversations: Essays on Harry Potter

Travis Prinzi, Editor

Ten fascinating essays on Harry Potter by popular Potter writers and speakers including John Granger, James W. Thomas, Colin Manlove, and Travis Prinzi.

Poets and Poetry

Remembering Roy Campbell: The Memoirs of his Daughters, Anna and Tess

Introduction by Judith Lütge Coullie, Editor

Preface by Joseph Pearce

Anna and Teresa Campbell were the daughters of the handsome young South African poet and writer, Roy Campbell (1901-1957), and his beautiful English wife, Mary Garman. In their frank and moving memoirs, Anna and Tess recall the extraordinary, and often very difficult, lives they shared with their exceptional parents. Over 50 photos, 344 footnotes, timeline of Campbell's life, and complete index.

In the Eye of the Beholder: How to See the World Like a Romantic Poet

Louis Markos

Born out of the French Revolution and its radical faith that a nation could be shaped and altered by the dreams and visions of its people, British Romantic Poetry was founded on a belief that the objects and realities of our world, whether natural or human, are not fixed in stone but can be molded and transformed by the visionary eye of the poet. Unlike many of the books written on Romanticism, which devote many pages to the poets and few pages to their poetry, the focus here is firmly on the poems themselves. The author thereby draws the reader intimately into the life of these poems. A separate bibliographical essay is provided for readers listing accessible biographies of each poet and critical studies of their work.

The Cat on the Catamaran: A Christmas Tale

John Martin

Here is a modern-day parable of a modern-day cat with modern-day attitudes. Riverboat Dan is a "cool" cat on a perpetual vacation from responsibility. He's *The Cat on the Catamaran* – sailing down the river of life. Dan keeps his guilty conscience from interfering with his fun until he runs into trouble. But will he have the courage to believe that it's never too late to change course? (For ages 10 to adult)

"Cat lovers and poetry lovers alike will enjoy this whimsical story about Riverboat Dan, a philosophical cat in search of meaning."

Regina Doman, author of *Angel in the Water*

Fiction

The Iona Conspiracy (from The Remnant Chronicles book series)

Gary Gregg

Readers find themselves on a modern adventure through ancient Celtic myth and legend as thirteen year old Jacob uncovers his destiny within "the remnant" of the Sporrai Order. As the Iona Academy comes under the control of educational reformers and ideological scientists, Jacob finds himself on a dangerous mission to the sacred Scottish island of Iona and discovers how his life is wrapped up with the fate of the long lost cover of *The Book of Kells*. From its connections to Arthurian legend to references to real-life people, places, and historical mysteries, *Iona* is an adventure that speaks to eternal truths as well as the challenges of the modern world. A young adult novel, *Iona* can be enjoyed by the entire family.

