

## **C.S. Lewis for Armchair Theologians**

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## Introduction: The Life of Jack

*"All find what they truly seek."*<sup>1</sup>

C.S. Lewis, fondly called "Jack" by those close to him, experience renown during his lifetime for being a tremendous literary critic and was considered by many to be one of the foremost Christian apologists and children's' novelists of the twentieth century.

Jack's life was colored with loss, and the death of his mother during early childhood to cancer influenced his view of God and eventual identity as an atheist. Having fought in France during WWI, he made a pact with his best friend that if either of them should die, the other would care for the family left behind. After being wounded in action and discharged, Jack went home to take care of his late best friend's family. For Jack, either God did not exist at all, or he was inexplicably cruel.

Jack went on to teach, write, and lecture at the University of Oxford for thirty years. It was here that an infamous group of friends, writers, and scholars dubbed themselves The Inklings and met weekly in the local pub or Lewis' rooms at the college to discuss their works and enjoy intellectual conversations with one another.

This amalgam of friendship and scholasticism influenced Lewis' conversion to a theist and eventually a Christian. On a rainy night, the Inklings began a voracious discussion of myth. For Lewis, myth was simply a tale that was untrue. But he came to discover that "myth participates in truth" and that Christianity is the true myth that survived history and became fact because of its truth.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis, *The Last Battle*.

<sup>2</sup> *The Life and Faith of C.S. Lewis*. Dir. The Duncan Group. Perf. Ben Kingsley. Questar, Inc., 2006. DVD.

After his conversion, Lewis began expanding his writings to subjects on Christianity in addition to his fictional writings. During WWII he gave several radio talks on the BBC which focused on unifying the various Christian traditions through the commonalities shared. He illustrated this point with a metaphor of a long hallway with many doors. A door might lead to orthodoxy, and another to protestantism. But they both shared the same hallway. These talks and other thoughts and concepts became the book *Mere Christianity*.

Lewis was a gifted writer of satire and his book *The Screwtape Letters* was received with mixed emotions. Contrary to the popular belief of the day, Lewis believed strongly in spiritual warfare being a reality. While not a direct parallel to the divine human relationship with evil, the epistolary novel was an invitation to audiences to think more deeply.

Like *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Chronicles of Narnia* were initially read as fantasy. Many claimed there was an obvious parallel to Christ. Rather than a direct parallel, the books bore a motif of the passion story. After reading, many realized, "I've met Aslan in the real world, but here we call him Jesus."<sup>3</sup> Other scholars believe that not only did the lion Aslan bear resemblance to Christ, but Narnia represented the landscape of the spirit.<sup>4</sup> Whether it be fiction or works like *Mere Christianity*, Lewis never boasted of an advanced theological understanding, but continually pointed back to the metaphorical hallway being just that- mere Christianity.

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<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

Later in his life he met his wife Joy after corresponding with her through many letters he received from his readers. Joy moved from America with her two sons to abandon an abusive marriage. When denied the right to live and work in the UK, Lewis married her so she would not have to return to America. They were not in love when they married, but after Joy's diagnosis of terminal cancer, they quickly realized their love for each other. Making the most of her unprecedented remission, Joy and Jack travelled until her cancer returned and she passed away.

It was during his bereavement that Lewis wrote one of his most poignant, intimate, and visceral works- *A Grief Observed*. He openly argues with God over the losses in his life and wrestles with the doubt now then root in his faith. He questions the character of God rather than God's existence. This work amongst others is what made Lewis incredibly relatable for his readership.

Not long after Joy's death, Lewis developed health problems of his own. He passed away the same hour as John F. Kennedy, but continues to impact life posthumously. His books sell millions of copies each year, and several works remain standard in literary study in the UK.<sup>5</sup>

Regardless of its genre designation as fiction or other various theological writings, Lewisian theology is cogent and logical. Like all theologians, Lewis draws from four sources to compose his theological norm- his measure on what he will or will not accept theologically. Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience all contribute to the Lewisian view. However, Lewis is most greatly influenced by his experience and reason, having come from a background of literary criticism and history.

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<sup>5</sup> See Addendum A

When one looks more closely at his fictional writings, one can find his theology embedded within it, even with great subtlety. Through various characters, Lewis himself is exposed, as well as his characterization of God. Theologies on christology and atonement, evil and theodicy, and the character of God can be found with fictional illustrations as well as experiential ones to demonstrate the concepts in his writings.

## Chapter One

### Jesus, Eustace Scrubb, and Redemption

*father, have mercy  
I know that I have gone astray  
when I saw my reflection  
it was a stranger beneath my face<sup>6</sup>*

C.S. Lewis was a christocentric theologian who explains Christianity and his religious beliefs logically through this lens. He explains this succinctly: “Reality, is in fact, usually something you could not have guessed. That is one of the reasons I believe Christianity. It is a religion you could not have guessed. If it offered us just the kind of universe we had always expected, I should feel we were making it up.”<sup>7</sup> Lewis is not deterred by complicated doctrine or alleged historical events that appear to be impossible. It’s very impossibility is one of its strongest arguments: Christianity simply could not have been made up by man in response to the world.

Lewis was combatted with questions about those who believed in Jesus’ existence as a historical man, but proclaimed him only a teacher. He states:

You will see that what this man [Jesus] said was, quite simply, the most shocking thing that has ever been uttered by human lips... Yet this is what Jesus did. He told people that their sins were forgiven, and never waited to consult all the other people whom their sins had undoubtedly injured. He unhesitatingly behaved as if He was the party chiefly concerned the person chiefly offended in all offenses. This makes sense only if He really was the God whose laws are broken and whose love is wounded in every sin.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The Oh Hellos. The Lament of Eustace Scrubb. N.d. MP3.

<sup>7</sup> *Mere Christianity*, 43.

<sup>8</sup> *Mere Christianity*, 50.

Not only is Christianity more than an imagining of man, Jesus was an audacious human being to say the things he did about sin in particular. Sin was viewed as an injury man:man, or man:God. Since Jesus did not seek to resolve conflict in man:man sinfulness, and told the individual of their forgiveness- only one conclusion could be reached. He was talking as if He was God.

Lewis furthers his explanation when he closes the chapter:

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.<sup>9</sup>

There is no middle ground when it comes to the identity of Christ. One cannot call him a teacher because that would be taking the foolish stance- one that logically does not make sense to Lewis. Jesus was either insane for making claims he did equivalent of God in a political climate that would quickly ignore him, or He meant what he said, garnered followers, and died the Son of God to forgive the sins he spoke of to begin with.

While Lewis answers these questions with logical responses, he admits that no theology can be certain of its truth when he says: "We may not be able to get certainty, but we can get probability, and half a loaf is better than no bread."<sup>10</sup> To Lewis, Christ's existence and work simply makes sense and he's willing to bargain on a loaf of bread

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<sup>9</sup> *Mere Christianity*, 50-1.

<sup>10</sup> Lewis, *Christian Reflections*, 111.



with some errors rather than starve. Not to mention, he draws a fantastic eucharistic metaphor when he states this.

Admittedly, it can take one quite some time to accept a piece of the loaf. One of these scenes occurs in the Chronicles of Narnia book *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, in which the character Eustace Scrubb undergoes quite the transformation and the Christ motif found in the beginning of the Narnian chronicles becomes more obvious.

Stuck for the Summer in the company of Lucy and Edmund, Eustace gets sucked into Narnia through the flooded picture frame with his cousins. He is quickly disdained by the crew of the Dawn Treader for his lackluster attitude, arrogance, and inability to cooperate or act in fairness. The crew stumbles upon an island along their journey to Aslan's country and Eustace wanders off alone only to find a dragon in a cave. The dragon soon dies and Eustace ventures into the cave to discover the dragon's treasure. Having no knowledge of dragons or the lore associated with them (notes Lewis), Eustace quickly dons a golden bracelet and quickly stuffs diamonds and gems into his pocket thinking, "'They don't have any tax here,' he said. 'And you don't have to give treasure to the government. With some of this stuff I could have quite a decent time here.'" <sup>11</sup>

Eustace inevitably falls asleep and upon waking: "The dragon face in the pool was his own reflection...He had turned into a dragon while he was asleep. Sleeping on a dragon's hoard with greedy, dragonish thoughts in his heart, he had become a dragon himself."<sup>12</sup> After a struggle identifying himself to the crew, dragon Eustace initially weeps

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<sup>11</sup> Lewis, C.S. *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 464.

<sup>12</sup> Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 466.

for his plight, yet eventually helps the crew in a number of ways- using his new dragon form to scout out lands, start fires, and keep his friends warm. “It was, however, clear to everyone that Eustace’s character had rather improved by becoming a dragon.”<sup>13</sup> Late one night Eustace encounters Edmund, having transformed back into a boy and tells the story of how he changed from dragon back to himself.<sup>14</sup>

Eustace (unbeknownst to himself) encounters Aslan who leads him to a pool and instructs him to peel back the layers of scales before entering the pool which can change him back to his human self. Despite several attempts, the scales continue to come back. Finally, Aslan says only he can do it. And so,

The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought he had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling my skin off, it hurt worse than anything I’ve ever felt. The only thing that made me able to bear it was the pleasure of feeling the stuff peeling off...It smarted like anything but only for a moment. After that it became perfectly delicious and as soon as I started swimming and splashing I found that all the pain had gone from my arm. And then I saw why. I’d turned into a boy again.<sup>15</sup>

In this young boy’s tale, we see Lewis’ Christ. A mysterious God who painfully peels back the layers until we are made new and washed clean in his life-giving water. Not only are we transformed of our sin, we are made into new people, as evidenced in Eustace’s change of character seen in the rest of the book and the *Chronicles*. As Lewis says of this transformation, “Remember, this repentance, this willing submission to humiliation and a kind of death, is not something God demands of you before He will take you back and which He could let you off if He chose: it is simply a description of

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<sup>13</sup> Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 469.

<sup>14</sup> Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 470.

<sup>15</sup> Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 474-75.

what going back to him is like.”<sup>16</sup> In his own way, Eustace’s story resembles a person’s life before and after Christ enters into it. As a former atheist encouraged by his friends to just consider something different, so too did Lucy and Edmund encourage Eustace to believe in the magic found in Narnia. Thus, they were both transformed.

The very same lion who returned Eustace to his true self was the same lion that in exchange for Edmund’s freedom, willingly sacrificed himself on the stone table. The stone table is considered by many to be the equivalent of the cross. Edmund had done nothing but betray his siblings all for the lure of power- a Judas representing human nature. What the White Witch didn’t know when she agreed to the bargain with Aslan was that true sacrifice overcomes death- and so Aslan was resurrected. Lewis speaks of Jesus’ resurrection as follows: “He could surrender His will, and suffer and die, because He was a man; and He could do it perfectly because he was God.”<sup>17</sup> Aslan goes on to literally breath life onto the Narnian stone statues in the White Witch’s courtyard, transforming them much like Eustace.<sup>18</sup> Lewis says, “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.”<sup>19</sup> For Lewis, Jesus, his work, and the resurrection were as real, albeit unimaginable, and as meaningful as Eustace’s experience and the old magic of the stone table. Jesus was more than a lunatic, and Aslan is more than just a lion.

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<sup>16</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 55.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

<sup>19</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 53.

## Chapter Two

### More on Aslan and the Lewisian Portrait of God

*"This world is a great sculptor's shop. We are the statues and there is a rumor going round the shop that some of us are some day going to come to life."<sup>20</sup>*

Christ is the cornerstone in the Lewisian formation of God. Through the image of Aslan and Lewis' ideologies on Christ, God also becomes more than the traditionally proclaimed omnipotent and omnibenevolent God, but extremely personable and even somewhat knowable because God is interacting with the world.

Through Aslan one can see that God is a relational God, involved in history and involved in individual lives. In the beginning of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* Aslan is not present. No Narnian alive has seen him and he exists only in legend and in the Narnian prophecy that he will return with the arrival of "two sons of Adam" and "two daughters of Eve".<sup>21</sup>

*Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight,  
At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more,  
When he bares his teeth, winter meets its death,  
And when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring again.<sup>22</sup>*

Aslan is mysterious. His existence is not in question, but his presence is. Despite visible proof, the loyal Narnians continue to believe he will come and reverse the endless winter.<sup>23</sup> Much the same can be said for God. Lewis describes this simply: "He shows

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<sup>20</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 131.

<sup>21</sup> Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, 146.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

much more of Himself to some people than to others- not because He has favorites, but because it is impossible for Him to show Himself to a man whose whole mind and character are in the wrong condition.”<sup>24</sup> Lewis is not talking about a person’s sinful nature, but the state and openness of their heart. This is a God who chooses free will above all else and has built it into the very structure of the world. “Creatures. I give you yourselves,” said the strong, happy voice of Aslan. ‘I give to you forever this land of Narnia. I give you the woods, the fruits, the rivers. I give you the stars and I give you myself.’”<sup>25</sup> This God who will not act in someone’s life without their consent. God is present with the faithful believer- as evidenced by Lucy at the beginning of *Prince Caspian*. No one else sees Aslan but her until they come to believe she is telling the truth. We even see similarity in the Bible when the women share the good news of the risen Christ, yet the disciple must see for himself.<sup>26</sup> Even in the story of Eustace, he had to be in the “right condition” before Aslan could strip him of his scales.<sup>27</sup>

In another work of fiction- cunning satire- Lewis writes *The Screwtape Letters*, an epistolary novel from one demon to his protege in the techniques of winning souls away from God. In this text God is described as “The Enemy” and the Father of the heavenly realm- the direct competition for the father of the hellish realm.<sup>28</sup> As Screwtape advises his student, he reveals several facts about The Enemy. “Desiring their freedom, He therefore refuses to carry them, by their mere affections and habits, to any of the goals

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<sup>24</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 135.

<sup>25</sup> Lewis, *The Magician’s Nephew*, 118.

<sup>26</sup> Gospel of Matthew Ch. 28.

<sup>27</sup> Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 469.

<sup>28</sup> Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, 185-87.

which He sets before them: He leaves them to 'do it on their own'."<sup>29</sup> Here again we see the God who wants to receive genuine, and not coerced relationship. Maintaining the figure of God as omnipotent, Lewis claims through Screwtape: "Now it may surprise you to learn that in His efforts to get permanent possession of a soul, He relies on the troughs even more than on the peaks; some of His special favorites have gone through longer and deeper troughs than anyone else."<sup>30</sup> This quotation brings several qualities of God to the forefront. God is active in using the events in a humans life to draw them nearer to himself. There is evidence of Lewis' own suffering in this statement, not to mention the word choice of "troughs" conjuring images of WWI that he saw in the trenches of France. There is something about suffering that makes a human more malleable to the lure of God. As Screwtape says, "He cannot ravish. He can only woo."<sup>31</sup> This is a very relational notion, even one with a romantic connotation of "wooing".

Screwtape later explains the goals of either side participating in this spiritual warfare. "We want cattle who can finally become food; He wants servants who can finally become sons." Clearly, Lewis' God is after a loving relationship with his creatures, and will pursue it, but not use force to achieve it. Demons are building a feast, and God is building a family.

Even the presence of such a God is addressed: "He wants them to learn to walk and must therefore take away His hand; and if only the will to walk is there He is pleased with their stumbles."<sup>32</sup> This illustration of God is also found in Aslan. For Peter

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<sup>29</sup> Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, 189.

<sup>30</sup> Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, 207.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, 208.

and Susan, the oldest of the Pevensie quartet, their journeys in Narnia come to an end in the final chapters of *Prince Caspian*. Aslan explains to them that they have learned all they can in Narnia and that they will come to know him in their world by another name.<sup>33</sup> This is one of the most blatant allusions to Christ found in the *Chronicles*.

Lewis not only provides Aslan as a figure for children, but every believer to know and consider God in a new way. Aslan's actions and words are thought provoking, not just in their eventually realized wisdom, but in the parallel to Jesus himself. Lewis wants to emphasize a God that is knowable and a faith that is approachable and meaningful. He does this by re-characterizing the traditional image of God as an all-powerful entity that is said to be good but appears to act otherwise. By maintaining the mystery of both Aslan and God, Lewis keeps his "mere" Christianity. Some things are knowable, and the rest will be known in time.

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<sup>33</sup> Lewis, *Prince Caspian*, ch.15. "Aslan Makes a Door in the Air".

## Chapter Three

### Evil, Edmund, and the Screwtape Letters

*"You were only an ass, but I was a traitor."*<sup>34</sup>

Lewis' fiction contains many classic themes of good versus evil. As a foil to Aslan, the White Witch, also known as Jadis, represents the figure of evil throughout many of the Narnian chronicles. When the Pevensie children ask the Beavers about her, they describe her origin: "Your father Adam's first wife, her they called Lilith. And she was one of the Jinn. That's what she comes from on one side. And on the other she comes of the giants. No, no, there isn't a drop of real human blood in the Witch."<sup>35</sup> The allusion to Lilith has serious implications. Going back to Jewish mythology, Lilith is known as being Adam's first wife, made at the same time and from the same soil as Adam. She refuses to become subservient to Adam, and all her offspring are demonic.<sup>36</sup> This not only means that evil has an origin, but that the White Witch is truly a force to be defeated. She is derived from everything classically evil, and is more imposing and powerful than an evil queen in a fairy tale.

It's no surprise that in Edmund's first trip to Narnia, that he succumbs to the temptation of turkish delight and bringing his siblings to the Witch in exchange for a place of power. Edmund later does in fact betray his siblings only to be jailed by the

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<sup>34</sup> Lewis, *The Dawn Treader*, 468.

<sup>35</sup> Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, 147.

<sup>36</sup> "Lilith." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 05 Sept. 2016.



White Witch without anything that was promised to him.<sup>37</sup> It is possible he represents Judas in the Christ motif present throughout *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. But a much stronger argument can be made for Edmund representing the whole of humanity's relationship with sin and temptation. Turkish delight is not just a sweetie, but the object of free will- to choose God and the good- or something else entirely.

Lewis methodically lays out his view of evil in *Mere Christianity*; a view that is reflected in his fictional writings and characters. He begins first by examining dualism.

Dualism means the belief that there are two equal and independent powers at the back of everything, one of them good and the other bad, and that this universe is the battlefield in which they fight out an endless war. I personally think that next to Christianity Dualism is the manliest and most sensible creed on the market.<sup>38</sup>

Lewis points out that dualism becomes inadequate because it introduces a third facet besides the two opposing powers- morality. You need morality in order to say one thing is good while the other is bad.<sup>39</sup> If this is the case, the evil power would like badness for the sake of badness. Lewis says how this is not possible when he writes: "wickedness, when you examine it, turns out to be the pursuit of some good in the wrong way", and "badness is only spoiled goodness."<sup>40</sup> This is what is reflected in reality. If this is true, the evil power is no longer independent and desiring badness, but reliant on the good power's realm.<sup>41</sup> And since agency and intelligence are good things, the evil power

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<sup>37</sup> Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, chap. 4-9.

<sup>38</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 43.

<sup>39</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 44.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 45.

would be dependent on the good power and must “borrow or steal from his opponent.”<sup>42</sup>

So Lewis concludes, “And do you now begin to see why Christianity has always said that the devil is a fallen angel?...evil is a parasite, not an original thing.”<sup>43</sup> But if dualism is not the Christian view, what is?

Lewis continues, “The difference is that Christianity thinks this Dark Power was created by God, and was good when he was created, and went wrong. Christianity agrees with dualism that this universe is at war.”<sup>44</sup> In this way, evil was never intended by God. But rather free will contributed to a world structured with the capacity for evil. Lewis describes it as “enemy-occupied territory- that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage.”<sup>45</sup> It is easy to place both the White Witch, Aslan, and poor Edmund in this model. To put it succinctly, Lewis has Satan as a real and active figure. Dualism? Not quite. Spiritual warfare? Absolutely.

The Screwtape Letters, while fictional satire, gives the best glimpse into Lewis’ view of evil and how it works in the world’s structure. In this epistolary novel, Screwtape writes to his demon protege Wormwood about the art of collecting souls from The Enemy, known to us as God. The demons work in small conniving ways, taking advantage of temptations, doubts, and even the Church to dissuade a soul from true faith. While the demons meddle in a life, God wants to invest in a life. This “God is infinitely personal, and so ‘beyond’ any human personality we know...Human beings in

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<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 46.

turn become truly personal only in this God.”<sup>46</sup> We see this exemplified in Eustace’s transformation and foiled by the desires of Screwtape and his cronies:

By steady and cool-headed application here and now you can finally secure his soul, he will then be yours forever- a brim-full living chalice of despair and horror and astonishment which you can raise to your lips as often as you please.<sup>47</sup>

To the likes of Screwtape, a man is a prize to be won and sacrificed to their benefit. Despair feeds them and the loss of a soul is doing good business. Whereas God seeks a true relationship, one in which he can transform a man to his truest self. Eustace becomes a better boy having been transformed from a dragon, and Edmund becomes a king having renounced his traitorous ways and goes on to save more than himself. The satirical work of *The Screwtape Letters* subtly illustrates God’s nature and how evil may be presumed to work, but also acts as a warning for the Christian life- your life and very soul are being fought for- do not choose the wrong side. Just because you begin as a Eustace or an Edmund does not mean that God does not desire to make you into a faithful Lucy.

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<sup>46</sup> Fiddes, Paul S. “On Theology”, *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*.

<sup>47</sup> Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, 197.

## Chapter Four

### Theodicy, Loss, and One Man's Journal

*No one laughs at God in a hospital  
No one laughs at God in a war  
No one's laughing at God when they're starving or freezing or so very poor.*<sup>48</sup>

C.S. Lewis lived a fought through two world wars, lost his mother, father, and wife to cancer, lost his best friend in war, and suffered from illness himself before death. He had seen the immense suffering of others and mourned unimaginable losses of his own. It is easy to see how childhood loss and trauma as a young man would lead him to atheism. If a God existed, surely he must be cruel and not good if he allows such suffering in the world. After his conversion, the sufferings of life did not cease.

Through his personal journal after the death of his wife Joy, (Later to be published as *A Grief Observed*), Lewis wrestled with these theodicy questions. Rather than a fictional component that mirrors his theology, Lewis examines his own life in the model he previously created. He describes the real problem at hand: "Not that I am (I think) in much danger of ceasing to believe in God. The real danger is coming to believe such dreadful things about Him. The conclusion I dread is not 'So there's no God after all,' but 'So this is what God's really like. Deceive yourself no longer.'"<sup>49</sup> Lewis describes the very situation that Screwtape and the demons would try to take advantage of to create a distaste of an apparently sadistic God. But Lewis believes that evil and suffering were not intended by God. Yet the mystery of God remains- "Why is He so

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<sup>48</sup> Regina Spektor. *Laughing With*. 2009. MP3.

<sup>49</sup> Lewis, *A Grief Observed*, 658.

present a commander in our time of prosperity and so very absent a help in times of trouble?”<sup>50</sup> The Narnians in the beginning of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* were likely asking the same question. He later concludes that we are making God too anthropomorphic and that is why the answers to the difficult questions of loss do not have satisfying answers.<sup>51</sup>

Lewis asks why if God is good, why does he hurt to heal? Why must Aslan painfully scrape away the scales? “What do people mean when they say, ‘I am not afraid of God because I know he is good’? Have they never been to a dentist?”<sup>52</sup> Lewis says that what is happening after the suffering is not healing, but an alteration. He uses the example of a man who has had his leg amputated. “There will hardly ever be a moment where he forgets it.”<sup>53</sup> Meaning, he cannot get his leg back. The wooden one is not a true replacement. Instead each facet of his life is altered by this loss. The stump may have healed, but his life has forever been changed. Lewis equates loss to this stump. It’s one thing to lose an “appendix”, but quite another to lose a leg.<sup>54</sup> The life altering loss is what raises these questions about God in the first place. Lewis does not change his model. He concludes with:

When I lay here questions before God I get no answer. But a rather special sort of ‘no answer’. It is not the locked door. It is more like a silent, certainly not uncompassionate, gaze. As though He shook

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<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Lewis, *A Grief Observed*, 669.

<sup>52</sup> Lewis, *A Grief Observed*, 675.

<sup>53</sup> Lewis, *A Grief Observed*, 679.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*

His head not in refusal but waiving the question. Like, 'Peaace, child; you don't understand.'<sup>55</sup>

Lewis exchanges certainty for a portion of the loaf. He knows that "free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having."<sup>56</sup> You cannot-

[invent] some sort of happiness...outside God, apart from God...

The reason why it can never succeed is this. God made us: invented as a man invents an engine...God designed the human machine to run on Himself...God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.<sup>57</sup>

God Himself is goodness. Suffering is not God building up a great capacity in a person only to take it away, akin to inflicting Beethoven with deafness.<sup>58</sup> Suffering is not God

testing one's faith because God already knows the depth of it.<sup>59</sup> We can pray for others

when they suffer, but until there is a risk to us personally and our way of life is belief tested.<sup>60</sup> God does not always answer our entreaties to end suffering because like a

surgeon, if he stopped his activity, the pain of the patient would have been for nothing.

While God never intended evil to run rampant in the first place, He did intend free will for the capacity of great joy and authentic relationship between Himself and those he

created. While suffering happens with equal mystery to that of God, God will not allow

the pain to be useless. Just as Aslan will not allow one to go without transformation.

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<sup>55</sup> Lewis, *A Grief Observed*, 685.

<sup>56</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 47.

<sup>57</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 49.

<sup>58</sup> Lewis, *A Grief Observed*, 665.

<sup>59</sup> Lewis, *A Grief Observed*, 678.

<sup>60</sup> Lewis, *A Grief Observed*, 665.

## Addendum A: Bibliographic Resources

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