

cdr

“The Great Story on Which the Plot Turns”: Cruciformity in C.S. Lewis’ Narrative Spiritual Theology

Item Type	Thesis or dissertation
Authors	Dickieson, Brenton
Citation	Dickieson, B. (2019). “The Great Story on Which the Plot Turns”: Cruciformity in C.S. Lewis’ Narrative Spiritual Theology (Doctoral dissertation). University of Chester, UK.
Publisher	University of Chester
Rights	Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International
Download date	2026-05-19 03:14:59
Item License	http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/10034/623095

“The Great Story
on Which the Plot Turns”:
Cruciformity in C.S. Lewis’
Narrative Spiritual Theology

Brenton D.G. Dickieson (BA, MCS)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Chester
Department of Theology and Religious Studies

May 2019

Abstract

This thesis presses in on C.S. Lewis' extremely diverse corpus to explore his integrative narrative spirituality of the cross. Chapter one argues that Lewis' concept of spiritual self-death and resurrection is lacking critical treatment despite the spirituality of the cross that I argue is deeply woven into the fabric of Lewis' poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and letters. This cross-shaped spirituality, what Michael Gorman calls "cruciformity," is central to Lewis' understanding of Christian life. Though neglected because of readings of Lewis that reduce him to the role of an apologist, chapter one surveys occasional notes about this death-and-resurrection motif in Lewis scholarship and provides definitions for methodological approaches to the study. Following definitions of spiritual theology by Eugene Peterson, chapter two turns from systematic theological explorations of Lewis to consider him as a spiritual theologian, a move that is organic to his theological enterprise, his epistemology, and his fiction. Chapter three explores Gorman's biblical-theological approach to Pauline cruciformity, arguing that there is a six-point Logic of Cruciformity in Lewis' so-called apologetics writings that moves past and refocuses Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*. As Lewis' spirituality is embedded in narrative form within poetry, fiction, and nonfiction, chapter four explores "The Shape of Cruciformity" in Lewis' *œuvre*, using Northrop Frye's narratology and J.R.R. Tolkien's theory of *euclastrophe* to argue that there is a comedic, U-shaped pattern of cruciform imagery in Lewis' fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. Chapter five interrogates Lewis' integrative, normative narrative cruciformity with feminist theological critique, provoked by Anna Fisk's concerns about cross-shaped spiritualities in women's experiences. A response to this problematisation reveals an inversive quality inherent to Lewis' thought that is itself U-shaped, comedic, and euclastrophic. Chapter six explores this inversive U-shaped thinking central to Lewis' theological project, arguing that the shape of cruciformity in Lewis is the shape of his spiritual theology. I conclude the thesis with "sacred paradoxes" in Lewis' thought that invite further work and deepen our understanding of Lewis' concept of spiritual life, thus inviting a prophetic self-critique for Christian believers.

Declaration

The material being presented for examination is my own work and has not been submitted for an award of this or another HEI except in minor particulars which are explicitly noted in the body of the thesis. Where research pertaining to the thesis was undertaken collaboratively, the nature and extent of my individual contribution has been made explicit.



Brenton D.G. Dickieson
30 May 2019

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Declaration.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
Abbreviations.....	vi
Acknowledgements.....	vii
Ch. 1: Introduction: Cruciform Spirituality in the Works of C.S. Lewis	1
Introduction: Accounting for the Integrative Nature of C.S. Lewis' Thought.....	1
Definitions as Methodological Approaches.....	8
Death is at the Root of the Whole Matter.....	23
"The Macdonald Conception of Death".....	26
A Brief Survey of Lewis' Theology of the Cross.....	34
Ch. 2: Where the Secret of Secrets Lies Hid: C.S. Lewis as Spiritual Theologian.....	42
Introduction	42
An Approach to Spiritual Theology: Eugene Peterson and "Living, living fully and well"	43
C.S. Lewis as Spiritual Theologian	47
Secondary Literature on Lewis and Spirituality	47
Social Thought and a Spirituality of the Cross in Conversation.....	51
A Tilt of the Head: From Systematic to Spiritual Theology.....	59
<i>The Great Divorce</i> : Eschatology to Spirituality	61
Lewis' "Meditation in a Toolshed" as Epistemology	64
<i>Mere Christianity</i> : Lewis' Emphasis on the Spiritual Life.....	66
An Experiment in Narnia: From Atonement Theory to Spiritual Theology	72
C.S. Lewis and The Cross Event.....	72
Aslanic Sacrifice as Imitation Motif.....	77
Conclusion.....	84
Ch. 3: "Die Before You Die": C.S. Lewis' Logic of Cruciformity	85
Introduction	85
Michael Gorman as Conversation Partner for C.S. Lewis	85
C.S. Lewis' Logic of Cruciformity	88
<i>Mere Christianity</i> : Incarnational Necessity and the Echo of God.....	88
<i>The Problem of Pain</i> : Lewis' Six Point Logic of Cruciformity.....	90
Cruciformity in Lewis' Fiction.....	97
<i>The Great Divorce</i> (1944-45).....	98

<i>The Voyage of the Dawn Treader</i> (1952).....	101
<i>Till We Have Faces</i> (1956).....	106
Conclusion: Clarifying and Moving Past Thomas à Kempis' <i>Imitation of Christ</i>	113
Ch. 4: The Shape of Cruciformity: Narrative Patterns of the Cross in Lewis' Fiction and Nonfiction	115
Introduction: Recognisable Narrative Patterns of Spirituality	115
Lewis as Imagistic Mythmaker: "It All Began with a Picture"	116
Lewis' Imagistic Story-making and Frye's U-Shaped Pattern	119
Dive: U-Shaped Cruciform Imagery in Lewis' Life and Writing.....	122
The Fairy-Tale Form in Lewis' Fiction.....	130
Eucatastrophe and Fairy Tale.....	130
<i>The Pilgrim's Regress</i>	132
Narnia.....	134
<i>That Hideous Strength</i>	137
Descent and Ascent in Planetary Journeys	144
Death Restored to the Baptised Imagination	150
Conclusion: "The Grand Miracle" and the Zenith of the Cosmic Story	158
Ch. 5: The Long Shadow of the Cross and the Cruciform Heroic in C.S. Lewis	163
Introduction: A Black and Scarlet Cord: Violence and Death in the Shadowlands	163
The Long Shadow of the Cross: A Feminist Critique of Crucicentric Spirituality	168
Approaches to Feminist Christologies	168
Anna Fisk and Images of the Cross	172
Kath Filmer and the First Generation of Critics on Lewis and Women	179
Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen and the Second Generation of Lewis Gender Critics	186
Integrative Cruciformity and Inversive Qualities in Lewis' Life and Work.....	191
Ann Loades and Lewis' Christological Inversion	191
Inversive Cruciform Elements in <i>The Four Loves</i> and <i>A Grief Observed</i>	193
The Cruciform Principle and <i>A Severe Mercy</i>	195
Lewis' Deepening Cruciform Inversion of Hierarchy in Love	201
Monika Hilder and the Lewisian Spiritual "Feminine" Heroic	203
Lewis as Conversation Partner in a Cruciform Spirituality of Sex and Gender.....	208
Ch. 6: The Inversive Shape of C.S. Lewis' Theology of the Cross	210
Introduction: The Shape of Lewis' Spiritual Theology	210
Comedy, Satire, and Ironic Inversion in Lewis' Work	212
The Screwtape Letters as Moral Inversion	216
Comedy and Inversive Thinking	221

“As High as My Spirit, As Small as My Stature”: C.S. Lewis’ Theology of the Small	222
Ch. 7: Conclusion: Sacred Paradoxes in C.S. Lewis’ Spiritual Theology	235
Introduction	235
Criticism as Conversion: C.S. Lewis’ <i>Experiment in Criticism</i>	237
Active Surrender to the Other: On <i>A Grief Observed</i>	241
Sacred Paradoxes: Limitations and Possibilities for Other Work	244
Bibliography	255
C.S. Lewis Bibliography	255
Secondary Source Bibliography	259
Primary Sources and Archival Material.....	283

Abbreviations

AGO	<i>A Grief Observed</i> (1961)
BCP	The Book of Common Prayer (1662)
CLI	<i>The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis: Volume 1</i> , ed. Walter Hooper (2004)
CLII	<i>The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis: Volume 2</i> , ed. Walter Hooper (2004)
CLIII	<i>The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis: Volume 3</i> , ed. Walter Hooper (2007)
CP	<i>The Collected Poems of C.S. Lewis: A Critical Edition</i> , ed. Don W. King (2015)
CSL	C.S. Lewis
EIC	<i>An Experiment in Criticism</i> (1961)
OHEL	<i>English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama</i> (1954)
f.,ff.	Folio, Folia
GD	<i>The Great Divorce: A Dream</i> (1945)
HHB	<i>The Horse and His Boy</i> (1954).
<i>Imitation</i>	Thomas à Kempis, <i>Of the Imitation of Christ</i> (early 15 th century)
LB	<i>The Last Battle</i> (1956)
l.	Leaf
<i>Malcolm</i>	<i>Letters to Malcolm</i> (1964)
LWW	<i>The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe</i> (1950)
MC	<i>Mere Christianity</i> (1952)
MN	<i>The Magician's Nephew</i> (1955)
MS., MSS.	Manuscript, Manuscripts
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OSP	<i>Out of the Silent Planet</i> (1938)
PC	<i>Prince Caspian: The Return to Narnia</i> (1951)
PoP	<i>The Problem of Pain</i> (1940)
<i>Preface</i>	<i>A Preface to Paradise Lost</i> (1942)
<i>Regress</i>	<i>The Pilgrim's Regress: An Allegorical Apology for Christianity</i> (1933)
<i>Reflections</i>	<i>Reflections on the Psalms</i> (1958)
SBJ	<i>Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life</i> (1955)
SC	<i>The Silver Chair</i> (1953)
<i>Screwtape</i>	<i>The Screwtape Letters</i> (1942)
THS	<i>That Hideous Strength: A Modern Fairy-tale for Grown-ups</i> (1945)
TWHF	<i>Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold</i> (1956)
VDT	<i>The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'</i> (1952)

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Chester for the opportunity, creativity, and needed support. Various professors made time for me when I was on campus, including Dawn Llewellyn, who several times chided me prophetically for undue perfectionism or for committing to too many projects. Ben Fullford provided critical feedback in the end-stages of the project. In particular, Alana Vincent was unflagging in her support when my foundations shifted. Each of Alana's writing interventions was pointed and transformative. Thank you also to Profs David Clough of Chester and David Jasper of Glasgow for their critical and supportive work as examiners.

To my colleagues and students at the University of Prince Edward Island, I am grateful for the classroom space for experiments that initiated this project and for public forums to workshop my ideas. Maritime Christian College, Signum University, and The King's College (New York City) each allowed me an opportunity to develop a course to test this material. Regent College in Vancouver continually gives me space to work with Eugene Peterson's spiritual theology. In each of these schools, the students have been superb, providing energy and ideas that encouraged me in my work and challenged me in my conclusions. The classroom is, I believe, the crucible of academic research, where ideas find their form and where, under the Mercy, these students can be shaped to change the world.

I appreciate deeply the institutions that have given me access to archives, library resources, and presentation opportunities. Joe Ricke and the team at the Center for the Study of C.S. Lewis and Friends at Taylor University allowed me to present my ideas to students, peers, and senior scholars. The Bodleian has always been open to my work and supportive of every opportunity, as has the C.S. Lewis Co. in allowing me to publish unearthed Lewis manuscripts. Rob Fennell and the Atlantic School of Theology allowed me to present my incipient understanding of Lewis' spiritual theology in a critical environment—opportunities also provided by the Oxford C.S. Lewis Society, ISRLC, the C.S. Lewis and Inklings Society, and the Mythopoeic Society. In particular, everyone at the Marion E. Wade Center at Wheaton College has been incredibly supportive. Laura Schmidt at the Wade and Chris MacLauchlan at UPEI each helped me find rare materials.

I have been blessed with too many mentors to list, but I want to note several senior Inklings scholars who have specifically taken time to encourage me along the way, including Crystal and David Downing, Charlie Starr, Devin Brown, Kirsten Jeffrey Johnson, Diana Glycer, Bruce Johnson, Janet Brennan Croft, Charles Huttar, Joe Christopher, David Llewellyn Dodds, and Dale Nelson. Some of these scholars engage in the strange online forum at A Pilgrim in Narnia, which I have used as a thesis sandbox over the years. Others in that community have also read portions or all of this thesis, including David Llewellyn Dodds, Yvonne Aburrow, and Dana Ames, who revealed all of my typographical oddities. Signum University has become an intellectual collective I rely upon, including Sørina Higgins who published my theoretical work, and Jennifer Rogers who dialogued with me in the last year of the writing.

Essential were my friends, family, and church. Especially, to Nicolas for his voracious curiosity, and to Kerry, my partner who is "very close and intimate yet all the time unmistakably other, resistant," my love, my Jehovah nudge. This was hard. Thank you.

And to my mother, unfailing in support, who died before I finished.

Brenton Dickieson
The Feast of St Joan of Arc, 2019
Urendi Maleldil

Ch. 1: Introduction: Cruciform Spirituality in the Works of C.S. Lewis

Introduction: Accounting for the Integrative Nature of C.S. Lewis' Thought

With book sales exceeding 200,000,000 copies¹ and a bookshelf of critical, philosophical, and popular works continually in print, C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) is the leading 20th century English-speaking Christian public intellectual.² Fellow Inklings and scholar of C.S. Lewis, Owen Barfield, has famously said that “what Lewis thought about everything was secretly present in what he said about anything.”³ Granting as most scholars do the integrative nature of Lewis' Christian thought,⁴ and considering the vast diversity of his writings as they move from literary scholarship through popular fiction to his work as a Christian public intellectual, what is the central organising feature that unites Lewis' Christian thought? If we believe that Lewis is an integrative thinker, it is reasonable to ask the question as to what specifically integrates his thought? Lewis scholarship to this point has been unable to produce a satisfying answer to this question.

¹ Devin Brown, *A Life Observed: A Spiritual Biography of C.S. Lewis* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2013), 187.

² See Samuel Joeckel, *The C.S. Lewis Phenomenon: Christianity and the Public Sphere* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2013).

³ Owen Barfield, “Preface,” in *The Taste of the Pineapple: Essays on C.S. Lewis as Reader, Critic, and Imaginative Writer*, ed. Bruce L. Edwards (Bowling Green, KY: Popular Press, 1988), 1.

⁴ Major Lewis scholars consistently grant this and quote Barfield, including Carolyn Curtis and Mary Pomroy Key, *Women and C.S. Lewis* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2015), 243; Matthew T. Dickerson and David O'Hara, *Narnia and the Fields of Arbol: The Environmental Vision of C.S. Lewis* (Lexington, KY: UP Kentucky, 2009), 18; Bruce L. Edwards, “An Examined Life: Introducing C.S. Lewis,” in *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy: Volume 1: An Examined Life*, ed. Bruce L. Edwards (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 10; Bruce L. Edwards, “The Christian Intellectual in the Public Square: C.S. Lewis's Enduring American Reception,” in *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy: Volume 4: Scholar, Teacher, and Public Intellectual*, ed. Bruce L. Edwards (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 8; Monika B. Hilder, *The Feminine Ethos in C.S. Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), advance praise by Wayne Martindale; Monika B. Hilder, *The Gender Dance: Ironic Subversion in C.S. Lewis's Cosmic Trilogy* (New York: Peter Lang, 2013), xi; Monika B. Hilder, *Surprised by the Feminine: A Rereading of C.S. Lewis and Gender* (New York: Peter Lang, 2013), 5; Crystal Hurd, “Transformational Leadership in the Life and Works of C.S. Lewis” (EdD thesis, East Tennessee State University, 2012), 122, 147; Alan Jacobs, *The Narnian: The Life and Imagination of C.S. Lewis* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2005), xix; Joe Rigney, *Lewis on the Christian Life: Becoming Truly Human in the Presence of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 16-17; Michael Ward, “The Son and the Other Stars: Christology and Cosmology in the Imagination of C.S. Lewis” (PhD thesis, University of St Andrews, 2005), 24; Donald T. Williams, *Deeper Magic: The Theology Behind the Writings of C.S. Lewis* (Baltimore, MD: Square Halo, 2016), 19-20.

In theological terms, some projects work to systematise Lewis' Christian thought, including attempts by Will Vaus,⁵ David Clark,⁶ and most recently and extensively, Donald Williams.⁷ Beyond a commitment to "mere Christianity"—which admittedly includes, at times, ideas that are unique to Lewis—these studies do not identify a Lewisian integrative core. Corbin Scott Carnell highlights Lewis' concept of Joy, or *Sehnsucht*,⁸ the topic of Lewis' memoir and what Devin Brown calls "the central story of his life."⁹ Lewis himself admits that "the subject has lost nearly all interest for me since I became a Christian,"¹⁰ and *Sehnsucht* is a concept absent from most of his Christian nonfiction books. To compellingly argue that "Joy" is the central organising feature of his thought is a challenging position to take.

There are Lewis critics focussing on social thought whom I argue below capture something of the essence of what is central to Lewis, but who are unsuccessful in explaining the integrative nature of his work. John Stackhouse offers a generative though incomplete consideration of Lewis as a theologian of culture in the Christian realist tradition, but does not argue that this realism is the root of his thinking.¹¹ Gilbert Meilaender argues that for Lewis a "taste for the other" is the driving principle behind his social and ethical thought, though remains limited by his focus on communal ethics.¹² Kath Filmer does offer the suggestion of a central organising feature, namely a "synthesis of Platonism with orthodox Christianity" combined with "submerged" paganism¹³—a "disturbing" syncretism that "is not so much Christianity at all, but Lewisianity—a strange, idiosyncratic blend of beliefs, prejudices, fears and apprehensions."¹⁴ The limitations of Filmer's methodology and her

⁵ Donald T. Williams, *Mere Theology: A Guide to the Thought of C.S. Lewis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

⁶ David C. Clark, *C.S. Lewis: A Guide to His Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

⁷ Donald Williams, *Deeper Magic*.

⁸ Corbin Scott Carnell, *Bright Shadow: C.S. Lewis and the Feeling Intellect* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).

⁹ Brown, *Life Observed*, xi.

¹⁰ C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1955), 238.

¹¹ John G. Stackhouse, Jr., *Making the Best of It: Following Christ in the Real World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), ch. 2.

¹² Gilbert Meilaender, *The Taste for the Other: The Social and Ethical Thought of C.S. Lewis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978).

¹³ Kath Filmer, *The Fiction of C.S. Lewis: Mask and Mirror* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1993), 12-13.

¹⁴ Filmer, *Mask and Mirror*, 13.

poignant questions will be evident below, but her thesis reveals not an integration of Lewis' thought but a precise break between fiction and Christian nonfiction in Lewis' corpus.¹⁵

The lack of a consensus on a cohesive centre of Lewis' thought is puzzling considering the almost universal agreement about the integrative nature of Lewis' thought. This lack of consensus is due in part to a reductive tendency to read Lewis through the lens of "apologist," thereby narrowing the vision of his work and making full integration impossible. No doubt Lewis wrote as an apologist, most famously in his so-called apologetics trilogy of *The Problem of Pain* (1940), *Mere Christianity* (1952, reprinting BBC talks in 1941-44), and *Miracles* (1947, complete by 1945 with a second edition in 1960). As Lewis' formal apologetics is confined almost completely to WWII—just six years of Lewis' thirty-two-year Christian life—it is worth questioning whether "apologetics" is the most comprehensive description for Lewis' diverse project. Moreover, his most popular book, *Mere Christianity*, is neither defensive in posture nor systematic, moving quickly from philosophical apologetics to Christian spirituality.

Yet, a tendency to reduce Lewis to "apologist" remains. Clark's chapter on Lewis' biography is titled "From Atheist to Apologist"—evidently the two most significant categories for understanding Lewis.¹⁶ In a volume entirely dedicated to an assessment of Lewis' apologetics, Gregory Bassham calls Lewis "Oxford's Bonny Apologist."¹⁷ Williams defends inquiry into Lewis' theological project because Lewis "was one of the most imaginatively winsome and logically forceful ambassadors for Christianity we have seen."¹⁸ Though admitting that there are dangers of biographical reductionism, Victor Reppert argues that Lewis is operating as an apologist throughout his life, even as late as his pseudonymous memoir of loss, *A Grief Observed* (1961).¹⁹ By contrast, it is Lewis' reputation

¹⁵ In a later piece, Filmer goes further in her thesis about the disintegrative nature of Lewis' work, arguing that, "there is a different mode of self-disclosure at work in fiction" where "paradoxically, more of the person behind the fictional work can be, and is, revealed." Thus, for Filmer, the veil of fiction "admits self-disclosure subversively, at a deeper layer of meaning," Cath Filmer-Davies, "C.S. Lewis," in *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology*, ed. Andrew Hass, David Jasper, and Elizabeth Jay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 655. Filmer's call to "take serious account of the theology to be found at the heart of his fiction" is essential to my approach, 655.

¹⁶ Clark, *C.S. Lewis*, 14-31.

¹⁷ Gregory Bassham, *C.S. Lewis's Christian Apologetics: Pro and Con* (Boston: Brill, 2015), 1-26.

¹⁸ Williams, *Deeper Magic*, 14.

¹⁹ Victor Reppert, *C.S. Lewis's Dangerous Idea: A Philosophical Defense of Lewis's Argument from Reason* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2003), 11-28.

as a Christian apologist that makes the environmental study of Matthew Dickerson and David O'Hara admittedly surprising.²⁰

While scholars can separate out the roles of Lewis, as Jacobs does,²¹ he admits the task of “silencing” the apologist in imaginative fiction is difficult.²² From a theological perspective, a more capacious and comprehensive category of thought for considering C.S. Lewis is necessary if we are to take the diverse and integrative nature of his thought seriously. While Stackhouse, Meilaender, Filmer and others offer partial explorations according to focussed questions, and Vaus, Clark, Williams and others offer theological syntheses, none of these approaches can account for the cohesive core of Lewis' thought as it works through fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and letters.

I argue that in extending our understanding of Lewis to the role of spiritual theologian, we discover a death-and-resurrection motif that operates as the integrative core of his *œuvre*. This thesis is an exploration of that death-and-resurrection theme as it works throughout Lewis' entire corpus. In a deep reading of Lewis' diverse *œuvre*, we consider the consequences of this spiritual theological centre as it reorients an understanding of Lewis' Christian thought for his most committed readers.

There is in Lewis' thought what he calls a “doctrine of death,”²³ a spiritual practice of “good Death”²⁴ founded in the thought of George MacDonald and St Paul that Lewis believes “is at the root of the whole matter.”²⁵ From his conversion in the early 1930s through his WWII-era apologetics and cultural criticism, in his fiction, and in the less controversial books in the last decade of his life, a theme of self-death emerges, where the normative Christian response to Christ's death and resurrection is to “echo”²⁶ Christ's self-surrender in the hope of rebirth into spiritual life. Biblical theologian Michael Gorman has identified a similar imitation motif in the way that Paul tells the story of the cross. I argue that Gorman's construct of a cruciform spirituality, or “cruciformity,” is useful for understanding how Lewis' unsystematic thought works as a cohesive whole. While Lewis

²⁰ Dickerson and O'Hare, *Environmental Vision*, 10-17.

²¹ Jacobs, *Narnian*, 51, 199.

²² See *Ibid*, 229-244.

²³ C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1940), 91.

²⁴ C.S. Lewis, ed., *George MacDonald: An Anthology* (London: Fount, 1983), 34.

²⁵ Walter Hooper, ed., *The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis: Volume 1: Family Letters 1905-1929* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004), 971.

²⁶ C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1960), 184.

scholars have noticed aspects of his narrative spiritual theology of the cross, there is no full-length scholarly treatment that draws together the various threads of Lewis' "doctrine of death" in a way that accounts for the concentrated and recurring nature of Lewis' cruciform spirituality.

As a result, scholars have been unable to understand what integrates Lewis' Christian thought, despite near-universal testimony to this characteristic of Lewis as a public intellectual. This death-and-resurrection image of spiritual life is not merely a leitmotif in Lewis' teaching, but is so central that the shape of Lewis' cruciform spirituality is the shape of Lewis' Christian thought—a way of thinking that is inversive, holistic, bound up in self-surrender and hope, and captured in narrative form both in fiction and nonfiction. Without denying that Lewis was an apologist, this thesis argues that a reconsideration of Lewis as a "spiritual theologian," in the way that pastor-theologian Eugene Peterson conceives it, is best able to account for Lewis' spirituality of the cross that is the central organising feature of his thought.

To speak of a "centre" of thought, even in an integrative thinker, can be problematic. Beyond polycentric possibilities, Gorman argues that using "centre" to talk about Paul's spirituality is inadequate as it suggests either a wheel-hub or solar system metaphor—word pictures that suggest inflexibility and arbitrariness that are inorganic to Paul's thought.²⁷ By contrast, given Lewis' love of the symmetry of the medieval solar system model²⁸—which is neither arbitrary nor mechanistic—to speak of the centre of Lewis' narrative spiritual theology may mislead readers into imagining a tighter, more coherent system than he was able to provide. It would be helpful, rewriting Gorman's words, to speak of Lewis' "all-encompassing, integrating narrative reality" which in its proto-theological, reflexive, emergent form brings "together the diverse and potentially divergent aspects" of his thought and writing.²⁹ The phrase is admittedly cumbersome.

Moreover, Lewis was playful with the image of "centre," using it throughout his work. In just the denouement of *Perelandra*, he uses it dozens of times to evoke an image where all things are returning to the centre. In one way, "there seems no centre because it

²⁷ Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 370.

²⁸ See C.S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), ch. 5.

²⁹ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 371.

is all centre”³⁰; in another, “[w]here Maleldil is, there is the centre. He is in every place.”³¹ This is one of the “sacred paradoxes” that fill Lewis’ work, a reality that is crucial in his cruciform spirituality and the image that closes this thesis.³² Moreover, Lewis himself uses “centre” as a metaphor to describe his idea of cruciformity.³³ I will, therefore, continue to use “centre” to describe the way in which Lewis’ cruciform spirituality is the all-encompassing, integrating and integrative narrative reality that accounts for Lewis’ thought as it is expressed in diverse media, and into which other theological considerations of Lewis—apologetic, systematic, cultural, ethical, and moral—can be unified and ultimately reread.

Chapter one argues that the concept of spiritual self-death and resurrection is integrated through Lewis’ Christian thought and embedded within his poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and letters. This prevalent theme is largely neglected in work focussed upon C.S. Lewis’ spirituality and theology. Where it is intimated in scholarship, it appears primarily in critics interested in Lewis’ social thought, such as Stackhouse, Meilaender, and Filmer. In exploring how Lewis understood Christian discipleship as an echo of Christ’s incarnation, death on the cross, and resurrection to new life, chapter one introduces four thinkers to frame the conversation in the four central chapters of the thesis.

Eugene Peterson provides an approach to “spiritual theology” that works heuristically for C.S. Lewis’ emergent understanding of spiritual life. In turning from systematic to spiritual theology in chapter two, I argue that thinking of Lewis as a spiritual theologian rather than apologist is a more capacious categorisation of his thought and is organic to Lewis’ theological works, his epistemology, and his storytelling. Using this framework, chapter three systematically describes Lewis’ spiritual theology of the cross and provides examples from Lewis’ fiction to demonstrate Lewis’ spirituality in narrative form. In chapter three, I argue that Michael Gorman’s biblical-theological approach to Pauline

³⁰ C.S. Lewis, *Perelandra* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 218.

³¹ *Ibid*, 216.

³² C.S. Lewis, “Religion Without Dogma?” in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 131.

³³ C.S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1947), 133-136; C.S. Lewis, “The Grand Miracle,” in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 81, 85. Lewis elsewhere calls the Incarnation the “utterly historical and concrete reality which is the centre of all our hope, faith and love,” “Transposition,” in *The Weight of Glory, and Other Addresses* (New York: HarperOne, 2000), 112. For “centre” metaphors in thought, see also “Religion Without Dogma,” 130; “Christian Reunion,” in *Christian Reunion, and Other Essays*, ed. Walter Hooper (London: Fount, 1990), 20-21.

exegesis allows us to see that Lewis offers a non-systematic theology of cruciformity that moves past Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ* to refocus spirituality on a fuller understanding of the *imitatio* motif. Narrowing in upon Lewis' first work of Christian nonfiction, *The Problem of Pain*, I discern a six-point Logic of Cruciformity that emerges in various forms throughout Lewis' writings. Chapters two and three each conclude with an experiment of spiritual theology in Lewis' fiction, demonstrating that Lewis is operating in a "narrative" spirituality of the cross.

Having established a method for reading Lewis as a spiritual theologian, and having drawn out the theological logic from Lewis' unsystematic teachings on Christian life, chapter four then explores "The Shape of Cruciformity" in Lewis' *œuvre*. Chapter four offers an extensive and detailed close reading of Lewisian narrative patterning across Lewis' project of poetry and prose. Using a narratological tool from Northrop Frye's theory of reading, supported by J.R.R. Tolkien's theory of *eucaastrophe*, I argue that there is a comedic, U-shaped pattern of cruciform imagery in Lewis' fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. Frye analyses the gospel story and discerns a "U-pattern" in Christ's descent in incarnation and his death and burial, and an ascent in his resurrection—what Tolkien in his essay, "On Fairy-stories," calls the "sudden joyous 'turn'" of the happy ending.³⁴ This U-shaped movement is the pattern for spiritual life as it is the pattern for literary comedy, and we see U-shaped, comedic images appear extensively throughout Lewis' works.

Having described in detail a narrative spiritual theology of cruciformity that is central to C.S. Lewis' *œuvre* and integrated throughout his entire thought in word and image, in chapter five I recognise that images of self-surrender, conformity, and submission are not unproblematic. These images are gendered, often pressed to the point of complete negation of the self. I use Anna Fisk's feminist theology to problematise Lewis' normative cross-shaped spirituality. Following a literature review of scholarship on C.S. Lewis and gender, I argue that Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, Ann Loades, and Monika Hilder each suggest models showing an inversive quality inherent to Lewis' thought that confirms the U-shaped eucaastrophic narrative pattern at the centre of his theology. The shape of Lewis' narratives is the shape of his thought. A U-shaped eucaastrophic spirituality of the cross,

³⁴ J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-stories," in *Essays Presented to Charles Williams*, ed. C.S. Lewis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 81.

where all are called to surrender the self as an echo of the cross and a marriage partnership looks most like a Crucifixion, works to subvert Lewis' idiosyncratic valorisation of gender hierarchy. This crucicentric spirituality eventually reconstitutes Lewis' understanding of gender roles in his own marriage.

In taking feminist critics of Lewis seriously, we discover that the inversive form of Lewis' moral thought that emerges from the interrogation of his spiritual theology offers possibilities for a hopeful, holistic spirituality of the cross evident in his fiction and nonfiction. This inversive shape of Lewis' thought leads ultimately to what I call Lewis' "theology of the small," an ironic spiritual theological perspective that subverts gendered expectations of heroics. In this project of subversion, what Hilder calls a "theological feminism," Lewis privileges leadership qualities often gendered feminine, such as childlikeness, spiritual sensitivity, friendship, loyalty, and an "active passivism" that holds together self-submission and rugged commitment to truth, goodness, and beauty. As Lewis' cruciform spiritual theology collapses numerous binaries at the nadir of the death-and-resurrection pattern, I conclude with a separate chapter on "sacred paradoxes" in Lewis' thought that invite further work. The whole of C.S. Lewis' life and works suggests a narrative cruciform theology that deepens and extends *imitatio Christi* motifs that can "steal past ... watchful dragons" of "stained-glass" images and "Sunday school associations" of writings on the Christian life. There will "for the first time appear in real potency"³⁵ a holistic, praxeological theology of the cross that deepens our understanding of Lewis' concept of spiritual life and invites a prophetic self-critique for Christian believers.

Definitions as Methodological Approaches

The subtitle of this thesis includes the terms Spiritual Theology, Cruciformity, and Narrative. The definitions of these key terms provide methodological approaches for this study and structure the main argument of chapters two, three, and four, respectively. In each of these central chapters, I use one of Lewis' so-called apologetics books to provide a focal point for discussion of the death-and-resurrection motif, and one scholar whose methodological approach is critical to our discussion. Chapter two uses Eugene Peterson's definition of "spiritual theology" as a framework to demonstrate Lewis' focus on "spiritual

³⁵ C.S. Lewis, "Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's to be Said," in *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*, ed. Walter Hooper (New York: Harvest, 1994), 37.

life” in *Mere Christianity*. Chapter three uses Michael Gorman’s biblical-theological concept of “Cruciformity” as a category for discerning the inherent *imitation Christi* logic within *The Problem of Pain*. Chapter four uses Northrop Frye’s structuralist analysis of the U-shaped pattern of comedy for an analysis of how Lewis narrativizes his spiritual theology of the cross within fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and letters; Lewis’ *Miracles* captures this U-shaped pattern in the image of descent and ascent in what Lewis calls “The Grand Miracle.” Each of chapter two and three concludes with an experiment in fiction, demonstrating the turn to spiritual life in Lewis’ fiction (chapter two) and the inherent Logic of Cruciformity (chapter three). Chapter four is an intensive narratological study across Lewis’ entire corpus. Three Lewis nonfiction texts offer examples of the three core concepts and the three methodological approaches that structure the central chapters of this thesis, providing the critical evidence that what emerges from C.S. Lewis’ diverse corpus is an instinctive spirituality of the cross that is the central organising feature that unites Lewis’ Christian thought.

The term “spiritual theology” captures the first methodological distinctive of this thesis and is the concentrated focus of chapter two. I am arguing that what integrates Lewis’ thought in his poetry, fiction, Christian teaching, and even in his literary criticism is the image of spiritual self-death and resurrection. I argue in chapter two that there is within Lewis’ apologetics project and Christian writings a concentrated focus upon the spiritual life—a turn from philosophical and doctrinal theology to spirituality and Christian praxis that is rooted in the death and resurrection of Christ. As an amateur, non-systematic, popular theologian, Lewis requires a framework that organises and systematises his protocritical thought into a coherent form, to the degree that such a reconstruction is possible. The category of “spiritual theology,” particularly in the mode presented by Eugene Peterson, is helpful in following Lewis’ instinctive move from systematic theology and doctrinal explication to spirituality.

Eugene Peterson was a Presbyterian minister, the inaugural James M. Houston Professor of Spiritual Theology at Regent College from 1992-1998, and the author of more than thirty books on spiritual life, including the five-volume *Spiritual Theology* series (2005-2010). In Peterson’s view, spiritual theology is the considered reflection upon what it means to live the Christian life. In particular, it “is the attention that we give to the details of living

life on this way.”³⁶ “Spiritual theology,” Peterson writes, “represents the attention that the church community gives to keeping what we think about God (theology) in organic connection with the way we live with God (spirituality).”³⁷ In his ground-breaking *Spiritual Theology* (1998), Singaporean Chinese theologian Simon Chan concurs with this definition, what he calls the “flip side” of systematic theology, where the goal of spiritual theology is “not to reflect on Christian doctrines per se but on their implications for the Christian life.”³⁸ Chan argues that theology, done well, is always in a sense doxological, and that the “division of theology” into categories like spiritual, dogmatic, biblical, moral, ascetic, mystical, and practical is a late development and potentially alienating to goals of theology.³⁹ Nevertheless, there is value in the “systematic reflection and formalization” of Christian spirituality.⁴⁰ Spiritual theology is, then, a bridge between systematic theology and dogmatics, on the one side, and street-level concerns of pastoral theology and training in discipleship, on the other. The “mediation” of spiritual theology, Chan argues, avoids reductive thinking in either the intellectual or practical quarters of theological exploration.⁴¹ Spiritual theology, while distinct from these disciplines, is never far from them—never fully disconnected from other theological approaches and contexts where Christians practice their faith. For Peterson and Chan, spiritual theology is a discipline embedded in community life and engaged culturally. In a phrase central to the approach of this thesis in chapter four, Chan argues that the “shape of our spirituality must be true to both the context in which we live and the Christian story.”⁴² For Peterson, spiritual theology is what he calls “the specifically Christian attempt to address the lived experience revealed in our Holy Scriptures and the rich understandings and practices of our ancestors as we work this experience out in our contemporary world.”⁴³

Consequently, in a reconsideration of Lewis as a spiritual theologian, we are not limited to his overtly Christian teaching, but discover patterns of spirituality in his letters, his storytelling, his poetry, and even in his work as a literary historian and critic. Moreover, this

³⁶ Eugene Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 13.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 16.

³⁸ Chan, *Spiritual Theology*, 9.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 16-20,

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 16.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 20.

⁴² *Ibid*.

⁴³ Peterson, *Christ Plays*, 17.

spiritual theological approach to the enterprise is organic to Lewis' project, as he is admittedly a popular writer talking about his understanding of Christian life rather than a trained systematician. James Patrick reminds us that "Lewis was always careful to note that he was not a theologian, so we need not expect systematic completeness there."⁴⁴ Indeed, as Travis Buchanan warns, the "transposition of Lewis's works into the sanitized foreign language of systematic theology," when done poorly, can be "a brutal vivisection of Lewis's living words and images, with the messy result left lying in abstract deadness on the pages."⁴⁵ Jacques Sys captures something of the truth when he asks us to imagine Lewis' entire project as "a constant meditation on the central kerygma."⁴⁶ While Lewis may not be a professional theologian, he is an intelligent lay Christian thinking Christianly and in a way that mediates, as Chan puts it, the gap between systematic theology and Christian living. While Donald Williams' suggestion that Lewis might be "the most important amateur theologian ever"⁴⁷ is hyperbolic, Williams is correct that Lewis is successful because his winsome "presentation of the nature and purpose and task of theology shows powerfully how it can and should be made to speak to the whole person."⁴⁸ Lewis' popular theology is systemic rather than systematic, reflexive and emergent, and embedded throughout his diverse corpus. The category of spiritual theology is heuristically valuable, then, in analysing the "doctrine of death" that is at "the root of the matter" of his Christian thought. Chapter two follows Peterson in offering an approach that allows us to recognize Lewis' "tilt of the head" from systematic to spiritual theology in his most famous works, *Mere Christianity* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

Although Lewis is writing as an amateur and popular theologian in a way that links Christian doctrine to lived experience, there are moments that are prototheologically interesting in his work. In *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (2001),

⁴⁴ James Patrick, "C.S. Lewis and Idealism," in *A Christian for All Christians: Essays in Honour of C.S. Lewis*, ed. Andrew Walker and James Patrick (Toronto: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), 173.

⁴⁵ Travis Buchanan, "An Unwelcome Transposition: Review Essay of Paul H. Brazier's *C.S. Lewis: Revelation and the Christ*," *SEVEN* 33 (2016): 103.

⁴⁶ Jacques Sys, "'Look out! It's Alive!': C.S. Lewis on Doctrine," in *A Christian for All Christians: Essays in Honour of C. S. Lewis* (eds. Andrew Walker and James Patrick; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990); 175. Sys is helpful in noting here the distinction between "speculative theology" and "dogmatic theology," where the latter is concerned with what Lewis might describe as "mere Christianity." Sys' definition of doctrine as "not a system at all, but the expression of a body of hard facts" (175) stands in strong contradistinction to Lewis' project of spiritual theology as described in this thesis.

⁴⁷ Williams, *Deeper Magic*, 14.

⁴⁸ Williams, *Deeper Magic*, 58.

Gorman has worked out most fully the concept of cruciformity as he understands St Paul's spirituality of the cross.⁴⁹ The term "Cruciformity" combines "cruciform," meaning cross-shaped, and "conformity," referring to the believer's formation in co-crucifixion with Christ as described in Galatians 2:19b-20 and parallels: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (NRSV). The triple entendre in the concept of Cruciformity argues that Christian spirituality is *formed* by the image of the cross, but also that spiritual *formation* is defined by *conformity* to Christ on the cross. In this imitation practice, the believer is drawn into the original drama, what Gorman calls the "narrative" theology of cruciformity: "To be in Christ is to be a living exegesis of the narrative of Christ, a new performance of the original drama of exaltation following humiliation...."⁵⁰ The believer's imitation of Christ, then, is one of self-sacrifice, a kind of self-death in the pattern of Christ and by the power of Christ that anticipates resurrection into new life.

C.S. Lewis anticipates Gorman's approach to Pauline spirituality with what I describe in chapter three as a Logic of Cruciformity evident in Lewis' apologetics trilogy and throughout his corpus. This proto-theological instinct in Lewis makes Gorman useful for framing Lewis' ideas into a coherent whole. Gorman has emerged as an important figure in theological studies of the New Testament. In his focus upon the spirituality of the cross in Paul's thought, Gorman answers the problem posed by Luke Timothy Johnson a generation ago about the lack of attention paid to religious experience in exegetical studies and biblical theology.⁵¹ Johnson's phenomenological approach is crucicentric, arguing that early Christians defined themselves by a power "derived from the crucified and raised Messiah Jesus" experienced in the Resurrection.⁵² Yet, exegetical attention to spirituality in the text-worlds of the Bible has lagged behind the development of thought on Christian spirituality. In the thirty-one chapters of the influential *Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality* (2005), the only dedicated treatment of lived spirituality *within* Scripture is specifically

⁴⁹ See also Gorman's *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); *The Death of the Messiah and the Birth of the New Covenant: A (Not So) New Model of the Atonement* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014).

⁵⁰ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 92.

⁵¹ Luke Timothy Johnson, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity: A Missing Dimension of New Testament Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998).

⁵² *Ibid*, 184-185.

responding to Johnson's challenge. In this chapter, Bonnie Thurston desires to move past the trend to view the New Testament as an "artifact of history" to the idea that it is a "record of human experience" in the earliest encounters with the person of Christ.⁵³ Gorman's focus on a spirituality of the cross uniquely invites praxeological concerns while rooting his Pauline study in the theology of the cross tradition. Lewis scholar and historical theologian Alister McGrath argues that the *theologia crucis* tradition as founded by Martin Luther is by definition a *spiritual* theology, for the cross is "the iconic and symbolic center of Christian theology, worship, and spirituality."⁵⁴

Within this theology of the cross tradition, and with exegetical precision, Michael Gorman's attention to lived spirituality is what Eugene Peterson and Simon Chan would recognize as spiritual theology. Intriguingly, although attuned to the theology of the cross tradition and the importance of spirituality, neither McGrath's biography of Lewis nor his more general *Christian Spirituality* (1999) has a concentrated study of a cross-shaped spirituality—and certainly not to the extent that we see in Lewis. Indeed, Lewis scholars have missed this element in his work. I argue in chapter three that Gorman's term Cruciformity is useful in understanding the importance in Lewis of Christ's death and resurrection as a pattern for spiritual life. Using Cruciformity as the guiding term in chapter three, I argue that there is a "Logic of Cruciformity" in *The Problem of Pain* and throughout Lewis' writings, a sixfold pattern to Lewis' spiritual theology of the cross that emerges in various forms throughout his fiction.

In chapters two and three, this thesis works along twin methodological rails of Peterson's approach to spiritual theology and Gorman's Pauline spirituality of Cruciformity. Though he does not use the term, Gorman is working as a spiritual theologian in offering a bridge between lived experience and doctrinal formulation as he sees it worked out in Paul. As a theologian looking at storied spirituality, Gorman uses the term "narrative" in a number of ways that, when combined with Northrop Frye's approach to narratology, are helpful in analysing Lewis' writings and discerning the embedded nature of his spiritual theology.

⁵³ Bonnie Thurston, "The New Testament in Christian Spirituality," in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, ed. Arthur Holder (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 55.

⁵⁴ Alister E. McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther's Theological Breakthrough*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 205; see 18-22. See also Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), esp. 200-218.

By “narrative spirituality,” Gorman means “a spirituality that tells a story, a dynamic life with God that corresponds in some way to the divine ‘story.’”⁵⁵ Paul is deeply invested in narrating his own story of encounter with Christ and life in the spirit (e.g. 1 Cor 9; 1 Cor 15:8-10; 2 Cor 3:18-4:6; 2 Cor 11-12; Gal 1:11-2:21; 1 Thess 2-3), but he also uses what Gorman calls “narrative patterns about the significance of the cross.”⁵⁶ There is in Paul’s call to conform to the crucified Christ “a dynamic correspondence in daily life to the strange story of Christ crucified as the primary way of experiencing the love and grace of God.”⁵⁷ Paul’s project unifies the story of the cross with the story of Christian life by “re-presenting in living form the word of the cross.”⁵⁸ As I argue further below, Gorman notes that Paul’s letters are themselves not projects of systematic theology but are deeply invested in pastoral concern rooted in spiritual theology. In a further element of narrativity, within these deeply contextual moments, Paul often makes theological statements in elliptical, echoative, and synecdochical form. Gorman notes that Paul uses “recognizable narrative patterns” to tell the story of Christ and the life of Christ; the phrase “Christ crucified,” for example, captures the entire gospel story, including the Resurrection, which is not explicitly specified in that phrase but essential to it.⁵⁹ These creedal statements and brief kerygmatic formulae draw together the story of Christ’s Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection with the believer’s call to respond in co-crucifixion and hope for new life. Thus, Gorman argues, we are invited into a narrative unity with Christ that imaginatively patterns the normative Christian life.

Gorman’s analysis of Paul’s narrativity thus also speaks to the ways that Lewis meshes the cross and cruciform spirituality with his fiction. While Gorman does not himself make the link to structuralist thought, his instinct to note “recognizable narrative patterns” makes an important connection to narratological analyses in literary criticism. Gorman is sensitive to the *form* of the cross and synchronistic *formation* of believers, so looking to the structure of a spiritual theology of the cross is an essential element of examining its

⁵⁵ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 4.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 7. For an exegetical argument for narrativity as an approach to understanding Paul’s theology, see Brenton D.G. Dickieson, “Antisemitism and the Judaistic Paul: A study of I Thessalonians 2:14-16 in Light of Paul’s Social and Rhetorical Contexts and the Contemporary Question of Antisemitism” (MCS thesis, Regent College, 2005).

⁵⁷ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 5.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 30

⁵⁹ Ibid, 75-76.

narrativity. Following a focus upon spiritual theology and cruciformity in chapters two and three, respectively, in chapter four, I turn to the narratological tool by literary theorist Northrop Frye. In his *The Great Code: The Bible as Literature* (1981), Frye offers a U-shaped structuralist analysis that shows the intimate link between Lewis' storytelling, his understanding of fiction, and central themes in his theological writing. Beyond the organic link between Frye's archetypal typology and narrative patterns in Lewis' work, Lewis scholars have turned with some frequency to Frye's analytical tools, including Kath Filmer on archetypal imagery in Narnia,⁶⁰ Joe Christopher on Narnia⁶¹ and *The Great Divorce*,⁶² Nancy-Lou Patterson on *That Hideous Strength*,⁶³ Jared Lobdell on Lewis' understanding of myth and mythopoeia,⁶⁴ Jody Woerner on Lewis' quest narratives,⁶⁵ and Paul Rovang on Ransom as a Christ figure in *Perelandra*.⁶⁶

Beyond criticism of Lewis' narratives, David Lyle Jeffrey contrasts Lewis with Northrop Frye, Frank Kermode, Robert Alter, and other 20th-century literary critics, where religious commitment is distinct from literary criticism.⁶⁷ With their own particular interests, Frye and Lewis are each engaged in the Western literary tradition.⁶⁸ William Calin's survey recognises that both Lewis and Frye share a critical foundation in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, a resistance to some aspects of "the New Critical revision of the canon," and numerous other

⁶⁰ Filmer, *Mask and Mirror*, 44. Michael Ward roots his project in "foundational archetypes" of the type that Frye has discussed, *Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C.S. Lewis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁶¹ Joe R. Christopher, "An Introduction to Narnia Part IV: The Literary Classification of The Chronicles," *Mythlore* 3, no. 1 (1973): 12-15, 27.

⁶² Joe R. Christopher, "Considering *The Great Divorce* [Parts III, IV, and V]," *Mythcon* II (1971): 12-21.

⁶³ Nancy-Lou Patterson, *Ransoming the Waste Land: Papers on C.S. Lewis's Space Trilogy, Chronicles of Narnia, and Other Works: Volume I*, ed. Emily E. Auger and Janet B. Croft (Clifford, ON: Valleyhome Books, 2015), 205-225.

⁶⁴ Jared C. Lobdell, "An Irritation of Oysters: C.S. Lewis and the Myth in Mythopoeia," *Extrapolation* 39, no. 1 (1998): 68-84. Cf. James W. Menzies, *C.S. Lewis and Joseph Campbell on the Veracity of Christianity* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2015), 37; Shezra Kamran, "Fantastic languages: C.S. Lewis and Ursula K. Le Guin" (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2014), 64-65.

⁶⁵ Jody R. Woerner, "The Quest for Joy: C.S. Lewis's Use of the Quest Narrative in His Fiction" (PhD Thesis, Arizona State University, 2001).

⁶⁶ Paul R. Rovang, "A Spenserian in Space: *The Faerie Queene* in C.S. Lewis's *Perelandra*," *Mythlore* 33, no. 1 (2014): 40. Cf. Sanford Schwartz, *C.S. Lewis on the Final Frontier: Science and the Supernatural in the Space Trilogy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 17, 184-185.

⁶⁷ David Lyle Jeffrey, "C.S. Lewis, the Bible, and Its Literary Critics," *Christianity and Literature* 50, no. 1 (2000): 95-109. For a counterpoint arguing for theological integration, see Joe Velaidum, "Typology and Theology in Northrop Frye's Biblical Hermeneutic," *Literature and Theology* 17, no. 2 (2003): 156-169.

⁶⁸ William Calin, *The Twentieth-Century Humanist Critics: From Spitzer to Frye* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 127.

features.⁶⁹ Indeed, Frye is interested, as was Lewis and the Oxford Inklings, in mythopoeic literature as a trans-generic category of writing, and Frye includes C.S. Lewis and Charles Williams in his consideration of mythopoeia in his theory of symbols.⁷⁰ Calin considers Lewis and Frye to be in a tiny category of excellence among 20th-century critics, though Till Kinzel is probably correct that Lewis is “lightweight” as a theoretician next to Frye, Todorov, or those of the structuralist school.⁷¹ As Lewis’ thinking about literature moves towards narratological consideration, as I argue in chapter four, Frye is a strong conversation partner. Particular to this study, what Calin calls a “‘u’ structure” in Frye’s analysis of the Christian Bible,⁷² is useful in considering the spiritual theology embedded in Lewis’ narrative project. The Gospel is a U-shaped narrative, following the pattern of descent and ascent in the Incarnation, death, and resurrection at the centre of the story. Indeed, in Frye’s analysis, the Christian Bible as a whole is a “divine comedy.”⁷³ Scholars like Charles Huttar, Michael Ward, Doris Myers, Peter Schakel, and Colin Manlove have looked for structures in Lewis’ work that have informed his theological project, and Frye’s typology is helpful at this point. Moreover, Curtis A. Weyant notes the value of Frye as a resource for a “praxeological study of literature”⁷⁴ as literature is rooted in “human action.”⁷⁵

Peterson, Gorman, and Frye, respectively, inform chapters two, three, and four on spiritual theology, cruciformity, and narratology—each linked in the narrative or storied nature of Lewis’ corpus, whether fiction, nonfiction, or prose. It is here that the feminist critics of chapter five are important, concerned as they are with Marcella Maria Althaus-Reid and Lisa Isherwood’s insistence that feminist Christology be ethical and rooted in everyday life, and thus judged by the outcomes of the logic within its framework.⁷⁶ Anna Fisk likewise places her work in literature and feminist theology within a school that

⁶⁹ Ibid, 129, 141.

⁷⁰ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 116-117. Cf. Richard Brett Campbell, *Assisting the Effoliation of Creation: J.R.R. Tolkien’s Sub-Creation Theory and C.S. Lewis’s Imagination* (PhD thesis; Union Institute & University, 2010), 184.

⁷¹ Peter J. Schakel, “C.S. Lewis and the Art of Reading: The Uses of Scholarship and the Pleasures of the Text,” *Linguaculture 2* (2014): 91.

⁷² Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible as Literature* (Toronto: Penguin, 1990), 169.

⁷³ Ibid, 169.

⁷⁴ Curtis A. Weyant, “Praxeology and Literature: The Intersection of Action and Imagination” (MA thesis, Signum University, 2017), 43.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 2.

⁷⁶ Marcella Maria Althaus-Reid and Lisa Isherwood, *Controversies in Feminist Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2007), 105.

emphasises “theory that is practical and embodied.”⁷⁷ In conversation with feminist theologians and feminist critics of C.S. Lewis, Fisk is a useful conversation partner in three critical ways: as a reader of Lewis concerned with the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement; as a feminist theologian searching for a more compelling and holistic theology of suffering; and as a theologian of literature offering a method that both interrogates the text and generates new and fruitful theological readings.

First, Fisk is a reader of C.S. Lewis who, in her chapter on “Suffering, Sacrifice, and Sin,” uses the Stone Table sacrifice in Narnia as an example of a Christian theology of sacrifice that needs rethinking in the light of feminist theology. In particular, Fisk addresses the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement discussed in chapter two. Fisk admits that of penal substitutionary atonement is a logically coherent and poetic doctrine that was confirmed in her childhood—Fisk uses the word “absorbed”⁷⁸—in reading Narnia. As an adult critic, Fisk finds this theological perspective to be “so unjust, so nasty, so limited in its imagination about the divine” that the feminist rejection of this theology of glorified suffering is justified.⁷⁹ Fisk’s work, then, invites inclusion in a conversation about C.S. Lewis’ theology of the cross—not least because Lewis himself publicly rejected the penal substitutionary atonement that is central to the faith of many of his readers.⁸⁰

Second, while Fisk searches for a deeper theology of suffering than penal substitutionary theology in Evangelical thought can offer her, she is concerned that hopeful theologians can too quickly look away from the cross as they set their faces “towards the bright dawn of Easter Sunday.”⁸¹ Fisk argues that the cross demands our attention. In particular, Fisk has argued that in the lived experience of the cross, “the crucifixion has cast a long shadow on western Christianity.”⁸² In Christian history, theologies of the cross brought into spiritual life have often served to affirm patriarchy and abuse, extending suffering rather than inviting redemption and reconciliation. As a theologian of literature who calls us to attend to the cross, Anna Fisk helps problematise the imitation motifs of a

⁷⁷ Anna Fisk, *Sex, Sin, and Our Selves: Encounters in Feminist Theology and Contemporary Women’s Literature* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014), xiv.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 105.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 106.

⁸⁰ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper, 2001), 54.

⁸¹ Fisk, *Sex*, 105.

⁸² *Ibid*, 105.

cruciform theology that clarifies an inversive U-shaped posture at the centre of Lewis' spiritual theology.

Although Fisk's theological project represents a significant challenge to a normative Lewisian spiritual theology of the cross that I offer here, and although Fisk is doubtful about a reconstruction that might come from such a problematisation,⁸³ the nature of her work not only offers a fruitful challenge to Lewis' spirituality but offers some opportunities for a recovery from the challenge. There are other projects that contest theologies of the cross as they impact lived experience, such as Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker's evocative *Proverbs of Ashes* (2001). Brock and Parker argue that the cross can never be a central image of a living and healing faith because violence is at the centre of its story:

Violence denies presence and suffocates spirit. Violence robs us of knowledge of life and its intrinsic value; it steals our awareness of beauty, of complexity, of our bodies. Violence ignores vulnerability, dependence and interdependence. A person who acts violently disregards self and other as distinct, obliterating the spaces in which spirit breathes.⁸⁴

A cross-centred spirituality will never, for Brock and Parker, be anything more than a "proverb of ashes." Fisk's feminist theological critique, by contrast, problematises Lewis' spirituality while remaining in conversation with it.

Third, Fisk's work as an approach to literature and theology provides a distinctive method that helps define this project, demonstrated in her view of what theology can do and the relationship between literature and theology. Primarily, Fisk is attempting not a renovation or remodelling of Christian thought in conversation with literature, but a "deconstruction." Indeed, she does "not believe that it is possible, or desirable, for feminist theology to rearrange the torn-apart symbols of Christian theology into a new harmonious whole."⁸⁵ While I demonstrate in chapter five that Fisk does go some distance in recovering a spiritual theology of the cross as a compelling and hopeful narrative rooted in realism,⁸⁶ she does not share the "faith" in the "groundbreaking, dedicated, meticulous, and profoundly valuable work" of "the more well-known voices of feminist theology [who]

⁸³ Ibid, xv.

⁸⁴ Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker, *Proverbs of Ashes: Violence, Redemptive Suffering, and the Search for What Saves Us* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 9-10.

⁸⁵ Fisk, *Se*, xv.

⁸⁶ E.g., Ibid, 108, 116.

resound with hope and certainty.”⁸⁷ By contrast, this thesis *does* share the hope that reconstruction is possible. The two verbs that frame Heather Walton’s feminist approach to theology and literature—“interrogate” and “generate”—suggest the transformational possibilities that deconstruction brings in her work.⁸⁸ Moreover, I hope that a cruciform spirituality patterned in, clarified by, and given story form by C.S. Lewis will season and deepen the lived experience of Christian readers. Though in the 21st century Lewis is at the height of his influence, his voice may recede into the background in popular Christian thought. And yet a more integrated, cross-shaped pattern of spiritual life will remain necessary for the maturing of the faith of those who look to Christ on the cross for hope and direction. As a conversation partner, Fisk’s own project of interrogation and generation offers a fruitful opportunity for testing the limits and possibilities of Lewis’ narrative spiritual theology of the cross.

In considering methodological approaches to a study of literature and theology, it is worth pausing a moment to consider where Lewis as a student of literature fits within the study. Fisk’s school of literature and theology applies the specific methodology of David Jasper and Heather Walton, which in Fisk’s terms “emphasizes not theology *through* literature, or literature as the handmaid of theology, but the ways in which literature forms a renewing challenge to theological certainties.”⁸⁹ In one sense, all theology is meant to disturb and challenge, offering a self-critique within a conversation, much like Fisk’s internal critique of feminist theology. My approach, however, is largely within the frame defined by C.S. Lewis and his work. Lewis never fully articulated a method of literature and theology. However, in a 1939 paper, later printed as “Christianity and Literature,” Lewis describes his approach: “Christian story and sentiment were among the things on which literature could be written, and, conversely, that literature was one of the ways in which Christian sentiment could be expressed and Christian story told.”⁹⁰ This is an example both of literature as a

⁸⁷ Ibid, xv.

⁸⁸ Heather Walton, *Literature, Theology and Feminism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 1.

⁸⁹ Fisk, *Sex*, xvii, referencing David Jasper, “Study of Literature and Theology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology*, ed. Andrew Hass, David Jasper, and Elizabeth Jay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 15-33; Walton, *Literature, Theology and Feminism*; Heather Walton, ed., *Literature and Theology: New Interdisciplinary Spaces* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011).

⁹⁰ C.S. Lewis, “Christianity and Literature,” in *Christian Reflections*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 1.

servant to theology—against which Fisk distinguishes the Jasper-Walton school—and literature *through* theology.

Lewis' understanding of theology and literature goes one step further, where *theology* is a servant to *literature*. Critics note how Lewis was thoroughly invested not merely in reading texts theologically, but understanding them in what John Fleming calls "the *social* context of his literary thought," sometimes expressed in "warm sympathy" with the "most fundamental religious ideas" of older poets,⁹¹ or explicating and explaining religious contexts. Lewis' lifelong work as a literary historian is devoted to the "map," "beliefs," and "harmonious mental Model" in and behind the original texts—to use three terms from *The Discarded Image* (1964)⁹²—that compose their "cosmological, ... historical or religious" beliefs.⁹³ Beyond the more general considerations of social context, Lewis also attends to the theological nature of various works in literary criticism of figures as diverse as John Milton,⁹⁴ Charles Williams,⁹⁵ Denis de Rougemont,⁹⁶ Dorothy L. Sayers,⁹⁷ Edmund Spenser,⁹⁸ and the medieval and 16th-century poets in *Allegory of Love* (1936) and *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* (1954). In Donald Williams' terms, literature can contain something like a "spilled religion," where Christian thought emerges organically from nontheological texts.⁹⁹ Theological analysis was thus a tool to support good literary criticism. Lewis, then, would agree with the Jasper-Walton school that it is unnecessary to reduce literature to the servant role with regard to theology. Rather, it would be better to see literature and theology as partners in mutual service in varying and diverse ways.

Though lacking Tolkien's magnanimity and depth, Lewis presents a view that approaches Tolkien's theory of subcreation: an artist is someone who is "trying to embody in terms of his own art some reflection of eternal Beauty and Wisdom."¹⁰⁰ Indeed, C.S.

⁹¹ John V. Fleming, "Literary Critic," in *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, ed. Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 25.

⁹² Lewis, *Discarded Image*, ix, 1, 11-21, 198-223.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 17.

⁹⁴ C.S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1942), esp. 81-91; C.S. Lewis, *Image and Imagination: Essays and Reviews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 297-300.

⁹⁵ C.S. Lewis, *Image*, vi-xiv; 110-124; 137-146.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 59-62.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 167-169.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 287-288; C.S. Lewis with Alastair Fowler, *Spenser's Images of Life* (Cambridge: Canto Classics, 2013).

⁹⁹ Donald T. Williams, *Mere Humanity: G.K. Chesterton, C.S. Lewis, and J.R.R. Tolkien on the Human Condition* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2006), 143.

¹⁰⁰ Lewis, "Christianity and Literature," 7. See Tolkien, "On Fairy-stories," 38-89.

Lewis' conversion is in some senses an "intellectual-literary conversion,"¹⁰¹ won to the divine by this "reflection" of God in beautiful and wise art. In *An Experiment in Criticism* (1961), Lewis describes what he considers a true literary encounter as "an experience so momentous that only experiences of love, religion, or bereavement can furnish a standard of comparison. Their whole consciousness is changed. They have become what they were not before."¹⁰² Stephen Logan argues that Lewis is "the writer who most incisively and insistently comments on the moral and metaphysical infrastructure of literary and critical art while having the most exuberantly appreciative appetite for literary artistry."¹⁰³ In this sense, Lewis never stopped being a lover of literature who looked for this divine reflection and sought to emulate it in his work. A literature and theology approach to Lewis must attend to this distinctive feature.

Moreover, Logan notes that Lewis "attempts to achieve an almost unachievable personal unity"¹⁰⁴ in his work, poetically, personally, and sacramentally. Considering this attempt at unity, Meilaender argues that Lewis' "manner of thinking theologically seems itself to be consistent with the matter of his theology."¹⁰⁵ As the Gospel, for Lewis, is rooted in the cross and filled with eschatological hope realised in Christian living, so his theology takes the same integrative flavour. As I argue that Lewis' Christian thought is cross-shaped, his theology and literature project includes an inversive, even a subversive element. In this sense, Fisk's use of Jasper-Walton approaches to theology and literature—a theological interrogation of the text that generates renewing challenge to entrenched theological—is helpful in utilising Lewis as a challenge to settled understandings of spirituality that do not sufficiently account for the cross in Christian spiritual formation. This cross-shaped spirituality means, in turn, that Lewis' theology of literature includes the idea of "surrender" to texts, i.e., specific attention to the reader's response involved in submission to a text that echoes the cross event, which is Lewis' unique literary *imitatio Christi*. The complexities of

¹⁰¹ This is René Girard's term from his own conversion story, Wayne Northey, "Rene Girard and Violence," *Clarion Journal of Spirituality and Justice* (2006), https://clarionjournal.typepad.com/clarion_journal_of_spirit/2006/06/rene_girard_and.html.

¹⁰² C.S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 3.

¹⁰³ Stephen Logan, "Literary Theorist," in *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, ed. Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 40.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 41.

¹⁰⁵ Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 241.

this surrender to the text is a subject of the concluding chapter, where I argue that in Lewis, the image of surrender is active rather than passive.

The definitions of three terms in the subtitle—spiritual theology, Cruciformity, and narrative—invite methodological questions that shape the central exploration of this thesis (chs. 2-4) as well as an interrogation of the material (ch. 5) that leads to a generative conversation about the inversive shape of C.S. Lewis' cruciform spirituality (chs. 6-7). The subtitle also indicates that this is a work in primary conversation with C.S. Lewis. As the review of literature below demonstrates, Lewis' thinking about spirituality is emergent and integrative—a form of “spilled religion” in his diverse *oeuvre*. Therefore, a study of this kind is most effective when considering Lewis' diverse, developmental, and, on the surface, apparently disparate corpus, consisting of various kinds of fiction, diary entries, notes, letters, essays, poems, sermons, books on literature (history, theory, and criticism), and Christian books (apologetics and praxis). Biographer Alan Jacobs quips that it is “hard to imagine one person managing all these kinds of writing,” and yet “what’s really remarkable about Lewis is not the *diversity* of his writings, but the *unity*—the sense that something ties them all together.”¹⁰⁶

To capture that unity, in each chapter following this introduction, I use one of Lewis' popular books of nonfiction to frame the conversation: *Mere Christianity* on spiritual theology (ch. 2); *The Problem of Pain* on Lewis' Logic of Cruciformity (ch. 3); *Miracles* on the narrative shape of Lewis' spirituality (ch. 4); *The Four Loves* in considering cruciform spirituality from women's perspectives (ch. 5); and *An Experiment in Criticism* in the exploration of Lewis' inversive thought (ch. 6). None of these books is overtly a work of spiritual theology, ranging from apologetics to Christian teaching to literary theory—though *The Four Loves* comes close to a project we could call spiritual theology. However, these specialised works, combined with various experiments in fiction and close reading, show the deeply integrative nature of Lewis' understanding of what it means to live a Christian life. Secondary literature on Lewis is vast, but literature reviews in this thesis on Lewis and spirituality (ch. 1), Lewis and the theme of death (ch. 1), Christology (ch. 2), narratology (ch. 4), and Lewis and gender (ch. 5) attempt to be as inclusive as possible of major works. We

¹⁰⁶ Jacobs, *Narnian*, xviii.

turn next to the spiritual theological theme that resonates throughout Lewis' entire project, Lewis' "doctrine of death."

Death is at the Root of the Whole Matter

Lewis' primary literary curator, Walter Hooper, is often quoted as saying, "Lewis struck me as the most thoroughly converted man I ever met."¹⁰⁷ Catholic theologian Sr John Sheila Galligan agrees, arguing that "the thread of authentic conversion seemed to be subtly woven into Lewis' writing...."¹⁰⁸ Elaborating the thesis at the centre of her study on C.S. Lewis' spirituality, Galligan argues that in

both his theological works and in fantasy, Lewis suggests the structure of conversion in daily experience.... Indeed, in all his works, he invites ... Christians to be consciously aiming ... to be in the process of ongoing conversion ... as the setting of day-to-day existence wherein Christians are called to fulfill their vocation of discipleship.¹⁰⁹

Galligan highlights the thoroughly integrated nature of Lewis' conversion as it works throughout his fiction and Christian nonfiction. Rather than leaping joyfully into the Christian fold, he famously described himself as the "most dejected and reluctant convert in all of England."¹¹⁰ While reluctance is a rhetorically suspect device for an apologist in a Freudian age, the substance of Lewis' pre-conversion poetry confirms Lewis' fear of "the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet"¹¹¹ and his intense discomfort with the "subtle burden" of "the troublesome responsibilities" of "transcendental interferences."¹¹² In his first published conversion narrative, *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1933), Pilgrim John thrills when he hears there is no God figure watching him: "Such a weight had been lifted from his mind that he felt he could fly."¹¹³ In Lewis' first

¹⁰⁷ C.S. Lewis, *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 12. See also Hooper's preface to *Of This and Other Worlds*, "Lewis' conversion just was the chief watershed of his life. There was no nook or cranny of his being that it did not eventually reach and transform," 15. See George Watson, "He was a critic whose views are supremely bound up with the course of his life," *Critical Essays on C.S. Lewis* (Leister: Scolar Press, 1992), 7.

¹⁰⁸ John Sheila Galligan, "'Slow-Paced We Come': Conversion in the Writings of C.S. Lewis (PhD Dissertation, Pontificiam Universitatem S. Thomae de Urbe, 1985), 14.

¹⁰⁹ Galligan, "Slow-Paced," 14.

¹¹⁰ Lewis, SBJ, 228-229.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 228-229.

¹¹² C.S. Lewis, "'Early Prose Joy': C.S. Lewis's Early Draft of an Autobiographical Manuscript," *SEVEN* 30 (2013): 29.

¹¹³ C.S. Lewis, *The Pilgrim's Regress: Wade Annotated Edition*, ed. David C. Downing (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 28.

collection of poetry, *Spirits in Bondage* (1919), the poet cries out against the God who “tosses the dust of chaos and gives the suns their parts”: “Ah, sweet, if a man could cheat him! If you could flee away / Into some other country beyond the rosy West.”¹¹⁴ His character of Dymmer in his 1926 eponymous narrative poem has been described as embarking on a “quest for autonomy.”¹¹⁵ More than Lewis “Trying all postures there / To make my image fair,”¹¹⁶ Lewis’ private, unpublished poetry shares the same worry:

But what’s the use? For yield I must,
Though long delayed, at last must dare
To give over, to be eased of my iron casing,
Molten at thy melody, as men of snow
In the solar smile. Slow-paced I come,
Yielding by inches.¹¹⁷

Dated to February 1929 to July 1930,¹¹⁸ the period leading up to Lewis’ conversion to theism,¹¹⁹ these poems show that Lewis wanted to be left alone. Despite this desire for independence, whatever Lewis does, and though “wary of yet another cheat,”¹²⁰ he yields the field of battle by inches. The war metaphor is poignant. “Every story of conversion is the story of a blessed defeat,” Lewis writes.¹²¹ In *Surprised by Joy* Lewis talks about “traps everywhere,”¹²² “fine nets and stratagems,”¹²³ and being “annihilated”¹²⁴ or “assailed”¹²⁵ by his unscrupulous opponent, only being given a momentary “retreat”¹²⁶ and the occasional

¹¹⁴ C.S. Lewis, *Spirits in Bondage: A Cycle of Lyrics*, ed. Walter Hooper (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984), 15.

¹¹⁵ Don W. King, “Columns of Light: The Preconversion Narrative Poetry of C.S. Lewis,” in *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy: Volume 2: Fantasist, Mythmaker, and Poet*, ed. Bruce L. Edwards (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 218.

¹¹⁶ Lewis, *Regress*, 190.

¹¹⁷ Don W. King, ed. *The Collected Poems of C.S. Lewis: A Critical Edition* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2015), 419.

¹¹⁸ Charlie W. Starr, “Date Corrections, Confirmations or Narrowings, and Dates for Undated Poems in Don King’s *Collected Poems of C.S. Lewis: A Critical Edition*,” Private document, 2019.

¹¹⁹ Two scholars working independently have recalculated Lewis’ conversion to theism to Trinity Term 1930, and perhaps in the first ten days of June 1930. See Andrew Lazo, “Correcting the Chronology: Some Implications of ‘Early Prose Joy,’” *SEVEN* 29 (2012): 51-62; Alister E. McGrath, *C.S. Lewis: A Life: Eccentric Genius, Reluctant Prophet* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2013), 141-146.

¹²⁰ Don W. King, “Topical Poems: C.S. Lewis’s Postconversion Poetry,” in *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy: Volume 2: Fantasist, Mythmaker, and Poet*, ed. Bruce L. Edwards (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 271.

¹²¹ Joy Davidman, *Smoke on the Mountain: An Interpretation of the Ten Commandments* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), 7.

¹²² Lewis, SBJ, 191.

¹²³ *Ibid*, 191.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, 217.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, 73-74, 191-192.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, 201.

“ammunition for defence of a position already chosen.”¹²⁷ “Dangers lie in wait for him on every side”¹²⁸ when it comes to the idea of God. “God closed in on me,”¹²⁹ Lewis realises, and “[t]otal surrender ... [was] demanded,”¹³⁰ for the “reality with which no treaty can be made was upon me.... I gave in ... kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting [my] eyes in every direction for a chance of escape....”¹³¹ Even in his last published interview Lewis phrases his surrender in terms of parley: “[A]t the moment what I heard was God saying, ‘Put down your gun and we’ll talk.’”¹³² Though Don King notes that the “total surrender” section of *Surprised by Joy* is the most oft-quoted,¹³³ critics have ignored the martial metaphor that anchors the image-cluster. As we think of the religious terms of death and surrender in Lewis' memoir, we must remember that surrender is, after all, a military metaphor, and Lewis was a war veteran.

More than convenient metaphors, these word images and narrative patterns are the primary tools for exploring Lewis' spiritual theology. Therefore, it is not incidental that Lewis' metaphors shape themselves toward the idea of death. There are other images of letting go that Lewis uses in telling the story of his conversion. In a draft of *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis talks about “sloughing off” as a metaphor for letting go.¹³⁴ Throughout *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis speaks of losing to a chess master, a theme that Joel Heck uses to structure his study of Lewis' conversion to Christianity.¹³⁵ As a whole, however, the image-cluster of metaphors around yielding or surrendering is part of an idea of self-death that Lewis saw as critical to Christian conversion and, as Galligan argues, the daily pattern of self-surrender in Christian spirituality.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 140

¹²⁸ Ibid, 226.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 224.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 228.

¹³¹ Ibid, 228-229.

¹³² Lewis, “Cross-Examination,” in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 261.

¹³³ King, “Topical Poems,” 279.

¹³⁴ A.N. Wilson, *C.S. Lewis: A Biography* (London: Flamingo, 1991), 158; Dep.d.241, f. 22, Bodleian archive, Oxford, UK.

¹³⁵ Joel D. Heck, *From Atheism to Christianity: The Story of C.S. Lewis* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017).

Aaron Cassidy argues that to understand “the mystery of surrender in Lewis’s life”¹³⁶ we must begin with his autobiography and his early experiences of “Joy.” These encounters with nature, nostalgia, literature, and art begin in Lewis as adoration, as well as a “disinterested self-abandonment to an object.”¹³⁷ There is in this surrender, Cassidy notes, both humility and self-forgetfulness. Cassidy walks through Lewis’ conversion story, attending to invitations to self-surrender, when Lewis must “get himself out of the way,” “surrender his pride,” unmake himself, and “let go.”¹³⁸ When it comes to final conversion, Cassidy explains, “Lewis had already allowed himself to be taken in by nature, books, and friends—all played their roles in facilitating his ultimate surrender to God.”¹³⁹ Cassidy goes on to discuss this idea in friendship, surrender to God, and the believer’s escape from the prison of self. Unlike many scholars that we note below, Cassidy has observed the importance of the “image of death and resurrection”¹⁴⁰ in Lewis’ encounter with George MacDonald’s *Phantastes*. And in doing so, he observes the posture of self-surrender that I argue is critical in Lewis’ work, and thus invites a fuller exploration of Lewis’ narrative spirituality of Cruciformity explored here. There is, Cassidy notes, “a little bit of death in every act of surrender.”¹⁴¹ Thus we must turn to the background of why Lewis believes that “death is at the root” of Christian faith.¹⁴²

“The Macdonald Conception of Death”

“All conversion involves death and re-birth,” Lewis argues, and we consistently see Lewis invoking these ideas in the story of his turn to Christ.¹⁴³ When we come to the conversion letters, this imagery of death and surrender is not merely incidental. On 22 Sep 1931, Lewis wrote to Arthur Greeves: “The Macdonald conception of death—or, to speak more correctly, St Paul’s—is really the answer to Morris.”¹⁴⁴ In the eleventh chapter of

¹³⁶ Aaron Cassidy, “To Risk Being Taken In: C.S. Lewis on Self-Transcendence Through Surrender,” in *C.S. Lewis and the Inklings: Discovering Hidden Truth*, ed. Salwa Khoddam and Mark R. Hall (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 95.

¹³⁷ Lewis, SBJ, 77, qtd. Cassidy, “Risk,” 96.

¹³⁸ Cassidy, “Risk,” 99-100.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, 109.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 99.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 113.

¹⁴² CLI 971.

¹⁴³ C.S. Lewis and Charles Williams, *Taliessin through Logres, The Region of the Summer Stars, Arthurian Torso* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 347.

¹⁴⁴ CLI 970.

Surprised by Joy, Lewis speaks about how he first encountered George MacDonald's *Phantastes* (1858); Lewis' debt to MacDonald is universally recognised as "far-reaching and profound,"¹⁴⁵ in the words of Gisela Kreglinger. Among books that were influential to Lewis' thinking, George Sayer calls William Morris a favourite for life,¹⁴⁶ and Lewis links the two authors at the beginning and the end of his conversion story. Lewis' imaginative conversion began with this literary encounter with *Phantastes* when he was seventeen. Already in love with fairy stories by authors like Malory, Spenser, Morris, and Yeats, reading *Phantastes* was for Lewis "as if I had died in the old country and could never remember how I came alive in the new."¹⁴⁷ MacDonald's work brought a "new quality," a "bright shadow" Lewis later calls holiness: "It was as though the voice which had called to me from the world's end were now speaking at my side."¹⁴⁸

The "world's end" link here is a thinly veiled reference to William Morris' *The Well at the World's End* (1896), a book Lewis encountered with delight just before his sixteenth birthday, connecting it to the arboreal, Nordic mythologies and Arthurian-styled romantic worlds he loved.¹⁴⁹ Lewis retained an opinion of Morris as a capable mythopoeic writer throughout his life and read and reread his works many times. Morris' influence is evident as early as Lewis' first attempt at writing an adventure story, his incomplete teenage novel, *The Quest of Bleheris*.¹⁵⁰ David Downing describes the tale as "a chivalric quest narrative that draws on Nordic mythology," which, perhaps unconsciously "is also the story of a spiritual journey."¹⁵¹ Lewis' *Sir Bleheris* is in many distinct ways parallel to and distinct from Morris' *Sir Ralph*. Lewis praises "the cool water-colour effects" and "northern bareness" of Morris,¹⁵² and mentions him dozens of times in his letters. The effect in *Bleheris* is such that

¹⁴⁵ Gisela H. Kreglinger, "Storied Revelations: The Influence of George MacDonald upon J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis," *Sewanee Theological Review* 57, no. 3 (2014): 304.

¹⁴⁶ George Sayer, *Jack: A Life of C.S. Lewis*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 99.

¹⁴⁷ Lewis, SBJ, 179-180.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 179-180.

¹⁴⁹ CLI 92.

¹⁵⁰ See MS. Eng. lett. c. 220/5, Bodleian archive, Oxford, UK.

¹⁵¹ David C. Downing, *The Most Reluctant Convert: C.S. Lewis' Journey to Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 67.

¹⁵² C.S. Lewis, "The Literary Impact of the Authorized Version," in *Selected Literary Essays*, ed. Walter Hooper, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 143.

King calls it an imitation of Morris.¹⁵³ Lewis rejects Morris' socialist philosophy,¹⁵⁴ but his critical concerns about Morris lay in the visualisation of "death" in his first encounter with *Well at the World's End*. The story captures

our irreconcilable reluctance to die, our craving for an immortality in the flesh, our empirical knowledge that this is impossible, our intermittent awareness that it is not even really desirable, and (octaves deeper than all these) a very primitive feeling that the attempt, if it could be made, would be unlawful and would call down the vengeance of the gods.¹⁵⁵

It is this externalised, intermittent, irreconcilable conversation with death that Morris evokes. Morris' problematisation was important for Lewis, who did not think that "the slow fading of the magic in *The Well at the World's End*" was an error in Morris' work, but "an image of the truth"¹⁵⁶ of what Morris could never reconcile. For Lewis, however, MacDonald reconciled this problematisation of death with a tale that transports both protagonist and reader to other regions of home, of holiness, and ultimately of joy. Making this connection between long-loved books on the eve of his conversion, Lewis presses the point home in his next letter, claiming that when it comes to his religious struggle, "*death* is at the root of the whole matter."¹⁵⁷

Lewis would have agreed with Tolkien's later observation that "Death is the theme that most inspired George MacDonald."¹⁵⁸ Intriguingly, the "Macdonald conception of death" remains largely unexplored in the secondary literature, even in its links to Lewis' particular understanding of spiritual death. By contrast, scholars have been attentive to literal themes of death in Lewis' work. Lewis describes Kathryn Lindskoog's analysis of his project as "in the centre of the target everywhere" and "you know my work better than anyone else I've met."¹⁵⁹ Lewis especially appreciates the integrative nature of her study,

¹⁵³ Don W. King, *Plain to the Inward Eye: Selected Essays on C.S. Lewis* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2013), 36.

¹⁵⁴ C.S. Lewis, "William Morris" in *Selected Literary Essays*, ed. Walter Hooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 227.

¹⁵⁵ C.S. Lewis, "The Mythopoeic Gift of Rider Haggard," in *Of This and Other Worlds*, ed. Walter Hooper (New York: Harvest, 1994), 131.

¹⁵⁶ C.S. Lewis, "On Stories," in *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*, ed. Walter Hooper (New York: Harvest, 1994), 19.

¹⁵⁷ CLI 971.

¹⁵⁸ Tolkien, "On Fairy-stories," 81.

¹⁵⁹ Walter Hooper, ed., *The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis: Volume 3: Narnia, Cambridge, and Joy 1950-1963* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2007), 891. Later published as Kathryn Lindskoog, *The Lion of Judah in Never-*

allowing him to remain “a single author not a man who impersonates half a dozen authors.”¹⁶⁰ In her later study, *C.S. Lewis: Mere Christian* (1973), Lindskoog, includes a chapter on “Death,” considering the unusual attention Lewis pays to issues of physical death, mortality and immortality, living and loss.¹⁶¹ Lindskoog is attentive only to the literal reality of the death of one’s body and does not connect her sections on spirituality significantly to Lewis’ idea of cruciformity. However, there are moments that are suggestive of a spiritual reality of death peeking out in her work, such as the notion of “living death”¹⁶² and her idea “that Lewis’s concept of human life is climaxed in death.”¹⁶³ While attentive to death as a theme, Lindskoog’s attention to the literal, physical end of life causes her and other scholars to miss the central role that death plays as a motif in Lewis’ spiritual theology. What Lindskoog does do is link Lewis’ understanding of anthropology with his reading of Morris and death:

Lewis ... refers to the dialectic of natural desire which William Morris hinted at when he said that life owes all its sweets to that same death whence rise all its bitters. Without the gift of death, life would become a wearisome torment.¹⁶⁴

For Lewis, the lure of Morris’ romantic longings for immortality problematizes mundane realities of life and thus puts death in its proper contexts. “An unlimited extension of life as we know it now,” Lindskoog argues, “would not be a blessing.”¹⁶⁵

Thus we return to the question of the link between physical death and our spiritual posture toward death that Lewis wants to make in his description of Morris in his conversion letters. What is this Pauline-MacDonaldite conception of death that answers Morris? Morris, Lewis believes, is helpful if you ever “feel inclined to relapse into the mundane point of view—to feel that your book and pipe and chair are enough for happiness.”¹⁶⁶ Morris will make the reader dissatisfied with apathetic existence but cannot do what MacDonald did for Lewis in opening him up to new worlds. Fifteen years after

Never Land: The Theology of C.S. Lewis Expressed in His Fantasies for Children (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973) Kindle.

¹⁶⁰ CLIII 891.

¹⁶¹ Kathryn Lindskoog, *C.S. Lewis: Mere Christian*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1981), 69-78.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, 75.

¹⁶³ Lindskoog, *Lion of Judah*, 2115. Cf. Peter J. Schakel, *Is Your Lord Large Enough? How C.S. Lewis Expands Our View of God* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2008), 86.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 2063-2068. Here Lindskoog refers to Lewis’ essay on “William Morris.”

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 2068.

¹⁶⁶ CLI 971.

discovering *Phantastes*, Lewis read St Paul seriously, noting that Romans includes “many difficult and some horrible things, but the essential idea of Death (the Macdonald idea) is there....”¹⁶⁷ “Death” refers to the freedom from death that Morris wrote about but could never deliver. However, it also connects to the myths of dying-and-rising gods that so enamoured Lewis in his love of mythology. On the famous Addison’s Walk discussion with Hugo Dyson and J.R.R. Tolkien in 1931, Lewis comes to see that the death and resurrection of Christ was a true myth, as he explains to Arthur in his conversion letters.¹⁶⁸ It was then that Lewis finally understood the idea of “a God whose dying could transform those who believed in him.”¹⁶⁹

Mortality is a critical trigger for Lewis’ exploration of Christian thought, and death and resurrection images emerge at his crucial turn to faith. Death, finally, is at the root of the whole matter of spiritual response. In various places in his writings, Lewis works out the spiritual principle of death and resurrection as the “whole, huge pattern”¹⁷⁰ of spiritual life. Though most scholars reduce Lewis’ “baptism of the imagination” to a synecdoche of Christianisation, Lewis’ usage is far more specific, as we shall see in chapter four. In his introduction to his anthology of George MacDonald Lewis writes:

I was only aware that if this new world [of *Phantastes*] was strange, it was also homely and humble; ... the whole book had about it a sort of cool, morning innocence, and also, quite unmistakably, a certain quality of Death, *good* Death. What it actually did to me was to convert, even to baptize (that was where the Death came in) my imagination.¹⁷¹

There are other moments of death that are essential to Lewis as he moves toward conversion and back into everyday life, including Owen Barfield’s “essay on Death”¹⁷²; the MacDonald link, however, is critical. In considering Lewis’ anthology of MacDonald, there are certainly moments where death is eschatological, as in MacDonald’s “unspoken” sermon, “The Consuming Fire,” where all that is “immortal in God shall remain in man”

¹⁶⁷ CLI 975.

¹⁶⁸ This scene is notably absent in SBJ, but central to his testimony in the conversion letters, CLI 969-970, 976-977. See also Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper, *C.S. Lewis: A Biography* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), 116-118; Jacobs, *Narnian*, 148-149; Lindskoog, *Mere Christian*, 16-17; McGrath, *C.S. Lewis*, 146-159; Sayer, *Jack*, 225-226.

¹⁶⁹ Sayer, *Jack*, 226.

¹⁷⁰ Lewis, “Grand Miracle,” 82.

¹⁷¹ Lewis, *George MacDonald*, 33-34.

¹⁷² See Christopher W. Mitchell, “Introductory Note to Owen Barfield’s Essay ‘Death,’” *SEVEN* 25 (2008): 43.

while all that is “death in humanity ... shall be consumed.”¹⁷³ Physical death, which we can see as a counterpoint to Morris, provides its service not in “fettters that gall, but the fettters that soothe, which eat into the soul” as they provide liberty from slavery to things of the world,¹⁷⁴ and is the theme of MacDonald’s *The Back of the North Wind* and *The Golden Key*. The theme of “spiritual death,” however, is a critical part of George MacDonald’s Christian thought in fiction and nonfiction and is connected to Lewis’ response to *Phantastes* and his subsequent understanding of spirituality.

Phantastes itself is a story where the hero Anodos—a name that scholars recognise means “pathless” but can also mean “the upward way,” an evocation of Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*—is a young man who must die to his fears, his dreams, and his desire on the road to where he must ultimately lay down his life. Upon giving up his life in fairyland, Anodos is ultimately reborn in his everyday life, no longer a child but now a man. At a structural level, James Williamson argues that *Phantastes* is comprised of four cycles, “each embodying a pattern of death and re-birth, accompanied by events and imagery which repeat and develop in a reflexive fashion.”¹⁷⁵ Williamson is specifically interested in structural analysis rather than theological or spiritual criticism and believes that analyses of the theme need not be mutually exclusive. But his analysis of the death-and-resurrection patterns may be part of what Lewis intimated from *Phantastes*: “Each cycle begins with a figurative birth out of a kind of chaos” and “[e]ach cycle ends with a figurative death ... which leads directly into the next cycle.”¹⁷⁶ My argument in chapter four is that there is a discernable pattern of spiritual self-death and new life that is central to Lewis’ spiritual theology of the cross and that shapes Lewis’ fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. In chapter four, I use structuralist tools to analyse the “shape” of Lewis’ cruciform thought. Williamson’s cyclical death-and-birth analysis is similar, demonstrating that MacDonald’s “idea of death” emerges in a form observable by narratological analysis. Indeed, since the four cycles of death and re-birth forming a horizontal axis of the structure, while the vertical axis refers to four character “layers running through the narrative,”¹⁷⁷ Williamson is offering a cruciform structural

¹⁷³ Lewis, *George MacDonald*, 42; George MacDonald, *Unspoken Sermons: Series I, II, III* (N.p.: Renaissance Classics, 2012), 19.

¹⁷⁴ Lewis, *George MacDonald*, 69; MacDonald, *Unspoken Sermons*, 127.

¹⁷⁵ James T. Williamson, “The Fourfold Myth of Death and Rebirth in George MacDonald’s *Phantastes*,” *North Wind* 33 (2014): 38.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 39.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 38.

analysis of the text. Although the final link is more intimated rather than explicated in Williamson's analysis, the final rebirth after the fourth cycle results in Anodos' awakening into his everyday earthly life as a new man.

I would hesitate to limit a reading of MacDonald's spiritual theology, where "there is a power ever breathing itself forth in signs,"¹⁷⁸ and a "genuine work of art must mean many things; the truer its art, the more things it will mean."¹⁷⁹ Still, there is merit to viewing death and loss of self as themes linked to the centre of George MacDonald's "spiritual vision," to use Rolland Hein's terms. In Hein's chapter on *Phantastes*, he argues that MacDonald's core concern was to deal with the problem that "self-centredness is spiritually destructive."¹⁸⁰ The temptations of Anodos, whether sensual or intellectual, are designed to expose his self-centredness and, hopefully, invite the cure. The self-awareness is not unimportant, as an indication that Anodos has grown spiritually is "that his true self is beginning to be aware of a lower self that, when indulged, negates good and works harm."¹⁸¹ MacDonald pictures this parasitic self as a shadow that follows Anodos everywhere, killing what it touches until it is itself killed. In the shadow sequence, and in the story-within-a-story about Cosmo and his mirrored love, "MacDonald's doctrine of the self" is linked to "the emphasis that he places upon the death of the self."¹⁸² Self-death is in MacDonald the "crucial experience," the "final answer to pride."¹⁸³ This principle is what Catherine Persyn calls the "friendliness of death" that is truly "a leitmotif in MacDonald's work."¹⁸⁴ Thus the novel captures the various points where Anodos discovers that "the narrow path of truth and right"¹⁸⁵ is unattainable without death to the self, and thus he "symbolically dies and is reborn."¹⁸⁶

While Hein feels the need to assert that the loss of self in George MacDonald's thought is not "ascetic" but defined by self-giving love shown in deeds,¹⁸⁷ C.S. Lewis'

¹⁷⁸ George MacDonald, *Thomas Wingfold, Curate* (N.p., n.d.) Kindle Edition, 57; quoted in the epigraph to Rolland Hein's *The Harmony Within: The Spiritual Vision of George MacDonald* (Eureka, CA: Sunrise Books, 1982).

¹⁷⁹ George MacDonald, *A Dish of Orts: Chiefly Papers on the Imagination, and on Shakespeare* (N.p., n.d.) Kindle Edition, 192.

¹⁸⁰ Hein, *Harmony Within*, 55.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, 65.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, 69.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, 72.

¹⁸⁴ Catherine Persyn, "'In My End is My Beginning': The *fin-negans* Motif in George MacDonald's *At the Back of the North Wind*," *Mythlore* 24, no. 3-4 (2006): 53.

¹⁸⁵ Hein, *Harmony Within*, 74.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 72.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 54-55.

understanding of self-death likewise rejects asceticism, as I argue in chapter six, placing no value in suffering except in its service to the complete surrender of the self. “Love that gives of itself,” Hein claims of MacDonald’s thought in *Phantastes*, “unlocks the secret of life and bliss.”¹⁸⁸ Kerry Dearborn notes the central concern in MacDonald of “divine love which overflows with self-giving”¹⁸⁹—both in the “creative self-giving” of God¹⁹⁰ and in the human response: “For Anodos to become more whole and to learn to love, he must be willing to die to himself.”¹⁹¹ A section title within the Cosmo story states the theme of *Phantastes*: “Who lives, he dies; who dies, he is alive.”¹⁹² Central to MacDonald’s vision of spiritual life is “spiritual death into newness of life.”¹⁹³ As Glenn Edward Sadler states, “the process of dying-into-life (“more life”) that is MacDonald’s major concern” is “a theme which is to be found in everything he wrote.”¹⁹⁴ The “utility of death,” as Lewis calls it in his *George MacDonald* (1946), is that it awakes human consciousness: “Never soul was set free without being made to feel its slavery.”¹⁹⁵ This liberty in MacDonald’s spirituality in fiction is the death to self and the loss of self in self-giving love. In MacDonald’s “autobiographical story,” *Wilfred Cumbermede*, he writes: “We die daily. Happy those who daily come to life as well.”¹⁹⁶

The link between Lewis’ “doctrine of death” and MacDonald is clear, but it is noteworthy that Lewis also sees a Pauline element in the thought, having first made the connection while reading Romans. Gorman’s emphasis of co-crucifixion with Christ is linked conceptually to Romans. Paul speaks of being “dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus,” where believers offer themselves “to God as those who have been brought from death to life” under grace (Rom 6:11-14, NRSV). In Romans 6 Paul connects the self-death theme to baptism and turns to the spiritual struggle in chapters seven and eight, where he reminds his followers that “you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, 61.

¹⁸⁹ Kerry Dearborn, *Baptized Imagination: The Theology of George MacDonald* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 56.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 72.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, 85. Dearborn’s interest is not spirituality, specifically, but a “theology of imagination.”

¹⁹² George MacDonald, *Phantastes: A Faerie Romance* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1858), 95.

¹⁹³ Hein, *Harmony Within*, 73.

¹⁹⁴ Glenn Edward Sadler, “Defining Death as ‘More Life’: Unpublished Letters by George MacDonald,” *North Wind* 3 (1984): 4.

¹⁹⁵ Lewis, *George MacDonald*, 69; MacDonald, *Unspoken Sermons*, 127.

¹⁹⁶ George MacDonald, *Wilfred Cumbermede* (N.p., n.d.) Kindle Edition, 168.

belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead” (Rom 7:4, NRSV). The “Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you” (Rom 8:11, NRSV); therefore we “put to death the deeds of the body” with the hope of new life (Rom 8:13, NRSV). In spiritual response, then, Romans 12 turns to “living sacrifice,” which results in a transformed view of the world and one’s integrated place within the body of Christ. The Anglican Eucharist liturgy translates Paul’s word in prayer: In view of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, “here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee.”¹⁹⁷ Early Christians capture this death-to-life spiritual echo in the Gospels in various places, including the idea that “those who lose their life for my sake will find it” (Matt 10:39, NRSV; see Luke 9:23-24), which Stackhouse claims is the most quoted passage in Lewis,¹⁹⁸ that Meilaender suggests is a paradox Lewis is “so fond of,”¹⁹⁹ and that Filmer suggests could be Lewis’ “favourite scripture” if he had one.²⁰⁰ In the next section, I explore how a Pauline-MacDonaldite idea of self-death emerges in Lewis’ thought.

A Brief Survey of Lewis’ Theology of the Cross

George MacDonald, then, has a clear understanding of life-giving “spiritual death” demonstrated in self-giving love. MacDonald answers Morris’ problematisation of death with a Pauline spirituality of death that MacDonald works into his entire corpus. Lewis observes this “idea of death” while reading MacDonald, and ties it into a cluster of images of death related to his own conversion to Christ, so that Lewis pictures conversion as a kind of death that leads to life. I have argued with Sr Galligan that “conversion” is rooted in everyday Lewisian spirituality, so MacDonald’s spirituality of death and resurrection is also evident in Lewis’ understanding of spiritual life. As Christopher Mitchell notes, Lewis shares this “dying into life” MacDonaldite idea.²⁰¹ I argue that this theme is central to Lewis’ Christian thought and is consequently evident throughout his entire corpus. This section offers a brief survey of Lewis’ spiritual theology of the cross, the Pauline-MacDonaldite idea of good death as it emerges in Lewis’ thought. Once recognized, this theme is so central to

¹⁹⁷ BCP 85.

¹⁹⁸ Stackhouse, *Making the Best of It*, 50.

¹⁹⁹ Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 27.

²⁰⁰ Filmer-Davies, “C.S. Lewis,” 662.

²⁰¹ Mitchell, “Introductory Note,” 43.

Lewis' understanding of spiritual life and so present in his fiction, poetry, and Christian teaching that it invites further exploration. Using the lens of "spiritual theologian" that I argue for in chapter two, chapter three offers a systematic consideration of Lewis' death-and-resurrection spirituality. Chapter four then offers a number of close readings of this theme using narratological analysis, while chapter five pauses to consider the implications of Lewis' integrative, normative spirituality of self-death.

In C.S. Lewis' last novel, *Till We Have Faces* (1956), we find this intriguing command of the god in the text at the nadir of the protagonist's descent into self-discovery: "Die before you die. There is no chance after."²⁰² This moment marks the turn of the story, as Hsui-Chin Chou describes it, the moment when Orual's "soul becomes perilously on the edge of total collapse."²⁰³ Rather than a Socratic good death, Orual must go through a Dantean journey that is a process of losing and finding the self. As she "dies to self," in Peter Schakel's words, she learns unselfish love, gaining a kind of salvation.²⁰⁴ It is the moment where Caroline Simon says Orual "finally faces the remedy for her distorted loves" and where "Lewis invites us to identify with Orual in hopes of generating" a similar kind of "epiphany."²⁰⁵ Orual comes to a full realisation of her life as a "psychological vampire," in Doris Myers' words,²⁰⁶ where the "veneer over the inner divided self" is revealed and healed by her "surrender of the lower self."²⁰⁷ We will explore in chapter three what Myers calls the "contrast between love that is expressed in force and love expressed in self-sacrifice,"²⁰⁸ but as readers we are attuned to the centrality of conversion in Lewis' thinking—as Galligan reminds us—and to Lewis' perception that, with MacDonald, a certain death-to-life pattern is critical to the entire spiritual turn. Orual's "conversion" story, as Myers describes it²⁰⁹ and as we discover in chapter three, is important to this query.

²⁰² C.S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* (Harcourt, 1984), 279.

²⁰³ Hsui-Chin Chou, "The Problem of Faith and the Self: The Interplay between Literary Art, Apologetics and Hermeneutics in C.S. Lewis's Religious Narratives" (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2008), 205.

²⁰⁴ Peter J. Schakel, "Till We Have Faces," in *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, ed. Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 285.

²⁰⁵ Caroline J. Simon, "On Love," in *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, ed. Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 179.

²⁰⁶ Doris T. Myers, *Bareface: A Guide to C.S. Lewis's Last Novel* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 130.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 182.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 72.

²⁰⁹ See her section on William James and Lewis on conversion, *Ibid*, 175-182.

But the language of self-death is not unique to these moments of spiritual initiation: self-death as an image, with its attendant theme of new life and its antitype of Christ's sacrifice, is all throughout Lewis' fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and letters. What Cassidy calls "the mystery of surrender in Lewis's life" requires a study of some depth.²¹⁰ "Total surrender is the first step toward the fruition of either" nature or art, Lewis writes in *Surprised by Joy*, the narrative that moves ultimately toward Lewis' Orual-like surrender to death.²¹¹ "Total surrender," he concludes, "the absolute leap in the dark, [was] demanded...."²¹² We saw in his conversion that death is at the root of everything, for spiritual commitment "is itself a kind of death."²¹³ These themes are resonant in Lewis' conversion-era poetry. "Save yourself. Run and leave me. I must go back," Lewis cries to his colleagues, knowing he must face "mockery and the whip and the rack"²¹⁴ in his "regress" to Christianity. Death has become providential in Lewis' period poetry—"all die, but all are, while Thou continuest"²¹⁵—and death may still be an adventure—"I will undertake though I earn my death / At the wizard's wiles,"²¹⁶ but it carries with it an essential spiritual principle that is captured very well in Lewis' literary criticism: "[a]ll conversion involves death and re-birth...."²¹⁷ Edith Humphrey notes that the conversion in *Pilgrim's Regress* is a "continual series of 'deaths'" and steps of obedience where John "dies to himself."²¹⁸

In response to a correspondent's question, Lewis uses the same principle: "Nothing rises again which has not died."²¹⁹ More explicitly, in a lecture on love, Lewis asserts that "nothing will rise which hasn't in some degree shared the Crucifixion."²²⁰ Lewis is frequently concerned with inordinate love in these conversations, as we shall see in chapter five, but with Dom Bede Griffiths he flips this death-and-life principle: "*Everything* we crucify will rise

²¹⁰ Cassidy, "Risk," 95.

²¹¹ Lewis, SBJ, 146.

²¹² Ibid, 228.

²¹³ C.S. Lewis, "'Early Prose Joy': C.S. Lewis's Early Draft of an Autobiographical Manuscript," *SEVEN* 30 (2013): 29.

²¹⁴ Don W. King, ed., *The Collected Poems of C.S. Lewis: A Critical Edition* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2015), 223.

²¹⁵ Ibid, 225.

²¹⁶ Ibid, 245.

²¹⁷ Williams and Lewis, *Arthurian Torso*, 347.

²¹⁸ Edith M. Humphrey, *Further Up and Further In: Orthodox Conversations with C.S. Lewis on Scripture and Theology* (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2017) Kindle Edition, 1637.

²¹⁹ Walter Hooper, ed. *The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis: Volume 2: Books, Broadcasts, and the War 1931-1949* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004), 788.

²²⁰ C.S. Lewis, "Agape" lecture in "The Four Loves" (The Episcopal Media Center, 1958); see CLII 608.

again: *nothing* we try to hold onto will be left us,"²²¹ describing the spiritual principle behind *The Great Divorce* (1945), which he was working on at the time.²²² In the voice of George MacDonald, the Virgil to Lewis' Dantean pilgrim in *The Great Divorce*, Lewis places before the reader the critical spiritual choice of Lewis' self-death spirituality we see emerging in his work: "There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'Thy will be done.'"²²³

This surrender of the will is the moment of self-death critical to Lewis' understanding of spiritual life. God makes a disarmament treaty for rebellious humanity, Lewis argues in *Mere Christianity*, where we lay down our weapons. This surrender "means unlearning all the self-conceit and self-will that we have been training ourselves into for thousands of years. It means killing part of yourself, undergoing a kind of death."²²⁴ We must, then, "share in God's dying,"²²⁵ a choice of self-surrender within us that "echoes" the death-and-resurrection pattern of natural life, which in turn echoes the central story of Christianity. In Christ's incarnation and submission to the cross, we discover that "bodily Death ... becomes blessed spiritual Death to self."²²⁶ Thus, this "self-rejection will turn out to be also a self-finding,"²²⁷ While we may strive toward goodness or even perfection, "man must undergo some sort of death if he would truly live."²²⁸

All of these moments interact with and tumble out of Lewis' understanding of conversion as a kind of death that leads to life as it was reflected in Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection and thus patterned for believers' spiritual life. This is the central idea of cruciformity. There is also celebration in the death to self as a motif of return: "RESVRGAM and IO PAEAN, / IO, IO, IO PAEAN!!" (roughly, I shall rise again, o victory!).²²⁹ But there is resistance to this idea in Lewis' poetry, particularly in the lead up to conversion:

my soul's interior Form, though now
Deep-buried, will not die,
—No more than the insensible dropp'd seed which grows

²²¹ CLII 617.

²²² See C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce: A Dream* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1945), 7; CLII 617.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 66-67.

²²⁴ Lewis, MC, 56.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 58.

²²⁶ Lewis, *Miracles*, 156.

²²⁷ Lewis, "Religion Without Dogma," 388.

²²⁸ C.S. Lewis, *Reflection on the Psalms* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1958), 107.

²²⁹ King, CP, 233-234.

Through winter ripe for birth²³⁰

As we see in the poem “Nearly They Stood Who Fall,” this resistance may be a desire for his materialist path (“Themselves as they look back / See always in the track”²³¹) or self-doubt (“smallest tremor of the smallest nerve”)²³² or struggle against the pursuing God he has long sought to avoid (“Therefore oh, man, have fear / Lest oldest fears be true”).²³³ However, as we see in the “dropp’d seed” image, even here Lewis is touching upon a death-and-resurrection principle at the centre of his understanding of spirituality. “In this descent and reascent” of the Incarnation is the mythic image of the “corn-seed’s burial,”²³⁴ and Lewis the Christian apologist hopes that

everyone will recognise a familiar pattern: a thing written all over the world. It is the pattern of all vegetable life. It must belittle itself into something hard, small and deathlike, it must fall into the ground: thence the new life reascends.... Death and Rebirth—go down to go up—it is a key principle.²³⁵

We can see the seasons in this narrative image, the death of winter brought by the life of spring, which begins Lewis’ incomplete Arthurian poem of the early 1930s—“When the year dies in preparation for the birth”²³⁶—and is the speculative-world transformation of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) that matches the spiritual dynamics of the central crisis. Though a self-death and resurrection pattern has a mythic beauty to it, it is a costly spirituality. Ultimately, though, this pattern brings comfort to Lewis, and there is beauty for him in the mythic pattern of the narrative of dying and rising:

Arise my body, my small body, we have striven
Enough, and He is merciful: we are forgiven....
Drink all the bitter water and the chilly death;
Soon enough comes the riot of warm blood and breath.²³⁷

There is life in this death—both the Narnian experience of “death working backwards” we explore in chapter two, but also in the “shiver of re-birth and deliverance

²³⁰ Ibid, 226.

²³¹ Ibid, 227.

²³² Ibid, 227.

²³³ Ibid, 228.

²³⁴ Ibid, 348.

²³⁵ Lewis, *Miracles*, 136.

²³⁶ King, CP, 260.

²³⁷ Ibid, 327.

round the Earth”²³⁸ that fills Lewis’ work. Again, this Phoenix-like hope of resurrection is rooted in “The Turn of the Tide,” a poem that demonstrates how Lewis imagines the Incarnation of Christ—that great, Gospel movement of embodiment, death, and resurrection—as the hinge point of history, where all cosmic realities turn toward hope. It is an event that has “altered the universe for ever,” pictured in *Perelandra* as a wave that can never come twice.²³⁹ In this moment “Death lay in arrest,” even though in Bethlehem

Nothing greater could be heard
Than sighing wind in the thorn, the cry of One new-born,
And cattle in stable as they stirred.²⁴⁰

Jerry Root and Mark Neal describe the turning point well: “When the hush has stilled both earth and heaven with a paralyzing fear of death and annihilation, there returns with a rush a sense of life and equilibrium, a lightening of spirits.”²⁴¹ The result of the Christ-event changes all things:

Through the God who died and bled:
Hell lies vacant, spoiled and cheated,
By the Lord of life defeated.²⁴²

And all are called to the Resurrection celebration:

Bear, behemoth, bustard, camel,
Warthog, wombat, kangaroo,
Insect, reptile, fish and mammal,
Tree, flower, grass, and lichen too,
Rise and romp and ramp, awaking,
For the age-old curse is breaking.
All things shall be made anew;
Nature’s rich rejuvenation
Follows on Man’s liberation.²⁴³

All things tilt in the Christ-event, including the hope that all seekers are “Risen from the vilest death.”²⁴⁴

²³⁸ Ibid, 360.

²³⁹ Lewis, *Perelandra*, 144.

²⁴⁰ King, CP, 360.

²⁴¹ Jerry Root and Mark Neal, *The Surprising Imagination of C.S. Lewis* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2015), 184.

²⁴² King, CP, 393.

²⁴³ Ibid, 394.

²⁴⁴ Ibid, 394.

This transformation, however, is not *merely* eschatological, but realised in the life of the believer in the here and now, where believers are “caught up into the higher kinds of life,” having been “pulled into God, by God, while still remaining” oneself.²⁴⁵ As in Charles Taylor’s observation of Gerard Manley Hopkins’ concept of inscape, “Death and Resurrection are inextricably linked”²⁴⁶ in Lewis’ thought. This is providential, in the mythic patterning of reality—“The earth, the bare moon, / Death and birth”²⁴⁷—but also in God’s providential ordering of things: “When Adam ate the irrevocable apple, / Thou Saw’st beyond death the resurrection of the dead.”²⁴⁸ Thus spirituality, for Lewis, echoes the reality of God’s self-giving nature as myth does. Cassidy notes that for Lewis, the “logic of the surrender was bound up in the Divine nature.”²⁴⁹ This understanding of self-death and new life in spiritual response to the Christ-event is not merely an appreciative echo, but something like a “Law” upon which the “whole system of the universe works.”²⁵⁰ Lewis, with MacDonald, admits the difficulty—even the impossibility—of arguing that the “only way is absolute obedience to Him, total surrender.”²⁵¹ Yet, when “we are *quite* empty of self we shall be filled with” God.²⁵²

As in all his reflections, Lewis is here interested in “the real thing wh[ich] lies deeper,”²⁵³ the inherent logic to our theological response to nature, Christ, and neighbour in everyday life. This instinct for the essential truth at “the root of the matter” with a concern for how it informs Christian life is precisely the project of spiritual theology. And this logic is, I argue, cruciform, and bound up with Lewis’ emergent and centralising project of spiritual theology—a cohesive core that can account for Barfield’s assessment about the integrative nature of Lewis’ thought. Continuing my analysis of Lewis’ spirituality of the cross, I argue in chapter two for a turn to Lewis as a spiritual theologian that is organic to his method, theology, and fiction. Looking at Lewis’ entire corpus from this perspective, we are able to see the spiritual theology of the cross that scholars have failed to explicate but that is the centre of Lewis’ thought. In exploring this death-and-resurrection pattern further, I argue in

²⁴⁵ Lewis, MC, 163.

²⁴⁶ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (London: Belknap Press, 2007), 763; see 755-765.

²⁴⁷ King, CP, 406.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 230.

²⁴⁹ Cassidy, “Risk,” 110.

²⁵⁰ CLII 616, paraphrasing MacDonald *Unspoken Sermons*, 83-94.

²⁵¹ CLII 616.

²⁵² CLII 617.

²⁵³ *Ibid*, 617.

chapter three that there is a Logic of Cruciformity that undergirds Lewis' entire project of fiction and nonfiction. Chapter four explores Lewisian Cruciformity in prose and poetry, revealing through extensive narratological analysis that there is a U-shaped, comedic, eucatastrophic pattern throughout Lewis' writing that gives shape to his cruciform spirituality. In using feminist theological critique to problematise Lewis' normative, narrative spirituality of the cross in chapter five, we discover a comedic, inversive characteristic to Lewis' thought that offers generative possibilities. The inversive shape of Lewis' theology of the cross is described in chapter six, revealing a "theology of the small" at the heart of Lewis' spirituality and emphasising the activistic nature of his understanding of self-surrender. The thesis concludes by looking at numerous "sacred paradoxes" in Lewis' thoughts—tensions that never resolve in Lewis thinking.

Ch. 2: Where the Secret of Secrets Lies Hid: C.S. Lewis as Spiritual Theologian

Introduction

The examples of cruciform spirituality that closed chapter one cycle around Lewis' experience of conversion as they are patterned in everyday spiritual life. They can appear to the casual observer as random points of light rather than a constellation of thought, which is evidenced by the fact that scholars have failed to explicate the connective links that Lewis makes between themes of death and principles of spiritual life. Lewis' use of the death-and-resurrection pattern, the imitation motif, and a posture of surrender are interesting to scholars; however, scholars have failed to link these ideas together in a unified vision of Christian faith. There is, however, an inherent logic to this imagery that is the all-encompassing, integrating narrative reality that informs all of Lewis' life and works. I argue in this chapter that Lewis' "doctrine of death" amounts to what Eugene Peterson would call Lewis' spiritual theology. In this chapter, we consider C.S. Lewis as a spiritual theologian using Peterson's definitions, applying a lens that has never been used by scholars despite the persuasive links between what Lewis is doing and what contemporary scholars outline as spiritual theology. By looking at his spiritual theology, I am arguing for a "tilt of the head" in how Lewis is normally approached, moving from considerations of Lewis as an apologist or doctrinal theologian, to a focus on spirituality. This turn is both heuristically advantageous and organic to Lewis' popular theology as it accounts for his integrative, holistic, and emergent Christian thought. Following a description of Peterson's approach to spiritual theology and a rationale for Peterson as a conversation partner in a project on Lewis' Christian thought, I include a literature review of scholarly conversation about Lewis and spirituality, where we move toward thinking about Lewis' spirituality of self-surrender. I argue that Lewis makes a similar "tilt of the head" in *Mere Christianity*, turning from classic apologetic arguments to structured thought about "spiritual life." This turn confirms that *The Great Divorce* is more profitably read as spiritual theology rather than eschatology. I conclude with an experiment in fiction that invites a turn from atonement theory to spiritual theology, using Narnia for narrative focus on what it means to live, live fully and well.

Chapter three follows naturally from this chapter, looking in detail at the Logic of Cruciformity at the centre of Lewis' spiritual theology.

An Approach to Spiritual Theology: Eugene Peterson and "Living, living fully and well"

Even within the relatively narrow focus of Christian studies with its own long history of studying Christian practice, "Spiritual Theology" and "spirituality" are mercurial terms that are somewhat disconnected from historical usage. Indeed, some scholars and practitioners argue for necessary elasticity in the terms, including Bruce Demarest,¹ Simon Chan,² and Eugene Peterson.³ There are, however, wide-ranging attempts at defining "spiritual theology" and "Christian spirituality."⁴ As diverse as they are, many of these definitions include the words, "lived," "life," or "living" (e.g., Aumann; Callen; Chan; Downey; Foster and Helmers; Holder; Sheldrake; and Vandenbroucke). Some of this life-emphasis comes from classic devotional practice, such as Richard Foster and Kathryn Helmers' definition of Christian spirituality as "the art of living with Jesus, or the 'with-God' life."⁵ Others, like Gorman, include a trinitarian or Christocentric element: "For Christians, spirituality is a relationship with the triune God that impacts their daily life with others."⁶ For a diverse volume on Christian spirituality largely within the school of Sandra Schneider, Arthur Holder offers this working definition as the starting point for dialogue: Christian

¹ Bruce Demarest, ed., *Four Views on Christian Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 12, 17-20.

² Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 15-17.

³ E.g., Peterson, *Christ Plays*, 27.

⁴ E.g., see Jordan Aumann, "Spiritual Theology in the Thomistic Tradition," Dominican Central Province, accessed Apr 29, 2019, <http://opcentral.org/resources/2013/04/08/jordan-aumann-o-p-spiritual-theology-in-the-thomistic-tradition/>; Louis Bouyer, *The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers* (London: Burns & Oates, 1968), vii-ix; Chan, *Spiritual Theology*, 15-39; Demarest, *Four Views*, 17-20; Michael Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 146; Richard J. Foster and Kathryn A. Helmers, *Life with God: Reading the Bible for Spiritual Transformation* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), 7; Jeffrey P. Greenman, "Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective," in *Life in the Spirit*, ed. Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010), 24; Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology: Christian Living and the Doctrine of God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998), 35; Christian Duquoc, ed. *Spirituality in Church and World* (New York: Paulist, 1965), including essays by A.M. Besnard (25-44) and Hans Urs von Balthasar (7-24); and most chapters in Arthur Holder, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), specifically pp. 1-5 of his "Introduction." Sandra M. Schneider's chapter, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality" (15-33) is indicative of her approach to research that is open to ambiguity, diverse expressions, social scientific research, and lived experience.

⁵ Foster and Helmers, *Life with God*, 7.

⁶ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 3.

spirituality is “the lived experience of Christian faith and discipleship.”⁷ Simon Chan thus defines spiritual theology with this guiding question: “What kind of life does the Christian story give rise to?”⁸

Among the leading voices of the spiritual theology conversation and one of the more helpful thinkers in turning to C.S. Lewis is Presbyterian minister and author of books of spiritual direction, Eugene Peterson. Perhaps most well-known for his Message translation of the Bible, Peterson writes as a pastor, professor, and practitioner in *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (2005). Resonating with this same “life” emphasis, Peterson defines spiritual theology as “the *lived* quality of God’s revelation among and in us,” and aligns it with the discipline of writing about the spiritual life.⁹ Peterson uses Gerard Manley Hopkins’ famous sonnet, “As Kingfishers Catch Fire,” to shape his conversation about spirituality, pressing in on the titular phrase “Christ plays in ten thousand places.” Critical to Peterson’s approach is that spiritual theology is not a new or individual perspective, but a fulfilment of all theologies, rooted in the personal, creational, communal, historical, and biblical experience of Christ in church and world. Though Peterson’s definition of spiritual theology is both simple and specific, in defining spirituality, he is pleased to remain ambiguous. Though “spirituality” was once a term limited to a particular Christian context, its usage is so broad and varied that precise definition is impossible. Indeed, Peterson does not even think it is helpful, for “spirituality” is useful not in precision “but rather in the way it names something indefinable yet quite recognisable—transcendence vaguely intermingled with intimacy.”¹⁰ “Spirituality,” for Peterson, mixes “a sense that there is more, a sense that life extends far beyond me” with “a sense that deep within me there is a core being inaccessible to the probes of psychologists or the examinations of physicians, the questions of the pollsters, the strategies of the advertisers....”¹¹ The term “spirituality” allows Peterson to throw “every intimation of Beyond and Within into one huge wicker basket,”¹² arguing that “[l]iving, living fully and

⁷ Holder, *Blackwell Companion*, 5.

⁸ Chan, *Spiritual Theology*, 16.

⁹ Peterson, *Christ Plays*, xi.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 27.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 27. While Peterson does not reject psychological support or social scientific research, this prophetic distinction is different than the Schneider school, which integrates these disciplines more fully.

¹² *Ibid*, 27.

well, is at the heart of all serious spirituality.”¹³ Peterson’s call to attentiveness within the ambiguities of the term “spirituality” work well with definitions of spirituality and spiritual theology that focus on Christian living. Therefore, I will use “living, living fully and well” as a synecdoche for the entire discussion.

As “[s]piritual theology is the attention that we give to the details of living life on this way,” Peterson’s writing is both an affirmation and a critique of other work in Christian theology, a protest against depersonalised theology and programmatic spirituality.¹⁴ Lewis felt this very tension in his work as an apologist, being cautious and sometimes cynical about the enterprise. In the preface to his first published set of BBC talks he is patently dismissive of his own capability, reminding the audience that “I gave these talks, not because I am anyone in particular”¹⁵—the precise language Ransom uses of himself of the mission to Perelandra, written in the same period.¹⁶ Also from the same period, in “The Apologist’s Evening Prayer,” Lewis prays that in both his “lame defeats” and “victories that I seemed to score” his audience will not trust in the “thin-worn image” of God his arguments create.¹⁷ In discussing the “wearying” and faith-damaging work of being an apologist, he admits in correspondence that “Christian doctrine never seems less real to me than when I have just (even if successfully) been defending it.”¹⁸ Peterson and Lewis each resist depersonalised and programmatic aspects of faith talk.¹⁹

Beyond a shared prophetic critique, Peterson makes a good expert with whom to work in spiritual theology because Peterson and Lewis share theological space. They are each mainstream Protestant “mere Christians,” theologically rooted in historic, credal Christianity and the Scriptures, rejecting the more vibrant forms of fundamentalism and theological liberalism, and yet read by people in those traditions. Both are definitively Christocentric, trinitarian, and steeped in both poetic, mythic, and historic resonances of the Bible. There are theological differences. While Lewis was experiencing a state church in descent and a culture moving toward post-Christian realities—what Stephanie Derrick

¹³ Ibid, 29.

¹⁴ Ibid, 1.

¹⁵ C.S. Lewis, *Broadcast Talks* (London: Geoffrey Bless, 1942), 5.

¹⁶ Lewis, *Perelandra*, 24.

¹⁷ King, CP, 328.

¹⁸ CLIII 762.

¹⁹ See Williams, *Deeper Magic*, 101.

describes as the “Indian Summer of British Christianity”²⁰—Peterson’s formation took place in a North American Presbyterian church in renewal during the birth of neo-Evangelicalism. Lewis’ ecumenism was an intentional commitment by a man within the dominant religious structure of the period; Peterson’s ecumenism is embedded within the architectural design of his North American Evangelicalism. Both Lewis and Peterson are grounded in natural and literary experiences of faith, but Peterson’s spirituality is structured by theological language for which Lewis had no training. They are both popular writers, but in quite different ways: Lewis is an apologist and novelist; Peterson is almost exclusively a writer of books of spiritual formation and a literary, popular language translation of the Bible (the Message). Peterson studied scriptural languages and cultures, while Lewis focussed on European literature, history, and philosophy.

Lewis frequently asserts that he was a layperson and wrote his Christian books as one. In many ways, Peterson is the fulfilment of the theologian-as-translator that Lewis called for in his generation.²¹ Lewis lacked critical language to discuss theologies of praxis in the way Peterson does; Peterson, by contrast, was a pastor and theologian whose approach is an organic way of looking at the “lived experience” of faith within Lewis’ integrative text-worlds. While there are important differences, particularly in language and culture, Peterson shares with Lewis a literary, Scripture-rooted, nature-soaked, creational, Christocentric, resurrection-directed spirituality.

In this work, I am using spiritual theology and spirituality in the ways that Eugene Peterson uses them. “Spirituality” will retain its popular use, both recognisable and imprecise, combining transcendence and intimacy. With Peterson, the theological conversation about spirituality moves toward the goal of “living, living fully and well,” so “spiritual theology” is a detailed focus upon the spiritual life, structured thought about what I argue Lewis calls *zoe*.

²⁰ Stephanie Derrick, *The Fame of C.S. Lewis: A Controversialist's Reception in Britain and America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 39.

²¹ See C.S. Lewis, “Rejoinder to Dr Pittenger,” in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 177-183; C.S. Lewis, “Christian Apologetics,” in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 98-99; C.S. Lewis, “Before We Can Communicate,” in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 256.

C.S. Lewis as Spiritual Theologian

Granted that these terms are relatively new and thus heuristic, a review of literature on Lewis and spirituality demonstrates that Lewis' spiritual theology is non-systematic and emergent, and yet contains a coherent vision that supports the scholarly consensus that there is an integrative and holistic core to Lewis' thought. Though the small number of scholars who have attended to Lewis' spirituality is diverse in experience and approach, treatments are mostly of a general kind. With noted exceptions, scholars who attend to Lewis' social thought are more effective at intimating a cruciform centre to Lewis' works than those who are intentionally exploring Lewis' spirituality—even if they lack the technical language, scope, or methodological circumspection to fully explore Lewis' spiritual theology of the cross in a way that accounts for his integrative thought. Following a literature review of scholarship on Lewis and spirituality, we turn to these critics of Lewis' social thought, namely John Stackhouse, Gilbert Meilaender, and Kath Filmer. I then argue for a necessary reorientation of our way of reading Lewis, following Lewis in turning to spiritual life in his apologetics and his fiction.

Secondary Literature on Lewis and Spirituality

On the one hand, no one doubts that Lewis' work has been important to the spiritual growth of individuals,²² though popular writing about Lewis is sometimes hagiographical and invites a poor critical response.²³ While the academic conversation in this work will bear out the degree to which historians, biographers, critics, and theologians are aware of the deeper resonances in Lewis' thought, specific focus upon Lewis as a spiritual theologian, however named, is rare. Roman Catholic PhD theses show early academic interest in Lewis

²² See James T. Como, ed., *Remembering C.S. Lewis: Recollections of Those Who Knew Him* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992); John Lawlor, *C.S. Lewis: Memories and Reflections* (Dallas: Spence Publishing, 1998); Mary Anne Phemister and Andrew Lazo, eds., *Mere Christians: Inspiring Stories of Encounters with C.S. Lewis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009); Harry Lee Poe and Rebecca Whitten Poe, eds., *C.S. Lewis Remembered: Collected Reflections of Students, Friends and Colleagues* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006); Stephen Schofield, ed., *In Search of C.S. Lewis* (South Plainfield, NJ: Bridge Publishing, 1983). On Lewis reception see esp. Derrick, *Fame of C.S. Lewis*; Joeckel, *Lewis Phenomenon*; George M. Marsden, *C.S. Lewis's Mere Christianity: A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); Joseph Pearce, *C.S. Lewis and the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Charlotte, NC: St Benedict Press, 2013); K. Alan Snyder, *America Discovers C.S. Lewis: His Profound Impact* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016).

²³ Joeckel, *Lewis Phenomenon*, 22-23, 1. For poor critical responses, see Peter Kreeft, *C.S. Lewis: A Critical Essay* (Front Royal, Virginia: Christendom College Press, 1988), 5; Robert MacSwain, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, ed. Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 11.

and spirituality. In *The Idea of God and Spirituality of C.S. Lewis* (1969), Jesuit scholar Jacobo E. Hoff highlights the emergent nature of Lewis theological project: “Lewis never wrote an explicit spirituality, but a spirituality emerges naturally from his Christian writings.”²⁴ Lewis’ spirituality is grounded in his idea of the present as an “eschatological” event, and thus the foundational space of Christian growth.²⁵ Hoff uses Lewis’ literary theory to describe spirituality as what “bubbles to the top in Lewis’s Christian writings.”²⁶ Hoff is attentive to Lewis’ conversion story, which becomes Sr Galligan’s focal point in her 1985 study of theme and image of conversion²⁷ (introduced in chapter one). Galligan uses a Roman Catholic emphasis on ongoing conversion—“*in statu conversionis*”—to look at the ways in which Lewis thought “we must all be converted anew every day.”²⁸ Resisting apologetic reductionism, Galligan argues that “Lewis does more than provide a defence of Christian belief and practice. He presents a vision of the totality of human experience caught up into the mystery of God, of divine providence and grace at work in the ordinary and everyday.”²⁹ Both Hoff and Galligan divine the instinctive and integrative life-long nature of Lewis’ spiritual theological project.

More recently, there has been a renewed emphasis on Lewis and spirituality in full-length book studies. One of the earliest and more idiosyncratic of this new generation of studies is William Griffin’s *C.S. Lewis: Spirituality for Mere Christians* (1998). Also coming from a Roman Catholic perspective, Griffin’s style is off-putting, he is jarringly flippant at times, and his method to first look for sexual scandal or homosexuality in Lewis’ life—and then, failing to find the scandal, turning to spirituality—is bizarre. Though clumsy, his inquiry-based approach leads to a striking image of integrative, holistic spirituality, that of an “underground aquifer running throughout his conscious and unconscious and revivifying his spirit.”³⁰ Lewis’ spirituality was “revealed” by “telltale watermarks all through his personal correspondence, revealing a person of deep spirituality, fed by reading Scripture, nourished by Holy Communion, fortified by spiritual direction.”³¹ As a person’s spirituality is

²⁴ Jacobo E. Hoff, “The Idea of God and Spirituality of C.S. Lewis” (PhD dissertation, Instituto Theologiae Spirituality Pontificiae Universitatis Gregoriana, 1969), 4.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 169-185.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 5.

²⁷ See Galligan, “Slow-Paced,” 22.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 19-20, quoting Pope John Paul II.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 21.

³⁰ William Griffin, *C.S. Lewis: Spirituality for Mere Christians* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 14.

³¹ *Ibid*, 14.

“marked by interruption, distraction, coincidence ... encountering the divine in the oddest places,”³² Griffin confirms the emergent and integrative nature of Lewis’ spirituality.

Lyle W. Dorsett’s *Seeking the Secret Place: The Spiritual Formation of C.S. Lewis* (2004) is the first monograph to be specifically sensitive to a focus on spiritual formation as an intellectual discipline. As they each concentrate upon Lewis’ philosophy of Joy in a manner that complements Corbin Scott Carnell, *Bright Shadow of Reality* (1974), Dorsett can be read well with Devin Brown’s focal-point biography, *A Life Observed: A Spiritual Biography of C.S. Lewis* (2013) and Will Vaus’ topical study *The Hidden Story of Narnia: A Book-by-Book Guide to C.S. Lewis’ Spiritual Themes* (2010).³³ Vaus is an apt systematiser of Lewis,³⁴ and summarises the spirituality of Narnia succinctly: the “spiritual journey begins, continues, and finds its consummation, only because Aslan knows us.”³⁵

Though these scholars share Joy as a thematic centre with David C. Downing’s exploration of “mysticism,” his *Into the Region of Awe* (2005) is quite distinct in approach. Defining mystical faith as one that is fully integrated into the soul, Downing demonstrates that Lewis crosses the threshold of awe in his conversion and Christian life, his reading, and his writing. While Downing draws out the Christian mystical emphasis on spiritual death and resurrection, it is not the substantial organising feature of his work that I am arguing for here. Likewise, in *The Spirituality of Narnia* (2007), John Bowen presents Lewis’ Christian perspective as rooted in deep wells, and thus both life-affirming and liberating. The Narnian wardrobe, in Bowen’s reading, is the gateway to living a fuller Christian life. Bowen treats overlapping themes, like obedience and humility, coming ultimately in the final pages to Lewis’ conversion as “a kind of surrender.” Bowen correctly connects Lewis’ surrender to the submission of Eustace to Aslan in *The Dawn Treader*—a scene to which we will return.³⁶ Bowen concludes with what he sees as the key idea of surrender behind Lewis’ philosophy of Joy: “Lewis’ main point ... seems to be that in our spiritual searching there is a limit to how far we can get by ourselves.”³⁷ Eventually, we come to a point where “it is good to

³² Ibid, 25.

³³ See also Carnell, *Bright Shadow*.

³⁴ See also Williams’ *Mere Theology: A Guide to the Thought of C.S. Lewis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006).

³⁵ Will Vaus, *The Hidden Story of Narnia: A Book-by-Book Guide to C.S. Lewis’ Spiritual Themes* (Cheshire, CT: Winged Lion Press, 2010), 73.

³⁶ John P. Bowen, *The Spirituality of Narnia* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2007), 141-142.

³⁷ Ibid, 142.

acknowledge that reality, and (however we may want to conceive of it) to surrender to the real Aslan. That will make our progress much faster.”³⁸ This is a very weak view of Lewisian cruciformity, and it locks this idea of surrender into a conversion or second conversion event rather than a pattern for everyday spiritual life. While he is a lively and informative writer inviting thought about self-surrender, Bowen misses the central theme in Lewis’ spiritual theology.

With the possible exception of Sr Galligan’s 1985 thesis, Joe Rigney’s recent *Lewis on the Christian Life* (2018) is the closest to my inquiry. Rigney’s work is a spiritual theology, though he uses neither that term nor even the word “spirituality.” His conservative Reformed Evangelical audience would, perhaps, find the terms alienating. Rigney is, however, paying focussed attention to “living, living fully and well,” drawing out Lewis’ teachings to construct a theologically coherent approach to Christian life. His outline looks like systematic theology with a praxeological focus but retains a doctrinocentric approach to the material. Though he does not recognise cruciformity at the centre of Lewis’ thought, Rigney is a strong conversation partner—particularly in the study of *Screwtape* in chapters five and six.

Though there are others who touch on Lewis’ spirituality,³⁹ the authors surveyed here confirm two critical aspects of my argument. First, they reveal the non-systematic, emergent nature of Lewis’ spiritual theology. Second, they each demonstrate the integrative and holistic nature of Lewis’ spirituality, often noting how Lewis’ biography relates to his principles, and lived ideas emerge across Lewis’ diverse corpus. Despite the diversity of backgrounds and approaches—these critics are male and female, Roman Catholic and Protestant, American, Canadian, and European, theologians, literary critics, historians,

³⁸ Ibid, 142.

³⁹ E.g., Tony Richie, “Awe-Full Encounters: A Pentecostal Conversation with C.S. Lewis Concerning Spiritual Experience,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 14, no. 1 (2005): 99-122; Connie Hintz, “The Theme of Desire in the Writings of C.S. Lewis: Implications for Spiritual Formation,” *Inklings Forever* 6 (2008); Robert Moore-Jumonville, “The End for Which We Are Formed: Spiritual Formation through C.S. Lewis,” *Inklings Forever* 7 (2010); Richard James, “Guidelines for Spiritual Reading from C.S. Lewis,” *Inklings Forever* 7 (2010); Heather Meacock, “Narnia, Genre, and Children’s Spirituality,” *Journal of Children’s Literature Studies* 8, no. 3 (2011): 96-112; John Froula, “Joy as Spiritual Perception in C.S. Lewis,” *Heythrop Journal* 59, no. 1 (Jan 2018): 56-65; Kallistos Ware, “Sacramentalism in C.S. Lewis and Charles Williams,” in *C.S. Lewis and His Circle: Essays and Memoirs from the Oxford C.S. Lewis Society*, ed. Roger White et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 53-64; Jason Lepojärvi, “Praeparatio Evangelica—or Daemonica? C.S. Lewis and Anders Nygren on Spiritual Longing,” *Harvard Theological Review* 109, no. 2 (2016): 207-232; James M. Houston, “The Prayer-Life of C.S. Lewis,” *Crux* 24, no. 1 (1988): 2-10.

biographers, and journalists—each of the authors is interested in developing an integrative and holistic Christian spirituality in their readers’ and (presumably) their own lives. Some scholars want to work at a critical distance, like John Beversluis, A.N. Wilson, Samuel Joeckel, and Laura Miller, but it is evident that Lewis as a proto-critical spiritual theologian attracts those interested in developing spiritual theology in their own life and work.

Social Thought and a Spirituality of the Cross in Conversation

Scholars on Lewis and spirituality are helpful in understanding his *theologia crucis* through considerations of topics like humility (Bowen, Rigney) and conversion (Galligan, Griffin, Downing). The literature surveyed above confirms that Lewis’ spiritual theology is ad-hoc, emergent, and soaked through all aspects of his life. Dorsett focuses upon spiritual direction,⁴⁰ other authors explore Christian praxis with Lewis as a conversation partner,⁴¹ and numerous shorter studies and sections of biographies have focussed on spiritual expression in Lewis’ life as Dorsett and Brown have done. However, these scholars have failed to notice the crucicentric focus in Lewis’ work and have underemphasized *imitatio Christi* motifs in his writings. When considering Lewis’ spiritual theology upon the cross, by contrast, the most fruitful conversations come from authors who are concerned less with Lewis’ spirituality and who are more invested in the social implications of his thought. We see glimpses of Lewis’ cruciform spirituality in John Stackhouse’s theology of culture, Gilbert Meilaender’s treatment of Lewis’ social and ethical thought, and Kath Filmer’s feminist critique of Lewis’ fiction.

In attempting to recapitulate a neo-Niebuhrian Christian realism for a 21st-century post-Christian culture, Stackhouse uses Lewis in *Making the Best of It* (2008) as a “resource for the recovery.”⁴² Stackhouse turns in appreciative critique to Lewis’ innate understanding of myth and story as they are integrated into Lewis’ public writings (preaching), ingrained in his personal life (practice), and “encoded” in his fiction (parables). Distinctive themes of Lewis’ reconstituted theology of culture include the sanctification of self, society, and Creation; conversion as a confirmation of vocation and good work; a critical sense of fallen

⁴⁰ See also Hintz, “Desire,” 1-10; Moore-Jumonville, “The End,” 1-11.

⁴¹ See Chris R. Armstrong, *Medieval Wisdom for Modern Christians: Finding Authentic Faith in a Forgotten Age, with C.S. Lewis* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016); Chris Jensen, “Thick Christianity: C.S. Lewis, Transformation, and the Ancient Doctrine of Theosis,” *Transformational Theology* (Spring/Summer 2010): 20-25.

⁴² Stackhouse, *Making the Best of It*, 43.

humanity, yet a deep hope rooted in history and imagination; and a call to a joyful life. “Lewis never tires,” Stackhouse argues, of the reality “that new life, which we all need, requires death of a sort.”⁴³ Among the parallels to Galatians 2:20—the representative passage of Pauline and Lewisian cruciformity quoted in chapter one—is the “gospel paradox” of “losing one’s life to save it” (see Matt 10:39 and parallels), which Stackhouse argues is everywhere in Lewis’ work.⁴⁴ As Lewis’ work in apologetics is essential to his spiritual theological project, Stackhouse quotes *Mere Christianity* and *Miracles*:

Christ says “Give me All. I don’t want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want You. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half-measures are any good. I don’t want to cut off a branch here and a branch there, I want to have the whole tree down. I don’t want to drill the tooth, or crown it, or stop it, but to have it out. Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think innocent as well as the ones you think wicked—the whole outfit.”⁴⁵

The first innocent and spontaneous desires have to submit to the deathlike process of control or total denial: but from that there is a reascent to fully formed character in which the strength of the original material all operates but in a new way. Death and Rebirth—go down to go up—it is a key principle.⁴⁶

These passages again demonstrate the pervasiveness of Lewis’ spiritual theology of the cross, capturing together the self-death movement that leads to life as it is patterned for believers.

Stackhouse is narrowly focussed on a theology of culture rather than a consideration of spiritual life. Therefore, he does not connect what I will call the Divine Pattern of self-sacrifice to the Divine Principle that Jesus models this self-sacrifice as he is in full surrender to God—which is the theme as Lewis develops it in the next paragraph in *Miracles*:

The doctrine of the Incarnation, if accepted, puts this principle even more emphatically at the centre. The pattern [of descent and reascent, death and resurrection] is there in Nature because it was first there in God.... I am not now referring simply to the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ. The total pattern, of which they are only the turning point, is the real Death and Rebirth.⁴⁷

⁴³ Ibid, 50.

⁴⁴ Ibid, following Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 6.

⁴⁵ Lewis, MC, 196-197.

⁴⁶ Lewis, *Miracles*, 136.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 136.

Stackhouse does, however, attend to what he calls the “paradox”—what I will dub the Divine Paradox—of Lewis’ view of redemption, which deepens to the reality that “[w]hat we are reborn to, then, is not a negation of everything we felt and enjoyed and wanted before. This new life is but a purification and elevation of all of that to its shining best.”⁴⁸

Stackhouse discerns what I call Divine Possibility—the life change of the believer following the surrender of self. Stackhouse then turns to Meilaender:

For a fallen creature to [turn to God] will seem like a death of the self. It cannot be experienced simply as a turning from one good to a higher good but instead must often be experienced as a negation not only of the thing but of the self.⁴⁹

In *The Taste for the Other: The Social and Ethical Thought of C.S. Lewis* (1978), Meilaender is primarily interested in “the heart of Lewis’ vision of human community and his understanding of morality.”⁵⁰ Though Lewis eschewed formal social theory,⁵¹ Meilaender argues for an instinctive, emergent social ethics: “in his own way Lewis treats some questions of central importance to Christian social thought.”⁵² What Meilaender calls Lewis’ “reality principle” is what I call the Divine Premise, that although “human beings are made for life in community with God (and, thereby, with one another),” the desire for humans to call their souls their own leads to the fall.⁵³ Meilaender’s communal interest informs mine on the question of the self within that community. In this, Meilaender intimates a Lewisian theology of cruciformity: “The proper posture for the creature is one of receptivity.”⁵⁴ In Meilaender’s understanding of healthy spirituality from a Lewisian perspective, one must resist a double temptation of unordered love and desire. One side of the temptation is the “seductive lure of things,” using the phrase “the sweet poison of the false infinite” in *Perelandra*⁵⁵ to capture how people can be lost in the enjoyment of what are often very good things in and of themselves. The flip side of this is the temptation to lose one’s self in self-denial. “Things must be renounced,” but “such renunciation is never an end in itself.”⁵⁶ This distinction is what Meilaender calls Lewis’ “double attitude toward things”; as this

⁴⁸ Stackhouse, *Making the Best of It*, 50.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 27.

⁵⁰ Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 2.

⁵¹ Lewis offers no “program for society,” *Ibid*, 40.

⁵² *Ibid*, 2.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 2.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 18.

⁵⁵ Lewis, *Perelandra*, 81.

⁵⁶ Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 11.

subtlety is critical to Lewis' cruciform spirituality, Meilaender's comment is a uniquely perceptive note about Lewis' spirituality.⁵⁷

Thus, on the side of renunciation, we see the "killing of the self" that Stackhouse references, where in a fallen world "self-giving love becomes self-sacrificing."⁵⁸ While the self "provides an occasion for love and delight," the ego-self continually asserts itself above others and "must be killed."⁵⁹ The heart of the dialectic is that the "self must be honored as God's creature, yet put to death."⁶⁰ This rejection of disordered desire toward self-abuse or self-assertion—the two sides of a single narcissistic coin—is the tension of Lewis' understanding of spiritual pilgrimage.⁶¹ Thus, the "person who wants the Christian story to shape the contours of his life will want to enter this dialectical movement between enjoyment and renunciation" in ordinary life.⁶² Amidst this dialectic is the work of grace, approached by faith and lived out by "attempting the *imitatio Christi*."⁶³

Meilaender and Stackhouse rhyme in intimating a cruciform theme in Lewis' thought, that for him the "story of Creation, Fall, Incarnation, redemption, and *eschaton* shapes the contours of the entire Christian life. The Christian understands his life by locating it within that story."⁶⁴ The "central element" of this story of redemption is the Incarnation,⁶⁵ where the self-giving Christ centres spiritual life. Considering Lewis' "reality principle" of the fall, mutuality and love for other in the posture of self-giving is not merely a resistance to the loss of freedom but touches "a rhythm of all creation"⁶⁶ in God's self-giving to the other. Thus, in encountering the "other" in reordered self-sacrificial love, "Christ's sacrifice is repeated among his followers in various degrees."⁶⁷ Christ's self-sacrifice is the model or "realisation" of love, so much of Lewis' fiction, in Meilaender's view, is about developing that "taste for the other," drawing the person into reading experiences of diversity and

⁵⁷ *Taste for the Other*, 20-31. We return to this point in chapter six.

⁵⁸ Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 26.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 27. Meilaender dedicates a section to "the great sin," pride, as it leads to self-destructive and disordered loyalties, 45-48.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 29.

⁶¹ The journey motif is essential in Meilaender's understanding of Lewis' spirituality, suggesting that conversion (turn) is not sufficient to understand Lewis' idea of grace for those who have "entered upon an imitation of Christ," *Taste for the Other*, 37.

⁶² Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 31-32.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 38.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 38-39.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 39.

⁶⁶ Lewis, PoP, 140.

⁶⁷ Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 64.

longing for other, and ultimately Other. Self-centred pride is the rejection of community and otherness, and must be “broken in surrender.”⁶⁸ In Lewis’ view, there is in the human soul a need for otherness, so humans have a single choice: “either the ruthless, unsmiling, and deadly isolation of self” or the “revelry of insatiable love.”⁶⁹ It is around this concept that Meilaender organises Lewis’ integrated, instinctive theology.⁷⁰

The projects of Meilaender and Stackhouse are largely positive, commending to the reader Lewis’ approach to community life and cultural engagement, respectively. Filmer’s feminist approach, *The Fiction of C.S. Lewis: Mask and Mirror* (1993), is by contrast largely critical. Filmer is not without admiration for Lewis at points but stands against “a universal tendency to hagiography”⁷¹ in Lewis studies. Filmer is successful in creating a critically distinct study. In facing what she perceives as the difficult aspects of Lewis’ fiction—namely, Lewis’ understanding of light and darkness, good and evil, political theologies, and conceptions of women—Filmer argues that “Lewis’s novels are both mask and mirror for the man himself, for his beliefs and for his spiritual and psychological struggle for wholeness.”⁷² Filmer resists growth theories of Lewis’ ideas, including theses of Margaret Hannay and Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen explored in the fifth chapter, suggesting that Lewis had a commitment to dualism, a love of violence, and a hatred toward women that emerges in his fiction and poetry throughout his entire adult life, before and after his conversion. Intentionally rejecting the death-of-the-author movement in literary criticism, and seemingly unaware of or disinterested in Lewis’ own contribution in *The Personal Heresy* (1939), Filmer argues that:

In Lewis’s fiction, we see the monster which Lewis could not confront in actuality; his fiction functions ... both to conceal and to reveal the monster, the devourer, the sceptic which Lewis could not admit was present in his subconscious....⁷³

Particularly concerned with the “the misogynist and the chauvinist beliefs that so taint his spiritual vision,”⁷⁴ Filmer argues that Lewis transfers his darkness to his fiction, “and in a

⁶⁸ Ibid, 93.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 105.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 5, 241.

⁷¹ Filmer, *Mask and Mirror*, 1.

⁷² Ibid, 2.

⁷³ Ibid, 4.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 27.

sense identifies with it by creating evil entities ‘in his own image.’”⁷⁵ It is a breathtaking thesis, and because Filmer is unwilling to gloss over problematic aspects of Lewis’ work, she is a stimulating conversation partner and a searing critic.

One of her concerns with Lewis’ theology is the spirituality of the cross I am outlining, the idea “that the ‘self’ must die in order to be made whole.”⁷⁶ Filmer agrees with Meilaender on the fall as self-assertion and the desire to dominate others.⁷⁷ It naturally follows, in Filmer’s view, that Lewis’ fiction takes up images of “evil depicted in terms of self-enslavement, devouring and absorbing others in order to feed the burgeoning ego of the auto-idolater.”⁷⁸ By contrast, one responds to the good “in terms of spiritual and psychological individuation, achieved through submission and obedience to God.”⁷⁹ Filmer then perceptively summarises an approximation of the central aspect of Lewis’ integrative and emergent spiritual theology of the cross: “The message that the self must be put to death, as it were, in surrender to God, in order for rebirth and regeneration to take place, recurs throughout the entire *oeuvre* of Lewis’s fiction.”⁸⁰ In a later piece, Filmer argues that “the key issue of his Christian faith” is “the surrender of the self to God.”⁸¹

Unfortunately, Filmer misunderstands the true nature of the “Self” in Lewis, suggesting that he believes that “Self” rather than self-assertion is “the true enemy of God.”⁸² As a result, Filmer can make the mistake of suggesting that self-surrender “is rewarded by the solid reality of heaven”⁸³ rather than heaven being the logical result of self-surrender, which I argue below is the thematic centre of *The Great Divorce*. However, she rightly understands the response in Lewis’ view and how concentrated his focus is upon the idea of self-death. Filmer is one of only a handful of critics who have glimpsed a cross-shaped spirituality in Lewis’ work, especially her observation that “self-realisation comes before individuation; only when a human being knows his or her self can that self be surrendered and become real.”⁸⁴

⁷⁵ Ibid, 28.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 29.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 29.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 29. Cf. Filmer-Davies, “C.S. Lewis,” 662.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 29.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 30.

⁸¹ Filmer-Davies, “C.S. Lewis,” 656; cf. 662-663, 666-667.

⁸² Filmer, *Mask and Mirror*, 33.

⁸³ Ibid, 39.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 41.

While Filmer perceives this cruciform spirituality that others fail to note, her theoretical approach is highly problematic as she never provides a measure for what Lewis is masking or what he is mirroring. Filmer uses very little of Lewis' nonfiction corpus, largely ignores Lewis biographers and critics, and includes nothing from his letters, diaries, or other parts of his public or private record. Uninterested in rooting her assessment of Lewis' biography in any biographical evidence—setting aside his memoir entirely—Filmer is unable to distinguish between what might be a view Lewis held as part of his Christian faith and one that reveals his alleged troubled psychology. “It is possible to tell a great deal about a human being from the way in which he or she addresses issues of good and evil,”⁸⁵ Filmer argues. What does it say that Lewis believes in (and wrote extensively about) demons in everyday life? Filmer would like us to believe that Lewis is haunted by demons, but there are other options. He may, for example, simply be using Christian imagination to think about spirituality in historically understood and culturally significant ways. Unfortunately, Filmer gives us no method to discern the difference. As her conclusions about Lewis' true hidden character cannot be tested, they are therefore effectively non-falsifiable.

In the case of cruciform spirituality, Filmer admits that his ideas come from the “whoever loses his life shall find it” passages and classic spirituality.⁸⁶ Despite this, Filmer concludes that Lewis' “constant iteration and the emphasis he puts upon the absolute need for self-transcendence reveals his own preoccupation with the notion that he might possess the desire to dominate others” and that “they might also intend to dominate *him*.”⁸⁷ This may indeed be the case; Lewis may really be “a man confronted by his own self, tormented by the evil within himself, seeking to know himself and finding it, paradoxically, in the mirror of his own fiction.”⁸⁸ Filmer, however, offers no evidence except an unreferenced statement about “the sketchy details available to us of the details of Lewis's personal relationships.”⁸⁹ Thus, in portraying villainous women characters, Lewis creates monsters of the opposite sex to facilitate “facing the monstrosity within himself.”⁹⁰ Filmer admits that “we can only conjecture”⁹¹ about what that autobiographical monstrosity was that is hiding in Lewis'

⁸⁵ Ibid, 29.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 30.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 39.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 42.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 39.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 135.

⁹¹ Ibid, 136.

fiction. Regardless, Filmer believes she is uniquely able to reveal that Lewis is an embarrassing “sycophant,”⁹² “nasty and inhumane,”⁹³ a spiritual cannibal she likens to a “vampiric monster” akin to Tolkien’s Shelob,⁹⁴ someone who is “tinged with the colours of male friendship,”⁹⁵ and not just someone who betrays sexism in his work but who is undoubtedly a misogynist in his own person with an “unrelenting animosity towards women.”⁹⁶ Though Filmer offers numerous suggestive critiques of Lewis’ work both *in situ* and in the evolving readers’ context, her analysis is shockingly bereft of biographical consideration in a biographical study.

Filmer’s criticism is often stronger than her theory. She offers perceptive analysis, as we see in this thesis and in observations like “the Narnian Chronicles focus relentlessly upon the notion of evil arising from enslavement to the unredeemed, self-serving self.”⁹⁷ While Filmer provides no evidence for her assertion that “in Lewis’s fiction there is always an underlying sense of a male fear of female sexuality,”⁹⁸ her binary division of women as saints/goddesses/virgins or sluts/villains is worth considering⁹⁹—and would be stronger if the evidence she leaves out of other characters and the analysis of masculine characters was included. We are left, ultimately, with the problem of method. At one point, Filmer asks, “[a]re the monstrous selves he depicts images of the unrecognised monsters within himself?”¹⁰⁰ It is a catastrophic rhetorical question: readers must either answer “we don’t know” based on the evidence, or provide an adamant yes or no based on their own level of comfort with the text. As an experiment in readers’ response to a text by someone unwilling to be dishonest about the cultural problems with Lewis’ corpus, Filmer’s work is invaluable; as a project in psychological discernment of the hidden figure behind the text, it is a failure. Ultimately, the only arbiter of Lewis’ true experiences is her own critical judgment rather than the testable evidence of Lewis’ public record. In the feminist critique in chapter five, I

⁹² Ibid, 5.

⁹³ Ibid, 35.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 41.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 137. This aspect is the most troubling of Filmer’s work, who says that the “elements and constituents of every normal male” are that “he must make himself powerful and free” categorised by emotional impoverishment, compulsory violence, and penis power, which is “the central power, the only power, which is, demands, must be, must have, now.”

⁹⁶ Ibid, 95.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 43.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 44.

⁹⁹ See Ibid, 121-131.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 116.

return to some of Filmer's stronger responses to Lewis as they problematise Lewis' spirituality of the cross.

It is intriguing to note that each of these scholars of social thought intimate aspects of Lewis' spirituality of self-death while considering other questions. Meilaender alone—and only briefly—considers the imitation motif, and none of them understands the full importance of the incarnational element in Lewis' work as it connects to spiritual theology. Yet each scholar appreciates that, in Lewis' view, human fallenness is bound up with the self and that self-death or self-surrender is part of Lewis' redemptive matrix. Stackhouse and Meilaender view this aspect of Lewis' faith as positive and paradigmatic, while Filmer argues that Lewis' belief that "Self must be surrendered and 'put to death'"¹⁰¹ was a disturbing example of unrepented darkness in his life. Each author, however, notes what I argue is the centre of Lewis' spiritual theology. Moreover, these authors on Lewis' social thought agree with Lewis scholars on spirituality, each recognising the emergent, integrative reality of Lewis' cross-shaped spirituality. For my argument, it would have been ideal if Filmer would have shown evidence that Lewis' "whole life's quest" was toward "wholeness, self-abnegation and surrender."¹⁰² In her criticism of Lewis' fiction, however, and despite the absence of a critical method, Filmer invites exploration of Lewis as a spiritual theologian centred upon a self-surrender and new life spirituality that echoes Christ's self-sacrifice.

A Tilt of the Head: From Systematic to Spiritual Theology

Peterson provides a framework for thinking about spirituality as a "theological language"¹⁰³ that provides a structured and holistic way of understanding Christian living. As a biblical theologian, Gorman is concerned with the way Paul creates "narratives" of the way that Christ's self-sacrificial death and resurrection to new life pattern Christian discipleship. Both Peterson and Gorman are theologians that suggest a tilt of the head, a turn from systematic theology to Christian thought invested in the dynamics of spiritual life, what it means to live, live fully and well. While not in any sense rejecting the value of systematic theology or Lewis' work as an apologist—and thus generating reductive readings of my own—there is value in a similar reconsideration of Lewis from the perspective of

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 137.

¹⁰² Ibid, 52.

¹⁰³ Peterson, *Christ Plays*, 61.

spiritual theology. Wayne Shumaker is correct when he says that “Lewis succeeds in making a body of reasoned theological doctrine perceptually available in quasi-realistic fiction”¹⁰⁴—though Lewis is not a trained theologian like Peterson and Gorman. Lewis never systematically describes principles for Christian faith and practice as an integrated whole. Moreover, Paul Fiddes is correct when he says that “it is the *experiential* aspect of talking about God that interests Lewis.”¹⁰⁵ Thus, it is important to consider the *lived* element within Lewis’ Christian thought, the attention that Lewis gives to spirituality.

When we do, we see that Lewis’ “doctrine of death” is infused throughout his voluminous corpus. Any attempt to discern C.S. Lewis’ theology as a whole is a project of reconstruction, but it is a reconstruction based upon a spirituality of the cross that is the all-encompassing, integrating narrative reality of Lewis’ life, central to all of his Christian thought, and foundational to the thematic nuances of his fiction. Travis Buchanan argues that theological reconstructions of dynamic, emergent thought incur risk: “transposition of Lewis’s works into the sanitized foreign language of systematic theology” can become “a brutal vivisection of Lewis’s living words and images, with the messy result left lying in abstract deadness on the pages.”¹⁰⁶ As Lewis’ Christian thinking is integrative, narrative, and emergent—played out creatively in various modes—so a reading of his thought must capture this living reality.¹⁰⁷ Considering Lewis’ narrative spirituality of the cross requires a tilt of the head from systematic, philosophical, and doctrinal assessments—at least theoretically or programmatically distant from Christian life—to a fully embedded spiritual theology with the focussed question of what it means to live, live fully and well.

Lewis’ apologetics and theological works are more satisfying when also considered for their contribution to spiritual theology. The central sections of this thesis are structured with Lewis’ so-called apologetics trilogy. In this chapter, I recognise Lewis’ proto-critical

¹⁰⁴ Wayne Shumaker, “The Cosmic Trilogy of C.S. Lewis,” *Hudson Review* 8 (1955): 240-254. See Williams, *Deeper Magic*, 14, 25, 58.

¹⁰⁵ Paul Fiddes, “On Theology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, ed. Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 92.

¹⁰⁶ Travis Buchanan, “An Unwelcome Transposition: Review Essay of Paul H. Brazier’s *C.S. Lewis: Revelation and the Christ*,” *SEVEN* 33 (2016): 103.

¹⁰⁷ On Lewis and praxis, See Williams, *Deeper Magic* 217; Dickerson and O’Hara on Christian environmental praxis in *Narnia and the Fields of Arbol*, where in *Perelandra*, in particular, “issues of practical theology rise to the surface and remain there for close scrutiny,” 183. Similarly, Andrew Linzey argues that “Lewis’s contention that animals can only be understood in their relationship to human beings is a deeper issue for practical theology,” “C.S. Lewis’s Theology of Animals,” *Anglican Theological Review* 80, no. 1 (1998): 77.

interest in producing spiritual theology as *Mere Christianity* moves from arguments for God to teaching about the spiritual life. In chapter three, I argue that *The Problem of Pain* can be read as a manual for spiritual direction, providing a Lewisian Logic of Cruciformity. In chapter four, the sermon at the climax of *Miracles* focuses a discussion on the pattern of cruciformity. Beyond these books, Lewis' corpus is filled with writing about how to live, live fully and well. Lewis' cross-shaped spirituality appears in his letters, essays, sermons, and lectures, and in book-length treatments about spiritual life, including *The Screwtape Letters* (1942) on temptation; *The Great Divorce* (1945) on making eternal choices in everyday life; *Reflections on the Psalms* (1958) about worship, prayer, and reading biblically; *The Four Loves* (1960) on how our relationships can be transformed by God's love; and *Letters to Malcolm* (1964) on prayer. I turn to each of these texts at various points to consider implications of Lewis' cruciform spirituality. Lewis was someone who continually reminded his readers that he was merely "a layman and an amateur,"¹⁰⁸ so Peterson's hopeful resistance to professional theology by rooting it in lived experience is resonant with Lewis' instincts as a Christian thinker.

The Great Divorce: Eschatology to Spirituality

The distinction between Lewis as a theologian—a Christian thinker working out the principles of faith in teaching and fiction-writing—and Lewis as a *spiritual* theologian is subtle. It is the shift from structured doctrinal consideration or systematic theology to the particular consideration of that doctrine or theology in spiritual life. In the preface to *The Great Divorce* (1945), one of his theological novellas, Lewis invites this shift and prepares us to see the subsequent exploration of the theme of spiritual life in *Mere Christianity* (1952).

In *The Great Divorce*, the author-protagonist comes into consciousness at a bus stop in a town shrouded by perpetual twilight. The fictional geography is significant as all the expansive leagues of the grey town, its millions of miles of suburban sprawl filled with dim monochromatic communities—all of this huge, misty, twilit dull world—is but a toeprint within the eternal acreage of heaven, nothing but, in Rigney's description, "a crack in heaven's sidewalk."¹⁰⁹ The contrast of the grey town and the bright heaven is meant to jolt the visitor—both within the story and without—out of their complacent acceptance of a less

¹⁰⁸ Lewis, PoP, viii.

¹⁰⁹ Rigney, *Christian Life*, 257.

than glorious spiritual life. As I explore in detail in the experiment at the close of chapter three, the characters of *The Great Divorce* are presented with a singular, cruciform choice. One choice brings the dawn, while the other ultimately brings nightfall. The grey town, then, becomes purgatory for any that leave it, a hint of heaven that is “the Valley of the Shadow of Life.”¹¹⁰ By contrast, in the words of the mentor in the dream-vision, George MacDonald, “ye can call those sad streets in the town yonder the Valley of the Shadow of Death: but to those who remain there they will have been Hell even from the beginning.”¹¹¹ The speculative world geography maps onto the soul’s geography, with all of the reality of the dream working backwards into everyday life.

Considering this text from the perspective of doctrinal theology, it seems to be a story about eschatology. Lewis argues in *The Problem of Pain* that “the doors of hell are locked on the inside,”¹¹² rejecting MacDonald’s universalism for a different possibility. Adopting the view of Boethius that God is outside of time in an “unbounded now,”¹¹³ Lewis reasons that Christ reaches out to all lost souls as he descends to preach to the captives of hell (see 1 Pet 3:19). “Our souls *demand* purgatory,” Lewis believes,¹¹⁴ and *The Great Divorce* “owes more to the *Purgatorio* than to the *Inferno*.”¹¹⁵ It is no wonder that when considering Lewis’ eschatology, scholars like Williams, Martindale, Clark, and N.T. Wright turn to *The Great Divorce* as a primary text.¹¹⁶

However, we must remember that Dante does not so much provide a map of the afterlife but rather a narrative spiritual theology, what Lewis calls the “imaginative interpretation of spiritual life”¹¹⁷—what Marsha Daigle-Williamson calls “theological and

¹¹⁰ Lewis, GD, 61.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 61.

¹¹² Lewis, PoP, 115.

¹¹³ Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1942), 138-139. See Lewis, MC, 166-171, *Letters to Malcolm, Chiefly on Prayer* (London: Bles, 1964), letter 20.

¹¹⁴ Lewis, *Malcolm*, 140.

¹¹⁵ CLII 700. Cf. CLIII 313-314.

¹¹⁶ E.g., see Williams, *Deeper Magic*, 237-49; Wayne Martindale, *Beyond the Shadowlands: C.S. Lewis on Heaven & Hell* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), esp. 75-83, 179-183; David G. Clark, *C.S. Lewis Goes to Heaven: A Reader’s Guide to The Great Divorce* (Hamden, CT: Winged Lion Press, 2012); N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York, HarperCollins, 2007) Kindle Edition, 158-160, 179, 261-262.

¹¹⁷ Lewis, *Preface*, 111.

spiritual principles in literary depictions of spiritual life” in both Dante and Lewis.¹¹⁸ Lewis begins *The Great Divorce* with a cautionary preface:¹¹⁹

I beg readers to remember that this is a fantasy. It has of course—or I intended it to have—a moral. But the transmortal conditions are solely an imaginative supposal: they are not even a guess or a speculation at what may actually await us. The last thing I wish is to arouse factual curiosity about the details of the after-world.¹²⁰

Within the text itself, MacDonald also cautions the author-protagonist: “if ye come to tell of what ye have seen, make it plain that it was but a dream.... Give no poor fool the pretext to think ye are claiming knowledge of what no mortal knows.”¹²¹ Lewis subtitled the original serial as “A Fantasy” and the printed book as “A Dream.”

The precise meaning of Lewis’ caution is exegetically debatable. Does he mean that we are to avoid thinking about any aspect of eschatology? Or does he simply mean that the speculative structure of the imaginative universe of *The Great Divorce*—mountains and grey towns and twilight—is not meant to be considered an imaginative vision of what heaven is really like? While it is certain he at least means the latter,¹²² the debate continues regarding the former limitation and what Lewis’ theology of hell and purgatory even means.¹²³ For our purposes, however, the larger caution about theological speculation is a helpful reorientation to reading *The Great Divorce*. Whatever Lewis may or may not be saying about transmortal realities, *The Great Divorce* is designed to help us think about “living, living fully and well.” The “divorce” suggested in the title is the “moral” that Lewis embeds within the speculative universe of *The Great Divorce*, the cruciform choice at the centre of the novella I discuss in chapter three.

This is the tilt of the head that I am inviting in this thesis. Rather than concerning ourselves with “factual curiosity about the details of the after-world,” in the case of *The Great Divorce*, we attend to what spiritual realities Lewis’ imaginative world suggest to us.

¹¹⁸ Marsha Daigle-Williamson, *Reflecting the Eternal: Dante’s Divine Comedy in the Novels of C.S. Lewis* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2015), 2.

¹¹⁹ The original editor’s preface to this serial novella includes a comment germane to our purpose: “In his fantasies, as in all his books, we see the implications of our faith set before us with robust imagination and relentless logic,” see “The Grand Divorce,” *The Guardian*, Nov 10, 1944, 399.

¹²⁰ Lewis, GD, 9.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 116-117.

¹²² See CLIII 778, CLIII 1198; Clark, *Lewis Goes to Heaven*, 85-87.

¹²³ For recent counterpoints see Rigney, *Christian Life*, ch. 15; Reggie Weems, “Universalism Denied: C.S. Lewis’ Unpublished Letters to Alan Fairhurst,” *Journal of Inklings Studies* 7, no. 2 (2017): 87-98.

The flavour of heaven in *The Great Divorce* and the lessons the characters learn there help us imagine what Christian life should be like here and now. In this text, there is a direct line of continuity drawn between characters' lives on earth and their transmortal realities. Whatever the great race to go "further up and further in" teaches us about heaven in *The Last Battle*, by tilting our head to consider the spiritual theological perspective we discover a hopeful spirituality suggestive of light, joy, longing, and laughter. This is the project that I am proposing: when a poignant theological moment arises in Lewis' work, I am inviting readers to turn, at least for the sake of discovery, from the question "what is the systematic theological import of Lewis' teaching?" to include the question "what does this invite us to imagine about living, living fully and well?"

Lewis' "Meditation in a Toolshed" as Epistemology

This tilt of the head is foundational to Lewis' epistemology. In "Meditation in a Toolshed," published two months after *The Great Divorce*, Lewis offers a thought experiment. Lewis imagines a sunbeam piercing a crack above a shed's door. The beam of light is distinctive in the gloom, but if Lewis steps into the beam of light, he no longer sees the beam of light but sees "framed in the irregular cranny at the top of the door, green leaves moving on the branches of a tree outside and beyond that ... the sun."¹²⁴ Lewis uses these two different ways of seeing to suggest two different ways of accessing reality, such as the difference between a lover in love and a neuropsychologist examining the phenomenon of love. The move from the question of "what is the implied doctrine in the text?" to the question of living, living fully and well is analogous to Lewis' epistemological shift in this "Meditation." As Lewis rejects in the "Meditation" any temptation to negate either the detached, scientific inquiry or the embedded, personal experience, I am not rejecting systematic theological analysis or doctrinal formulation in the turn to spiritual theology. For the sake of this project, we are simply focussing upon one experience of

¹²⁴ Lewis, "Meditation in a Toolshed," 212.

knowing to another.¹²⁵ Both ways of seeing, held in tension or tandem, are essential to Lewis' understanding of spiritual life.¹²⁶

John Lawlor argues that “the fundamental impulse in [Lewis'] scholarly work is at one with what we respond to in the fictional works—an energy which combines in unique fashion creative imagination and ratiocinative ardour.”¹²⁷ In the integrative nature of his work, then, it should not be surprising that Lewis experiments with his “Meditation” in his fiction. The two-ways-of-seeing thought experiment in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* is not subtle. As the *Dawn Treader* is drowning in darkness, the crew notice a “broad beam of light” that falls upon the ship and highlights their peril. When Lucy looks along the beam as Lewis did in this toolshed five years earlier, she “presently saw something in it.” The cruciform image she sees in the light is an albatross, revealed to be Aslan, who leads them out of the darkness.¹²⁸

Within a book shaped around images of the sun (so Michael Ward¹²⁹) and contrasts of light and dark (so Marsha Daigle-Williamson and Monika Hilder),¹³⁰ the “beam of light” fits in well with the theme. Beyond this light-as-hope motif, however, is Lewis' epistemological framework in parable form. Lucy's ability to resolve and integrate tensions of knowing is a leitmotif in *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. Hilder argues that in *Dawn Treader*, “C.S. Lewis subverts the ‘masculine’ classical heroic ethos of those who resist spiritual light with the ‘feminine’ spiritual heroic ethos of those who turn to the light, discover it

¹²⁵ This point of view illustrates the two ways of seeing that Lewis brings together as a self-described “romantic rationalist” that Peter Kreeft (*C.S. Lewis*, 9, 40) argues comes together in *The Pilgrim's Regress*. See Lewis, *Regress*, 207-217. Intriguingly, Kreeft argues, “[t]he three main strings to Lewis' bow, rationalism, romanticism and Christianity, correspond to the three main genres of his writing, literary criticism, imaginative fiction and apologetics. All three genres carry the common theme of a ‘lover's quarrel with the world’ of modernity,” 13. These three categories are similar to Stackhouse's categories of preaching, parables, and practice outlined above.

¹²⁶ Lewis, SBJ, 217-220. Cf. Owen Barfield, *Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), 103-104. Moreover, as a spiritual theological approach need not lack systemic precision, neither is systematic theology devoid of spirituality and lived experience, as we see in Jürgen Moltmann's project dedicated to “The Identity and Relevance of Faith” in Christian life (*Crucified God*, esp. 7-31), and where, in his *Theology of Hope*, he is writing because to live without hope is no longer really living, for by definition “Hell is hopelessness,” *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 32.

¹²⁷ For a fuller analysis, see Lawlor, *C.S. Lewis*, ch. 6 on “Reason and Romanticism” and ch. 7 on “Scholar and Writer.”

¹²⁸ C.S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (London: Fontana Lions, 1980), 143.

¹²⁹ See Ward, *Planet Narnia*, ch. 5.

¹³⁰ See Daigle-Williamson, *Reflecting*, 162-170; Hilder, *Feminine Ethos*, 20, 194.

‘[d]rinkable,’ and are transformed.”¹³¹ Hilder’s feminist swords-into-insight thesis is a critically strong reading of *Dawn Treader* and an essential part of my argument in chapter five. Pressing her reading further, we can see that the adventurers typically turn to the intellect, argument, force, and battle when faced with issues. Lucy consistently turns to friendship, instinct, imagination, and spiritual insight—each built upon her life as the most experienced English pilgrim to Narnia. It is a spiritually significant integration of the two-ways-of-seeing while remaining a simple metaphor that children can understand.

Mere Christianity: Lewis’ Emphasis on the Spiritual Life

The “tilt of the head” from doctrine to spirituality works along the same lines as Lewis’ two-ways-of-seeing epistemology. It is also the critical turn that Lewis makes in *Mere Christianity* as the book moves from formal apologetics to spiritual theology, and thus provides the paradigmatic example of Lewis’ spiritual theological instinct. When describing Lewis’ apologetic, George Sayer argues that the “climax” of *Mere Christianity* is “concerned with Christian virtues, such as faith, hope, charity, and forgiveness.... The advice given is practical, because it is based on Jack’s personal experience, rather than on books or tradition.”¹³² Lewis begins the last section of *Mere Christianity* by admitting that experts warned him that “the ordinary reader does not want Theology; give him plain practical religion.”¹³³ For Lewis, this warning is a false reading of the public and a false dichotomy. Considering theology as the “science of God,” Lewis reasons that if people are going to think about God at all, they would like to have “the clearest and most accurate ideas” possible.¹³⁴ “Theology is practical,”¹³⁵ Lewis argues, linking clear thinking and strong ethics. Beyond the question of whether our theology is informed or uninformed, coherent or incoherent, progressive or retrogressive,¹³⁶ is the question of where it leads. Just as travelling without a map is impractical if you want to arrive somewhere, thinking about God without theological

¹³¹ Hilder, *Feminine Ethos*, 60.

¹³² Sayer, *Jack*, 279. For a comparison of MC with a catechism, see James Como, *C.S. Lewis: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2019) Kindle Edition, 70.

¹³³ Lewis, MC, 153.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 153.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 155.

¹³⁶ Lewis suggests that the contemporary popular theology of his day was out of date, a kind of retrogression akin to flat-earth doctrines, MC, 155. Moreover, Lewis admitted that the task of apologetics, rather than deepening his hold on faith, made the doctrines of faith “spectral” to him; see “Christian Apologetics,” a paper read to Welsh priests and youth leaders in 1945, now in *God in the Dock*, 89-103, esp. 103.

awareness is not only inherently limited but it “has no practical importance at all.”¹³⁷ The remainder of *Mere Christianity* moves back and forth from theological inquires about creation and new creation, the Trinity, and the nature of time, to the personal, practical question of what it means to be a child of God. The conclusion of *Mere Christianity* sharpens to the point of cruciformity. This sharp point is quoted by Sayer to describe the single “principle” that “runs through all life from top to bottom”¹³⁸:

Give up yourself, and you will find your real self. Lose your life and you will save it. Submit to death, death of your ambitions and favourite wishes every day and death of your whole body in the end: submit with every fibre of your being, and you will find eternal life. Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will be really yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead. Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in.¹³⁹

Apologetics and theological speculation are organically bound up with lived spirituality implications in Lewis’ work. Wrong directions from Tintern to Tübingen or Belfast to Oxford will lead the pilgrim astray as much as wrong ideas about spiritual life will make it harder to discover that life. For Lewis, the “whole purpose for which we exist is to be thus taken into the life of God.”¹⁴⁰ Theology, then, is what Rigney calls “A Map to Ultimate Reality,”¹⁴¹ where “Reality” is never merely abstraction but implicated in all of Christian life. “The thing that matters,” says Lewis, “is being actually drawn into that three-personal life” of God.¹⁴² George Watson obviously misunderstands the embedded nature of Lewis’ project when he claims that “theology is only an episode in his literary career.”¹⁴³ Instead, Lewis is entirely soaked in theology, but it is a theological emphasis that moves toward the applied, practical, and spiritual realities of Christian thought.

Agreeing with Sayer, Meilaender emphasises the integrative nature of Lewis’ spiritual theology, suggesting that Lewis’ “manner of thinking theologically seems itself to be consistent with the matter of his theology.”¹⁴⁴ Though *Mere Christianity* sets out to

¹³⁷ Lewis, MC, 155.

¹³⁸ Sayer, *Jack*, 280.

¹³⁹ Lewis, MC, 226-227.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 161.

¹⁴¹ Rigney, *Christian Life*, ch. 3.

¹⁴² Lewis, MC, 162-163.

¹⁴³ Watson, *Critical Essays*, 2.

¹⁴⁴ Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 241.

clarify Christian doctrine and correct misunderstandings of historic doctrine, the thrust of the work is not a project of doctrinal precision but his stated goal of drawing people into what he calls *zoe*, spiritual life.¹⁴⁵ *Mere Christianity* begins with philosophical speculation on the existence of God, moves through clarifications of what Christians believe, and closes with Lewis' teaching on spiritual life, defined above as the giving up self to God and thus receiving a new self, the real self. This cruciform concept of what I will below call "Divine Possibility" is the substance of what Lewis describes as spiritual life in *Mere Christianity*.

While there are more layers of complexity in his thought,¹⁴⁶ Lewis argues that *zoe* is, in essence, uncreated spiritual life "which is in God from all eternity, and which made the whole natural universe."¹⁴⁷ That *zoe* is then given to humans, thus accentuating the *bios* (natural life) reality of human life and consequently filling out or fulfilling our humanity. Thinking of the statues in the Pygmalion myth, a *bios* creature transforms into a *zoe* creature as stone becomes living flesh.¹⁴⁸ This Pinocchio-like transformation, begun in the giving up of self, is about being "caught up into the higher kinds of life" and "being pulled into God, by God, while still remaining" oneself.¹⁴⁹ Jensen defines *zoe* as the "divine and eternal life" that believers "share in the transforming power of Christ."¹⁵⁰ In his letters, Lewis calls *zoe* a resurrection life¹⁵¹ and links it with the cruciform principle in *Miracles*.¹⁵²

Zoe is thus for Lewis the "absolutely Supernatural life which no creature can be given simply by being created but which every rational creature can have by voluntarily

¹⁴⁵ Lewis, MC, 159, 163, 177, 178, 189, 221. Lewis transliterates *zoe* and *bios* from the Greek ζωή and βίος, which shade in the direction that Lewis uses them in the early Christian Greco-Roman world, though Lewis draws a finer distinction. The distinction is largely for illustrative purposes, and Lewis no doubt hopes his readers will connect the words to popular terms like biology and zoology. See also Lewis' chapter on "Life" in *Studies in Words*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 269-305. Lewis uses *zoe* in *Miracles*, and the term is perhaps more technically a subset of "spiritual life" as Lewis does not here use *zoe* to describe the life of Christian discipleship (though he does not deny that possibility).

¹⁴⁶ Though Lewis clarifies his thought in, *Miracles*, 171-196, Fiddes is correct that Lewis' distinction between biological life and spiritual life is overdrawn, especially when pressed to ultimate conclusions, "On Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, ed. Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 95-97. Lewis also clarifies the meaning of the words "spirit" and "spiritual" for his purposes in *Miracles*, 203-207.

¹⁴⁷ Lewis, MC, 159.

¹⁴⁸ See Fiddes, "On Theology," 93.

¹⁴⁹ Lewis, MC, 163, 177. Pressing his *bios-zoe* metaphor too far, Lewis uses the inelegant image of "infection" to talk about how we get spiritual life.

¹⁵⁰ Jensen, "Thick Christianity," 22.

¹⁵¹ CLIII 20.

¹⁵² Lewis, *Miracles*, 205.

surrendering itself to the life of Christ,”¹⁵³ which is how he believes “devotional writers talk of the ‘spiritual life.’”¹⁵⁴ In practical matters, throughout his essays, books, and letters, Lewis uses “spiritual life” to describe the development of a culture of the mind and heart—including, from an upside-down perspective I explore in chapter six, the (anti)theological treatise, *The Screwtape Letters*, which is about the “various methods of corrupting ... spiritual life.”¹⁵⁵ The mundane realities of eating and sleeping, relationships and ambitions, are the raw materials of the spiritual life.¹⁵⁶ In a similar vein, Lewis argues in *Letters to Malcolm* that the purpose of petitionary prayer is not to get things done through God, but to attend to the nature of our spiritual lives—the real concern of that late-in-life book.¹⁵⁷

While there are critiques about Lewis’ ecclesiology,¹⁵⁸ it is impossible to read *The Four Loves*, *The Great Divorce*, or any of the Narnian adventures, and miss how important mutuality and friendship is to spiritual life. Within that communal life on the way, Lewis argues that whatever our axiological assessment is of people—and he believes that individuals are immortals, possible gods and goddesses,¹⁵⁹ individuals of inestimable worth¹⁶⁰—our *lived* reality as saints and sinners is diverse, complex, and often problematic. Communal life, particularly the diverse life of the church, ultimately “gets you out of your solitary conceit”¹⁶¹ and expands the believer’s vision of possibility.¹⁶² As such, Meilaender can draw together Lewis’ entire social thought, including his understanding of the complex matrices of hierarchy in real life and his love for diversity, into a cohesive argument that all

¹⁵³ Ibid, 205.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 205.

¹⁵⁵ Lewis, *Screwtape*, 141.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 100.

¹⁵⁷ See Lewis, *Malcolm*, 75, 144-148. Further see Marjorie Lamp Mead, “Letters to Malcolm: C.S. Lewis on Prayer,” in *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy: Volume 3: Apologist, Philosopher, and Theologian*, ed. Bruce L. Edwards (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 209-235.

¹⁵⁸ In a response to a perceived weakness of C.S. Lewis on ecclesiology, a recent Festschrift in honour of Walter Hooper examines *C.S. Lewis and the Church*, showing more complexity than is immediately evident in his nonfiction, Judith E. Wolfe and Brendan N. Wolfe, eds., *C.S. Lewis and the Church: Essays in Honour of Walter Hooper* (New York: T&T Clark, 2012). Though the volume is focussed upon Lewis’ idea of the relations of the denominations, see Michael Ward. “The Church in C.S. Lewis’ Fiction,” 67-89.

¹⁵⁹ C.S. Lewis, “The Weight of Glory,” in *The Weight of Glory, and Other Addresses* (New York: HarperOne, 2000), 45.

¹⁶⁰ Lewis, MC, 74-75.

¹⁶¹ C.S. Lewis, “Answers to Questions on Christianity,” in *God in the Dark: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 62.

¹⁶² Ibid, 62.

“human beings are made for life in community with God (and, thereby, with one another).”¹⁶³ The “other” for Lewis has the integral role of drawing us out of ourselves.

Functionally, even in his distinction between self and other and his discussion of *bios* and *zoe*, Lewis tends to collapse binaries—a fact about Lewis that I use to close this thesis. Indeed, Lewis agrees with Dante and *The Imitation of Christ* that a principle of the spiritual life is “*summum non stat sine infimo*,” the highest never stands without the lowest.¹⁶⁴ These higher and lower realities never live in contradistinction: there is “no essential quarrel between the spiritual life and the human activities.”¹⁶⁵ Indeed, though there is a contrast between *bios* and *zoe*, “Christianity does not simply replace our natural life and substitute a new one.”¹⁶⁶ The new life is the true self, for all Christian life is integrated; within “our spiritual life all the elements of our natural life recur.”¹⁶⁷ The universal principle of *zoe* is that a surrendered mundane reality is taken up into spiritual reality—what Meilaender calls “the restoration of true creatureliness,” not merely as an eschatological hope but a lived reality.¹⁶⁸ The surrender is critical, for we will discover that according to the Logic of Cruciformity laid out in chapter three, there are “all sorts of things in our own spiritual life where a thing has to be killed, and broken, in order that it may then become bright, and strong, and splendid.”¹⁶⁹ Lewis evokes another image of transformation to suggest the kind of movement from *bios* to *zoe*. Lewis asks us to imagine a two-dimensional figure that can understand that it is flat in a three-dimensional world, even if that understanding comes in a “dim and confused way.”¹⁷⁰ *Zoe* transforms us from two-dimensionality to the realm of

¹⁶³ Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 2.

¹⁶⁴ C.S. Lewis, “Imagery in the Last Eleven Cantos of Dante’s ‘Comedy,’” in *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, ed. by Walter Hooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 92, referencing Thomas à Kempis, *Of the Imitation of Christ* (Toronto: Thomas Nelson and Sons, nd.), 90-92.

¹⁶⁵ C.S. Lewis, “Learning in War-Time,” in *Fern-seed and Elephants*, ed. Walter Hooper (Glasgow: Fontana Books, 1975), 55.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 54.

¹⁶⁷ See Lewis’ sermon “Transposition,” preached on the feast of Pentecost, 28 May 1944, Mansfield College, Oxford, later printed in *The Weight of Glory*, 104. Each of Lewis’ sermons is theologically weighty, but also personally integrative as each turns to a particular aspect of Christian life. “Transposition” is about attending to *zoe* first so that it transforms the *bios*: “Everything is different when you approach the Transposition from above, as we all do in the case of emotion and sensation or of the three-dimensional world and pictures, and as the spiritual man does in the case we are considering,” 105.

¹⁶⁸ Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 171.

¹⁶⁹ Lewis, “The Grand Miracle,” 82.

¹⁷⁰ Lewis, “Transposition,” 106.

three dimensions—transforming us from “in-animation to animation” as David Russell Mosley calls it¹⁷¹—and transforming the lived experience of the believer.

While consistently turning to praxeological dimensions of the Christian life, Lewis is not anti-intellectual or anti-theological. Proper belief, Lewis argues, is healthy for spiritual life.¹⁷² While it is true that “the spiritual life transcends both intelligence and morality,” Lewis suspects that “it transcends them as poetry transcends grammar, and does not merely exclude them as algebra excludes grammar.”¹⁷³ Instead, it is in the spiritual life where “we touch upon the very central region where all doubts about our religion live,” the idea that our lives may be a pale substitute for something much richer and deeper than we can touch.¹⁷⁴ Jong-Tae Lee argues throughout his entire project that “Lewis closely links imaginative life to spiritual life,”¹⁷⁵ suggesting that reading itself can be a kind of *askesis* or spiritual exercise.¹⁷⁶ Art and myth in Lewis were of such a central place that he called them “an image of the spiritual life.”¹⁷⁷

These examples of “spiritual life” in Lewis’ writing inform the degree to which lived experience is central to Lewis’ thought, even in texts that work in doctrine and speculative thought. They also demonstrate briefly why *Mere Christianity*, ostensibly a book of apologetics, sharpens to a spiritual theological point as it begins with philosophy and ends with the transformative realities of living, living fully and well. Lewis’ non-systematic

¹⁷¹ David Russell Mosley, *Being Deified: Poetry and Fantasy on the Path to God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), xl.

¹⁷² See Lewis, *Miracles*, 146-147.

¹⁷³ Lewis, “Christian Reunion,” 21.

¹⁷⁴ C.S. Lewis, “Religion: Reality or Substitute?” in *Christian Reflections*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 37; C.S. Lewis, “The Anthropological Approach,” in *Selected Literary Essays*, ed. Walter Hooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 308. See Lewis, TWHF, 110-112.

¹⁷⁵ Jong-Tae Lee, “‘Into the Region of Awe’: C.S. Lewis, Wonder and the Re-Enchantment of the World” (PhD dissertation, Graduate Theological Union, 2015), 219.

¹⁷⁶ C.S. Lewis, “On Three Ways of Writing for Children,” in *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*, ed. Walter Hooper (New York: Harvest, 1994), 30.

¹⁷⁷ Quoted from Lewis’ “Great War” document, *Clivi Hamiltonis Summae Metaphysices Contra Anthroposophos* in Barkman, *Philosophical Christianity*, 148. For a conversation about Lewis’ view of the spiritual life in his pre-theistic idealist period, see also the text and introduction to Norbert Feinendegen and Arend Smilde, “The ‘Great War’ of Owen Barfield and C.S. Lewis: Philosophical Writings 1927-1930,” *Inklings Studies Supplement 1* (2015). This imaginative emphasis on spiritual life was so important that Lewis even drew it into his literary inquiry. See Lewis, “The Vision of John Bunyan,” in *Selected Literary Essays*, ed. Walter Hooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 146-147, on Bunyan’s literal, direct, present, and lifelong “preoccupation with the spiritual life.” See comments on the spiritual life in Donne (C.S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 53), Dante (*Preface*, 111), Milton (*Preface*, 128), as well as in numerous writers on spirituality in the sixteenth century (Lewis, OHEL, 37). See Jacobs, *Narnian*, 214.

theological project has one thing in common across the great diversity of his writing: Lewis is insistent on the turn from theological abstractions to living Christianly, what he calls *zoe* or spiritual life. In Peterson's estimation, then, Lewis is a spiritual theologian, particularly in death-and-resurrection motifs that penetrate in his work. I will conclude this chapter with a brief experiment that models the turn toward spiritual theology by turning from structured, systematic questions of atonement theory to the particular question of what it means to live the cross event in the experimental fiction of Narnia.

An Experiment in Narnia: From Atonement Theory to Spiritual Theology

C.S. Lewis and The Cross Event

I noted in chapter one that Anna Fisk uses the Narnian Stone Table sacrifice as a symbol for the infusive nature of the theory of penal substitutionary atonement. C.S. Lewis, however, had some critical doubts about this approach to the work of the cross. Following his famous presentation of the trilemma in *Mere Christianity*—that Jesus was either a liar, a lunatic, or the lord he claimed to be—Lewis turns to the response that believers must make. In doing so he addresses atonement theory, admitting that the important historical theory of penal substitutionary atonement—central to fundamentalists and essential to Evangelicals¹⁷⁸—no longer seems to him “quite so immoral and so silly as it used to.”¹⁷⁹ Lewis wants to assert that a particular theory of atonement is not Christianity itself. Instead, atonement is the “central” belief “that Christ's death has somehow put us right with God and given us a fresh start.”¹⁸⁰ Theories on how this happens may vary, but Christians agree that it works. As a map is available to the wanderer to find the country but not to replace it,

¹⁷⁸ See Jaroslav Pelikan, “Fundamentalism and/or Orthodoxy? Toward an Understanding of the Fundamentalist Phenomenon,” in *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon: A View from Within, A Response from Without*, ed. Norman J. Cohen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 4-5; 12-14. Responses by George M. Marsden (pp. 22-37) and Clark H. Pinnock (pp. 38-55) prepare for Bebbington's broader evangelical category of “crucicentrism”; see David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 2. There are attempts to challenge the concept of penal substitution in evangelicalism, e.g., Steve Chalke and Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004). Chalke and Mann use Lewis as a resource throughout their book. For a British-centred history and debate of atonement theories in evangelicalism, see Derek Tidball, David Hilborn, and Justin Thacker, eds., *The Atonement Debate: Papers From The London Symposium On The Theology Of Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), esp. the chapter by Ian Randall, “‘Live Much Under the Shadow of the Cross’: Atonement and Evangelical Spirituality,” 293-312.

¹⁷⁹ Lewis, MC, 54.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 54.

so for Lewis, theories of atonement are meant to help people understand the cross event but not to usurp the space of the cross itself. For what took place on the cross is “infinitely more important than any explanations that theologians have produced.”¹⁸¹

Writing catechetically to conservative Evangelicals, Rigney claims that Lewis is “cagey” and “dismissive” on penal substitutionary atonement—a “stumbling block to many readers.”¹⁸² Though Rigney agrees with Lewis’ positive statements about atonement, he argues that Lewis is reductive, crude, and misleading, creating a “caricature of the doctrine” he can easily dismiss.¹⁸³ In providing traditionally structured systematic theology of Lewis’ thought from a similar perspective, Williams argues that Lewis fails “to give adequate weight to those explanations of the atonement actually taught by Scripture”¹⁸⁴—which for Williams is inadequate attention to penal substitutionary theory. From a Lutheran perspective, Steven Paul Mueller argues that although Lewis is a relatively orthodox Christian, he does offer a challenge to traditional Christology concerning atonement theories. Mueller concludes that “what Lewis finds objectionable is a particularly narrow expression of the Anselmic Theory of the Atonement,” and that Lewis does not seem to have properly understood the theory.¹⁸⁵

Though Lewis was dismissive of atonement theory, as Jacobs notes, puzzling out *some* idea of the atonement was the last intellectual hurdle he had to cross on his path to Christian faith.¹⁸⁶ Moreover, he captured the general idea in the Stone Table moment in Narnia. Williams is certainly correct when he says that “Lewis was often better at portraying the atonement than explaining it.”¹⁸⁷ Analyses of what that narrative account of atonement really means differ. Fiddes argues that Lewis “is impressed by the idea of Christ as the

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 54. For further treatments about Lewis’ approach to theology, see esp. letters 16-18 of *Malcolm* and his essays, “Is Theology Poetry,” in *The Weight of Glory, and Other Addresses* (New York: HarperOne, 2000), 91-116; and “The Language of Religion,” in *Christian Reflections*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 129-141.

¹⁸² Rigney, *Christian Life*, 46-47; ch. 3 is devoted to Christology. Rigney is part of the Gospel Coalition, which holds penal substitutionary atonement in a privileged place among atonement theories in its confessional statement.

¹⁸³ Rigney, *Christian Life*, 60.

¹⁸⁴ Williams, *Deeper Magic*, 171. The critique is predictable given the history of contemporary evangelicalism penal substitutionary atonement as a creedal centrepiece of their understanding of the effective result of the cross event. There are attempts to challenge the concept of penal substitution in evangelicalism

¹⁸⁵ Steven Paul Mueller, “Christology in the Writings of C.S. Lewis: a Lutheran’s Evaluation” (PhD Thesis, University of Durham, 1997), 171.

¹⁸⁶ *Narnian*, 148-150. See also Cassidy, “Risk,” 105.

¹⁸⁷ Williams, *Deeper Magic*, 157.

perfect penitent.”¹⁸⁸ The Incarnation for Lewis is thus “the plunging of God into human life” that “is interpreted as empathy which has a transforming effect” in the lives of believers.¹⁸⁹ Adam James Barkman concludes that Lewis “wavered unconcernedly between the Anselmian model and the Christus Victor model.”¹⁹⁰ Indeed, Edith Humphrey argues that reading these theories together is ideal rather than problematic: “These ways of gesturing at God’s mysterious actions on our behalf are complementary, not mutually exclusive alternatives: and all of them require us to look into the darkness.”¹⁹¹ Richard Sturch notes that “the fact of the substitutionary death is indisputable,”¹⁹² and proposes that Lewis’ view is more Abelardian than Anselmic—though he suggests Charles Williams as a source for Lewis’ substitution theory.¹⁹³ Mueller agrees with Sturch that Lewis “delineates the substitutionary death of Christ,” particularly in *Miracles*.¹⁹⁴ Notably, the only Anselmic element missing in Lewis’ thought is the idea of the “payment” made to God. It is even evident in the narrative that Aslan satisfies the deep magic of the world, an echo of the satisfaction of God’s justice in the penal substitutionary theory.

There are other readings of Lewis’ emergent narrative atonement thought. Mueller outlines Lewis’ thought according to the *Christus Victor* model.¹⁹⁵ Andrew Walker argues that Lewis’ stone table moment is not a demonstration of Penal Substitution, but a “clear echo of the ransom theory ... in which the devil is seen as holding rights over the human world because of the fall”¹⁹⁶—a “good myth” that Lewis would have enjoyed encoding into his own “divine drama of salvation.”¹⁹⁷ It is doubtful that Lewis could have fully articulated either the Ransom theory that Walker presents or Mueller’s approach to *Christus Victor* theory, though he had read about the latter. To use Screwtape’s language, one wonders if

¹⁸⁸ “On Theology,” 98.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 99.

¹⁹⁰ “The Philosophical Christianity of C.S. Lewis: Its Sources, Content and Formation” (PhD Dissertation, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2009), 171. See Charles Taliaferro and Rachel Traugher, “The Atonement in Narnia,” in *The Chronicles of Narnia and Philosophy: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, ed. Gregory Bassham and Jerry L. Walls (Chicago: Open Court, 2005), 245-259.

¹⁹¹ Humphrey, *Further Up and Further In*, 2434-2435.

¹⁹² Richard Sturch, *Four Christian Fantasists: A Study of the Fantastic Writings of George MacDonald, Charles Williams, C.S. Lewis, and J.R.R. Tolkien* (Zurich: Walking Tree Publishers, 2001), 36.

¹⁹³ *Ibid*, 58-59.

¹⁹⁴ Mueller, “Christology,” 174-175.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 173-174.

¹⁹⁶ Andrew Walker, “Under the Russian Cross: A Research Note on C.S. Lewis and the Eastern Orthodox Church,” in *A Christian for All Christians: Essays in Honour of C.S. Lewis*, ed. Andrew Walker and James Patrick (Toronto: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), 64.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 64-65.

Lewis could speak of the Anselmic Penal Substitutionary theory he rejected “in any form which would hold water for five minutes.”¹⁹⁸

Whatever limitations Lewis may have had, the one area that scholars leave largely unexplored, perhaps because of reductionism on their own part, is the area of example theories. Mueller is not correct when he says that while “Lewis frequently views Christ as example, he is consistently unwilling to make the exemplary role of Christ the centre of His work.”¹⁹⁹ By contrast, Michael Christensen argues that the “meaning of Christ’s death for Lewis is in its exemplary demonstration of divine repentance. Christ died on the cross to show us how we are to die to our fallen natural selves.”²⁰⁰ Mueller is correct that Lewis does not lean on the “Abelardian theory of the atonement [as it] considers Christ's chief work to have been being an example to humanity.”²⁰¹ But Mueller makes a false distinction when he states that, for Lewis, “Christ was an example, but He was not merely an example.”²⁰² Mueller is correct that Lewis avoided reductive explanations of Christ as teacher or example, but centrality does not necessarily mean the exclusion of all other ideas. At the centre of Lewis’ conversion and his teaching on Christ is the believer’s call to *imitatio Christi* that is complementary to the salvific work of Christ on the cross. At the heart of Lewis’ gospel is the divine pattern of the cross event that runs through the arteries of his entire corpus.

However, does not the critique of Lewis’ approach to theories of atonement miss a crucial detail in Lewis’ work? In noting that Lewis is strong in exemplar or *imitatio Christi* approaches to the atonement, why do the authors not then turn with curiosity to how that Christ-model approach runs through Lewis’ work? In turning from systematic questions to

¹⁹⁸ Lewis, *Screwtape*, 84. Indeed, it is difficult to know precisely what Lewis was rejecting in penal substitutionary atonement. It may have been the personalising nature of the satisfaction as popularly understood, so that Christ protects us from the punishment of God, or some other feeling of distaste. Chad Walsh notes that contrary to the Anselmic model, it is not the Emperor Over the Sea or Aslan who is satisfied by the sacrifice, but “the economy of the divine Magic,” Chad Walsh, *The Literary Legacy of C.S. Lewis* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), 142. It is noteworthy that Aslan’s sacrifice, though no doubt lacking sophistication, meets John R.W. Stott’s “quadrilateral” of basic ideas about the atonement that Christians share: 1) Christ died for us; 2) Christ died for us that he might bring us to God; 3) Christ died for our sins; and 4) Christ died our death, *The Cross of Christ*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 80-81. Aslan voluntarily dies in the place of Edmund, taking Edmund’s death upon himself and thus bringing reconciliation to Edmund’s own self and beginning the process of turning death backwards in Narnia.

¹⁹⁹ Mueller, “Christology,” 171.

²⁰⁰ Michael J. Christensen, *C.S. Lewis on Scripture: His Thoughts on the Nature of Biblical Inspiration, the Role of Revelation and the Question of Inerrancy* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1979), 33.

²⁰¹ Mueller, “Christology,” 171.

²⁰² *Ibid*, 171.

Peterson's idea of spirituality, "living, living fully and well," what do we see in Lewis' understanding of Christology about spiritual life?

A spiritual theological approach has immediate benefits, organically demonstrating that an *imitatio Christi* response to the cross event is not merely speculative theology, but the right question to ask of Lewis' thought. This was precisely Lewis' point in *Mere Christianity*. In Lewis' fiction, Ward is correct that though it is "dramatically central," the "sacrifice in *The Lion* is a centrality in terms of plot and atmosphere, not in terms of its particular theology of atonement."²⁰³ Indeed, Ward notes that atonement theology cannot, in Lewis' view, be experienced "from the outside, determining scientifically its means of operation, the relative quantities of human and divine action, the precise calibration of the juridical element."²⁰⁴ By definition, such theory in a Lewisian framework must be approached in terms of spiritual theology.

Moreover, the imagistic resonances of *Christus Victor*, Anselmic substitution, penitential, and ransom theories can invest model-exemplar-*imitatio* models with richer theological imagery for spiritual life. Mueller, Williams, and Rigney are not without consideration of Christian discipleship. Mueller notes that when Lewis "considers the person and work of Christ" he "readily makes application to the lives of his readers."²⁰⁵ Williams turns to the "Application of the Atonement," instinctively seeing the spiritual theological import of Lewis' work as he is helpful in "the dynamic relations between grace, faith, and works."²⁰⁶ Rigney's work turns after his chapter critiquing Lewis' view of atonement to conversations behind practical application and spiritual direction. In fixating on atonement precision, however, these scholars do not make a sufficient link between Christ's work and the Christ life as it is fused together in Lewis' thinking. Yet Lewis argues that *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is about Crucifixion and Resurrection.²⁰⁷ Though not less than the turning point in the history of salvation, Lewis' reading of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, and the cruciform patterns already demonstrated in his work, argue that the

²⁰³ *Planet Narnia*, 70.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 70.

²⁰⁵ Mueller, "Christology," 138.

²⁰⁶ Williams, *Deeper Magic*, 167.

²⁰⁷ CLIII 1244-1245.

mytho-historical reality²⁰⁸ of Easter weekend is also a pattern of Christian living.²⁰⁹ A brief experiment will be helpful, then, to both demonstrate the kind of shift in perspective that spiritual theology provides and to bring us nearer to the practical, personal elements of explorations in spirituality. An experiment that picks up where Mueller, Rigney, and Williams leave off can at the same time highlight the theology of cruciformity that I am using as a primary guide for enquiry. To do so we will focus on C.S. Lewis' most famous work of fiction, the Aslanic sacrifice in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, and then move out briefly to characters in other parts of the Narniad.

Aslanic Sacrifice as Imitation Motif

Hapless Edmund, a toady and bully who lacks the courage or integrity to support Lucy as she tells the impossible story of a wardrobe gateway to another world, soon finds himself a miserable thrall in the clutches of the White Witch, Jadis. In what Filmer calls, "clownish ineptitude,"²¹⁰ Edmund betrays the league of loyal Narnian creatures. Jadis demands the traitor's blood price that she is due according to the deep magic of that world, inscribed on the Stone Table.²¹¹ Edmund is thus enslaved twice to sin, first in succumbing to temptation and then in his life's forfeiture for treachery. Following a long parlay between Jadis and Aslan, Edmund's life is spared.

That night, empathetic Lucy and Susan walk with Aslan as he slips away to the Stone Table. They do not know that Aslan's midnight wanderings are his *Via Dolorosa*, his journey to Mount Doom, his way of grief. In joining him, the sisters become St Veronica and Samwise Gamgee both, comforting and strengthening Aslan as he returns to the Stone Table to take Edmund's place. As Lucy and Susan crouch in the bushes with tear-stained faces shining in the moonlight, we are not told about the moment they realise that the price for Edmund's treachery was Aslan's own life. Edmund's betrayal is implicated in magic woven

²⁰⁸ "The heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact. The old myth of the Dying God, without ceasing to be myth, comes down from the heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history. It happens—at a particular date, in a particular place, followed by definable historical consequences," C.S. Lewis, "Myth Became Fact" in *God in the Dark: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 66.

²⁰⁹ Monika Hilder notes the paradigmatic nature of Aslan's self-sacrifice of a medieval feminine spiritual hero, calling it the real battle of LWW where Aslan patterns the transformative feature that is the focus of Hilder's work, the transformation from the classical masculine hero to the female spiritual that is the path of each Narnian character (to which we return in chapter six); see *Feminine Ethos*, esp. 28-30.

²¹⁰ *Mask and Mirror*, 45.

²¹¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (London: Fontana Lions, 1980), 128-129.

into the very fabric of the speculative universe of Narnia. Here, at the Stone Table, Aslan is beaten, humiliated, and bound, sacrificing himself for Edmund so that the deep magic is satisfied in death.

With fingers numb from the pre-dawn cool, Lucy and Susan creep from their hiding place with tear-stained cheeks and do their best to clean the blood and foam from Aslan's face. As the sun rises "they heard from behind them a loud noise—a great cracking, deafening noise as if a giant had broken a giant's plate."²¹² At that moment, the deeper magic of Narnia has broken into a new age. The Stone Table is riven as Aslan is raised to life. Jadis knew the deep Narnian magic that she invoked. What she failed to divine was that there was a deeper magic that grounds all other principles of Narnia, a principle of self-sacrifice, "that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards."²¹³ At this moment, the traitor's crime is paid for, and Narnia begins to turn. Death is broken, Aslan is raised, and Jadis' treachery begins to dissolve. Walsh is right that "what Lewis dramatizes is not simply the price [of sacrifice] but the glory of the price, as new life is released into a redeemed world."²¹⁴ Thinking Christologically, this scene is a faithful capturing of Lewis' popular-level comments about the atonement, namely that Christ died in our place thus disabling death, washing sins, putting us right with God, and giving us a fresh start.²¹⁵ Seen from this perspective, the theologians are also correct in noting that the substitution element that Lewis rejected in *Mere Christianity* is clearly present in "the Passion and Resurrection of Aslan" that is the climax of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.²¹⁶

However, thinking simultaneously of our spiritual theological approach—Peterson's consideration of what it means to live, live fully and well—and of our thematic line of enquiry—Gorman's cross-shaped theology of self-surrender—can we read this passage differently? After all, Lewis wants to distance himself from Anselmic penal substitutionary approaches and favours example theories of the atonement. If we look to another map, another image of the atonement, tuning ourselves to the imitation motifs within the cross

²¹² Ibid, 146.

²¹³ Ibid, 148.

²¹⁴ Walsh, *Literary Legacy*, 142.

²¹⁵ Lewis, MC, 54-55.

²¹⁶ Walsh, *Literary Legacy*, 142.

event, can we discern something like an *imitatio Leonis* within the Chronicles of Narnia? Paralleling St Paul in Galatians 2:20, this tilt means considering what it would mean for those loyal to Aslan to say, “I am put to death on the Stone Table with Aslan. Now I no longer live, but Aslan lives in me.” To do so, we will very briefly consider the cross-shaped pattern of self-death and the rebirth of the self in some of the characters of Narnia.

To begin, we will follow Bowen as he points to a critical aspect in Edmund’s life before his treachery: Edmund “kept on thinking that the others were taking no notice of him and trying to give him the cold shoulder.”²¹⁷ Bowen notes how wrapped up Edmund is in himself, and that this self-absorption creates distance with his siblings and leads to an ill-conceived allegiance bound up with his desire to rule over them.²¹⁸ Besides Edmund’s disastrous move to prop up a tyrant to serve his own self-interest, his treachery creates deep suffering for himself. In a parallel to Aslan’s own sorrowful march to the Stone Table, Edmund’s captive flight leaves him cold, hungry, wet, frightened, and exhausted under Jadis’ whip. His miserable treatment even leads him to wish for the company of the siblings he has betrayed. When Jadis turns some poor forest creatures to stone for celebrating Christmas, “Edmund for the first time in this story felt sorry for someone besides himself.”²¹⁹ During the torturous journey on foot, Edmund begins to awaken to the sounds of nature, to the long-awaited shifting of seasons.

When Edmund is finally rescued and brought to Aslan, their conversation is kept from the reader. Whatever it was, Edmund never forgot it and, Lindskoog argues, “Edmund was a different person.”²²⁰ Presently the witch arrives to claim Edmund as her own based on the principles of deep magic. As the Witch accuses Edmund of his treachery, intriguingly, this is the moment where we see what essential change has come over Edmund. It is not merely that he is sorry for treachery or simply that his allegiance is restored; Edmund feels nothing at the witch’s accusation before Aslan, for, “Edmund had got past thinking about himself.... He just went on looking at Aslan.”²²¹ The commentaries on Narnia do not all capture this moment of self-loss. For example, Vaus is correct that trust is an element in Edmund’s experience as it echoes the Christian experience: “The important thing is for

²¹⁷ Lewis, LWW, 82. See Bowen, *Spirituality of Narnia*, 63-68.

²¹⁸ See Filmer, *Mask and Mirror*, 29.

²¹⁹ Lewis, LWW, 107.

²²⁰ Lindskoog, *Lion of Judah*, 1277.

²²¹ Lewis, LWW, 128.

Edmund to trust in what Aslan does for him.”²²² However, Vaus has missed an important element. The vital thing is not merely to trust but an entire loss of self, a surrender of self to God as Christ has done on the cross. While in many ways a gift to Christian spirituality, the Anglo-American call to “just trust in Jesus” is such a thin reality next to the full embodiment of the Paschal Mystery in cruciform spiritual theology. This laying down of our lives as we see it in Edmund’s self-forgetfulness is the Aslanic principle, the Stone Table self-sacrifice modelled in the Narnian principle of moral choice: mortification of the flesh played out in a children’s tale.

Most of the human characters in Narnia similarly come to a point where they must give up their selves as Aslan did—not usually as an exchange for someone else’s crime but because something in the character needs to be mortified so it may be reborn. In *Prince Caspian*, High King Peter admits that “I’ve been leading them wrong ever since we started.”²²³ Brown reminds us that in “a lesson that will take him two books to fully learn,”²²⁴ in order to achieve true leadership Peter must, in fact, give up his status as high king and oldest sibling so that he can trust Lucy’s perspicuity and discernment. As with Edmund’s desire to be first, Peter’s slowness to learn the lesson costs them dearly and threatens the balance in a Narnian civil war. At the close of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, King Caspian discovers that kingship requires a loss of self. He is not his own person and must lay down his deepest wish, to see the end of the world. In *The Silver Chair*, Jill Pole must surrender her near-deadly desire to serve her own needs for attention or comfort. Bree in *The Horse and His Boy* must lose his pride in being a Narnian war horse rather than a regular workhorse. Digory Kirke makes a terrible error in *The Magician’s Nephew*, introducing great evil to a newborn world. The greatest challenge for Digory, however, is for him to give up what he wants the most: the healing of his dying mother. Jacobs is right that “the key moment in the book comes when Digory is poised agonisingly between two forms of love, one of which would eventually lead to destructive self-gratification, the other to joyful obedience and real newness of life.”²²⁵ It is a terrifying, gut-wrenching sacrifice, yet

²²² Vaus, *Hidden Story*, 32. Vaus is correct in noting that Edmund lacks a full understanding of what Aslan is about to do, and yet the sacrifice is still efficacious.

²²³ C.S. Lewis, *Prince Caspian* (London: Fontana Lions, 1980), 133.

²²⁴ Devin Brown, *Inside Prince Caspian: A Guide to Exploring the Return to Narnia* (Grand Rapids: BakerBooks, 2008), 142.

²²⁵ Alan Jacobs, “The Chronicles of Narnia,” in *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, eds Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 277.

Hilder observes that “Digory fully surrenders to Aslan’s quiet authority.” As a result, he “receives the Lion’s strength and courage to fulfill the task” that “will protect Narnia from the Witch for years to come.”²²⁶

When these intimate struggles are laid down, when the character has died to herself or himself, then there is a new life born out of the self-death. Peter’s leadership is proven true, and he stands in his greatest moment as a true king of Narnia. Through successive lessons that challenge Jill’s self-interest, we see her character win through in *The Silver Chair* and finally awaken to greatness in *The Last Battle* as a stellar marksman, a competent woodsman, and a fierce friend who shows great wisdom in the face of adversity. As Hilder argues, Jill’s putting aside of self in Narnia is the pattern of all the heroes: “In their willingness to surrender their lives for Aslan and truth, the friends also experience the beauty of Narnia,”²²⁷ the living heaven of peace and joy. Digory is bound up with what is almost universally recognised as one of the most personal stories for Lewis, the healing of a sick mother.²²⁸ Digory “hungered and thirsted and wept” for the life-giving apple,²²⁹ but he chooses instead to surrender it to Aslan, providing a millennium of protection for Narnia and healing for his mother—not to mention his own growth in wisdom.²³⁰

And Edmund, of course, is born anew. He fights well in the fields of battle and suffers a grave wound when he confronts his former captor, Jadis. His reborn character is shown in other critical points throughout the series. In *Prince Caspian*, despite his doubt and an instinctive sexism that is not fully reformed in him,²³¹ Edmund trusts Lucy as their leader and is proven a valiant and wise friend throughout the book. In *The Horse and His Boy*, Edmund saves the life of the fool-prince Rabadash who wages an unprovoked war, reminding the council obliquely of his own story by saying that “even a traitor may mend. I have known

²²⁶ Hilder, *Feminine Ethos*, 132.

²²⁷ Ibid, 147.

²²⁸ Critics are correct to note that Digory’s mother receives the healing that Lewis prayed for but never received in his own childhood loss of his mother to cancer. See McGrath, *C.S. Lewis*, 23-24; Brown, *Life Observed*, 38-43; Ward, *Planet Narnia*, 165; Terry Lindvall, *Surprised by Laughter: The Comic World of C.S. Lewis* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996), 208; Louis Markos, *Lewis Agonistes: How C.S. Lewis Can Train Us to Wrestle With the Modern and Postmodern World* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2003), 1091-1010. Jacobs suggests the link but resists it: “It is tempting to say that Lewis gives to his character Digory what God would not give to young Jack. But then, in this world we always see what is taken away; what restoration awaits us, and the ones we love, we cannot yet see,” *Narnian*, 9.

²²⁹ C.S. Lewis, *The Magician’s Nephew* (London: Fontana Lions, 1980), 154.

²³⁰ Edith Humphrey is particularly strong in her analysis of what happens when someone “mis-plucks” the fruit, and the personal cost of Digory’s self-sacrifice, *Further Up and Further In*, 748-783.

²³¹ See Hilder, *Feminine Ethos*, 43, 50.

one that did.”²³² Edmund, with the other characters, discovers new life following the act of symbolic self-death. The characters set aside their besetting pride or deepest wish and find that new self is born from their self-death. Aslan is the pattern of self-death and resurrection,²³³ and the story of these characters is the Narnian cruciform principle for children.

Though scholars talk about surrender and new life at various points in their criticism of Narnia, theologian Alister McGrath is unique in that he specifically connects encounter with Aslan and the “raised anew” part of Lewis’ Pauline cruciformity: the necessity of putting to death our old selves and gaining new identity in our true individual resurrected selves. McGrath argues that “Lewis deftly shows how the stories of the individual children ... become shaped by the story of Aslan.” McGrath describes this new identity as becoming “part of the story of Aslan”—not as a lost identity or a negated story, but a tale that “has gained a sense of value and meaning” with “a new sense of identity and purpose.”²³⁴ What does this new identity mean for the characters of Narnia? It is not merely imitating Aslan in the manner of his life but specifically the need to imitate Aslan in the manner of his death. There are moments when one must lay down one’s life for the sake of others, as is the case with Peter offering to duel Miraz the Usurper to save Narnia from carnage, or Puddleglum as he defies the Green Witch. The pattern in Narnia, however, is that in the midst of the quest, heroes are faced with the very thing in their hearts that they must surrender, and in surrendering it they discover there is something greater for them. It is in this self-death that characters discover true self for, in the words of Cath Filmer-Davies, “submission and obedience to God” is “the only means by which a person can be truly individuated (that is,

²³² C.S. Lewis, *The Horse and His Boy* (London: Fontana Lions, 1980), 180.

²³³ A critical reader might argue that Aslan was killed and the act of sacrifice was hardly voluntary. The vicarious nature of his death negates this argument. For a fuller understanding of how both “Christ was killed” and “Christ died” are to be held together in theological conversation, see Stott, *Cross of Christ*, 58-78. Colin Manlove argues that Aslan is not like Christ in his sacrifice because Aslan willingly goes to the Stone Table while Christ asked for the cup to pass, *C.S. Lewis: His Literary Achievement* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1987), 163. Brown is certainly correct, however, that Manlove both underestimates Christ’s ultimate willingness to die and Aslan’s deep sadness on his journey, *Inside Narnia A Guide to Exploring The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (Grand Rapids: BakerBooks, 2005), 213-215.

²³⁴ Alister McGrath, *If I Had Lunch with C.S. Lewis: Exploring the Ideas of C.S. Lewis on the Meaning of Life* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2014), 73-74.

become what they have always been meant, in the Divine plan, to be).²³⁵ Ultimately, in Judith Wolfe’s phrase, we experience life “as a heavenly game of self-surrender.”²³⁶

Thus there is more than atonement theory and soteriology imaged in Aslan’s Stone Table sacrifice. Lewis believed his Aslanic creation was not an allegorical picture of Christ, but an imaginative supposal, exploring the implications of Christ’s incarnation in a world different than ours.²³⁷ Schakel is right that in seeking “biblical equivalents to every character and detail,” one may reduce the power of “Lewis’ mythic achievement.”²³⁸ Huttar goes further, reminding the reader that Aslan’s self-sacrifice is not a strict parallel of the cross, as Aslan dies for Edmund alone and not the entire world of Narnia.²³⁹ The atonement is a uniquely Terran reality, Huttar argues, but looking more universally Huttar notes the kind of shift in perspective that I am arguing for here:

The principle of voluntary self-sacrifice on another’s behalf, however, is one that is valued throughout the universe. Often it takes the form, in Narnian as well as in earthly myth, of a descent into the underworld, a journey to danger and death, to perform the rescue. Aslan, who submits silently to the Witch’s knife ... is only one among many in the Chronicles who enact this archetypal descent.²⁴⁰

Huttar then mentions the stories of various Narnian characters who must face their own “archetypal descent” of self-sacrifice. By turning to the spiritual theological principle, we can see the deeper mythic elements in Lewis’ work woven into lived experience. In doing so, I argue that we are meant to live as Aslan died, laying down our own lives and trusting the “deeper magic from before the dawn of time” for new life—not the loss of our individuality but its fulfilment and the discovery of our true selves.

²³⁵ Filmer-Davies, “C.S. Lewis,” 662.

²³⁶ Judith Wolfe, “On Power,” in *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, eds Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 177.

²³⁷ See CLIII 1004-1005.

²³⁸ Peter Schakel, *Imagination and the Arts in C.S. Lewis: Journeying to Narnia and Other Worlds* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 67-68.

²³⁹ It is worth noting, however, that in dying in Edmund’s stead the entire magical logic of Narnia changes and death starts working backwards, noting a universal, creational redemptive feature of the cross as we see in Paul’s “the whole creation has been groaning” passage (Rom 8:22-24, NRSV) and the recreation of all things in Rev 21-22.

²⁴⁰ Charles A. Huttar, “C.S. Lewis’s Narnia and the ‘Grand Design’” in *The Longing for a Form: Essays on the Fiction of C.S. Lewis*, ed. Peter J. Schakel (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1977), 131-132.

Conclusion

Following the pattern in Lewis' preface to *The Great Divorce*, I believe that Lewis' dream-vision is about decisions in everyday life rather than factual speculations about heaven. Likewise, the Stone Table, I argue, is more than just a question of atonement theory, a topic about which we discovered Lewis was ambivalent at best. This *imitatio Leonis* is what Lewis believes was the essential character of Christ's work on the cross. Without negating the redemptive quality of Christ's sacrifice, the aptly named Dr Ransom of Lewis' SciFi books "plays the role of Christ ... because in reality every real Christian is really called upon in some measure to enact Christ."²⁴¹ To live, live fully and well in Lewis' thought is to "enact Christ," to lay down dreams and doubt and desire to live in the "lion-strength" of Aslan.

This tilt of the head, a turn from systematic doctrinal analyses to the spiritual theological principle in the text, resonates with Lewis' two-ways-of-seeing epistemology. Moreover, this reorientation of our focus leads to fruitful and organic readings of Lewis' fiction. There are myriad lessons of life and morality and courage in Narnia and other parts of Lewis' fiction, as well as what Downing calls "down-to-earth advice on daily living."²⁴² But to the extent that Aslan's death and resurrection structure the entire Narniad, so the series is shot through with the cruciform principle of enacting that death and resurrection in spiritual life. In chapter three, then, we consider C.S. Lewis' Logic of Cruciformity, in both his nonfiction and his fiction, and discover how it clarifies and moves past Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ* for a fuller, more holistic biblical-theological narrative spirituality. Chapters four through six, then, work out the details of Lewis' storied cruciform spirituality, exploring the imagistic motifs that structure Lewis' Christian thought and offer possibilities for a hopeful, inversive spiritual life.

²⁴¹ CLIII 1004.

²⁴² Downing, *Region of Awe*, 12.

Ch. 3: “Die Before You Die”: C.S. Lewis’ Logic of Cruciformity

Introduction

Having established frameworks for thinking about Lewis as a spiritual theologian, and having examined questions of spirituality in Lewis’ work, we now turn to the question of C.S. Lewis’ narrative spirituality of Cruciformity that I argue is the central organising feature of Lewis’ Christian thought. Biblical theologian Michael Gorman is himself engaged in a similar turn to spiritual theology. After outlining Gorman’s narrative spirituality of the cross and its potential for providing clarity for C.S. Lewis scholarship, I propose a sixfold cross-shaped pattern of spiritual theology in Lewis’ nonfiction and fiction, a pattern that lies at the conceptual centre of Lewis’ spiritual theology. This “Logic of Cruciformity” is derived from his so-called apologetics trilogy, now considered as works about spiritual life. As *Mere Christianity* was the apologetics text that provides the model for chapter two, and *Miracles* supplies the guiding image for chapter four, in this chapter I use *The Problem of Pain* for the outline of Lewis’ Logic of Cruciformity. As I used an experiment in fiction in chapter two to test the possibilities of Lewis as a spiritual theologian, so I use an experiment in fiction here to test this Logic of Cruciformity. Three examples from Lewis’ fiction show how Cruciformity patterns Lewis’ narratives: the theological novella *The Great Divorce* (1945), the children’s fantasy *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952), and Lewis’ final novel, *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* (1956). As Lewis is offering an “imitation” motif spiritual theology, I will close this chapter with a short note about how Lewis clarifies and deepens Thomas à Kempis’ *Imitation of Christ* for his readers.¹

Michael Gorman as Conversation Partner for C.S. Lewis

Not merely a “crucified God” (so Bauckham, Luther, Moltmann, and Barth) but a “cruciform God,” God’s self-revelation on the cross shows that God is a self-sacrificing God. Gorman argues in *Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (2001) that St Paul is attuned to the fact that the cross is not merely the redemptive hinge of history but also the normative pattern for Christian spirituality. Discipleship is cross-shaped, so the believer’s life

¹ This chapter appears in an earlier form as Brenton D.G. Dickieson, ““Die Before You Die’: St. Paul’s Cruciformity in C.S. Lewis’s Narrative Spirituality,” in *Both Sides of the Wardrobe: C.S. Lewis, Theological Imagination, and Everyday Discipleship*, ed. Rob Fennell (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2015), 32-45.

echoes the death and resurrection of Christ. Paul captures this cruciform principle of spirituality in narrative patterns of the cross embedded in his letters, often speaking less in terms of theological systematisation and much more commonly in terms of pastoral, spiritual theology (i.e., in catechetical references, allusions, poetic echoes, kerygmatic snapshots of the Paschal Mystery, and in the cruciform shape of his thought).² Gorman argues that the cross invites us into narrative unity with Christ while also patterning the normative Christian life. As we are “co-buried and co-crucified with Christ” so we are “co-formed with his death and will be co-formed with his resurrection in glory.”³ In co-formation, our Christian lives echo the death-and-resurrection pattern of the Paschal Mystery, so that we give ourselves over to self-death, surrendering to the new creation God makes in us.

In looking to spirituality, Gorman’s exegesis can provide integrative theological readings. For example, on the question of atonement theory discussed in chapter two, we saw that theological writers on Lewis limit themselves to soteriological analyses of the cross and neglected implications for discipleship. Gorman’s cruciformity integrates the two. Gorman explores “Paul’s patterns of narrating the cross”⁴ without having to consider polemical atonement theory options. Gorman’s twin approach of narratology and spiritual theology suggest for him thirteen narrative patterns of the cross: 1) obedience, righteousness, faith, and faithfulness; 2) love (*agape*); 3) grace; 4) sacrifice; 5) altruism, substitution; 6) self-giving, giving; 7) voluntary self-humbling; 8) culmination of a story that includes incarnation and suffering; 9) paradoxical power and wisdom; 10) interchange; 11) apocalyptic victory and liberation for new life and transformation; 12) reconciliation and justification; and 13) a prelude to resurrection and exaltation.⁵ One might add a eucharistic (and thus teleological) element to this list, and Gorman himself suggests elsewhere that there is room in atonement theories for a new-covenant model of the atonement which includes the eucharistic response.⁶ From these thirteen narrative patterns captured in

² See Gorman, *Cruciformity*, ch. 5.

³ *Ibid*, 46.

⁴ *Ibid*, 87.

⁵ *Ibid*, 82-87.

⁶ See Michael J. Gorman, *Death of the Messiah*, where he argues that “the ultimate purpose of Jesus’ death was to create a transformed people, a (new) people living out a (new) covenant relationship with God together. Moreover, this people will not simply believe in the atonement ... they will eat and drink it,” 3.

metaphors, values, and principles of Paul's kerygmatic epistles, and from his particular consideration of the atonement conversation, Gorman is able to make a fourfold link to spirituality: Cruciformity is faithful obedience, self-giving love, life-giving suffering, and a prelude to resurrection.⁷ In this observation, Gorman extends the triad of faith, love, and hope (1 Cor 13:13) to include "power," for the principle of Cruciformity is the inversion of power structures: suffering leads to liberation, death leads to life, self-emptying leads to fullness, the foolish and weak are the wise and strong, and the posture of humility is filled with cruciform power.

Gorman's construct is heuristically significant for C.S. Lewis' thought. In chapter one, we saw from Lewis' conversion letters that a Pauline conception of spiritual death—mediated to him by MacDonald—is the root of Christian thought. Ultimately the idea of self-death and resurrection shapes Lewis' entire understanding of Christian spirituality, and the image of sacrifice, recovered in his talk with Tolkien and Dyson on Addison's Walk in September 1931, transformed Lewis' christological imagination. As much as Lewis is formed intellectually by modern and ancient mythmakers, Lewis is a Pauline thinker. Indeed, he quotes Paul more often than the Gospels—"It's all in St. Paul"⁸—though he gives the latter hermeneutical primacy. Of those biblical allusions, the cluster of cruciform ideas are the most common, as Meilaender, Filmer, and Stackhouse observe.⁹ Quite specifically, on the eve of his conversion to Christ, Lewis turns to Romans where "the essential idea of Death" becomes for Lewis the principle upon which "the whole story turns."¹⁰ As Lewis is not a trained biblical scholar himself, we benefit from Gorman's systematic exegetical study of St Paul to provide definitions to explore Lewis' spirituality of the cross.

Methodologically speaking, Gorman's spiritual theology works well with the approach suggested in chapter two of this work. Like Lewis, Gorman's approach to atonement theory looks to the spiritual theological development sometimes lost in the

Indeed, Gorman suggests a primacy of his new covenant model over other theories, including Anselmic penal substitutionary theory because "the new-covenant model is more comprehensive, integrated, participatory, communal, and missional than any of the major models in the tradition, traditional or recent," 232. See also *Inhabiting the Cruciform God*, where he uses the method of *Cruciformity* to challenge the centre of Paul's teaching on justification by faith, arguing for a communal, mystical union of theosis of the believer akin to Eastern thought and St Athanasius' dictum, God "assumed humanity that we might become God," 93.

⁷ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 92-94.

⁸ C.S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength* (New York: Collier Books, 1965), 262.

⁹ Stackhouse, *Making the Best of It*, 50; Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 6.

¹⁰ CLI 975.

debate. Moreover, Gorman is attentive to a narratological analysis of the text, particularly when these narratives emerge in elliptical and symbolic form. This attentiveness makes his exegetical work helpful in considerations of literature and theology, particularly with an integrative storyteller like Lewis. Gorman's prime word picture captured in the term "Cruciformity," his attention to exegetical detail, and his spiritual theological approach make him a good conversation partner as we approach more deeply Lewis' non-systematic work.

C.S. Lewis' Logic of Cruciformity

Mere Christianity: Incarnational Necessity and the Echo of God

As *Mere Christianity* moves from formal apologetics to a concentration on the spiritual life, in various ways, Lewis asks the question, "what did Jesus come to do?"¹¹ In terms of soteriology, Lewis argues that Christ has come to address the essential human problem of sin somehow. For Lewis, the foundational answer to the problem of brokenness within creation is the cross. Lewis sets aside the finer points of atonement theory to the more general question of what penalty might be required. Lewis argues that fallen humans are not merely lacking perfection or needing improvement, but rebels who must surrender: "Laying down your arms, surrendering.... It means killing part of yourself, undergoing a kind of death."¹² Gorman's idea of self-death is in semantic overlap with Lewis' metaphor of military surrender, so that laying down one's life is the precursor to resurrection into new life.

However, we must not confuse this self-death as some sort of bar we must transcend before becoming a believer. This ultimate surrender "is simply a description of what going back to [God] is like," Lewis argues.¹³ This self-death is not easy. Ironically, only a bad person needs to repent, and only a good person is good enough to repent. So even in this act of ultimate surrender, the believer needs God's help

to do something which God, in His own nature, never does at all—to surrender, to suffer, to submit, to die. Nothing in God's nature corresponds to this process at all. So that the one road for which we now need God's leadership most of all is a road God, in His own nature, has never walked.¹⁴

¹¹ Lewis, MC, 53.

¹² Ibid, 56.

¹³ Ibid, 57.

¹⁴ Lewis, MC, 196-197. The expectation of God here is shaped by the moral law discussion that precedes it.

Lewis is improvising here a theory of the atonement that Fiddes calls “vicarious penitence”¹⁵ and Williams calls “vicarious repentance.”¹⁶ It stands to reason that the Undying One cannot die; a being with singleness of will cannot surrender the will. What if, Lewis wonders, God became human, so that the Undying One could truly die? Not only would God become a model for self-death, but it would have a singular advantage over any other model. Because God is God, God as a human being can do the act of dying perfectly, while we require help to die to self. So although critics like Fiddes and Williams note that Lewis is creating a rationale for the atonement of humanity, Lewis is also arguing that Christ is preparing a way of response in that we participate in God’s self-death:

Our attempts at this dying will succeed only if we ... share in God’s dying, just as our thinking can succeed only because it is a drop out of the ocean of His intelligence: but we cannot share God’s dying unless God dies; and He cannot die except by being a man.¹⁷

In becoming a person who can uniquely die our dying, Roger Newell argues that God “establishes a beachhead in our humanity for the renewal of our relationships with God.”¹⁸

Much of the remainder of *Mere Christianity* is concerned with how to live out the new life after self-death, which is *zoe*, the spiritual life. This discussion of spirituality moves past traditional categories of Christian morality or theories of redemption to narrow in on the cruciform principle of death and resurrection—the “Give me All” passage quoted above, where God does not want to torment, trim, or repair, but to “kill” the self so that “I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you Myself: my own will shall become yours.”¹⁹ This passage is not merely theological speculation in the abstract, but what Robert Moore-Jumonville calls “the process of ongoing spiritual formation.”²⁰ In these few excerpts from *Mere Christianity*, we see Gorman’s theology of cruciformity in profile: the Christ-follower is to follow God into self-death and rely on God to help in this surrender to death that results in a new kind of life. Given a chance to address millions of his neighbours during a crucial

¹⁵ Fiddes, “On Theology,” 98-99.

¹⁶ Williams, *Deeper Magic*, 156-157.

¹⁷ Lewis, MC, 58.

¹⁸ Roger J. Newell, *The Feeling Intellect: Reading the Bible with C.S. Lewis* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 36.

¹⁹ Lewis, MC, 196-197.

²⁰ Moore-Jumonville, “The End,” 7.

moment of their history, this is the principle that Lewis laid out for them in his WWII BBC talks.

Moving beyond formal apologetics, *Mere Christianity* attends to the question of the God-embedded, Christ-patterned, Holy Spirit-given spiritual life. From the perspective of Christian praxis, this cruciform pattern is essential to Lewis' project of drawing people into the deepest resonances of the Christ story and helping people move from merely human existence (*bios*) to supernatural life (*zoe*)—a move Fiddes likens to Aslan's breath that turns stone figures into living, breathing people.²¹ In this way, David Downing suggests that "the world is like a great sculptor's studio and we are all statues waiting to come to life."²² In Lewis' view, God's great movement in Christ is echoed in the life of the one who surrenders all to God. In this focus on the surrender of the self as the central Christian response, *Mere Christianity* resonates well with Gorman's cruciform narrative spirituality.

The Problem of Pain: Lewis' Six Point Logic of Cruciformity

It is clear that a spiritual theology of the cross is embedded within Lewis' most popular work of apologetics. *Mere Christianity* is neither the fullest nor the earliest expression of a cruciform view of discipleship. *The Problem of Pain* (1940) was the work that won Lewis the invitation to the BBC that began his career as a Christian public intellectual,²³ and most fully sets the stage for Lewis' nascent theology of cruciformity in public discourse. Though concerned with theodicy, like much of *Mere Christianity*, *Problem of Pain* is an apology not merely for the truth claims of Christianity but for a certain kind of Christian soul-making. As such, *The Problem of Pain* is a manual for spiritual formation that reveals the following six-point Logic of Cruciformity.

First, the principle of self-surrender, of self-death, is not merely a Christian principle for living well or simply a virtuous human construct for the response to God. It is itself a principle of the Divine; as Jesus is in full surrender to God, it begins in God's relationship with God's self. The "logic" of surrender, Cassidy argues, is "bound up in the Divine

²¹ Fiddes, "On Theology," 94.

²² David C. Downing, *Into the Wardrobe: C.S. Lewis and the Narnia Chronicles* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 71.

²³ See the correspondence between the BBC director of Religious Broadcasting and Lewis in February 1941, CLII 469-470. For a detailed study see Justin Phillips, *C.S. Lewis at the BBC: Messages of Hope in the Darkness of War* (London: HarperCollins, 2003); Marsden, *Mere Christianity*, ch. 2.

nature.”²⁴ Lewis’ focus on human self-death as spiritual discipline begins with how reality echoes God’s self:

For in self-giving ... we touch a rhythm not only of all creation but of all being. For the Eternal Word also gives Himself in sacrifice; and that not only on Calvary.... From before the foundation of the world He surrenders begotten Deity back to begetting Deity in obedience....²⁵

For Lewis, the reality that love involves self-giving and sacrifice is, in Meilaender’s terms, “a law of the natural universe”²⁶ and “written into the very nature of the universe.”²⁷ In thinking about one of Lewis’ favourite texts, *Theologia Germanica*, Downing writes of the Divine Principle that “God is, by his very nature, self-giving, self-emptying, even to the point of descending into human flesh and dying on a cross.”²⁸ Lewis would have agreed with Gorman’s reflection on Paul’s theology of the cross where “death” is the root of the matter, for God is “a God of self-sacrificing and self-giving love whose power and wisdom are found in the weakness and folly of the cross.”²⁹

Second, in following the Divine Principle at play in all Being we discover a Divine Pattern, what Gorman calls a “pattern of self-surrender.”³⁰ in Lewis’ words, “the proper good of a creature is to surrender itself to its Creator—to enact intellectually, volitionally, and emotionally, that relationship which is given in the mere fact of its being a creature.”³¹ As Meilaender says, this means being unwilling to “grasp one’s life as one’s own but, instead, being willing to entrust one’s life to the Creator in obedience.”³² For Chris Armstrong, this “process of self-surrender ... is a kind of death.”³³ In Gorman’s terms, “Paul came to believe that the crucified Jesus was not only the revelation of true divinity but also the paradigm of true humanity.”³⁴ Because it is the pattern of the Divine, it should also be the pattern of the believer. Williams is correct that Lewis believed that “Christ is the

²⁴ Cassidy, “Risk,” 110.

²⁵ Lewis, PoP, 140.

²⁶ Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 61.

²⁷ Ibid, 238.

²⁸ Downing, *Into the Region of Awe*, 74.

²⁹ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 16.

³⁰ Ibid, 85.

³¹ Lewis, PoP, 78.

³² Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 64.

³³ Chris Armstrong, “Ticket to heaven’: Lewis’s Debt to the *Theologia Germanica* on Self-will, Death, and Heaven,” in *Both Sides of the Wardrobe: C.S. Lewis, Theological Imagination, and Everyday Discipleship*, ed. Rob Fennell (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2015), 54.

³⁴ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 19.

template for humanity as it was meant to be,”³⁵ but it is important to emphasise that Christlikeness in this sense is not merely a picture of morality but the entire mytho-historic movement of kenosis that leads to the cross.³⁶ Both the original incarnation and the believer’s imitation are cross-shaped patterns of self-giving. Of Gorman’s thirteen narrative patterns of the cross, more than half of them are about the voluntary, self-emptying, self-giving pattern of cruciform love, demonstrated in Christ’s self-sacrifice. Although Lewis is stronger than Gorman on making the link, the Divine Pattern is clear in both authors: the Christian response of imitating the self-sacrificing Christ is not merely a spiritual goal for the devotionally elite but is the proper vocation and basic posture of all believers. As Gorman summarises the Divine Pattern, “Cruciformity is an ongoing pattern of living in Christ and of dying with him that produces a Christ-like (cruciform) person.”³⁷

Third, there is a potent irony in the logic of self-sacrifice in Gorman that is echoed in Stackhouse’s analysis of Lewis’ critical focus. This self-death is paradoxically the enactment of the inversion at the centre of Christ’s message. The denial of self is not the utter end of the self but the essential step toward the recovery of true self:

From the highest to the lowest, self exists to be abdicated and, by that abdication, becomes the more truly self.... This is not a heavenly law which we can escape by remaining earthly, nor an earthly law which we can escape by being saved.³⁸

Gorman has guided his academic project since *Cruciformity* so that it is more intimately concentrated upon “The Paradox of Weakness,” the name of chapter eleven of *Cruciformity*. Gorman’s focus on the Divine Paradox is in the strength that comes in suffering as part of a transformation of matrices of power. But the aspects are linked in Gorman as they are in Lewis: “The great Pauline paradox is that one comes to know the power and glory of Christ, the resurrection and life of Christ, through cruciformity.”³⁹ In the giving up of self, Lewis argues, believers are “caught up into the higher kinds of life” and are “pulled into God, by God, while still remaining” themselves.⁴⁰ Meilaender’s focus is on social ethics and is thus less attentive to the true-self discovery in Lewis’ logic. Though he does grant the “paradox”

³⁵ Williams, *Deeper Magic*, 107.

³⁶ See Moltmann, *Crucified God*, esp. 200-207.

³⁷ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 48-49.

³⁸ Lewis, PoP, 140.

³⁹ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 35.

⁴⁰ Lewis, MC, 163.

that the one who loses one's life will find it,⁴¹ he translates that paradox to the reality that in a fallen world, "self-giving love becomes self-sacrificing."⁴² The denial of self, then, is a denial of hell and an affirmation that we are "one self among others," and thus is the communal space for love in formation.⁴³ Whether in the recovery of the self as true self or for community integration, self-abdication for Lewis is in the DNA of healthy selfhood, a Divine Paradox that is the hopeful response to the problematisation of chapter five.

Given that the human follows this path of self-renunciation that leads to new life, it is important to recognise a fourth step in Lewis' Logic of Cruciformity. Lewis agrees in principle with Gorman's critique that the *Imitation of Christ* can be too narrowly focussed upon the believer's response—the believer's imitation of Christ and not God's role in the formation of the believer. In the way of self-death, it is essential, then, that we follow Christ into this fundamental human activity of self-surrender. Christ leads in self-abdication; we follow. It is Christ's self-sacrifice that provides both the initiative and the model; our position is only ever one of response within the experience of God's Divine Provision:

Our highest activity must be response, not initiative. To experience the love of God in a true, and not an illusory form, is therefore to experience it as our surrender to His demand, our conformity to His desire: to experience it in the opposite way is, as it were, a solecism against the grammar of being.⁴⁴

Meilaender notes that the "whole art of life becomes one of imitation,"⁴⁵ but he does not specifically observe the fact that Christ-imitation is also Christ led. What Gorman says of Paul is also true for Lewis. For both Paul and Lewis, "cruciformity cannot be attributed to human effort,"⁴⁶ but God takes the initiative in the principle of God's self, in the pattern of self-sacrifice, and in the Divine Provision of the Holy Spirit's guidance in our formation within the cruciform life.

Fifth, in Lewis' view, it is not only God who initiates this self-death but God who fulfils it within us. Humans are inherently limited in the task they must do, to die to self. The Divine Premise of Lewis' Logic of Cruciformity is the Fall of humanity. There are moments in Lewis' fiction where he captures the fallen reality of humanity, in particular, the ghostliness

⁴¹ Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 27.

⁴² *Ibid*, 77.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 27, 87.

⁴⁴ Lewis, PoP, 39.

⁴⁵ Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 73.

⁴⁶ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 49.

of the hell-vacated characters in *The Great Divorce* and in the parallel of “bent *hnau*” with “fallen man” in the speculative language patterns of the Ransom Cycle.⁴⁷ An entire chapter of *The Problem of Pain* explores the principles of Adam’s fall, arguing that Edenic humanity is not the prototype of perfection but—recalling the Divine Principle of self-surrender—Prelapsarian humans are models of healthy self-surrender. In this way, Adam and Eve pre-enact the cross in the natural, joyful self-surrender of their entire selves to one another, to the garden which was their task to tend, and to God. The reciprocal reality of self-surrender was the Garden of Eden paradigm, and was filled with possibility:

In perfect cyclic movement, being, power and joy descended from God to man in the form of gift and returned from man to God in the form of obedient love and ecstatic adoration: and in this sense, though not in all, man was then truly the son of God, the prototype of Christ, perfectly enacting in joy and ease of all the faculties and all the senses that filial self-surrender which Our Lord enacted in the agonies of the crucifixion.⁴⁸

Filmer and Schwartz have noted that Venus in *Perelandra* is “an uncorrupted world as earth would have been in the prelapsarian state.”⁴⁹ No critic, however, has analysed the ways in which Tinidril and Tor are the “perfect cyclic movement.” Critics do note in the temptation of Tinidril the slow movement toward independence that the Unman is attempting to create in her consciousness. “A mirror is a primary symbol of Venus,” Patterson argues,⁵⁰ and the Unman uses the mirror to create a “bifurcation of the self into spectator and actor,” in Schwartz’s terms.⁵¹ From symbolic act to temptation, this bifurcation of the self is a step in the Unman’s temptation toward Tinidril’s choice to reject Maleldil’s interdiction of remaining on the fixed land. In the Unman’s attempt to reverse “the primordial relationship between flux and fixity,” he is trying to “liberate” Tinidril from her “dependency” upon Maleldil.⁵² As Downing notes, the desire to anchor oneself, the act of “relinquishing control and accepting what is given” is at the symbolic heart of the fixed land temptation in

⁴⁷ See discussion in William Luther White, *The Image of Man in C.S. Lewis* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1969), 119-139, esp. 131.

⁴⁸ Lewis, PoP, 66-67.

⁴⁹ Film, *Mask and Mirror*, 23; Schwartz, *Final Frontier*, 14-15. Patterson proposes that the climax of THS is restored Eden, *Ransoming the Waste Land*, 41.

⁵⁰ *Ransoming the Waste Land*, 311.

⁵¹ Schwartz, *Final Frontier*, 75.

⁵² *Ibid*, 74.

Perelandra.⁵³ As Hilder demonstrates, the logic of the cosmic dance in *Perelandra* captures this “perfect cyclic movement” from God to humanity, where “to abdicate is to receive power, to bow is to rise, to mirror the other is indeed to find one’s self.”⁵⁴ The Unman’s temptation of Tinidril, then, is to reject this essential understanding of self and other and to have Tinidril assert her own will, to be a self that is independent of Maleldil.

The Fall, in Lewis’ logic, must have been humanity’s desire “to be on their own, to take care for their own future, to plan for pleasure and for security”⁵⁵—to be self other than Self—to “fall out of the posture of receptivity,” in Meilaender’s terms.⁵⁶ This move to independence went against the very principles of nature, and so the entire paradisaical melody became discordant. The pattern broke on Thulcandra (Earth) as it does not in *Perelandra* (Venus). And, by ourselves, humanity cannot recover it. Initiated by God on the cross and in the life of the believer, God alone can help believers participate in a practice of death, like “a master’s hand is holding ours.”⁵⁷

Finally, the sixth point of Lewis’ logic is that the believer’s life changes as a result of the self-abdication, what I call Divine Possibility. Martyrdom is the pattern for spirituality not because we are religiously bound to reject our mortal frames but because the act of the martyr models the proper posture of “suicide” or self-death in the believer. Lewis warns against the necessity of asceticism, and his lifestyle was certainly far from austere; indeed, in his career as a public intellectual and letter-writer, he resisted monastic tendencies in himself. It would be fair, I suggest, to say that Lewis thought that one does not throw oneself into a Christian lifestyle, but into Christ. So, total martyrdom is not the path for everyone even if it is a symbolically rich pattern, for the

⁵³ David C. Downing, *Planets in Peril: A Critical Study of C.S. Lewis’s Ransom Trilogy* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 91.

⁵⁴ Hilder, *Gender Dance*, 82.

⁵⁵ Lewis, PoP, 68.

⁵⁶ Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 24. Meilaender’s point is that because a fallen creature “wants to grasp and retain, to store up rather than receive, to turn from what is given to what is desired ... the movement of negation will often be felt as self-negation.... It will involve a kind of killing of the self,” 26. Although Meilaender does not fully grasp the depth of the imitation motif, suggesting that self-giving is grounded more in “anthropological assumptions” rather than imitation (63), the logic of self-death is notably not merely an echo of prelapsarian holistic living, but an adapted response to fallen nature.

⁵⁷ Lewis, PoP, 92. For a consideration and critique of C.S. Lewis’ insights on the doctrine of the Fall and human anthropology, see Williams, *Deeper Magic*, ch. 5. Although Gorman does not spend much time in the narrative structure of the fall, he presupposes a Pauline vision of human sin, often contrasting Adam and Christ in exegetical analysis, Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 88-92, 107-119.

sacrifice of Christ is repeated, or re-echoed, among His followers in very varying degrees, from the cruellest martyrdom down to a self-submission of intention whose outward signs have nothing to distinguish them from the ordinary fruits of temperance and “sweet reasonableness.”⁵⁸

Saints, in Lewis’ view, would not be distinguished by pristine devotion or social transformation or the ultimate surrender to physical death that is required of martyrs, but by the self-death within their hearts which is resurrected into the new life of the believer.⁵⁹

For Meilaender’s analysis of Lewis’ social thought, this Divine Possibility is bound up in natural love, which, when given up to God’s love, is “perfected by divine love itself” and thus leads to integrated community life.⁶⁰ In Lewis’ fiction, we see less of the transformed new life in the self-surrendered soul. We follow one of those stories below, the story of Eustace Scrubb, and we explore the example of Dr Ransom in chapter four, who, like Psyche of *Till We Have Faces*, experiences a kind of divination in a resurrected life. But Lewis often ends his story just where we might see Divine Possibility in play, as in the characters of Orual in *Till We Have Faces* and Jane and Mark in *That Hideous Strength*. Yet the Possibility is hinted at in the text, as Mark and Jane meet at the end of the story to enact the promise of “mutual society” in marriage that was only alienation and bifurcation at the beginning of the novel.⁶¹ Orual, too, is able to turn her lawsuit against the gods into an Augustinian prayer in her last words: “I know now, Lord, why you utter no answer. You are yourself the answer.”⁶² A stunning transformation, and yet the text teases with more, ending her testimony with the words, “I might...”⁶³ While the picture is not always complete, leaving the story to the imaginative reader in some cases, Lewis is concerned with the whole Logic of Cruciformity that leads to new life, “the spiritual death and resurrection of the individual.”⁶⁴ While Lewis and Gorman focus on different aspects of the new life experience, Gorman summarises this Divine Possibility well: “What the exalted Christ, properly

⁵⁸ Lewis, PoP, 92.

⁵⁹ See also, for example, Lewis, “Learning in War-Time,” 26-38: “All our merely natural activities will be accepted, if they are offered to God, even the humblest: and all of them, even the noblest, will be sinful if they are not,” 31.

⁶⁰ Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 163.

⁶¹ Lewis, THS, 13.

⁶² Lewis, TWHF, 308.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 308.

⁶⁴ Lewis, PoP, 91.

perceived, makes possible is a life conformed to his own story of self-humbling and self-giving, even to the point of death.”⁶⁵

The six-point Logic of Cruciformity in *The Problem of Pain* can be summarised thusly:

1. **Divine Principle:** The principle of self-surrender, of self-death, is not merely a Christian theological principle or even a human principle. It is a divine principle, beginning in God’s relationship with God’s self. Jesus is in full surrender to God.
2. **Divine Pattern:** In following the Divine principle, “the proper good of a creature is to surrender itself to its Creator.” Because it is the pattern of the Divine, it should also be the pattern of the believer. This surrender is the proper vocation of all persons.
3. **Divine Paradox:** Ironically, the act of self-death is an affirmation of true selfhood: “From the highest to the lowest, self exists to be abdicated and, by that abdication, becomes the more truly self....” Every rebirth is preceded by death.
4. **Divine Provision:** We follow Christ into this fundamentally human activity: “Our highest activity must be response, not initiative.”
5. **Divine Premise:** The premise of Lewis’ Logic of Cruciformity is the Fall of humanity. Lewis argues that Edenic humanity is not the prototype of perfection, but of surrender, and is thus a “prototype of Christ” who perfectly enacts joyful self-crucifixion. The Fall, in Lewis’ logic, must have been the desire for humans “to be on their own, to take care for their own future, to plan for pleasure and for security” — to be self other than Self.
6. **Divine Possibility:** The believer’s life changes as a result of his or her spiritual death and resurrection.

Such is the Logic of Cruciformity in *The Problem of Pain*, the first of Lewis’ nonfiction books as a Christian public intellectual. Lewis himself calls this his “doctrine of death,”⁶⁶ showing that death is at the centre of spiritual life. This cruciform spiritual patterning of Christian life informs his Christian books, his essays, his poetry, his work as a literary scholar, his correspondence, and his fiction.

Cruciformity in Lewis’ Fiction

If Lewis’ thought is emergent and integrative, as I have argued, a cross-shaped spirituality following this logic will be evident in his fiction. I conclude this chapter by considering examples of Lewis’ Logic of Cruciformity as it is played out in his fiction. I will touch briefly on three storylines in three very different books: a theological novella, a children’s Narnian tale, and a novel. In these three stories, we see Lewis’ “doctrine of death”

⁶⁵ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 44.

⁶⁶ Lewis, *PoP*, 91.

emerge clearly as reflecting the narrative nature of a cruciform spirituality as well as the lived nature of Lewis' spiritual theological project.

The Great Divorce (1944-45)

A.N. Wilson gives high praise to *The Great Divorce*, saying that it "shows Lewis at his very best; it is something approaching a masterpiece."⁶⁷ In chapter two, I argued that *The Great Divorce* reads better as a text about spiritual life than speculative eschatology. As a work of spiritual theology, I argue that the entire logic of *The Great Divorce* is based on the principle of cruciformity, focussed in this narrative on the human response.

As Amber Dunai argues, *The Great Divorce* uses the form of a medieval dream vision in a contemporary WWII-era setting "to harness the genre's device of presenting visitors to visionary realms with instruction relevant to philosophical or spiritual problems that they face in the waking world."⁶⁸ As visitors, we find ourselves in a grim, grey town filled with cantankerous, self-obsessed Ghosts who are given an opportunity to experience heaven—and to stay, if they wish. Heaven is raw: dangerously bright, frighteningly beautiful, menacingly real.⁶⁹ As the Ghosts stumble through this world, they meet "Solid People"—residents of heaven who appear to the Ghosts as angels or gods. Lewis' warning in *The Problem of Pain* that as a place filled with refining fire, heaven would be difficult for some to appreciate, plays out in full colour as the Solid Folk try to convince the Ghosts to stay in the bright lands long enough to acclimatise.

We see what takes place in this heavenly gateway through the eyes of Lewis, self-projected as a Ghost. He is met by George MacDonald, the figure who invites Lewis to a Pauline cruciform spirituality and cast here as the Solid Person tasked with trying to draw our protagonist further into heaven.⁷⁰ MacDonald dialogues with the protagonist on the

⁶⁷ Wilson, *C.S. Lewis*, 202.

⁶⁸ Amber Dunai, "The Process of Salvation in *Pearl* and *The Great Divorce*," *Mythlore* 37, no. 1 (2018): 6. On GD and medieval connections, see Robert Boenig, *Lewis and the Middle Ages* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2012), 97-111; Daigle-Williamson, *Reflecting*, 127-154; Darlene Gonzalez, "A Comparison of *The Divine Comedy* and *The Great Divorce*," *The Lamp-post of the Southern California C.S. Lewis Society* 16, no. 1 (1992): 8-11; Joe R. Christopher, "Considering *The Great Divorce*," *Mythcon I Proceedings*, ed. Glen GoodKnight (The Mythopoetic Society, 1972), 40-48; Joe R. Christopher, "The Dantean Structure of *The Great Divorce*," *Mythlore* 29, no. 3/4 (2011): 77-99; Clark, *Lewis Goes to Heaven*, 92, 166-168.

⁶⁹ See Alf Seegert, "'Harsh to the Feet of Shadows': The Wild Landscape of the Real in C.S. Lewis' *The Great Divorce* and William Faulkner's *The Bear*," in *Doors in the Air: C.S. Lewis and the Imaginative World*, ed. Anna Slack; Vitoria, Spain: PortalEditions, 2010), 157-194.

⁷⁰ Daigle-Williamson argues that MacDonald is "a detailed composite of five characters from *The Divine Comedy*," suggestive of Lewis' "multilayered echoes," *Reflecting the Eternal*, 137.

nature of love, life, faith, hope, hell and heaven. In their meeting, the fictional MacDonald lays out the principle behind the afterlife of *The Great Divorce*: “There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’”⁷¹ MacDonald interprets a number of scenes that play out this principle, including a woman who lost any real humanity in her sense of entitlement; a theologian far too sophisticated to believe in the heaven and hell in which he lives; a woman who attempts to lure the Solid People while unaware of her own ghostliness; a wife who loved her husband to an early death; and a number of activists advocating for better conditions in hell rather than simply transferring their membership to heaven. While there is a diversity to the stories of sin and self-attachment,⁷² in each the character is too lost in his or her sense of self to have any true self; each is unable to trust long enough to come to the point of self-surrender. In Clark’s words, most of the ghosts “refuse to allow God to make them ‘solid’ by killing what needs to die.”⁷³

Not all the characters are terminally lost or left in a “state of spiritual limbo.”⁷⁴ One of the Ghosts comes into the scene with a red lizard on his shoulder. He is arguing with his pet reptile, who continually whispers things into his ear. In dialogue with a Solid Person, the Ghost recognises he cannot keep the lizard in the new country, and the Solid Person offers to silence the lizard’s whispers. The Ghost desperately wants to be free of the whispers, but balks when it means killing the beast. The man stalls for time and tries to reason around it, but the Solid Person is unmoving: the beast must die, and it must be now, a sudden and violent choice rather than a gradual and amiable partnership. Pinned between a promise of pain and the torture of temptation, the Ghost wavers. Meanwhile, the lizard chatters desperate temptations into the Ghost’s ear.

Finally, the ghost gives in, deciding that “[i]t would be better to be dead than to live with this creature.”⁷⁵ With an unearthly scream of agony, the Solid Person breaks the back of the lizard and casts it to the ground. In the place of the ghost a Solid Person grows, and in the place of the lizard, a great stallion is born—“the transformation of lust in sanctified

⁷¹ Lewis, GD, 72.

⁷² Clark, *Lewis Goes to Heaven*, 117-118, offers a chart of various sins of the ghosts. Daigle-Williamson identifies ten varieties of “perverted love,” *Reflecting the Eternal*, 138.

⁷³ Clark, *C.S. Lewis*, 144.

⁷⁴ Dunai, “Process of Salvation,” 20.

⁷⁵ Lewis, GD, 101.

desire” in the words of W.H. Auden.⁷⁶ MacDonald reminds the protagonist that death precedes the new life, and then explains the Logic of Cruciformity within *The Great Divorce*: “Nothing, not even the best and noblest, can go on as it now is. Nothing, not even what is lowest and most bestial, will not be raised again if it submits to death.”⁷⁷

The picture of “the death of the sensuous lizard ... and its resurrection as the magnificent stallion”⁷⁸ is the poignant moment of the death-and-resurrection principle in *The Great Divorce*. Quoting the “those who lose their life” passage (Matt 16:25, NRSV), Matthew Lee has made this link succinctly:

This transformation scene conveys the spiritual principle that is key to much of Lewis’ philosophy.... This principle—the ‘ultimate law’—runs throughout Lewis’ writings and every, or virtually every, one of his works contains meditations on it, though it is approached from different angles in different works.⁷⁹

This “law” is the central core of Lewis’ Logic of Cruciformity in *Great Divorce*. Because of the Fall (the Divine Premise), humans are inclined to get lost in the vast internal damnation of self-obsession—what Meilaender calls the “retreat into the self” that is the definition of hell.⁸⁰ To be free, the person has to follow the Divine Pattern and surrender the whole self to God. Alone, this task is impossible, but with Divine Provision, the death to self may come—pictured in the story as the bright spirit helping the beleaguered ghost by killing the lizard. When the self is surrendered, the Divine Paradox reveals that death brings life and that the surrender of the self brings a new self, the true self, pictured as the transformation of the suffering soul into a bright spirit. Even the sin itself—the decrepit, incestuous, malignant lizard force of lust—is transformed into newness when it is surrendered in the Logic of Cruciformity. Intriguingly, it is the Divine Principle, Christ’s self-surrender to God, that is the nearly invisible element in *The Great Divorce*. In fact, the entire concept of Christ as the centre of salvation is suppressed in *The Great Divorce*, a rather odd fact unnoted in the literature. There are hints, however, where a ghost is told that God has also

⁷⁶ “Red Lizards and White Stallions,” *The Saturday Review*, Apr 13, 1946, 23. Auden praised GD but finds this transformation of lizard to horse to be theologically inelegant. Filmer thinks it a “coarse,” sexually tinged metaphor, *Mask and Mirror*, 39.

⁷⁷ Lewis, GD, 104-105.

⁷⁸ Williams, *Deeper Magic*, 263.

⁷⁹ Matthew Lee, “To Reign in Hell or to Serve in Heaven: C.S. Lewis on the Problem of Hell and Enjoyment of the Good,” in *C.S. Lewis as Philosopher: Truth, Goodness and Beauty*, ed. Jerry L. Walls, Gary Habermas, and David Baggett (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 163-164.

⁸⁰ *Taste for the Other*, 87.

“suffered.”⁸¹ But an indication of the intentionally suppressed nature of the cross is seen in the manuscript history of *The Great Divorce*. MacDonald tells the protagonist that no love “will rise again until it has been buried.”⁸² The original manuscript has few other corrections, yet has “crucified” where published texts have “buried”—certainly replacing a clearer term with a vaguer one, a reversal of standard editorial policy.⁸³ So although the Divine Principle of cruciformity is hidden within the text, the logic remains.

The Voyage of the Dawn Treader (1952)

As scholars recognise and Lewis himself explained, the Narnia series retells the stories of creation, fall, sacrifice, forgiveness, restoration, conversion, death, and resurrection.⁸⁴ I have already argued in favour of Narnia’s propensity for inviting spiritual theological explorations, both in the turn from doctrine to spirituality that I argued for in chapter two, and in scholarly work by Rigney, Vaus, Brown, Bowen, and others. As a book about “the spiritual life”⁸⁵—a phrase we saw as the focal point of *Mere Christianity*—*The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* includes Reepicheep, the character whom Downing calls the mystic of the spiritual life in Narnia.⁸⁶ Another character of critical importance is Eustace Scrubb, the primary focal point of transformation in the early part of the novel.

Eustace Scrubb is a suck-up and a toady, a boy whom Bowen says lives imprisoned by his own lack of imagination.⁸⁷ Myers describes Eustace as a “Boy Without a Chest”—echoing Lewis’ lecture in *The Abolition of Man*, “Men Without Chests,” referring to an omniscient technocracy where human beings are shaped for utilitarian ends but lack traits like courage and integrity.⁸⁸ Eustace’s family is urban-cool, progressive, distant, and uncreative. Eustace was one of the “coarse, brainless English schoolboys”⁸⁹ Lewis was forced to go to school with when he was a boy, though Downing suggests autobiographical

⁸¹ GD, 83.

⁸² Ibid, 83.

⁸³ CSL MS-52 B, Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton, IL, f. 8; Dep.d.241, f. 8, Bodleian archive, Oxford, UK.

⁸⁴ See Lewis’ description, CLIII 1244-1245. Charles Huttar argues that the grand design of Narnia is a linear pattern of creation, fall, redemption, and eschatology, “Grand Design,” 119-135.

⁸⁵ CLIII 1245.

⁸⁶ Downing, *Region of Awe*, 136-138.

⁸⁷ “There is hardly any worse criticism of anyone in Lewis’ world than to say that they lack imagination,” Bowen, *Spirituality*, 69.

⁸⁸ Myers, *Lewis in Context*, 145; see C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (Glasgow: Fount Paperback, 1978), 15-37.

⁸⁹ See CLI 59; Jacobs, *Narnian*, 33.

possibilities in the character of Eustace.⁹⁰ Beyond all his sins of petulance and wounded irritability, Filmer describes how Eustace fills his diary with “a farrago of complaints, self-pity, hypochondria and petty spite”⁹¹—in Jacobs’ terms, “a rock-solid narrative of superiority and paranoia.”⁹² Eustace has read none of the right books and is thus entirely unprepared to live in a magical world. He is priggish, entitled, self-involved, and willing to risk the entire crew of the *Dawn Treader* to maintain any of those attitudinal delicacies. It is this stance toward Narnia that leads to the events in the chapter, “The Adventures of Eustace.”

On a Narnian island, Eustace absconds from work and finds himself in a valley at the precise moment when a dragon has come out of its cave to die. Eustace, ignorant of dragon lore, takes refuge from the rain in the dead dragon’s cave. Having spent a long day of avoiding work and encountering myth, Eustace falls asleep on the dragon’s pile of gold and jewels, dreaming of what he might do with his newfound tax-free treasure. Then, “[s]leeping on a dragon’s hoard with greedy, dragonish thoughts in his heart,” Eustace awakes and discovers that he has been transformed into a dragon himself.⁹³ Without Lucy’s insight, the dragon Eustace may have been attacked by the crew when he returned to the *Dawn Treader*. Instead, Lucy and Reepicheep befriend and comfort him, and Eustace uses his dragon strength and great speed to hunt and gather materials for the crew. Throughout his time as a dragon, Eustace remains in great pain, humbled, disoriented, and unable to complain—except for the occasional boiling tear. Ironically, it strikes the *Dawn Treader* crew “that Eustace’s character had been rather improved by becoming a dragon.”⁹⁴ At the beginning of the surprise voyage, Eustace expected the entire ship to bend its activity to his every whim. Now, he is tormented by the knowledge that his enchantment is inhibiting the crew’s quest.

While Eustace’s transformation into a dragon begins the mortification of the flesh, this transformation is only complete when Eustace encounters Aslan. Eustace tries to shred off his scales, only to find that he is unable to shed his dragon shell by himself. Then Aslan attends to Eustace’s imprisonment. “The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought

⁹⁰ Downing, *Most Reluctant Convert*, 19-20.

⁹¹ Filmer, *Mask and Mirror*, 45.

⁹² Jacobs, *Narnian*, 134.

⁹³ Lewis, VDT, 73.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 80.

it had gone right into my heart,” Eustace explains.⁹⁵ Yet, there was a pleasure in feeling the scales removed. The language of self-death in Eustace’s un-dragoning is not as imagistically precise as Aslan’s self-sacrifice in *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*, or even Edmund’s personal realisation of his dragon heart and his metaphorical un-dragoning in suffering, humiliation, and forgiveness. The language here is interesting, though. Lying on the dragon’s hoard, thinking dragonish thoughts, we see that Edmund’s enchantment matches the true nature of the heart. He was being beastly, so, in the magical synchronicity of Narnia, he became a beast. Indeed, Jacobs notes that in “becoming a dragon, he completes the alienation from the human world that he has been trying to achieve by his own efforts.”⁹⁶ In this way, the Eustace conversion cycle is very much like the character stories in *The Great Divorce*, where the principle is that “our choices make us who we are,”⁹⁷ in Bowen’s words. In Narnia, Eustace became what he was, and it took the lion’s shredding of beastly skin to match the transformation of his heart.

Eustace’s un-dragoning echoes the ideas of self-surrender and self-death we see in the lizard scene of *The Great Divorce*. The baptismal scene that follows the removing of the scales, with all of its evocations, tells the biblical story of death to self and resurrection to new life which we explore more deeply in chapter four. Eustace’s adventure is a poignant demonstration of the mortification of the flesh in a children’s book and echoes the kind of spiritual dynamic I argued is at the heart of *The Great Divorce*. Eustace’s transformations also demonstrate the death-and-resurrection pattern within the Logic of Cruciformity, from the Fall of humanity, through the patterning and provision of the divine, to the new life that comes from the surrendered will. Critical points within the story are worth considering. The Divine Principle, the self-surrendering nature of God, is presupposed in the root volume of the series, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. The Divine Premise is clear: Eustace is a fallen character whose intense self-absorption alienates him and imperils his crew—a double penalty for sin like that of Edmund’s. In linking Eustace’s scene with that of the transformed man and lizard in *The Great Divorce*, Jacobs notes the Divine Provision within the story:

It is especially noteworthy that Eustace’s own attempts to remove his scaly skin are ineffectual.... It is only Aslan who has the strength (and the love) to do the job

⁹⁵ Ibid, 86.

⁹⁶ Jacobs, *Narnian*, 134.

⁹⁷ Bowen, *Spirituality*, 70.

properly—that is, to turn Eustace back into a boy again—and Eustace welcomes the gift.⁹⁸

In cruciform spirituality, we cannot baptise ourselves, cannot provide the initiative of transformation; therefore, Eustace must follow the Divine Pattern and surrender to Aslan’s care.

Devin Brown is careful to note that although Eustace can remove layers of scales, they grow back. Eustace is unable to remove the core dragon-nature of his being, which must be affected by Aslan’s cure.⁹⁹ Part of Brown’s caution is that we do not reduce Lewis’ beliefs to the idea that we can do nothing by our own efforts. Certainly, we may achieve particular moral, ethical, or personal goals. Full transformation, however, requires a much greater imagination of what is possible. In an essay for older schoolchildren, “Man or Rabbit?”, Lewis rejects the limited vision of the question that was put to him, “Can I live a good life without God?” Though admirable, in setting up “a good life” as the main standard or the final goal of life, “we have missed the very point of our existence.” Lewis argues, instead, that “[m]orality is a mountain which we cannot climb by our own efforts.”¹⁰⁰ While we are content with ropes and axes, only spirit-grown wings can take us to the “unbreathable air of the summit.”¹⁰¹ Beyond the moral lift of human progress, Lewis imagines a complete metamorphosis. In a passage that mirrors Eustace’s un-dragoning and Edmund’s cure of being beastly, Lewis argues that:

Morality is indispensable: but the Divine Life, which gives itself to us and which calls us to be gods, intends for us something in which morality will be swallowed up. We are to be remade. All the rabbit in us is to disappear—the worried, conscientious, ethical rabbit as well as the cowardly and sensual rabbit. We shall bleed and squeal as the handfuls of fur come out; and then, surprisingly, we shall find underneath it all a thing we have never yet imagined: a real Man, an ageless god, a son of God, strong, radiant, wise, beautiful, and drenched in joy.¹⁰²

Lewis’ vision of theosis is far greater than living a good life—whether according to Narnian honour codes, British societal standards, or even by more expansive visions of moral

⁹⁸ Jacobs, *Narnian*, 135.

⁹⁹ Devin Brown, *Inside The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (Grand Rapids: BakerBooks, 2010), 107-109.

¹⁰⁰ C.S. Lewis, “Man or Rabbit?”, in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 113.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 113.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, 112. Martindale first noted this link, *Beyond the Shadowlands*, 215.

excellence. Instead, all of one's life is given away—our life is sloughed off, swallowed up, and transformed. As it is, in Brian Hudson's words, "impossible to 'undragon' ourselves,"¹⁰³ there is Christ's example and God's provision.

The Divine Paradox is that death leads to life, that giving away is also a kind of receiving, that one must go down to come up. Therefore, when Eustace lays his life before Aslan, he is not only un-dragoned but re-Eustaced, if I may coin a term. The Divine Possibility in Eustace's changed character is what the *Dawn Treader* crewmates most clearly recognised. Indeed, Brown notes that it is hardly accidental that Edmund does not initially recognise Eustace when he returns to the crew as a boy.¹⁰⁴ The change worked on Eustace in his adventure has a permanent effect—not resulting in perfection, but setting Eustace's life on a trajectory away from self toward others. "The cure had begun"¹⁰⁵ and continues to create the "metamorphosis of Eustace, from 'monster' to a new born 'boy.'"¹⁰⁶ Kyoko Yuasa notes rhetorical changes in Eustace's diary and conversation that come as a result of his transformation, and we notice that he becomes a changed boy at home and rises to be one of the critical heroes in *The Silver Chair*. In recognising the death and resurrection imagery in the passage, Cassidy approximates what I am calling Lewis' Logic of Cruciformity. Eustace

must leave his old self behind by shedding his scaly skin. This is an operation he cannot do for himself; he must surrender to the claws of Aslan, whose surgery will pierce him to the heart. It is the maker who must re-make him. When the lion has done his work, the dragon flesh is cast aside; when Eustace rises from the pool, he is human again. Yet he is not his old self; he is better and newer than he ever was.¹⁰⁷

Kathryn Lindskoog links the stripping of Eustace with the sloughing off of the mortal frame at the end of life, arguing that Eustace's story is about "death and resurrection in either the psychological or physical sense."¹⁰⁸ Though Lindskoog does not connect directly to *Screwtape*, we can see a similar language concerning the patient's death: "as if a scab had fallen from an old sore, as if he were emerging from a hideous, shell-like tetter, as if he

¹⁰³ Brian Hudson, "Learning in the Shadowlands: The Educational Vision of C.S. Lewis," *Inklings Forever* VII (2010): 11.

¹⁰⁴ Brown, *Inside VDT*, 105.

¹⁰⁵ Lewis, *VDT*, 89.

¹⁰⁶ Kyoko Yuasa, *C.S. Lewis and Christian Postmodernism: Word, Image, and Beyond* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 114.

¹⁰⁷ Cassidy, "Risk," 112.

¹⁰⁸ Lindskoog, *Mere Christian*, 71.

shuffled off for good and all a defiled, wet, clinging garment.”¹⁰⁹ As spiritual life for Lewis is cross-patterned in his “doctrine of death,” so the metaphor of death is the critical frame for response in Narnia and the crucial moment for transformation. Thus we see in this brief glimpse into Narnia and Eustace’s character the essential Logic of Cruciformity: A divine “pattern of self-surrender”¹¹⁰ whose architect is the divine Aslan; it is expected of all who would wish to live, live fully and well; by necessity of human nature, however, it must be initiated by Aslan and aided by Aslan; and, finally, it affects a change in the life of the devotee. Eustace’s transformation echoes the Aslanic sacrifice and forms the paradigmatic foundation of the series.¹¹¹

Till We Have Faces (1956)

In moving to the third example of cruciformity in Lewis’ fiction, it is helpful to look back to the story of one of the ghosts in *The Great Divorce*. Perhaps the most poignant and risky image in *The Great Divorce* is the woman who arrives in the bright lands in order to find her son, Michael, who died in his youth. As the interview between the Ghost and her appointed Solid Person continues, we see that the love of the woman for her son is possessive to a startling degree. By the physics of this speculative world of *The Great Divorce*, she would be invisible to her son. Michael’s mother must become more real to reach him. Thus, she must give herself away, surrender her own self to Self. In her case, it means loving something other than her son, and ultimately, something or Someone more than her son. She is initially indignant at the suggestion, but is willing to perform whatever “ritual” is needed to see her son—thus attempting to use God to achieve her end. When this approach fails to work, the conversation turns to accusations against God—“If He loved me He’d let me see my boy”¹¹²—and the reader’s slow realisation that the woman sacrificed all human relationships on earth to her grief. When Michael died, she also lost daughter and husband—both grieving as well—to her entitled sense of self. The tension increases until she finally screams, “Give me my boy.... Michael is mine.”¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Lewis, *Screwtape*, 156-157.

¹¹⁰ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 85.

¹¹¹ We must be cautious, I think, in moving too quickly past Lewis’ intentional framing of VDT as a book about the spiritual life, as Ward does in *Planet Narnia*, 12. This inattention to Lewis’ cue is perhaps why Ward misses the cruciform patterning in VDT, suggesting that this “change in Eustace has been brought about not by the influence of his cousins, but by the *influenza* of Sol,” *Planet Narnia*, 115.

¹¹² Lewis, GD, 92.

¹¹³ Lewis, GD, 102-103.

In fact, Pam’s “all-consuming need to possess Michael,” Amber Dunai argues, hinders the ultimate reunification of mother and son. In her “fierce need to claim the long-dead son as hers and hers alone ... Pam renders God her rival, a self-defeating impulse which will deprive her of a fruitful relationship with both God and Michael.”¹¹⁴ Here Dunai echoes Lewis’ later teaching in *The Four Loves* that “God is the great Rival, the ultimate object of human jealousy.”¹¹⁵ The logic, Meilaender argues, follows the principle that I have identified as cruciformity. Because of “the self’s tendency to cling to the creature,” the self refuses “to permit the natural loves to be transformed by self-giving love.”¹¹⁶ Paulette Saunders notes a similar theme and a similar rivalry with Robert’s wife, whose “perverted, excessive Need-love and possessive Affection” are very much like Pam’s, though each affects a different kind of tyranny of self-obsession.¹¹⁷ Jason Lepojärvi presses in on Lewis’ concern with inordinate love, noting that for Lewis the “solution to disordered love is always ‘more’ love, never less love.”¹¹⁸

This is a disturbing scene, where MacDonald explains that the mother’s love is not an excess but a lack of love, for she would rather bring her son into hell itself than be without him—a desire, in Dunai’s terms, “irrevocable through its sheer strength.”¹¹⁹ We do not know the story’s outcome, though hope remains for this mother’s reconciliation. It is also a confrontation that we see repeated in Lewis’ corpus, including the “Mrs Fidget” character in *The Four Loves* whose household sacrifices were played up as a “silent accusation” for her family.¹²⁰ It is there in the *Screwtape* caricature of the person “who lives for others—you can always tell the others by their hunted expression”¹²¹—the kind of figure Wilson calls “the Lady Macbeth of the suburbs.”¹²² The male equivalents to this character in Lewis’ fiction are less convincing and much more brutish and hypocritical or clingy and ineffectual, such as the Vicar in “The Sermon and the Lunch” or Dr Quartz in *Four Loves*.¹²³ The

¹¹⁴ Dunai, “The Process of Salvation,” 17-18.

¹¹⁵ Lewis, *Four Loves*, 61.

¹¹⁶ Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 169.

¹¹⁷ Paulette Saunders, “Through the Lens of *The Four Loves*: The Concept of Love in *The Great Divorce*,” *Inklings Forever VII* (2010): 4-5.

¹¹⁸ Jason Lepojärvi, “Worship, Veneration, and Idolatry: Observations from C.S. Lewis,” *Religious Studies* 51, no. 4 (2015): 17.

¹¹⁹ Lewis, GD, 105; Dunai, “The Process of Salvation,” 17.

¹²⁰ Lewis, *Four Loves*, 59-62.

¹²¹ Lewis, *Screwtape*, 135.

¹²² Wilson, *C.S. Lewis*, 202.

¹²³ Lewis, *Four Loves*, 63-64.

Michael's mother/Mrs Fidget/Robert's wife caricature¹²⁴ is more compelling because their sacrifice looks like the kind of desperate, intimate, self-implicating love we have for our children and partners. However, in the God's-eye view we have of the inside of these households, we see it is a love that is possessive and jealous, a disturbing picture of that "ruthless, sleepless, unsmiling concentration upon self which is the mark of Hell."¹²⁵

The most complete and artistic image of this character, one who is certainly not a caricature, is Orual in Lewis' acclaimed novel *Till We Have Faces*. This is a complex piece of literature that Schakel argues is intentionally filled with layered symbolism meant to reveal "the full value of myth."¹²⁶ *Till We Have Faces* is a first-person retelling of the Greek myth of Cupid and Psyche¹²⁷ in two movements. The first movement is cast as a complaint against the gods—the anti-Confession of Queen Orual, a suit for damages against wantonly cruel divine figures, what Schakel calls "a mixture of diary and court case (along with romance and myth)."¹²⁸ In the protagonist's view, she has been cursed and taunted by the gods in numerous ways. She is profoundly ugly, the oldest daughter of an abusive king. Orual's rejection, Sally Bartlett argues, leads her to spend her life "searching for the affection and approval she seldom receives."¹²⁹ Faced with this psychological desperation, she finds that she has lost her deepest love, Psyche, her younger sister, whom Orual has raised as her own daughter. As beautiful as Orual is ugly, Psyche falls victim to the superstitions of her age and is demanded as a human sacrifice, ultimately chained to a tree to be devoured by the god of the mountain.

¹²⁴ Lepojärvi, "Worship," 4.

¹²⁵ C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters, with Screwtape Proposes a Toast*, rev. ed. (New York: Collier Books, 1982), ix. Here Lewis is talking about Faust and Screwtape's sophisticated, smoking-room gravitas kind of evil. See Douglas Loney, "Immortal Horrors and Everlasting Splendours," *Mythlore* 63 (Autumn 1990): 30.

¹²⁶ Peter J. Schakel, *Reason and Imagination in C.S. Lewis: A Study of Till We Have Faces* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 57. While TWHF is Lewis' least known work, academic literature is extensive; see Ian C. Storey, "An Annotated Bibliography to C.S. Lewis: *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold*" (Trent University, 2013).

¹²⁷ For more on the background myth, see Schakel, *Reason and Imagination*, 2-6; Walter Hooper, *A Companion and Guide* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 243-263; S.J. Van Der Weele, "From Mt. Olympus to Glome: C.S. Lewis's Dislocation of Apuleius's 'Cupid and Psyche' in *Till We Have Faces*," in *The Longing for a Form: Essays on the Fiction of C.S. Lewis*, ed. Peter J. Schakel (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1977), 182-192; Ian C. Storey, "The Classical Sub-text to *Till We Have Faces*" in *C.S. Lewis: Views from Wake Forest*, ed. Michael Travers (Wayne, PA: Zossima Press, 2008), 237-53; John Stanifer, "Tale as Old as Time: A Study of the Cupid & Psyche Myth, with Particular Reference to C.S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*," *Inklings Forever* 7 (2010): 1-11.

¹²⁸ Schakel, *Reason and Imagination*, 10.

¹²⁹ Sally A. Bartlett, "Humanistic Psychology in C.S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces: A Feminist Critique*," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 22, no. 2 (1989): 187.

When Orual travels to retrieve Psyche's remains, she finds in the valley of the sacrifice her own Psyche, well fed and happy and claiming to be the god's bride. Psyche's great palace, however, is invisible to Orual. Though as Stephen Yandell says, Orual and Psyche are "bound in a deep, spiritual love,"¹³⁰ Orual convinces herself that her sister-daughter is either deluded or the victim of a cad. Orual uses their mutual love to force Psyche into betraying her "beloved," the veiled god of the mountain. Even a reader sympathetic with Orual's position will balk at Orual's coerced love, as her mentor the Fox does. But Orual herself feels forced, believing that the gods had "withheld certain knowledge of themselves just long enough for Orual to force Psyche into destroying her happiness."¹³¹ Orual's path decided, the point of view begins to shift. At Orual's threat of suicide, Psyche agrees to betray her husband. In "winning" her point, though, Orual loses something as well. The look Psyche gives to her upon agreeing to betray her lover makes Orual feel like a cuckolded husband. Psyche's final speech shows Lewis' belief that a certain kind of love is not excess but lack:

You are indeed teaching me about kinds of love I did not know.... I am not sure whether I like your kind better than hatred. Oh, Orual—to take my love for you, because you know it goes down to my very roots and cannot be diminished by any other newer love, and then to make of it a tool, a weapon, a thing of policy and mastery, an instrument of torture—I begin to think I never knew you. Whatever comes after, something that was between us dies here.¹³²

All things break in the moment of Psyche's reluctant betrayal of the god.¹³³ Though Psyche pays the price of exile, in Orual's self-involved state she considers herself the victim: she has lost her Psyche, despite trying to save her, and she has "proved for certain that the gods are [i.e., exist] and that they hated me."¹³⁴ Orual hardens herself to her fate, gaining some wisdom from her experience and, after seizing the throne by political mastery, rules her country with cold efficiency. She holds her anger against the gods throughout her life and ends Book I with these words: "I say, therefore, that there is no creature (toad,

¹³⁰ Stephen Yandell, "Medieval Models of Loss in *Till We Have Faces*," in *C.S. Lewis: Views from Wake Forest*, ed. Michael Travers (Wayne, PA: Zossima Press, 2008), 260.

¹³¹ Schakel, *Reason and Imagination*, 51.

¹³² Lewis, TWHF, 165.

¹³³ *Ibid*, 170-174.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 175.

scorpion, or serpent) so noxious to man as the gods. Let them answer my charge if they can."¹³⁵

If Book I is about the filling of Orual's self—"I took this book ... to comfort myself, and gorge myself with comfort, by reading over how I had cared for Psyche ... and wounded myself for her sake"¹³⁶—Book II is about its emptying, what she calls "the gods' surgery,"¹³⁷ that reveals "the discovery that in her text are actually embedded many of her blind spots."¹³⁸ In her old age, a series of happenstances and mystical dreams brings Orual to the point of despair. After finding her way to the mountain of the god, she unconsciously mimics the binding of her sister by tying her own feet, thus parodying her sister's willingness to lay down her life for her people. She approaches the edge of her cliff, where she will throw herself into the river. The voice of the god speaks out of the darkness: "Do not do it."¹³⁹ "Lord, who are you?" Orual answers in fear. "Do not do it," the god repeats, for Orual cannot escape her fate by entering the land of the dead. The god gives the final charge: "Die before you die. There is no chance after."¹⁴⁰ Orual must in some way die to her self before her mortal frame comes to its end. The rest of the novel plays out Orual's self-dying and her rebirth. Orual is left to "chew the strange bread" the gods had given her, finally remembering her Socrates, who "said that true wisdom is the skill and practice of death." Orual resolves to practice this "true philosophy" of dying to her passions, hoping for the gods' help in resolve and soul-transformation.¹⁴¹

In the end, the gods helping, Orual dies to herself and in the autobiographical nature of the tale "rewrites her story," in Mara Donaldson's words.¹⁴² Socrates' "true philosophy" would not, however, be enough; Orual must die to her entire self, not merely her passions. Orual's efforts to change, Karen Rowe explains, "must come about through the renunciation of her deceptive comfort that at least she had loved Psyche well."¹⁴³ In a tale about truth-

¹³⁵ Ibid, 249-250.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 249-250.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 254.

¹³⁸ Chou, "Problem of Faith," 200.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 279.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 279.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 281-282.

¹⁴² Mara E. Donaldson, "Orual's Story and the Art of Retelling: A Study of *Till We Have Faces*," in *Word and Story in C.S. Lewis*, ed. P.J. Schakel and C.A. Huttar (Columbia MO: University of Missouri Press, 1991), 169.

¹⁴³ Karen Rowe, "Till We Have Faces: A Study of the Soul and the Self," in *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy: Volume 2: Fantasist, Mythmaker, and Poet*, ed. Bruce L. Edwards (Westport CT: Praeger, 2007). 138.

telling and self-deception, Orual's self-death is very much about seeing herself as she truly is. The reader, Walsh notes, "is caught up into the experience of death and rebirth" as "the symbols echo and vibrate" throughout the tale.¹⁴⁴ Joeckel notes that following a process of emptying of her self—an emptying that reveals a "tyrannical nothingness" in her soul—Orual is able to undergo regeneration and transformation.¹⁴⁵ Yandell notes that "Orual's transformation thus models restoration after multiple kinds of loss. We find a restoration of relationships with others, with God, with self, and with an eternal hope."¹⁴⁶ Susan McCaslin argues that Orual's story, as well as the life of Psyche, "can be seen in terms of spiritual rebirth analogous to the Christian experience," particularly poignant as a story "because it concerns the regeneration of both body and soul at a spiritual level of consciousness."¹⁴⁷ In a pattern similar to Yandell's, McCaslin notes that Orual experiences three kinds of rebirths: "(1) a new concept of self, (2) a new concept of love, and (3) a new concept of deity or God."¹⁴⁸ In these deaths and rebirths, Orual goes through "a process of radical transformation" paradigmatic of the transformation that takes place in the Christian life.¹⁴⁹

We do not see in full detail the entire Logic of Cruciformity in *Till We Have Faces*. As a novel set in pre-Christian pagan lands, the Divine Principle of God's self-surrender is understated, seen only in the inherent logic in the text, that one must die in a certain kind of way before one is seized by mortal death. Likewise, we cannot see all of the Divine Possibility in Orual, the rehabilitation after the surgery of the gods. Despite the brief time, however, a critical change has taken place in Orual, so that the woman who enters her final sleep at the end of Book II is so radically different from the protagonist of Book I that Orual calls herself "the woman who wrote it"—distancing her new self from her old self. Her entire understanding of self, love, Psyche, and the gods is transformed in a series of natural and phenomenal revelations that allow Orual to see the entire story from a new angle, leading her to her self-death. Though the entire Logic of Cruciformity is not worked out in detail in *Till We Have Faces*, the complex layering of the Orual-Psyche self-death and

¹⁴⁴ Walsh, *Literary Legacy*, 177.

¹⁴⁵ Joeckel, *Lewis Phenomenon*, 221; cf. 217-222.

¹⁴⁶ Yandell, "Medieval Models," 271.

¹⁴⁷ Susan McCaslin, "A Critical Study of C.S. Lewis' *Till We Have Faces*," *Crux* 15, no. 3 (1979): 7.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

discovery motif best captures the heart of Lewis' spirituality of the cross: that we must lay down our lives, "die before we die," in order to live, live fully and well.

Orual's story is like that of the characters in *The Great Divorce* and the story of Eustace Scrubb. Orual's character echoes other narratives, like the possessive mother crying, "Michael is mine!" as Orual cries, "Psyche is mine!" The organising principle of cruciformity in these conversions is at play, as hinted at in Lewis' conversion letters and then worked out in his books on spiritual theology. As Aslan's self-sacrifice informs the pattern for all other acts of self-surrender throughout the Chronicles, so Eustace's story most fully captures the pattern of cruciformity worked out in *The Problem of Pain*, from divine principle, to human necessity, to the recovery of the life-changing true self that is initiated and aided by Aslan-Christ. In *The Great Divorce* and *Till We Have Faces* the divine pattern is less explicit and even suppressed, but the central feature of self-death that one cannot accomplish by oneself is a central theme in the text—as is the permanent change that comes from the self-abdication, the new life from what has died.

One of the many complex theological layers in *Till We Have Faces* is the theme of divine identity. Indeed, the idea of a crucifixion-like divine self-sacrifice is both parodied and prefigured in the book. Orual parodies the cross when she pierces her forearm for her sister, Psyche—not in love, as she presumes, but in coercion; Psyche prefigures Christ as she is hung on a hilltop tree as a sacrifice to save the people. As a Christ-figure, Psyche lives the principle of divine love and self-giving that Orual can only see once she has committed herself to self-dying. It is Psyche who initiates the process of Orual's mortification. And though we do not see Orual's permanent transformation, it is intentional that she should follow Psyche's pattern of submission to death that leads to a new self that is the real self: "she was the old Psyche still; a thousand times more her very self..."¹⁵⁰ Psyche's self-surrender to death becomes the quickening of her own true self, and provides the divine pattern for Orual to follow.

¹⁵⁰ Lewis, TWHF, 306.

Conclusion: Clarifying and Moving Past Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*

“The more you depart from yourself, the more you will be able to enter into Me”
(*Imitation of Christ*, III.56).

Though lacking exegetical clarity and systematic precision, Lewis anticipates Gorman's theology of cruciformity, which is itself in conversation with Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*. Gorman's cruciformity takes up the *Imitatio* and discusses in greater depth the pattern of the cross in the formation of the spiritual life of the believer. Christ's own surrender to the cross shapes the ethical choices of the believer, and can inform political action, spiritual expression, and missional engagement. In surrendering to be “crucified with Christ,” the self is set aside. Thinking of Lewis' own experience, then, conversion is not a one-time event, as Sr Galligan reminds us, and the cross is not merely a salvific event as I argued in chapter two; these are the dominant motifs of Christian ethos that makes up the entire Logic of Cruciformity.

There is little doubt that the *Imitatio Christi* is a *locus classicus* of spiritual practice, where Christ—and Christ's self-giving death—is the essence and pattern of the Christian life. Considered in the light of the correction that Gorman offers in *Cruciformity*, however, the *Imitatio* does not place enough emphasis on the Holy Spirit guidance and principle of grace that is absolutely critical to Pauline spirituality. Gorman's correction, which we see in Lewis' fifth part of the Logic of Cruciformity, Divine Provision, is that the emphasis in Christian discipleship is not in the work believers do in seeking to be like Christ—as we see in much of the *Imitation*—but rather in the formation of the believer by Christ. Gorman argues that the *process* behind imitation is “better called Christ's formation in believers” and the *results* of imitation is the “believers' conformity to Christ, especially to his cross”¹⁵¹ (Phil 3:10). “Cruciformity” is a more capacious term as it captures the “ongoing pattern of living in Christ and of dying with him that produces a Christ-like (cruciform) person.”¹⁵² A Pauline—and Lewisian—cruciformity can never be reduced to human effort, for there is a “power”

¹⁵¹ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 48-49.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, 48-49.

that “enables the exalted crucified Christ to take shape in and among those who belong to him and live in him. It enables the narrative of the cross to be retold and relived.”¹⁵³

I argue that Lewis demonstrates the principle of cruciformity as the organising feature of a life of Christian discipleship in much the same way as Gorman understands Paul’s spiritual theology. Our response begins in conversion—a leap in the dark, a dive, a giving up, a surrendering, a self-realisation that leads to self-giving and other images and ideas we will explore in chapter four. But that death in conversion is only the first dying. Christian life is following Christ in self-surrender as God then forms the true self in the believer. Even this self-surrender is itself patterned and guided by God, whose Divine Provision we see imaged in divine figures in the stories we have explored: it is Aslan who must un-dragon Eustace. The bright spirits of *The Great Divorce* can aid in self-death and prepare the pilgrim for deeper heaven; and “the gods helping me,” Orual finds her way to death. In each of those examples, we see transformation and rebirth, inviting the Divine Possibility of new self.

Finally, this *imitatio* theme is for Lewis an integrative one, wholly implicated with daily life, as he says in *The Four Loves*: “[O]ur imitation of God in this life... must be an imitation of God incarnate: our model is Jesus...”¹⁵⁴ Consistently this theme emerges in Lewis’ overtly Christian apologetics books—which I argue are also manuals of spiritual formation—and weaves itself through his fiction. The following chapter looks more closely at C.S. Lewis’ *narrative* spirituality of cruciformity, considering recurring images in his broad and diverse *œuvre*. Together with the interrogation of these cruciform images of normative spirituality in chapter five that generates a conversation about inversive elements in Lewis’ writings, I argue that the shape of Cruciformity is also the shape of Lewis’ Christian thought.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 48-49.

¹⁵⁴ Lewis, *Four Loves*, 17.

Ch. 4: The Shape of Cruciformity: Narrative Patterns of the Cross in Lewis' Fiction and Nonfiction

Introduction: Recognisable Narrative Patterns of Spirituality

In chapters two and three, we explored the critical advantages of turning to spiritual theology to see grander possibilities in reading Lewis' theologically infused fiction as Lewis' stories are directed toward living, living fully and well. In the logic of Narnia, the believer follows Aslan in giving up the self and being reborn into a deeper, richer character; in the logic of Lewis' other fiction, this self-sacrificial move intensifies into the call to die before we die, to surrender fully as an echo of the divine reality. When considering spiritual theology in Lewis, the entire thrust of *Mere Christianity* is toward the spiritual life, or *zoe*, and there is within Lewis' theodicy, *The Problem of Pain*, a sixfold Logic of Cruciformity. Once we have the "general spiritual framework" of Lewis' cruciform spirituality—to invert a phrase Lewis used of his anti-spiritual theology in *The Screwtape Letters*¹—a reader can see the Logic of Cruciformity working out in his entire corpus.

As Eugene Peterson provides language to describe a critical shift to spiritual theology, Michael Gorman's "narrative spirituality" similarly turns from soteriological questions in a Pauline *theologia crucis* to the pattern of the cross that believers take up in their lives. Thus, in conforming to Christ's posture on the cross we are co-crucified with Christ—"I have been crucified with Christ"—and thus we are spiritually formed by the death and resurrection of Christ—"It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20, NRSV). Gorman's interest further aligns with my own in that he is looking for a *narrative* spirituality, the "experience of re-presenting in living form the word of the cross" as he examines it in Paul's own story and "the story of the cross."² Once attuned to this cruciform story, Gorman is able to make the link between spiritual theology and "recognizable narrative patterns" in Paul as they correspond "to patterns of cruciform existence."³

¹ Lewis used "general diabolical framework" to describe *Screwtape* in conversations with the BBC about adaptation, CLII 925.

² Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 30.

³ *Ibid*, 75-76.

In this chapter, we will attend similarly to recognisable narrative patterns in C.S. Lewis, focusing upon cruciform images as they emerge in fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Instinctively aware of narrative patterning, Lewis develops a proto-theoretical interest in narratology in essays like “On Stories,” as he remains open to the mythic and mythopoeic elements in literature. Consequently, we begin this chapter with a brief consideration of Lewis as imagistic mythmaker, highlighting the integration of theory and practice in Lewis’ work. The central concern of this chapter is narrative cruciform patterning as Lewis tells the story of the Paschal Mystery in his writing, what he calls “the great story on which the plot turns.”⁴ Applying a tool of structural analysis provided by Northrop Frye, supplemented by structural analyses by Lewis critics and J.R.R. Tolkien’s theories of story, the bulk of this chapter looks at the U-shaped comedic, eucatastrophic narrative as it plays out in the death and resurrection story in Christ’s self-sacrifice and in our cross-patterned, Christ-guided response. These U-shaped patterns include the dive, the fairy tale, patterns of descent and ascent, and the metaphor of baptism. Spiritually speaking, this narrative pattern is “where the secret of secrets lies hid”⁵ in Lewis’ work. Therefore, following our imagistic analysis, we conclude this chapter with the “grand miracle,” Lewis’ term for the spiritual theological principle in the last volume of his apologetics trilogy, *Miracles*.⁶

Lewis as Imagistic Mythmaker: “It All Began with a Picture”

Architecturally speaking, Aslan’s Stone Table is not shaped like the cross. In moving from questions of soteriology to questions of spiritual theology in treating Narnia in chapter two, however, I have argued that the Stone Table sacrifice is essentially cruciform, as scholars recognise.⁷ In this way, Aslan’s sacrifice also patterns normative spirituality for Christians. Images are central to Lewis’ imaginative process in writing, and Lewis’ theology takes narrative form through the images he chooses in order to communicate belief and

⁴ Lewis, *Miracles*, 119.

⁵ *Ibid*, 151.

⁶ An early version of central argument of this chapter was presented to the Oxford C.S. Lewis Society, 23 Oct 2018.

⁷ E.g., Brown, *Inside Narnia*, 215-20; Clark, *C.S. Lewis*, 59-66; Downing, *Region of Awe*, 127, 131-132; Hilder, *Feminine Ethos*, 28-31; Hooper, *Companion*, 411-413; Jacobs, *Narnian*, 148-150; Lindskoog, *Mere Christian*, 33-40; Lindskoog, *Lion of Judah*, ch. 3; Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 8-10; Mueller, *Christology*, 53-55; 103-120, 167-171; Patterson, *Ransoming the Waste Land*, 46, 63-64; Rigney, *Christian Life*, 63-68; Vaus, *Hidden Story*, 24-35; Ward, *Son and Other Stars*, 98-99; Williams, *Deeper Magic*, 30-31, 152-158. Reference is lacking in Filmer and Griffin, though Filmer discerns the imitation motif.

praxis. Fiddes argues that Lewis does theology “by inviting us to indwell these images, to find our own resolution there, and so finally to dwell in God.”⁸ Therefore, I consider Lewis as an imagistic mythmaker, tracing the roots of his imaginative process to images in his world and exploring what Williams calls “Lewis’s characteristically deft use of apt analogy.”⁹

Lewis’ imaginative process is relatively well known and considered in all biographies, including his own *Surprised by Joy*.¹⁰ Juvenilia Lewis produced with his brother, later printed as *Boxen*,¹¹ demonstrates the instinctive nature of his artfulness—a skill almost suppressed in adulthood except when his doodles occasionally find their way into his letters to children.¹² Lewis was, however, inspired with mental pictures,¹³ beginning his fiction not with a moral or even a storyline, but with “pictures in my head.”¹⁴ For Narnia, it was a faun and a snowy wood; for *Perelandra*, the mental image was that of a floating island.¹⁵ Scholars such as Matthew Dickerson, David O’Hara, and Alf Seegert demonstrate that there is little doubt that landscapes informed Lewis’ fiction-making.¹⁶

As a sensual reader and writer, Lewis describes how his childhood experience of literature brought him “to the very frontiers of hallucination.”¹⁷ Arthur Rackham’s fantastical illustrations were for the young Lewis “very music made visible,” which “plunged me a few fathoms deeper into my delight.”¹⁸ This delight was what Yuasa calls Lewis’

⁸ Fiddes, “On Theology,” 101. See also Yuasa, *Christian Postmodern*, and the discussion of image and word with John Hick, Dom Bede Griffiths, and Austin Farrar in Ward, *Christology and Cosmology*, ch. 1. Working through Farrar’s hermeneutical approach, Ward is careful to note the interrelated nature of word and image, e.g., “words convey the images, and ‘faith discerns not the images, but what the images signify.’ And yet, we cannot discern that significance ‘except through the images.’ We cannot by-pass the images to seize an imageless truth,” 23.

⁹ Williams, *Deeper Magic*, 29.

¹⁰ On childhood writing, see Lewis, SBJ, 9-16. From the perspective of literary creation see Corey Latta, *C.S. Lewis and the Art of Writing: What the Essayist, Poet, Novelist, Literary Critic, Apologist, Memoirist, Theologian Teaches Us about the Life and Craft of Writing* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016).

¹¹ Walter Hooper, ed. *Boxen: The Imaginary World of the Young C.S. Lewis* (London: Collins, 1985).

¹² C.S. Lewis, *Letters to Children*, ed. Lyle W. Dorsett and Marjorie E. Mead (New York: Macmillan, 1985), endpapers, 22. Lewis rarely used sketches to shape his writing or lecturing; exceptions include Bodleian archive Dep.d.809, f. 69 verso; Bodleian archive MS.Eng.misc.c.1109, f. 8 verso; Bodleian archive MS. Eng. lett. c. 220/5, ll. 6 verso, 15 recto, 16 verso, 25 recto, 25 verso; and CLIII 1601-1604, 1617, 1646.

¹³ C.S. Lewis, *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*, ed. Walter Hooper (New York: Harcourt, 1994), 42, 86-96.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 42.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 87.

¹⁶ Dickerson and O’Hara, *Environmental Vision*, ch. 7; Seegert, “Harsh to the Feet,” 167-194. See McGrath, *C.S. Lewis*, 9-10; Walter Hooper, “It All Began with a Picture: The Making of C.S. Lewis’s Chronicles of Narnia,” in *C.S. Lewis and His Circle: Essays and Memoirs from the Oxford C.S. Lewis Society*, ed. Roger White et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 150-163.

¹⁷ Lewis, SBJ, 55.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 74.

“indescribable desire of ‘northernness’”¹⁹—an aspect of what he would later call “Joy” or “*Sehnsucht*.” That longing is always imagistic for Lewis, “a vision of huge, clear spaces ... in the endless twilight of Northern summer, remoteness, severity....”²⁰ Lewis uses other images in his works to capture this sense of longing: the “unheard-of lands beyond, away to the North” in “The Quest of Bleheris”²¹; the Hesperidean dream of the western Island in *The Pilgrim’s Regress*; “the cup-shaped land of Abhalljin, beyond the seas of Lur in Perelandra”²²; the eastern Mountains in *The Great Divorce*; Reepicheep’s utter East, the end of the world in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, “Where the sky and water meet”²³; and the “further up and further in”²⁴ image of heaven in *The Last Battle*. All of these places are tactile and imagistic, examples of hints of joy infused through Lewis’ literary history, poetry, and fiction.

Donald Williams makes the explicit connections between these images and Lewis’ rooted project of theological experimentation by arguing that Lewis’ artistically constructed theological images make “their impact, their beauty, and their relevance easier to see *and to feel*.”²⁵ Lewis makes this point clearest in his literary criticism: “Reason is the natural organ of truth, imagination is the organ of meaning.”²⁶ Daniela Vasiliu captures Lewis’ integrative understanding succinctly: “The concept that multiple meaning [sic] can be grasped and expressed beyond reason through imagination became the key literary element in both his fiction and nonfiction work.”²⁷ When exploring Lewis’ use of spiritually infused images in his fiction,²⁸ it is important to step back and consider the imagistic nature of his

¹⁹ Yuasa, *Christian Postmodernism*, 162.

²⁰ Lewis, SBJ, 73.

²¹ Bodleian archive MS. Eng. lett. c. 220/1, l. 10.

²² Lewis, THS, 274.

²³ Lewis, VDT, 21.

²⁴ C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle* (London: Fontana Lions, 1980), ch. 15.

²⁵ Williams, *Deeper Magic*, 31.

²⁶ C.S. Lewis, “Bluspels and Flansferes,” in *Selected Literary Essays*, ed. Walter Hooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 265.

²⁷ Daniela Vasiliu, “C.S. Lewis: The Romantic Rationalist,” *Linguaculture 2* (2014): 120.

²⁸ See Charlie W. Starr, *The Faun’s Bookshelf: C.S. Lewis on Why Myth Matters* (Kent, OH: Black Squirrel Books, 2018). In *Planet Narnia*, Michael Ward has attempted to name what he calls “a new phenomenon in imaginative literature,” a “subtle and sophisticated technique” of “literary hiddenness” that Ward calls “donegality,” 42. Ward defines the term further as “the spiritual essence or quiddity of a work of art,” and includes questions of authorial intention and reader response in the term, 75. See also Michael Ward, “‘Looking Along the Beam’: Divine and Literary Hiddenness in C.S. Lewis’s *The Voyage of the ‘Dawn Treader,’*” in *C.S. Lewis and the Inklings: Discovering Hidden Truth*, ed. Salwa Khoddam and Mark R. Hall (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 10-33. Though *Planet Narnia* continues to be read with interest, the concept of donegality has not been taken up by literary critics for further work.

work. To do this, we will consider the recurrent union of image and story, reason and imagination in the cruciform narrative patterning of his fiction.

Lewis' Imagistic Story-making and Frye's U-Shaped Pattern

Imaginative, integrative, and imagistic, Lewis' fiction is environmentally and geographically rich.²⁹ Each of Lewis' worlds is richly painted, excepting Screwtape's lowerarchy, which seems merely like a Department of Motor Vehicles office: dim, stale, and dominated by never-ending, musicless noise. All of these touches are part of what Lewis calls "atmosphere"—the narrative layering of a story that gives it its unique texture.³⁰ It is also, in the words of Daigle-Williamson, Lewis' goal for his fictional worlds to reflect "spiritual reality" as Dante's has done.³¹ Lewis is interested as a critic and author in the relationship between the imagistic atmosphere and the reader's experience of the text world. If we are sensitive to Lewis' use of space, movement, and landscape while attempting to discern the shape of the narrative action and emotional plotlines of his work, we see intriguing patterns that confirm the central narrative arc of Lewis' theology of cruciformity. Structural analyses that would make for authentic readings of Lewis' fantasies include the Hero's Journey of Joseph Campbell³² and Vladimir Propp's folktale morphology.³³ As I noted in chapter one, Northrop Frye is frequently used by Lewis scholars. Frye shares Lewis' interest in the Western literary tradition with attentiveness to mythopoeic literature and the way in which literature and theology are interrelated. Frye is also a leading critic in

²⁹ Lewis' love of nature and rich descriptions of the world around his characters is considered in most biographies and throughout the secondary literature of Lewis. See specifically, Joe R. Christopher, "An Introduction to Narnia: Part II: The Geography of the Chronicles," *Mythlore* 2 no. 3 (1971): 12-16, 27, who focuses on cartography; Seegert, "Harsh to the Feet," 167-194; Armstrong, *Medieval Wisdom*, 139-164; Kip Redick, "Wilderness, Arcadia and Longing: Mythic Landscapes and the Experience of Reality," in *C.S. Lewis: Views from Wake Forest: Collected Essays on C.S. Lewis*, ed. Michael Travers (Wayne, PA: Zossima Press, 2008), 137-57; Lindskoog, *Lion of Judah*, ch. 2; Salwa Khoddam, "From Ruined City to Edenic Garden in C.S. Lewis's *The Magician's Nephew*," in *Truths Breathed through Silver: The Inklings' Moral and Mythopoeic Legacy*, ed. Jonathan B. Himes (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 27-50; Evrea Ness-Bergstein, "The Garden as Unfinished Narrative of the Good in C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*," *The Journal of Inklings Studies* 2, no. 1 (2012): 49-80; Meilaender, *Taste For the Other*, 174.

³⁰ Lewis, "On Stories."

³¹ Daigle-Williamson, *Reflecting*, 25.

³² Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968). See David Emerson, "Innocence as a Super-power: Little Girls on the Hero's Journey," *Mythlore* 28, nos. 1-2 (2009): 131-147; Valerie Estelle Frankel, "The Double-Sided Wardrobe: The Hero's and Heroine's Journey through Narnia," in *Doors in the Air: C.S. Lewis and the Imaginative World*, ed. Anna Slack (Vitoria, Spain: Portal Editions, 2010), 81-106; Corbin S. Carnell, "Ransom in Perelandra: Jungian Hero?" *Mythlore* 8, no. 2 (1981): 9-10.

³³ Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1968).

narratology and structural analysis. To demonstrate the link between Lewis' Logic of Cruciformity and the narrative patterning of his work, I turn to Frye's U-shaped patterning in his *Great Code* in conversation with narratological analyses of Lewis' fiction.

In expanding on the Greek notion of the narrative shaping of tragedy and comedy, Frye notes that the narrative of the Christian Bible is roughly U-shaped—from the height of Creation, through the Fall and disaster in Genesis, to redemption and recovery in Christ and the Return to paradise in Revelation. This U-shaped descent and ascent cycle is repeated throughout Scripture: in the downward spiral of Judges, in the story of Job or the prodigal son, and, ultimately, in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.³⁴ Moreover, the narrative framework has a prophetic element, so that “the U-shaped progression of original prosperity, descent to humiliation, and return ... is a part of its emphasis on the shape of history and the specific collision with temporal movement that its revelation is assumed to make.”³⁵ This “repeating *mythos* of ... apostasy and restoration” told both in the “falls and rises of the Biblical history”³⁶ are metaphorically interrelated within the Christian Bible to produce what Frye calls a “divine comedy” where spiritual reality is mirrored in history.³⁷ This U-shaped comedy of the Christian Bible has for its “hero” the Messiah; the story of Christ's Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension are the U-shaped pattern at the centre of the story.³⁸

Although not referencing Frye, Charles Huttar approximates Frye's analysis in considering the overall scope of the Narniad from the earliest book according to internal chronological order, *The Magician's Nephew*, to the fulfilment of the series in *The Last Battle*. Huttar describes a “linear pattern” of creation, fall, redemption, and eschatology that approaches what Frye describes as a U-shaped comedic narrative.³⁹ Huttar argues that Narnia forms “a sort of Bible,” making up “a loose collection of varied material structured to highlight the climactic events of world history, beginning, middle and end.”⁴⁰ Edith Humphrey uses similar language, also approximating Frye's pattern as she considers the

³⁴ Frye, *Great Code*, 169-170, 192-193.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 198.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 169-170.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 169.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 174-175.

³⁹ Huttar, “Grand Design,” 131.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 130.

“shape” of Narnia as a “v” shape of a restoration (down, and then up),” a pattern of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.⁴¹

There have been various attempts to provide the key needed to crack what seems to be a non-coincidental structure to Narnia. Most striking and popular is Ward’s *Planet Narnia*, but there have been attempts to connect the Narniad structurally to Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*,⁴² Anglican patterns of faith,⁴³ Lewis’ *Mere Christianity*,⁴⁴ the seven sacraments, a pattern of seven virtues, and the seven deadly sins.⁴⁵ Beyond creating a one-to-one Narnian relationship between the books and other sevenfold patterns, Huttar’s structural analysis follows Lewis’ own comments about the meaning of the Chronicles and attends to the U-shaped pattern that permeates Lewis’ work at a macro and micro level. This U-shaped pattern exists both in the Narnian stories and within the movements of plot and character inside the tales.

C.S. Lewis describes the Incarnation in similar structural terms, looking at the U-shaped comedic narrative of the Gospel story by using the picture of a weightlifter raising a burden or a diver going deep for a buried object.⁴⁶ Lewis was interested in theological perspectives that might be “a sort of echo or rhyme or corollary to the Incarnation,”⁴⁷ which is also one of the critical U-shaped comedic stories that Frye notes. While St Paul’s phrase, “Christ raised,” works as a synecdoche to capture the story as a whole, the U-shaped mythos is most fully demonstrated in the early Pauline poetry of Philippians 2:5-11. In this “Christ hymn” we see a descent by degrees and sudden ascent to glory. The U-shaped structure of Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension is, in the words of Lewis, “the great story on which the plot turns,”⁴⁸ a divine comedy, the grand narrative of self-death and resurrection patterned by the Divine for our spiritual integration. The context of

⁴¹ Humphrey, *Further Up and Further In*, 788-793. It is worth noting that at times Humphrey wants to assert that the pattern “is not a ‘v,’ but a checkmark” as the gain is so much greater than the loss, 1598; cf. 788-793. However, in the overall narrative of creation, fall, and redemption, Humphrey may be extending the image beyond theological necessity.

⁴² Myers, *Lewis in Context*, xiii, 112-181.

⁴³ Doris T. Myers, “Growing in Grace: The Anglican Spiritual Style in the Narnia Chronicles,” in *The Pilgrim’s Guide: C.S. Lewis and the Art of Witness*, ed. David Mills (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 185-202.

⁴⁴ Peter J. Schakel, *Reading with the Heart: The Way into Narnia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), xiii.

⁴⁵ Ward provides a short literature review of these sorts of intertextual structural analyses of Narnia, *Planet Narnia*, 10-11.

⁴⁶ Lewis, *Miracles*, 135. See Frye, *Great Code*, 176.

⁴⁷ Lewis, *Four Loves*, 184.

⁴⁸ Lewis, *Miracles*, 119.

this U-shaped Christ hymn is the ethical guidance of 2:1-4: “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:5, NRSV) follows the ethical instructions that begin the chapter and thus the Christ hymn is presented as an *imitatio Christi* motif. Aside from Galatians 2:19-20, Philippians 2:5-11 is the passage that Gorman uses the most in his analysis, often demonstrating exegetically how Pauline spirituality patterns itself on this passage.⁴⁹ It is also a passage that Lewis uses to structure his own thought about the Incarnation—so much so that James Patrick argues that “Lewis tends to use the figure of Philippians 2 ... as an *exemplum* and explanation too easily.”⁵⁰ This chapter aims to demonstrate that the intricacy with which Lewis works this image through his spiritual theology demonstrates that, contrary to Patrick’s concern, Lewis’ exemplar construction is neither lightly chosen nor incidental to his thought.

Frye’s structural analysis registers the synchronicity of form and content in the U-shaped biblical comedy, a narrative arc that matches its redemptive arc. So too, this analytical structure highlights Lewis’ fiction and its synchronicity of form and content. To use Lewis’ own words, the narrative shape of his work is often a “sort of echo or rhyme or corollary” to his theological project.⁵¹ The rest of this chapter explores narrative patterning in Lewis’ work, using Frye’s U-shaped comedic narratological framework in reading Lewis’ fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. This U-pattern is so prevalent in Lewis’ work, that upon the feminist theological interrogation of chapter five a consistent comedic, inversive, resurrection-orientated pattern emerges as dominant in Lewis’ thought. Thinking in narratological terms, the shape of Lewis’ spiritual theology, I argue, is the shape of his thought, which appears consistently throughout his diverse-yet-integrated *œuvre*.

Dive: U-Shaped Cruciform Imagery in Lewis’ Life and Writing

We concluded the last chapter on the edge of a cliff as Orual of *Till We Have Faces* was coming to the point of surrender. Doris Myers argues that Orual’s life is “seen as the enactment of a myth,”⁵² and her struggle is paradigmatic of the spiritual life. As the image of

⁴⁹ E.g., see his chapter in *Cruciformity* on “Cruciform Love (II): Apostolic Cruciformity,” which shows Philippians 2:4-10 echoed in Philemon 8-10, 14, 1 Thessalonians 2:5-12, and 1 Corinthians 9, esp. v. 19. Gorman does not himself make the link between the death-and-resurrection cruciform patterning and the U-shaped comedic elements of Frye’s work.

⁵⁰ Patrick, “Lewis and Idealism,” 170.

⁵¹ Lewis, *Four Loves*, 184.

⁵² Myers, *Lewis in Context*, 211.

the dive has powerful import for Lewis, let us begin this section by returning to a cliff—but in a passage that many forget: namely, Lewis’ narrative poem, *Dymer* (1926). Downing calls *Dymer* “obscure and artistically undistinguished.”⁵³ Walsh calls it a failure as a whole,⁵⁴ while Wilson suggests that only the most dedicated Lewis enthusiasts “have bothered to press on with *Dymer*.”⁵⁵ Without praise for the poetic wholeness of the piece, Lewis poetry expert Don King considers *Dymer* his “most important poem,”⁵⁶ while Downing admits that “it gives powerful evidence of how far Lewis had moved” along a spiritual path during his first years at Oxford.⁵⁷ *Dymer* is, Heck claims, a “reflection of Lewis himself”⁵⁸ in the period, thus providing an important consideration for the effect of Lewis’ conversion. The pre-Christian Lewis is so prevalent in the poem that Hilder remarks that *Dymer* represents the “classical male who rejects the spiritual female,” an approach that lacks the inversive nature of Lewis’ later work.⁵⁹ Idiosyncratic, difficult, and problematic, *Dymer* is nevertheless a helpful starting point for considering Lewis’ use of narrative patterning.

The story of *Dymer* begins in a utopic community with the eponymous character casually murdering his teacher, thus igniting a bloody revolution. *Dymer* flees naked into the wilderness and impregnates a monster. Finally, after many disturbing adventures, *Dymer* finds himself lying upon a hilltop dying of hunger. Even in this state of decrepitude, *Dymer* deigns to weigh the universe by his own wisdom, considering the “silly earth” and the “business of perpetual death and birth” as a kind of “meaningless precision.”⁶⁰ *Dymer* feels the universe accusing him in the starlight. Despite committing the murder, *Dymer* claims his own innocence and then falls asleep in the dew, his empty stomach grumbling against the world’s unjust treatment of him.

Walsh is doubtless correct that the themes here are “totalitarian utopia and lawless anarchy” and the “renunciation of wishful thinking.”⁶¹ And yet this crisis point in *Dymer* resonates with Lewis’ own biography, echoing his complaint against an unjust world that we

⁵³ Downing, *Most Reluctant Convert*, 118.

⁵⁴ Walsh, *Literary Legacy*, 46.

⁵⁵ Wilson, *C.S. Lewis*, ch. 9.

⁵⁶ Don W. King, “*Dymer*,” in *The C.S. Lewis Readers’ Encyclopedia*, ed. Jeffrey D. Schultz and John G. West, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 144.

⁵⁷ Downing, *Most Reluctant Convert*, 118.

⁵⁸ Heck, *From Atheism*, 124.

⁵⁹ Hilder, *Surprised by the Feminine*, 36. We will consider Hilder’s argument more fully in chapter six.

⁶⁰ King, CP, 179.

⁶¹ Walsh, *Literary Legacy*, 45.

see as early as *Spirits in Bondage* (1919).⁶² In “Satan Speaks,” there are no confederates for the mortal, who is betrayed by God, beauty, nature, sex, love, technology, myth, and reason. The one myth that prevails is Darwin’s, for the beast’s jaw should be bloody in the story of evolution. And in that grand narrative, all things move toward a mythic version of the heat death of the universe⁶³—a reflection of how Sköll finally devours Sol in the Norse story, thus instigating Ragnarök. Although seven years have passed in Lewis’ life between *Spirits in Bondage* and *Dymer*, and Lewis’ context has moved from being a soldier in WWI to working as an Oxford don, the later poem has a similar existential tension even though the mythic eschatological tinge has been exchanged for societal dystopia. On the hillside, fleeing monstrosities of his own making, Dymer’s complaints keep him awake in the morning cold, and he sits drenched among the clouds. As “the furrowed fog rolled down ahead,” Dymer continues his mountaintop pilgrimage before beginning a slide to the cliff’s edge, where

he tripped,
Stumbled and clutched—then panic, and no hope
To stop himself, once lost upon that slope.

And faster, ever faster, and his eye
Caught tree-tops far below. The nightmare feeling
Had gripped him. He was screaming: and the sky
Seemed hanging upside down. Then struggling, reeling,
With effort beyond thought he hung half kneeling,
Halted one saving moment. With wild will
He clawed into the hillside and lay still,⁶⁴

Hanging onto the edge of the cliff, Dymer’s feet dangle over the vast drop below. Though a footing eludes him, his resolve returns: “By God, I will not die,” said he. “Not yet.” Slowly he heaves himself to safety, “saved and spent,” but feeling “the big, round world beneath his breast, / The mother planet proven at his need,” Dymer then casts off the “shame of glad surrender.”⁶⁵

⁶² Lewis, *Spirits*, 3. In this period Lewis is caught between two conflicting pathways: disbelief in the face of his understanding of the evidence, in contrast with his continued poetic relationship with a creator of his imagination whom he approaches with some anger, see SBJ, 115.

⁶³ On Lewis’ inclusion of the scientific theory of heat death of the universe in the narrative of THS, but without making the link to Lewis’ poetic use of Ragnarök, see Ward, *Planet Narnia*, 196.

⁶⁴ King, CP, 183-184.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 184.

We cannot tell whether Dyer swears to God or challenges God in his refusal to die. In either case, Dyer surrenders to the earth's care—the earth he had just condemned as meaningless. There is in this passage a complex relationship between death and life that is congruent with themes of the poem, as Sayer notes.⁶⁶ At this moment, Dyer is caught between surrender and holding on. It is on the cliff's edge, moments before a dive or a drop, where we see the crux of C.S. Lewis' own spiritual crisis. The question of surrendering to a dive on the clifftop is also an image that forms the all-encompassing, integrating narrative reality of Lewis' life and writing, found in one form or another in every expression of Lewis' literature, including his poetry, his letters, his fiction, and his work as a literary scholar and Christian cultural critic.

To demonstrate that these scenes on the edge of a cliff are essential to Lewis' narrative spiritual theology, and remembering that Lewis' "doctrine of death" is rooted in conversion, we turn to two central moments in Lewis' conversion: the summer of 1930 and the autumn of 1931. In an 8 Jul 1930 letter to his friend, Arthur Greeves, Lewis wrote that learning to dive was spiritually significant for him: "I learned to dive wh[ich] is a great change in my life & has important (religious) connections. ... They are still v[ery] ungraceful dives but I do get in head first."⁶⁷ As Andrew Lazo notes, there are moments in the letter that speak of beginning again and a tangible connection to immortality—spiritual notes that suggest the tenor of this time in Lewis' life.⁶⁸ While Lewis does not explain further in the extant letters, the importance of his dive returns in a manuscript that shows his attempt to tell his theistic conversion narrative, "Early Prose Joy" (c. 1930-31). Here is the pinnacle of that conversion narrative:

The same year and the same month I learned an art which I had been trying to learn since boyhood. I learned how to dive. I am still not a good diver, but I do get into the water head first. Nothing is simpler than this art. You do not need to do anything, you need only to stop doing something—to abstain from all attempt at self-preservation—to obey the command which Saint Augustine heard in [a] different context, Securus te projice.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Sayer, *Jack*, 212-213.

⁶⁷ CLI 915.

⁶⁸ Lazo, "Correcting the Chronology," 57.

⁶⁹ Lewis, "Early Prose Joy," 40. See Lazo's transcription for corrections which I have omitted. This passage was first published in Green and Hooper, *C.S. Lewis*, 108, where the authors link the dive motif between the letter and "Early Prose Joy."

The Latin phrase, “throw yourself down fearlessly,” is from Augustine’s *Confessions*:

Why standest thou in thyself, and so standest not? Cast thyself upon Him, fear not He will not withdraw Himself that thou shouldst fall; cast thyself fearlessly upon him, He will receive, and will heal thee.⁷⁰

The links to Lewis’ cruciform spirituality of self-surrender are clear, but the contrast with Dyer is also striking: Dyer stood solo and lost his footing but only surrendered when he had saved himself; he refused to fully cast himself down, walking away to face the destiny he carved out by his deeds. Linking Lewis’ first and last narratives, like Orual as she sets out to write her book, Dyer and Orual are each anti-Augustinian.

Augustine’s exhortation to cast oneself on the Lord connects not just with Pauline self-death, but the dive that is the crucial moment for Tangle in George MacDonald’s “The Golden Key.”⁷¹ Already we see a confluence of images: the spiritual call to self-surrender evidenced in the intentional head-first dive. The dive that we see in his letter to Barfield and “Early Prose Joy” is both a doing and a not doing, an action and a letting go. Lewis speaks of “surrender” in *Surprised by Joy*, but it is his first Christian conversion story, the allegorical *Pilgrim’s Regress* (1933), that has the most striking parallel with these dive images.⁷² *Regress* is neither a typical modern-era novel nor merely a general allegory about Christian life, as Hsiu-Chin Chou explains:

Despite the proclaimed objective to *generalize* through allegorical imagination, or representation, of an individual’s pilgrimage, C.S. Lewis’s allegory and apologia—*The Pilgrim’s Regress*—is most truly based on his *personal* history of conversion, which is largely intellectually engaged, as can be seen in its full account of the dialectic of Lewis’s own philosophical progress....⁷³

To the degree that it is a personal account, *Pilgrim’s Regress* captures the moment of Lewis’ conversion in the character of Pilgrim John. After many days of travelling toward the goal of an Island in the west, escaping some temptations while falling into other traps, John finds himself on the edge of a great canyon. Like Dyer before him and Orual after, he is standing

⁷⁰ Augustine, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, trans. E.B. Pusey (London: Dent, 1907), 169.

⁷¹ George MacDonald, *Dealings with the Fairies* (Miami: HardPress, 2017), 248-308.

⁷² While Doris Myers does not link the “dive” motif, her analysis of TWHF alongside *Regress* is important, *Lewis in Context*, 211-213.

⁷³ Chou, “Problem of Faith,” 15. Most treatments of *Regress* are autobiographical, as mine is, but Chou argues for the cultural-critical nature of the text integrated with a more personal allegorical conversion narrative. See also *Regress*, xviii-xix.

in the cold dark, hanging between life and death. John then hears a voice, that of the Landlord whom he has been trying to escape in his quest for the Island:

“What am I to do?” said John.

“Which you choose,” said the voice. “Jump, or be thrown. Shut your eyes or have them bandaged by force. Give in or struggle.”

“I would sooner do the first, if I could.”

“Then I am your servant and no more your master. The cure of death is dying. He who lays down his liberty in that act receives it back. Go down to Mother Kirk.”⁷⁴

John obediently goes down to Mother Kirk. Though the conversion narratives are quite different, John’s confession to Mother Kirk is similar to Lewis’ surrender in *Surprised by Joy* (1955): “I have come to give myself up.”⁷⁵ It is a wincing surrender, a withering convert handing himself over to the authorities after a great flight toward freedom. Two decades later, Lewis retold this story in non-allegorical prose: “I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England.”⁷⁶ Without hope, Pilgrim John asks what he must do, and his fellow traveller, Vertue, answers with a smile: “It is only necessary ... to abandon all efforts at self-preservation.” John realises then “that they have brought me here to kill me.”⁷⁷ In a manner beyond what he could know, John speaks the truth. The final act of submission—the dying that is the cure of death—is a head-first plunge into a dark pool. Despite temptations for John to abandon this madness, John follows Vertue into a dive. “And how John managed it or what he felt I did not know,” the narrator explains, “but he also rubbed his hands, shut his eyes, despaired, and let himself go.”⁷⁸

The echo in John’s story and Lewis’ 1930 lesson in diving is clear: “It was not a good dive, but, at least, he reached the water head first.”⁷⁹ Indeed, the amateur dancer *qua* diving coach Owen Barfield may be the human model for Lewis’ image of the diver in *Miracles*:

[The Diver] ... first reducing himself to nakedness, then glancing in mid-air, then gone with a splash, vanished, rushing down through green and warm water into black and cold water, down through increasing pressure into the death-like region of ooze and slime and old decay; then up again, back to colour and light, his lungs almost

⁷⁴ Lewis, *Regress*, 170.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 173.

⁷⁶ Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 228-229.

⁷⁷ Lewis, *Regress*, 174.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 175.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 174.

bursting, till suddenly he breaks surface again, holding in his hand the dripping, precious thing that he went down to recover.⁸⁰

It is important to note that the referent here has changed even though Lewis is using the same word image. Up to this moment, the dive—imaged as the entire movement of release, descent, and then reascent—has been a metaphor of spiritual life, capturing a theology of self-death and resurrection to new life that transcribes Lewis' Logic of Cruciformity into narrative form. Though the *Miracles* passage is about the Incarnation, we see in Lewis' cruciform spirituality that the two are united in the imitation motif as they are in the great U-shaped descent and ascent of Christ in Philippians 2. And as imitation is built into that Pauline Christ-hymn, so we live out the U-shaped pattern in our spiritual lives. The two realities of our spiritual pattern and the grand miracle of the Incarnation, the cross, and the Resurrection are united in Lewis. These two images are united in the U-shaped metaphor of self-death and new life as pictured in the dive, brought together as "this whole, huge pattern"⁸¹ of all of life.

The cliff/dive image in his letters, in "Early Prose Joy," and in the Grand Miracle parallels with *The Pilgrim's Regress* and *Till We Have Faces* in specific and intriguing ways. The pilgrim John and Queen Orual each find themselves in the dark, trembling on the cliff's edge with a long drop before them. Both are there out of desperation. Each is faced with the choice between suicide and the will of God, and in each scene a divine voice speaks out of the dark and their decision is sharpened. Orual, like John, can fly no longer. "Die before you die," the god commands her,⁸² just as Pilgrim John is told that "the cure of Death is dying." The need for the desperate choice has changed in the two decades between the two stories, but not the cause. Both John and Orual have been fleeing God and themselves, and it is time to surrender. In John's case, the need for the choice is because "resistance is gone"⁸³—which is parallel to Lewis' later memoir, where Lewis finds himself unable to resist "the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet."⁸⁴ Orual's resolve to throw herself off the cliff is akin to Lewis' temptation to ignore the

⁸⁰ Lewis, *Miracles*, 135.

⁸¹ Lewis, "Grand Miracle," 82.

⁸² Lewis, TWHF, 279.

⁸³ Lewis, *Regress*, 170.

⁸⁴ Lewis, SBJ, 228.

philosophical evidence of theism. If Orual throws herself bound into the rushing river, she is escaping the truth about herself—the character’s desperate choice that parallels her author’s temptation to intellectual suicide. In the search for truth, both Orual and John must surrender to the voice in the dark and move toward their respective paths of self-death. For both characters, it is the principle that they must die before they die—a dive for John and a descent into dreamlands for Orual, where she experiences the sort of “dying many deaths”⁸⁵ that John experiences in his own story.

Considering the entire U-shaped pattern of descent and ascent in the image of the dive, both the image of self-death as well as the hope of resurrection to new life are important. In *Faces*, there is only a little of Orual’s resurrected life, though it is a powerful legacy. In *Regress*, the ascent in the dive, the resurrection of new life, is also Lewis’ “regress”—his return to the road to slay the cultural dragons that are before him. As he grows in faith, Lewis will slay some cultural dragons with his apologetics and controversial writings. Eventually, though, he will prefer to sneak past these dragons and transform the imagination of culture at the roots.⁸⁶ The use of the image of the dive in these texts shows how cruciform spirituality is the all-encompassing, integrating narrative reality for Lewis, captured elegantly in the U-shaped word picture of the dive and in other images of surrender and new life in the deeper mythic elements in Lewis’ work. These images are woven into Lewis’ normative spirituality as they echo Paul’s cruciform theology of Philippians 2:5-11.

Returning to where this section began, we recognise that Dymer is simply incapable of a self-death that could lead to resurrection because he is unable to surrender himself completely. However, there is a progression in his spiritual development. In *Spirits in Bondage*, Lewis equates nature with Satan,⁸⁷ and the lyric cycle is a rejection of surrender to the world as Lewis experiences it. In 1919, Lewis refuses to give in to reality as he perceives it. By the time of *Dymer* in 1926, we see that surrender to nature is possible: Dymer feels a gratefulness for “the big, round world beneath his breast, / The mother planet proven at his need.”⁸⁸ But Dymer cannot yet surrender to death—either to slide off the “perilous cliff”⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Lewis, *Regress*, 174.

⁸⁶ See Lewis, “Sometimes Fairy Stories,” 35-38.

⁸⁷ E.g., the poem “Satan Speaks.”

⁸⁸ King, CP, 184.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 185.

or to make the intentional head-first dive that is both an action and a non-action. When Lewis is finally able to surrender to God, there is the ultimate integration and emergence of the full narrative shape of his life, which is the U-shaped comedy of death and resurrection portrayed in his fiction and nonfiction. And, in that moment, Lewis is finally able to dive.⁹⁰

The Fairy-Tale Form in Lewis' Fiction

Eucatastrophe and Fairy Tale

The dive is a word picture that aptly captures the U-shaped nature of cruciform imagery in Lewis' autobiography, fiction, and apologetics. J.R.R. Tolkien's understanding of eucatastrophe can be a helpful introduction to the integrative nature of the U-shaped narrative in Lewis' fiction that approximates Frye's U-shaped narratology. In his famous lecture, printed as the essay "On Fairy-stories," Tolkien develops a concept of "the true form of fairy-tale" using the neologism "eucatastrophe."⁹¹ This "highest function" of fairy story is the consolation of the tale, "the joy of the happy ending: or more correctly of the good catastrophe, the sudden joyous 'turn.'"⁹² Deeper than simply a happy ending, it is a "sudden and miraculous grace" that works in concert with sorrow and failure and "dyscatastrophe" in the tale to provide "joy of deliverance." It also provides for the reader something like a numinous experience: "a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief," so that it gives a reader a peculiar "catch of the breath, a beat and lifting of the heart, near to (or indeed accompanied by) tears."⁹³

There is for Tolkien an intimate connection between the reader's experience of eucatastrophe and the religious centre of his understanding. In the body of the lecture, he makes the link of eucatastrophe to *Evangelium*, good news, the Gospel story. In the epilogue, Tolkien makes the connection more overt: "The Gospels contain a fairy-story, or a story of a larger kind which embraces all the essence of fairy-stories."⁹⁴ Tolkien does not just mean the mythical, marvellous, and artistic aspects of the story within the Gospels, but that,

⁹⁰ It is also critical to note that the dive cannot be forced or accidental, as in the peril of Jill and Eustace at the cliff's edge in C.S. Lewis, *The Silver Chair* (London: Fontana Lions, 1980), 21-23. We return to questions of consent in the concluding chapter.

⁹¹ Tolkien, "On Fairy-stories," 81.

⁹² *Ibid*, 81.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 81.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 83.

in C.S. Lewis' terms, myth has become fact when Christ took on flesh to redeem the world.

In Tolkien's words,

this story has entered History and the primary world; the desire and aspiration of sub-creation has been raised to the fulfillment of Creation. The Birth of Christ is the eucatastrophe of Man's history. The Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the story of the Incarnation. This story begins and ends in joy. It has pre-eminently the "inner consistency of reality."⁹⁵

Beginning and ending, creation and fulfilment, the pinnacle of the U-shaped Gospel story is, for Tolkien, the Nativity. David Russell Mosley is correct that the "Gospel is, for Tolkien, the greatest fairy tale, is, in fact, the source for all fairy tales, even those that come before it."⁹⁶ While making the same connections between the story of Christ and the form of fairy tale, Lewis would want to turn the frame slightly. The Logic of Cruciformity suggests that the U-shaped pattern of death and resurrection is the Divine Principle. The fairy-tale form evokes numinous Joy, Lewis would argue, because it touches on "a rhythm not only of all creation but of all being."⁹⁷ Though "story rarely achieves a perfect fusion of theme and plot," as John Haigh notes,⁹⁸ Lewis argues that there is an "internal tension in the heart of every story between the theme and the plot" that constitutes "its chief resemblance to life."⁹⁹ Lewis thinks that this synchronicity of form and content is a reflection of divine realities, and Tolkien employs the same critical facility in linking fairy story with Gospel. This rhythm of death and resurrection, surrender and new life, is the U-shaped form of the great eucatastrophic turn that Tolkien invites readers to recognise in the basic shape of fairy stories.

There is for Tolkien, then, the U-shaped comedic narrative in the very form and in the highest operation of fairy tale. Scholars such as Bruce Edwards have made the link between Lewis' approach to writing fiction and Tolkien's theoretical framing of fantasy:

⁹⁵ Ibid, 83.

⁹⁶ David Russell Mosley, *Being Deified: Poetry and Fantasy on the Path to God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 198. Pressing in on the importance of this distinction, see Sharin Schroeder, "Genre Problems: Andrew Lang and J.R.R. Tolkien on (Fairy) Stories and (Literary) Belief," in *Informing the Inklings: George MacDonald and the Victorian Roots of Modern Fantasy*, ed. Michael Partridge and Kirstin Jeffrey Johnson (Hamden, CT: Winged Lion Press, 2018), 149-179.

⁹⁷ Lewis, PoP, 140.

⁹⁸ John D. Haigh, "C.S. Lewis and the Tradition of Visionary Romance," in *Word and Story in C.S. Lewis*, ed. by Peter J. Schakel and Charles A. Huttar (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1991), 198.

⁹⁹ Lewis, "On Stories," 44.

The emphasis in Lewis's fiction (and nonfiction) is always "seeing with the heart," of apprehending images and tracing metaphors that instill faith and inspire journeys into the never-never land of the spirit.... And the perfect genre for hosting such stories and themes is the fairy-tale. Tolkien himself made explicit the connection between how fairy-tales touch the soul and how the Gospel account of the incarnation embodies "true history...."¹⁰⁰

It is not incidental, then, that the full title of Tolkien's first published fairy story is *The Hobbit, or There and Back Again*. The fairy tale is essentially U-shaped both in the form of the plot and in the inner working of the story. Lewis, I argue in this section, is largely moulded by the there-and-back-again U-shaped eucatastrophic form of fairy tale in his fiction as it echoes Frye's U-shaped comedy of the Gospel told in Pauline texts and played out in believers' lives.

The Pilgrim's Regress

Lewis concludes his theistic attempt to tell his conversion story, "Early Prose Joy," by rooting himself in Augustine's *Confessions* tradition.¹⁰¹ With the aptly-titled *The Pilgrim's Regress*, Lewis evokes Bunyan's conversion story tradition, written not in the form of prayer like Augustine, but as an allegorical romance. Mona Dunckel discusses the importance of allegory to Lewis' contemporary scholarship and his lifelong exploration of the genre, even though *Regress* was his only formal allegory. *Regress* was, Dunckel argues, "a veiled account of his real spiritual journey to salvation."¹⁰² In using this form, Lewis is not merely describing the intellectual and spiritual process of his faith discovery, as he does in *Surprised by Joy*.¹⁰³ Instead, in using allegory to shape the conversation, Valiliu argues that Lewis attempts to

¹⁰⁰ Bruce L. Edwards, "Patches of Godlight': C.S. Lewis as Imaginative Writer," in *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy: Volume 2: Fantasist, Mythmaker, and Poet*, ed. Bruce L. Edwards (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 4. See also Edward G. Zogby, S.J., "Triadic Patterns in Lewis's Life and Thought," in *The Longing for a Form: Essays on the Fiction of C.S. Lewis*, ed. Peter J. Schakel (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1977), 33; Allen B. Robertson, "Two Paths to Joy: C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien on Joy and Eucatastrophe," in *Both Sides of the Wardrobe: C.S. Lewis, Theological Imagination, and Everyday Discipleship*, ed. Rob Fennell (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2015), 20-31. Lewis' references to eucatastrophe are rare; see his 27 Oct 1949 letter to Tolkien, CLII 990-991; Lewis, SBJ, 145.

¹⁰¹ Lewis, "Early Prose Joy," 40.

¹⁰² Mona Dunckel, "C.S. Lewis as Allegorist: *The Pilgrim's Regress*," in *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy: Volume 3: Apologist, Philosopher, and Theologian*, ed. Bruce L. Edwards (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 29.

¹⁰³ The biographies typically retell this story, but see also Downing, *Most Reluctant Convert*; Heck, *From Atheism*. Norbert Feinendegen's recent lengthy essay, "The Philosopher's Progress: C.S. Lewis' Intellectual Journey from Atheism to Theism," *Journal of Inklings Studies* 8, no. 2 (2018): 103-143 considers the philosophical pathway to theism comprehensively.

put in story form “the converging paths of romanticism and rationalism”¹⁰⁴ of his own life, or what Chou calls “the dialectic of Lewis’s own philosophical progress.”¹⁰⁵ Lewis pictures this binary reality in the *Mappa Mundi* of *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, with regions north of the road representing the rationalist temptations Lewis imagines, and regions south of the road representing the romantic traps that might waylay the pilgrim.¹⁰⁶

Yet, considering the title again, it is striking that Lewis chose “regress” instead of “progress”—particularly in the days when Freudian psychology was finding its way into the social imaginary of Lewis’ world.¹⁰⁷ To hint at psychological regression, personal retrogression, atavism, anachronism, or intellectual conservatism is a risky move for Lewis in 1933. And yet, the polyvalent “regress” allows us to think of the *return* aspect of the narrative rather than merely the “progress” to the moment of conversion. Though he shares very little that is positive about his childhood faith in *Surprised by Joy*, it is essential for Lewis to emphasise the return, what Downing calls a rediscovery of “the childlike sense of wonder and imagination that he had lost,” as well as a return to classic authors, restored moral choices, and a Christian worldview.¹⁰⁸ Downing is right that “Lewis’s books abound in metaphors of return, of looking back or going back.”¹⁰⁹ Considered from a structural perspective, *The Pilgrim’s Regress* in this sense follows the fairy-tale element of U-shaped, comedic, eucatastrophic there-and-back-again tales.

The there-and-back-again nature of *The Pilgrim’s Regress* is pictured in the title itself and marks a distinctive revision of Bunyan’s *Progress* or other narratives behind the text.¹¹⁰ Everyman “John” sets out from the land of Puritania, trying to escape the Landlord’s threat of punishment and in search of the Island of his dreams in the West. Like Lewis’ *Dymer* and Bunyan’s Christian, John faces a series of temptations and opportunities in various encounters upon the road. Leaving behind the disintegrative but progress-styled *Dymer*,

¹⁰⁴ Valiliu, “Romantic Rationalist,” 105.

¹⁰⁵ Chou, “Problem of Faith,” 15.

¹⁰⁶ See Lewis, SBJ, 113. See “Southernness” in Adam Mattern, “An Image of the Discarded: C.S. Lewis’s Use of the Medieval Model in His Planetary Fiction” (MA thesis, Signum University, 2019), 25.

¹⁰⁷ Lewis describes Freudian psychological analysis as part of what he called “the New Look” at Oxford in the 1920s, SBJ, 203.

¹⁰⁸ Downing, “Editor’s Introduction,” xxiii.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, xxiii.

¹¹⁰ Augustine’s *Confessions* are a progress, as is Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, which Daigle-Williamson argues is the primary text behind *Regress, Reflecting the Eternal*, 21-40. Griffin notes other possible Ur-texts, such as *Everyman*, “The Dream of the Rood,” and *Piers the Plowman*, none of which have a strong there-and-back-again pattern, *Spirituality*, 59.

who after a certain kind of personal recovery descends into absurdity, Lewis follows Bunyan in having his pilgrim travel the dangerous road of discipleship. While the Celestial City is Christian's goal in *Pilgrim's Progress* with Christian's conversion early in the tale, Lewis' allegory is primarily a conversion narrative. The pilgrim John's trials are pulling him away from or preparing him for his initial surrender to the Landlord—culminating in a dive that echoes the death-and-resurrection pattern—and showing the “back-again” portion of the tale is a prophecy of Lewis' vocation as an apologist and cultural critic.¹¹¹ Despite the elusive nature of moments in *The Pilgrim's Regress*, we can see the clear U-shaped pattern of the there-and-back-again fairy-tale form in Frye's analysis. The dive, which most imaginatively demonstrates the U-shaped pattern of cruciform death and resurrection, comes at the zenith of the plot of *The Pilgrim's Regress*, which corresponds with the “threateningly low point” in Lewis' own divine comedy.¹¹² Whether instinctively or intentionally, we see in Lewis' conversion narrative many of the visual metaphors that he uses to represent cruciform spirituality in his works. The cliff's edge, a dive, surrender after a dash for liberty, self-death and new creation, death and resurrection, descent and ascent, conversion, and return—all of these images portray Lewis' rich cruciform imagination. The fairy-tale there-and-back-again eucatastrophic pattern informs the structures of Lewis' incipient fiction project.

Narnia

When asked why he wrote Narnia in a particular mode, Lewis explains that the genre of fairy tale was the form that best fits the content that was bubbling up inside of him.¹¹³ I have already noted the journeying nature of Lewis' fiction and its connection to his own spiritual development, and the Narnia tales are romances in the classic sense of adventure stories with elements of fantasy and quest narrative. Colin Manlove explores Lewis' attention to narratology by considering the structural nature of Lewis' image-rooted storytelling, exploring how “the techniques of the narratives put across Lewis' vision” to

¹¹¹ It is worth remembering that “conversion” itself is a U-shaped word-image meaning “turn around.”

¹¹² Frye, *Great Code*, 169.

¹¹³ Lewis, “Sometimes Fairy Stories,” 37. Lewis loosely equates his kind of fantasy writing and fairy tales in “On Three Ways,” 57. Lewis calls his Narniad fairy tales in letters, e.g., CLII 961, CLIII 323, 992.

readers.¹¹⁴ While making no reference to Frye's work, Manlove notes a structural movement in Lewis' fiction similar to the U-shaped comedic narrative of departure and return of fairy tale. Of *Regress*, Manlove agrees with our analysis, that the pilgrim's journey "has proved not linear but circular, and his [John's] desire, which seemed to take him away from the Landlord, was actually directed towards him."¹¹⁵ In critical ways, then, the unification of form and content intimates essential meaning for Lewis, a pattern Stephen Metcalf notes.¹¹⁶

As there-and-back-again adventure tales, the Narnian chronicles typically have elements of going and returning that represent movements of theme, meaning, or character development. We noted above that Huttar observes a linear pattern and Humphrey a v-pattern when the series is considered as a whole. Though he uses a different spatial image, Manlove agrees with Huttar and Humphrey: "beginning and ending with books that deal with spiritual matters concerning Narnia as a whole and having in the middle books concerned with more individual and local exploits."¹¹⁷ Each of these scholars is intimating the narrative function of the U-shaped comedy. Thinking multidimensionally, five of the seven novels have the children begin in our world and then return to it after journeying in Narnia. The exceptions are *The Horse and His Boy*, which is a story set within the Narnian court in the golden age of Pevensie rule, and *The Last Battle*, where our world and the Narnian world converge in a paradisaic "true Narnia"—indicating an ultimate return. Within the Narnian U-shaped fairy tale frame of each story, the "there and back again" nature of the story is often at play. In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, the journey turns out to be a U-shaped regress for some (King Caspian and most of the crew of the *Dawn Treader*) and a linear progress for others (the Pevensies, Reepicheep, and Eustace).¹¹⁸ *The Horse and His Boy* also has a split narrative, where two characters rediscover home in Narnia and

¹¹⁴ Colin Manlove, "Caught Up into the Larger Pattern': Image and Narrative Structures in C.S. Lewis's Fiction," in *Word and Story in C.S. Lewis*, ed. by Peter J. Schakel and Charles A. Huttar (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1991), 258.

¹¹⁵ Manlove, "Images and Narrative," 259.

¹¹⁶ Stephen Metcalf, "Language and Self-consciousness: The Making and Breaking of C.S. Lewis' Personae," in *Word and Story in C.S. Lewis*, ed. by Peter J. Schakel and Charles A. Huttar (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1991), 109-44, esp. 129-135.

¹¹⁷ Manlove, "Images and Narrative," 275.

¹¹⁸ Even in this linear progress, Manlove suggests that the series of adventures in VDT is a series that is a "denial of series" as Aslan appears throughout, rather than just at climactic moments, "Images and Narrative," 269. Cf. Yuasa, *Christian Postmodernism*, 103.

Archenland (Bree the talking horse, and Shasta, who rediscovers his birth name of Cor), and who escape from slavery into new homes (Hwin and Aravis). *The Silver Chair* has the U-shaped there-and-back-again pattern in three concentric circles, with the Narnian there-and-back-again adventure to find Prince Rilian at the centre of the tale, an encounter in Aslan's country on either side of that adventure, and the schoolground conflict of Jill and Eustace's world that bookends the novel. Ward is right in noting the chiastic pattern of *Silver Chair* in a series of steps of descent and re-ascent "constructed like a letter V,"¹¹⁹ what Manlove calls "its cyclic narrative of descent, release, and return"¹²⁰—terms that approximate our use of the U-shaped structuralist heurism.

Most of the narrative patterns are more complex than a simple U-shaped there-and-back again plotline. Ward notes the mercurial nature of the character pathways of the four main pilgrims in *The Horse and His Boy*, which if looked at from above would appear like quicksilver separating and coming back together in a tray.¹²¹ While we saw in chapter two that the crucial moment of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* has a U-shaped death-and-resurrection scene that patterns the spiritual theological structure of the series, the narrative arc of the Narnian adventures within that book is quite complex. *The Magician's Nephew* has a U-shaped narrative, beginning and ending at Digory's dying mother's bedside. Structurally speaking, however, *The Magician's Nephew's* construction is intricate. Though it takes the U-shaped comedic form, and even follows the death of one world (Charn) with the new life of another (Narnia), there is a tragic element that hints at the inverted U-shaped pattern of Frye's category of tragedy.¹²² And yet, as Digory releases evil into the Narnian world in the form of Jadis, he does not repeat the tragedy of Adam in the garden. Digory's cruciform choice, then, bends the form of the narrative back towards comedy.

Despite complexities of this sort, the Narniad takes up the U-shaped there-and-back again pattern in its narrative structure. The there-and-back-again form structures the stories

¹¹⁹ Ward, *Planet Narnia*, 129.

¹²⁰ Manlove, "Images and Narrative," 269.

¹²¹ Ward, *Planet Narnia*, 154. Ward's attention to "dynamic images" here and in his consideration of "*Poeima*" in Lewis throughout *Planet Narnia* represent some approximations to structural analysis rarely considered in Lewis studies. On "*Poeima*" and "*Logos*" in Lewis' critical work, see EIC, 82-83; Mattern, "Image of the Discarded."

¹²² "The inverted U is the typical shape of tragedy, as its opposite is of comedy: it rises to a point of 'peripety' or tragedy or reversal of action, then plunges downward to a 'catastrophe,' a word which contains the figure of 'turning down,'" Frye, *Great Code*, 176.

as we see the U-shaped comedic turn in character development and eucatastrophic plot points within the tale, sometimes with great intricacy of detail.

That Hideous Strength

Narnia is not Lewis' only conscious choice of the fairy tale as form. At the completion of the Ransom Cycle is *That Hideous Strength*, a close-of-war dystopia offering an overt critique of Nazi-styled uses of science and technology to mould society. It is surprising that this psychologically complex, dark, contemporary science fiction novel is subtitled *A Modern Fairy-Tale for Grown-Ups*. The subtitle contains an intertextual hint, betraying its connection to another important adult fairy tale, George MacDonald's *Phantastes: A Faerie Romance for Men and Women*—a book that we saw in chapter one had an incalculable influence on Lewis' view of spirituality. In most of the obvious ways, without fairy godmothers and woodcutter huts, *That Hideous Strength* does not feel like a fairy tale. Moreover, a surface-level reading of the text does not appear to reveal a "there and back again" structure: *That Hideous Strength* is a two-paths book, the way of the N.I.C.E. and the way of the Manor at St Anne's, and one of the paths is the ultimate destination for all who recover their sense of self. Although *That Hideous Strength* does not follow the traditional there-and-back formula of fairy stories of the other two planetary novels, there are complex motifs of death and resurrection in the book, including various pathways that converge and diverge and ultimately approximate Frye's U-shaped pattern. A closer look at *That Hideous Strength* can demonstrate the narrative patterns of cruciformity.

While it has elements of the romance genre in terms of adventure, quest, court, Merlin, magic, and fantasy,¹²³ *That Hideous Strength* forms a peculiar fairy-tale romance in the more contemporary sense of the love story between Jane and Mark Studdock. In doing so, *That Hideous Strength* approximates Frye's U-shaped pattern in the structure of the book as the twinned pathways of Mark and Jane demonstrate the cruciform nature of Lewis' thought in this fairy tale. Though "united" in matrimony at the beginning of the book, Mark and Jane move away from each other in the narrative on complementary and divergent pathways. As Downing notes, their paths can be traced from an overhead viewer, Jane moving by train toward the Manor at St Anne's and her confrontation with the powers of

¹²³ See Thomas L. Martin, "Merlin, Magic, and the Meta-fantastic: The Matter of *That Hideous Strength*," *Arthuriana* 21, no. 1 (2011): 66-84.

natural and spiritual good, and Mark racing by car toward the N.I.C.E. and his confrontation with the powers of technocratic evil.¹²⁴

That Hideous Strength begins by problematising marital mutuality with Jane reflecting on her wedding vows: “‘Matrimony was ordained, thirdly,’ said Jane Studdock to herself, ‘for the mutual society, help, and comfort that the one ought to have of the other.’”¹²⁵ Jane laughs bitterly at the idea. Marriage, for her, “had proved to be the door out of a world of work and comradeship and laughter and innumerable things to do, into something like solitary confinement.”¹²⁶ Mark is an absentee husband, Jane’s ambition is drifting, she is lonely, and she finds to her discomfort that she is falling into societal expectations for wives of dons. At the beginning of the novel, Mark and Jane are not one in spirit. As the story progresses, Mark and Jane each face their own journey as, in Kath Filmer’s words, “both learn that they must ‘die to self.’”¹²⁷ Moreover, as they each move toward an individual death of the self, these pathways are connected to two instinctive temptations that Lewis himself faced in his spiritual journey.

Mark’s temptation is the desire to fit in, to become part of “the Inner Ring.”¹²⁸ What Kathryn Lindskoog calls his “foolish greed” manifested in his need to please others¹²⁹ makes Mark a puppet of the bureaucratically tyrannical N.I.C.E. Mark’s inability to think critically about the allegiances he has forged makes him unable to see the horrible things that his organisation is doing, including the utter destruction of a small town; the undermining and

¹²⁴ The “structural symmetries” that invite these reflections on “the Studdocks’ opposite pilgrimages” is that of Downing, *Planets in Peril*, 58. See also Daigle-Williamson, *Reflecting the Eternal*, whose chapter splits to follow the twinned pathways of Mark and Jane. “The human race is to become all Technocracy,” Mark is told by a N.I.C.E. official, THS, 259. See *Abolition of Man* where Lewis speaks of how “the man-moulders of the new age will be armed with the powers of an omniscient state and an irresistible scientific technique: we shall get at last a race of conditioners who really can cut out all posterity in what shape they please”—referring not specifically to Nazi Germany but to bureaucratic possibilities in England, 71.

¹²⁵ Lewis, THS, 13.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, 13.

¹²⁷ Filmer, *Mask or Mirror*, 36.

¹²⁸ Lewis admitted that his “happiest hours are spent with three or four old friends,” Jacobs, *Narnian*, xvii. As much as Lewis enjoyed these sorts of coteries, his chapter on “Friendship” in *Four Loves* notes the value of “a circle of true Friends” (103) and the damaging exclusivity that can come from those not being “full members of the male circle,” 107-108. His lecture, “The Inner Ring,” given as THS was moving toward publication, most poignantly captures the “desire which draws us into Inner Rings,” in *The Weight of Glory, and Other Addresses* (New York: HarperOne, 2000), 149. One passage evokes Mark’s crisis in particular: “[Y]ou will be drawn in ... not by a desire for gain or ease, but simply because at that moment, when the cup was so near your lips, you cannot bear to be thrust back again into the cold outer world. It would be so terrible to ... know that you had been tried for the Inner Ring and rejected,” 153-154. Lewis himself makes the link between THS and the Inner Ring in “A Reply to Professor Haldane,” 103.

¹²⁹ Lindskoog, *Mere Christian*, 167.

negation of education; the perpetuation of lies in the public media; overt bigotries of many kinds; a Nazi-like desire to cleanse “the unfit” and “backward races”¹³⁰; and the torture and attempted rape of his own wife. As he begins to doubt the N.I.C.E. and begins to prove less pliable, Mark is confined within the N.I.C.E. compound, subjected to a series of peculiar brainwashing operations, and is ultimately challenged to demonstrate his allegiance. At the crucial moment of his faltering initiation into the inner circle of the N.I.C.E., he is commanded to trample upon and blaspheme a “ghastly and realistic” crucifix.¹³¹ Mark balks at the command, asserting that the Crucifixion is pure superstition and the action could have no real meaning. His N.I.C.E. master’s assertion of the importance of this action to his initiation causes Mark, for the first time in his life, to seriously consider the Christian story as something more than a social construct or a fairy tale. Though Mark continues to dismiss the Crucifixion as a spiritual reality, Downing is right that Mark’s stand against the N.I.C.E. is “the first courageous thing he has ever done in his life,” and that in an instinct deeper than self-preservation, this moment is “the beginning of his recovery.”¹³²

When Mark finally declares his loyalties, he undergoes a death to the self, giving up his desire for recognition, comradeship, and power. This self-death is initiated by a discovery of the straight path, which he finds by “losing himself to the Crooked, the Perverse, the Bent”¹³³—a man of straw who was finally “having his first deeply moral experience. He was choosing a side....”¹³⁴ But the challenge for Mark to set aside his desire for the Inner Ring represents a powerful renunciation of the self. In the face of the demand to perform the blasphemous act of desecration of the cross, though disbelieving in Christianity, Mark finds his entire moral life coming into focus. Finally, Mark cries out at his brainwasher: “It’s all bloody nonsense, and I’m damned if I do any such thing.”¹³⁵ In that moment, Mark rejects that which he values most deeply, the fellowship of others, in favour of a moral choice he does not fully understand.

¹³⁰ Lewis, THS, 42.

¹³¹ Ibid, 334.

¹³² Downing, *Planets in Peril*, 57.

¹³³ Ibid, 57-58.

¹³⁴ Lewis, THS, 336.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 337. Tom Shippey notes the irony in Studdock’s words, so that they are “literally, if unintentionally true,” and the move allows Studdock to invent “for himself what Tolkien called ‘the theory of courage’” from Norse myth, “The Ransom Trilogy and the Discovery of Myth,” in *Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, ed. Rob McSwain and Michael Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 247.

Jane's temptation is the precise mirror image of Mark's: Mark deeply desires to be drawn into the inner circle; Jane fears being drawn into something she cannot control. Thus, like Mark's, her death to self must be a death to that aversion. In the previous volume in the Ransom Cycle, *Perelandra*, the Lewis character-narrator of the novel analyses his own fear of a loss of self as he fights growing malaise while walking to meet Ransom at night. It is not just that Lewis is afraid of meeting a supernatural spirit, but that he is afraid that he "might get 'drawn in'":

I suppose everyone knows this fear of getting 'drawn in'—the moment at which a man realises that what had seemed mere speculations are on the point of landing him in the Communist Party or the Christian Church—the sense that a door has just slammed and left him on the inside.¹³⁶

Jane's fear of being trapped is precisely the same. Her fear of being drawn in is confirmed in her disastrous marriage to Mark, where being locked inside a room after the door has slammed closed is an accurate description of Jane's feeling. Moreover, Jane is far from open to the Christian maternalism of Mrs Dimble, the academic curiosities of Dr Dimble, and the peculiar gender and class realities of the coterie at the Manor of St Anne's.¹³⁷

Jane's role forms an unusual parallel to Mark's in the novel as Mark's space of power is his social status as a Bracton don, while Jane's is her ability as a seer to perceive the critical moments in the nation's history through dreams. The contrast of the societal, structural, and institutional power of Mark with the charismatic, visionary power of personal integrity in Jane is clear in the novel. As the N.I.C.E. seem eager to recruit Mark, so the Manor folk hope that Jane will join their side. The reasons, however, are quite different. The N.I.C.E. give Mark busy work, pretending to be interested in his academic CV while being truly interested in his relationship with Jane. In truth, the "twinned" powers are disproportionate in the novel, so that both the N.I.C.E. and the Manor are seeking Jane for *her* ability. The Manor movement under Ransom's directorship hopes that Jane can use her

¹³⁶ Lewis, *Perelandra*, 10.

¹³⁷ On the one hand, the enemies of the N.I.C.E. at St Anne's are engaged in an unusual project in egalitarianism, where men and women trade days where they are responsible for kitchen and cleaning work, and where—to Jane's consternation—common distinctions of class are disregarded in favour of a concerted appreciation of membership. On the other hand, the Manor movement retains views of marriage and gender, not always in agreement, that threaten to seal in Jane's cruel and alienating experience of marriage thus far. See also Myers, *Lewis In Context*, 101-102; Steven Elmore, "The Abolition of Woman': Gender and Hierarchy in Lewis' Space Trilogy," in *Women and C.S. Lewis: What His Life and Literature Reveal for Today's Culture*, ed. Carolyn Curtis and Mary Pomroy Key (Oxford: Lion Books, 2015), 109-120.

gift to see the evil that is afoot so they can act, while the N.I.C.E. desire to arrest the vision of the seer, to destroy her gift before it reveals their position. When Jane consults Dr Grace Ironwood in the Manor at St Anne's for advice on how to get rid of the visions, she realises that the Manor folk believe the visions to be veridical. Jane's disgust is palpable: "I am afraid I don't believe in that sort of thing."¹³⁸ As the N.I.C.E.'s reach extends, and she is finally faced with joining the St Anne's resistance movement, Jane's revulsion causes her to reassert her life vision statement:

But a settled distaste for what she called "all this nonsense" remained. She was not indeed sure that it was nonsense: but she had already resolved to treat it as if it were. She would not get "mixed up in it," would not be drawn in. One had to live one's own life. To avoid entanglements and interferences had long been one of her first principles.¹³⁹

Even in marriage, Jane wanted to assert her independence, and thus some "resentment against love itself, and therefore against Mark, for thus invading her life, remained." In an intriguing observation in the text, we recognise "how much a woman gives up in getting married"—a fact the narrator recognises, but Mark does not. Ultimately, we discover that Jane's "fear of being invaded and entangled was the deepest ground of her determination not to have a child."¹⁴⁰

In individual ways, Jane and Mark are helped past their antipathetic fears of being drawn in/being left out. As Mark's final moment of crisis and confrontation with otherness is aided by circumstances in the control of the N.I.C.E., so Jane finds herself in the Manor group without having fully committed to their resistance movement. Once she has connected, however, she begins to let go of her resistance. Jane undergoes a profound spiritual experience, finding her self split into four competing versions of who she is (or should be): one receptive to Ransom the Director; one resistant to male control over her self; one who (like Mark) is discovering a long-hidden moral voice; and one self in the realm of numinous joy, "in the sphere of Jove, amid light and music and festal pomp, brimmed with life and radiant in health, jocund and clothed in shining garments."¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Lewis, THS, 66.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 72.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 73.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 151.

Jane's death to self, the setting aside of her "first principle" of ensuring she is never drawn in, occurs through a complex series of events. In Jane and Mark individually, however, the final sign of personal death and resurrection to new life is a willingness to give up the self. While Jared Lobdell suggests that "the polyphonic narrative intertwining Jane's story and Mark's" is the coming of Merlin,¹⁴² within the frame of their journeys this crucial moment of interconnectivity is that very moment when Mark and Jane are individually able to reject their prime impulses of being left out/drawn in. It is then, in that death to their mirror-image fear, that they begin moving back toward one another. Roughly, as Jane accepts the good (the Manor at St Anne's), she moves toward Mark by overcoming her fear of being coerced; as Mark rejects the evil (the N.I.C.E.), he moves toward Jane by overcoming his fear of being rejected.

Though these transformational pathways are twinned, the depth of their individual mortification is not equal. The difference is reflected in the symbolised geography, where Mark must travel miles over treacherous roads and with great danger to find Jane, while Jane walks a few steps from the Manor to the guest house. The one-sided appearance of Mark's humiliation, however, can be overdrawn. Though Jane's austere restraint and personal sorrow are easier for the reader to appreciate than Mark's buffoonery,¹⁴³ Mark and Jane each travel a great emotional distance to discover one another. Mark's return requires a reconfiguration of his true relationship to Jane as Mark realises he has been shockingly cavalier in the presence of a woman of greatness. Humiliated, ashamed, and just beginning to root himself in a life deeper than his own self-aggrandisement, when Mark seeks out Jane at St Anne's a change begins "which ought to have happened to him far earlier."¹⁴⁴ This change is first an internal consideration of his real relationship to Jane. Rather than always being conscientious of "her moods," he

thought of his own clumsy importunity..... Inch by inch all the lout and clown and clod-hopper in him was revealed to his own reluctant inspection; the coarse, male boor with horny hands and hobnailed shoes and beefsteak jaw ... blundering,

¹⁴² Jared Lobdell, *The Scientifiction Novels of C.S. Lewis: Space and Time in the Ransom Stories* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2004), 152.

¹⁴³ The imbalance between Mark and Jane may not merely be the contemporary reader's experience of the text but may have a deeper root. As Joe Christopher notes that Ransom is the Beatrice character for Jane in the novel, Marsha Daigle-Williamson argues that Jane plays that role for Mark, *Reflecting the Eternal*, 115-116.

¹⁴⁴ Lewis, THS, 380.

sauntering, stumping in where great lovers, knights and poets, would have feared to tread.... How had he dared?¹⁴⁵

Mark had always regarded Jane as a woman to be reckoned with rather than a goddess, never understanding the great condescension she had undertaken to receive him in the first place.

Having seen himself as he truly is, Mark gains “the humility and self-recognition needed to redeem him from moral failure.”¹⁴⁶ As a result of his self-recognition, he is able to see Jane in new ways and decides to release her from their promises. In that vision of her and his submission to her will, he discovers that he finally truly loves Jane as he should always have done. In surrendering to this love, he then encounters Venus manifested in her fearful form, “divinely tall, part naked, part wrapped in a flame-coloured robe,” emanating light, “enigmatic, ruthless,” and “inhumanly beautiful.”¹⁴⁷ Venus beckons Mark to return to the marriage bed. “Surely,” he thought at that moment, “I must have died”¹⁴⁸—a statement of resonant truth in Lewis’ work and Mark’s own path.

Jane’s final self-death, too, comes in a surrender to new ideas of marriage—this time not submitting to marriage as a cultural artefact in an outdated but useful institution, but entering marriage as a lover. She descends to Mark from her place in the Manor at St Anne’s, with Ransom’s final blessing, her spiritual experiences and all her fears of pain and loss in her mind. Her walk down the path to the cottage where Mark was waiting is also the pathway of self-surrender: “into the liquid light and supernatural warmth of the garden and across the wet lawn ... and past the seesaw and the greenhouse and the piggeries, going down all the time, down to the lodge, descending the ladder of humility.”¹⁴⁹ Past the piggeries and carrying with her the discovered humility that is an “erotic necessity,”¹⁵⁰ Jane surrenders both to the possibility of Mark’s rejection—the stolid posture of the don distant from his wife or the active refusal of her as lover—and to her own life as wife and mother and whatever comes after.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 381.

¹⁴⁶ Downing, *Planets in Peril*, 82.

¹⁴⁷ Lewis, THS, 382.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 382.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 382.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 148.

Though Jane's folly was not nearly as great as Mark's, and her temptation to avoid being drawn in not nearly as disastrous as Mark's complicity with the Inner Ring of evil, Jane's "ladder of humility" is no less a death to self than Mark's. Intriguingly, they each submit to the *old* spouse in their return—Mark submitting to the old Jane and Jane to the old Mark—neither knowing that a transformation has taken place in the other. Yet, their individual self-death leads to an openness to the other that brings together the thematic threads of the novel. The eucatastrophe of their individual paths is the desperate death to self that turns each narrative toward redemption and to each other. Their twin paths unite in humility, providing a fairy-tale ending both in romantic love and in the "return" of the U-shaped fairy-tale form. The novel concludes in the marriage bed, returning to the vows that began the book. The text leaves off as Jane enters Mark's Venusian chamber—an intriguing inversion of sexual imagery. In this entering, however, we see that in their loss of self Mark and Jane have each discovered the recovery of their own new selves in one another. They see how their interdependence could be "for the mutual society, help, and comfort that the one ought to have of the other" that had been the original intention of their marriage. To complete the death-and-resurrection motif, this scene is what Monika Hilder calls the "rebirth" of Jane and Mark's marriage.¹⁵¹

Descent and Ascent in Planetary Journeys

We see the U-shaped narrative patterning of C.S. Lewis' fairy stories in the echo of the biblical "comedy," the there-and-back-again form of the tale, and the eucatastrophic spiritual death-and-resurrection of character narratives within the tale. This U-shaped pattern is the spiritual theology of cruciformity embedded in Lewis' fiction. Each of the planetary books is a there-and-back-again tale of adventure very much like a fairy romance.¹⁵² Within his science fiction, Lewis reorients the planets to a medieval model¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Hilder, *Gender Dance*, 156.

¹⁵² Lewis thought he was writing "planetary romances," so that fairy tale, science fiction, and adventure tales are linked together as romances. See his description of "romance" in his "Afterward to the Third Edition" of *Pilgrim's Regress*, 208. He calls the Space Trilogy "my romances" through "A Reply to Professor Haldane," and in his letters refers to writing romance both of the Space Trilogy and other stories, including "The Quest of Bleheris" and perhaps Narnia, CLI 181, CLII 914, CLIII 872.

¹⁵³ See Ward, *Planet Narnia*, 47-53, 80-87, 106-8, 123-126, 143-149, 169-175, 195-198.

and redefines space as “the heavens” for theological and cultural-critical reasons.¹⁵⁴

Therefore, the most significant U-shaped narrative pattern pictures the planetary adventure as a descent from and re-ascent to the heavens.

In *Out of the Silent Planet*, the U-shaped descent into Malacandra and return to the heavens is the imagistic shape of Ransom’s loss and discovery of self.¹⁵⁵ We see this self-death in two particular areas. First, Ransom must die to specific aspects of his social imaginary, particularly his ideas about “civilisation” and “savagery.” Sanford Schwartz analyses the slow cultural deconstruction that Ransom experiences on Malacandra, moving from his view of the Malacandrans as “monstrous bestial predators”¹⁵⁶ waiting for a human sacrifice to a vision of the Malacandrans as technologically simple yet complex in other ways, such as poetry, scientific knowledge, artisanship, spiritual perspicuity, and peacefulness. While his captors are blind to the inversion, Ransom experiences “the transfiguration of the terrestrial vision of relentless evolutionary strife into a harmonious community that participates in the beneficent rationality of the cosmic order.”¹⁵⁷ In challenging paradigms of nineteenth-century thinking that “distort our relations to one another and the rest of the natural order,”¹⁵⁸ Lewis portrays in the character of Ransom the kind of death to self that is also a death to the world, a letting go of preconceived notions that limit spiritual vision.

Lewis begins his criticism of the valorisation of “civilisation” from the beginning of the Ransom Cycle. In the opening scenes of *Out of the Silent Planet*, the word “civilised” is used by one of the villains, Weston, to refer to a community that would liquidate or experiment upon intellectually disabled people.¹⁵⁹ Weston’s commitment to “civilisation” is authentic to his worldview, though the other villain, Lord Devine, treats these lofty imperial

¹⁵⁴ We see in this moment Lewis’ subversion of one mythology for another, the materialist myth for the Christian myth. In doing so, he is renaming Space, C.S. Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), 32; Downing, *Planets in Peril*, esp. 60-82. Downing notes that “Lewis devoted a great deal of his energy and expertise as a scholar to the task of rehabilitating the medieval worldview,” 63. See also Schwartz, *Final Frontier*, 16-18; Lobdell, *Scientifiction*, 49-52.

¹⁵⁵ Admitting that the structure is less clear in OSP and that he is modelling the structure from the more obvious pattern of *Perelandra*, Schwartz suggests a chiasmic structure around the central section of Ransom’s stay with the indigenous Malacandrans, showing concentric circles of voyage and escape moving out from that central core, 29, figure 1.1.

¹⁵⁶ Schwartz, *Final Frontier*, 20.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 20.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 20-21.

¹⁵⁹ Lewis, OSP, 19.

ideals as placeholders for his interest in wealth and power, reverting to “ironical remarks about the white man's burden and the blessings of civilization.”¹⁶⁰ When Ransom escapes his captors and lives with indigenous Malacandrans, he finds himself “being treated as if he were the savage and being given a first sketch of civilized religion.”¹⁶¹ The transformation comes to a crisis point as Ransom’s idyllic time of embedded anthropology comes to a sudden close with the “terrestrial, human and civilized sound ... of an English rifle.”¹⁶² Lewis’ inversion of the colonial narrative is complete with the death of Ransom’s close friend, Hyoui, who dies from a bullet aimed at Ransom. This transformation of his understanding of civilisation leads Ransom to a new sense of self in the universe.

Like Mark and Jane, Ransom must also die to the social fears he cultivates in himself. Walsh reads *Out of the Silent Planet* as a “reeducation” and a lesson in spiritual warfare, where Ransom needs to “[p]ut on all the armour which God provides” and stand firm.¹⁶³ As the novel begins, Ransom “doubts his own uncertain courage and his mind is filled with an appalling vision of space as void, dead, threatening.”¹⁶⁴ This fearfulness continues onto the planet itself, where he is terrified of the inhabitants. His belief about space and his understanding of “the savage” are each reconciled, and yet he remains afraid. His “progress toward the conquest of fear”¹⁶⁵ continues more subtly as Ransom avoids attending to his mission of facing a god-like invisible intelligence and the unknown creatures, the Sorns, which still play on his imagination.

An experience of brotherhood and the death of Hyoui finally set Ransom on the journey. By the time he arrives at his destination, and through the trials that accompany the journeys and the time on Melidorn, Ransom has been transformed. The ruling intelligence of Malacandra comforts Ransom: “You are guilty of no evil, Ransom of Thulcandra, except a little fearfulness.”¹⁶⁶ The final return to earth, Thulcandra, causes Ransom to leave behind all his fearfulness. Ransom begins *Out of the Silent Planet* as a fearful, hesitant, blundering “Pedestrian”; by the epistolary afterword to the novel, Ransom is a centred leader of an

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 30.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 68.

¹⁶² Ibid, 81.

¹⁶³ Chad Walsh, “The Reeducation of the Fearful Pilgrim,” in *The Longing for a Form: Essays on the Fiction of C.S. Lewis*, ed. Peter J. Schakel (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1977), 66, quoting Eph 6:11-12.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 66.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 68.

¹⁶⁶ Lewis, OSP, 142.

interplanetary counter-revolution. Walsh notes that “Ransom has been born or reborn to life on Malacandra”¹⁶⁷ and that “Malacandra is making a new man of him,”¹⁶⁸ but that new life comes with giving up of his own fearfulness and facing the path that is before him. Similarly, Downing notes that Ransom’s journey is much like the path of mysticism, where the ideal is complete self-surrender. Downing argues that in these self-deaths and the new life that grows in him, Ransom has undergone “a kind of mystical death and resurrection.”¹⁶⁹ In this way, the narrative structure of *Silent Planet*, the descent and ascent, the there-and-back-again tale, are in concert with the U-shaped pattern of Ransom’s own journey toward self-death and resurrection into a new being.

Lewis’ second published planetary romance, *Perelandra*, also has the descent and ascent pattern on the macro-level of the visit to Venus and at points within the narrative itself. Schwartz recognises what he calls a “ring structure” in *Perelandra*, “a structure comprised of a central core (chapters 8-10) surrounded by a balanced series of frames.”¹⁷⁰ This ring structure of *Perelandra* has the chiastic U-shaped comedic form noted by Frye and embedded within Lewis’ narrative spirituality of the cross. Following Ransom’s descent from the heavens into the great Perelandran sea, the floating islands of Perelandra rise and fall on the waves, as if demonstrating the rising and falling actions of Ransom as he struggles to determine his mission and fulfil it.

The U-shape pattern, specifically, occurs at the end of the hand-to-hand battle between Ransom and the Unman. Following days of wearisome argument and violence against the creatures of Perelandra, Ransom slowly realises that Weston had told the truth: Weston has indeed summoned satanic spirits into his self. Weston has become an Unman and Ransom is compelled to act. Following the Unman’s repeated acts of senseless torture of the beasts of Perelandra, Ransom arrests the Unman, and a fight ensues. What follows is an all-night sea race in the utter dark as the duelling figures race toward the fixed land that is the Edenic moral centre of the planet. When they can flee no longer, stilled with exhaustion, Ransom has one last hope that Weston would return to his own body. In the absolute darkness at the shores of the fixed land, Ransom offers Weston/the Unman a word

¹⁶⁷ Walsh, “Reeducation,” 67.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 69.

¹⁶⁹ Downing, *Region of Awe*, 105. Downing uses Evelyn Underhill’s definitions of mysticism.

¹⁷⁰ Schwartz, *Final Frontier*, 8-10, see Figure I.1 with a picture of the U-shaped chiastic structure.

of hope. “With ironic symmetry,” Joseph Pierce notes, Weston’s “proclamation of me-myself-I as God does not result in the attainment of godhood but the very loss of selfhood.”¹⁷¹ While Ransom pleads with him, the Unman uses the sound of Ransom’s words of clemency as a homing beacon to locate him in the dark. The Unman grabs Ransom from his seat and drags him down into the sea: “The waters closed over his head: and still his enemy pulled him down into the warm depth....”¹⁷² The great descent continues until, when Ransom decides he will drown, they ascend into the pitch-dark of a cave.

Remembering that Lewis’ geography represents the spiritual reality of the story, Ransom’s U-shaped adventure is not merely the grand storyline of Perelandra’s history—Ransom’s descent and his return to the heavens, captured well in the description of *Silent Planet* where Ransom is “falling out of the heaven, into a world.”¹⁷³ It is also played out within the mountain itself. Beginning with this descent and ascent into the heart of the mountain, Ransom’s journey within the mountain is a brace of mythic and biblical images. Fulfilling the prophecy of Genesis 3:16, he crushes the skull of the Satan while receiving a wounded heel. This Christ-wound is the dolorous stroke of Arthurian legend, and in the following novel Ransom is the Pendragon *redivivus*.¹⁷⁴ Lewis’ Dantean ascent from the depths of hell is played out in the hungry, dark, uncertain scramble out of the heart of the mountain.¹⁷⁵ When Ransom finally emerges after a series of descents and ascents in the mountains, Milton’s space-age Eden remains intact. Ransom greets the King and Queen of Perelandra in a scene that is drawn from Genesis and Ezekiel, from John and Revelation, from classical mythology, and from faërie.

And it is here on that ultimate mountaintop scene where the final set of U-shaped patterns occur as Ransom escapes from the mountain into a refreshing Perelandran garden. This escape is pictured in terms of a rebirth, “a second infancy, in which he was breast-fed by the planet Venus herself.”¹⁷⁶ “It did once cross his mind that he had died and felt no weariness because he had no body,”¹⁷⁷ though his wound reminds him that he is indeed

¹⁷¹ Pierce, *Catholic Church*, 1687.

¹⁷² Lewis, *Perelandra*, 171.

¹⁷³ Lewis, *OSP*, 40.

¹⁷⁴ I want to hold both biblical and Arthurian together, with Yuasa, *Christian Postmodernism*, 98, contra Patterson, *Ransoming the Waste Land*, 155.

¹⁷⁵ See Marsha Daigle-Williamson’s treatment of Dantean echoes in *Perelandra, Reflecting the Eternal*, 79-99.

¹⁷⁶ Lewis, *Perelandra*, 185.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 192.

alive. This image of death and rebirth is complete within the mountain, yet there is a further U-shaped pattern for Ransom. When Ransom finally emerges from the mist of his mind and the mist of the mountaintop, he begins the final descent of his Perelandran experience. In a shallow cup between the mountaintops, he sees his own “coffin-like chariot”—his transportation to and from Perelandra. This death-like coffin-ship is equally evocative: “It was prepared for his return. If he had said, ‘It is for my burial,’ his feelings would not have been very different.”¹⁷⁸ Resonating with death and new life images in each of these descents and ascents, Sayer notes the Christ images in the passage:

There is a close parallel between Ransom and Jesus Christ. Ransom offers his body and mind so that Perelandra can be saved. He undergoes a laceration of the flesh and a symbolic death. He descends into the underworld and ... rises again. In spite of fear, pain, and agony, he is open to the promptings of the Spirit and obedient to them.¹⁷⁹

After an extended period of struggle and sleeping, journeying through a complex tableau of intramontane worlds where he defeats the carnal manifestation of Satan, there is a consistent turn to language evocative of the Resurrection, the story of a new man who has given up his own life and finds himself in a resurrected body. The man who emerges from the tomb is “a new Ransom, glowing with health and rounded with muscle and seemingly ten years younger. In the old days he had been beginning to show a few grey hairs; but now the beard which swept his chest was pure gold.”¹⁸⁰

What follows is the transformative Great Dance within the longest denouement of any of Lewis’ books, where all that is unfulfilled because of the Satan of Genesis (and Milton) is finally fulfilled on Perelandra, including the deification of the Eve and Adam characters. Ransom then returns to the heavens, completing his resurrection, the last ascent from the depths of the waters below the mountain. When he returns to Earth, he is someone new, a Ransom who has undergone theosis but also the Ransom that he might always have been, the true Ransom. This entire cycle within *Perelandra* is rich with images of death and new life, self-surrender and resurrection within its numerous patterns of descent and ascent.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 193.

¹⁷⁹ Quoting Lewis, *Perelandra*, 258, Sayer, *Jack*, 280.

¹⁸⁰ Lewis, *Perelandra*, 30.

Death Restored to the Baptised Imagination

Returning for a moment to one of the U-shaped patterns in *Perelandra*, there is a disturbing tinge to the battle with the Unman. After the Unman attempts to murder him, Ransom completes his gruesome task in the heart of the mountain, ultimately killing the demonised creature who had just tried to take his life. It is difficult to interpret this scene according to the U-shaped, death and resurrection pattern of Lewis' cruciform theology. In this case, the "dive" was not merely coerced but forced, and one of the deaths that result is neither self-sacrificial nor voluntary. Both Weston and Ransom go to Perelandra willing to die, but Weston's death occurs from spiritual warfare or self-defence rather than self-sacrifice. The violence grates against what we expect in this Edenic world. Just at the moment of Weston's anticipated self-surrender and repentance, he undergoes an anti-baptism that reverses the pattern: from life unto death, with the death of another rather than self-death as the aim. Rather than spiritual death to self, Weston uses Ransom's compassion to kill him, resulting instead in Weston's own gruesome death. Moreover, the Satanic energy that had totally overwhelmed Weston's body was not finished with him yet. After hours—perhaps days—lying dead in the cave, the body is monstrously re-energised and threatens Ransom. Thus Ransom's apotheosis is entwined with Weston's death.

This entire scene is a parody of self-death, resurrection, and baptism. The inversion of these tropes may have been entirely instinctive rather than conscious for Lewis. However, the anti-baptism demonstrates the core values of the demonic way from Lewis' perspective—an inversion that is at the centre of *The Screwtape Letters* as we explore it in chapter six. Self-sacrifice is the specific posture of the Christian believer, which is modelled for us in God's self-surrender, enacted by Christ's submission to the cross. The narrative arc of descent and ascent of the Incarnation may be parodied—not merely in the inverted U-shape pattern of tragedy, but in the satanic clutch for freedom from the fundamental principle that that which does not die cannot be truly reborn. Thus, this moment allows us to think of another U-shaped cruciform image, that of baptism. Baptism is the religious antecedent to the image of the dive. Both the dive and the baptism contain the U-shaped pattern of the Incarnation, the great pivotal, eucatastrophic story of the Gospel. In symbol and ritual, baptism takes up the story of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ as the believer surrenders herself with the hope of new life.

Since I worship in a baptistic tradition, symbol and ritual coalesce imagistically as the convert's body takes the form of the U-shape narrative. As I write this, my fourteen-year-old son is preparing for baptism, where I will lower his body into the water, and he will return into the light as a new creation. I have had the privilege of baptising dozens of people, each time repeating this formula: "Upon your confession of faith and before these witnesses I now baptise you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Dead with Christ, buried in the waters of baptism, you are risen anew to life." For teenagers and dramatic converts especially—as well as some others with a good imagination—the first minutes of this new life are filled with laughter and tears, overly wet hugs, and, as often as not, an improvised chorus of a well-known song that is past its due date. I have never heard "Now I Belong to Jesus" in a church service, but I have heard it countless times beside the baptismal tub, next to hotel swimming pools, and on the shores of the North Atlantic, Alberta lakes, the Georgian Bay, and the Japan Sea.

Lewis' communal experience of baptism was somewhat different. Indeed, he called Baptists an "extreme" sect.¹⁸¹ Unlike the Eucharist and confession, he rarely mentions baptism in his published works.¹⁸² Lewis uses baptism as a symbol for conversion¹⁸³ or joining the church.¹⁸⁴ Lewis does discuss baptism and Eucharist in *Mere Christianity*, but his interest is in the latter of the two experiences.¹⁸⁵ In one of his rare comments on baptism in his other Christian books, Lewis echoes a phrase introduced into English by Tyndale, "baptized into a death,"¹⁸⁶ showing an important connection to our exploration of cruciformity. Lewis was not cold to the topic; he attended or sent a gift for his goddaughters' baptisms and was encouraged by the baptism of one of his oldest friends,

¹⁸¹ C.S. Lewis, "God in the Dock," in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 241. See his reaction to the "fundamentalist" Baptist movement in Japan that wanted to excise any mention of evolution and tobacco from his works in translation, CLIII 1150.

¹⁸² See Williams, *Deeper Magic*, 251.

¹⁸³ C.S. Lewis, "Dante's Statius," in *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, ed. Walter Hooper (London: Harvest, 1991), 94; Lewis, OHEL, 40; C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), 13-14.

¹⁸⁴ E.g., Lewis, "Membership," 166.

¹⁸⁵ Lewis, MC, 60-65.

¹⁸⁶ C.S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1958), 52, 88. For his discussion of Tyndale, see esp. OHEL 208-210.

Owen Barfield.¹⁸⁷ References to baptism as the religious experience of individuals, however, are noticeably thin.

However, Lewis uses baptism as a metaphor in two critical ways. In quite a common approach, baptism works as a synecdoche for the process of Christianization in literary criticism,¹⁸⁸ intellectual history,¹⁸⁹ and evangelism.¹⁹⁰ Mother Dimble in *That Hideous Strength* takes mythology and the pagan world around her so intimately into her self that she is said to have baptised it.¹⁹¹ Lewis was comfortable using synecdochical language as a literary tool in his nonfiction.

The second metaphorical usage of baptism is often conflated with the first and narrows the lens upon a famous passage in Lewis' memoir. The image comes from Lewis' initial encounter with George MacDonald's *Phantastes*, finding a cheap Everyman copy on a Leatherhead platform. Lewis describes in detail the "woodland journeyings in that story," autographically weaving together the story with his experience of reading. Lewis was lured on, drawn in, and ultimately changed, using death and resurrection language explored above.¹⁹² *Phantastes* was both siren song and mother's milk for Lewis; it was like the voice of a god and filled him with something he later recognised as holiness. It also filled him with desperate longing, the sense that he was missing something: "If I could only leave off, let go, unmake myself, it would be there."¹⁹³

Fourteen years later, he would learn about that personal unmaking as he stood next to a river with Barfield learning to dive. *Phantastes* was infused with Lewis' sensation of Joy but worked to strip Lewis' philosophy of all its "erotic and magical perversions," all its misleading pathways and "sordid trumpery."¹⁹⁴ It was for Lewis both disenchantment and charm. Instead of robbing the common world of its light as Lewis' other experience of Joy had done, with *Phantastes* Lewis saw "the bright shadow coming out of the book into the

¹⁸⁷ CLII 947. See note on Aquinas' teaching of "baptism by desire," CLII 135. On technicalities, see CLIII 134, 172, 490; OHEL, 454.

¹⁸⁸ Lewis, "Christianity and Culture," 25.

¹⁸⁹ C.S. Lewis, "Neoplatonism in the Poetry of Spenser," in *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, ed. Walter Hooper (London: Harvest, 1991), 152. Cf., Lewis, OHEL, 10-11; Lewis, *Discarded Image*, 175-176.

¹⁹⁰ C.S. Lewis, "On the Transmission of Christianity," in *God in the Dark: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 119.

¹⁹¹ Lewis, THS, 314.

¹⁹² Lewis, SBJ, 179.

¹⁹³ *Ibid*, 179. The narrator uses "unmade" as the description of Jane's religious experience, Lewis, THS, 142-143.

¹⁹⁴ Lewis, SBJ, 181.

real world and resting there, transforming all common things and yet itself unchanged. Or, more accurately, I saw the common things drawn into the bright shadow.”¹⁹⁵ Lewis finishes the chapter with these oft-quoted words: “That night my imagination was, in a certain sense, baptized; the rest of me, not unnaturally, took longer.”¹⁹⁶

Twice more Lewis tells the story of this literary conversion moment. One of these retellings is in the dream story of *The Great Divorce*. The protagonist—revealed to be Lewis only by this very confession—meets his mentor George MacDonald¹⁹⁷ and shares the impact of that providential literary meeting. Trembling, the protagonist tries “to tell this man all that his writings had done for me,” how, ultimately, *Phantastes* “had been to me what the first sight of Beatrice had been to Dante: Here begins the New Life.”¹⁹⁸ Not long after completing *The Great Divorce* in 1944, Lewis begins editing an anthology of MacDonald’s quotable moments. In the introduction to that volume, Lewis attempts to capture once again the profound influence MacDonald had on him, what he calls a “debt of justice.”¹⁹⁹ Here Lewis extends his comments about his baptism of the imagination:

... the whole book had about it a sort of cool, morning innocence, and also, quite unmistakably, a certain quality of Death, good Death. What it actually did to me was to convert, even to baptize (that was where the Death came in) my imagination. It did nothing to my intellect nor (at that time) to my conscience. Their turn came far later and with the help of many other books and men....²⁰⁰

Scholarly interpretations of this baptised imagination do not always have the precision that David L. Neuhouser brings to Lewis’ moment: “To ‘convert’ means to change, but to baptize in a Christian sense means to kill something of the self, and Lewis’s mention of death shows that death is what he meant” and “that his imagination, as it was then, was killed.”²⁰¹ While scholars generally discuss important themes in Lewis’ experience, they tend to collapse this image of “baptism as death” into “baptism as a synecdoche” for the process of Christianization. For example, Yuasa emphasises the “spiritual impact of Holiness” in the

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 181.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 181.

¹⁹⁷ See David L. Neuhouser, *Exploring the Eternal Goodness*, ed. Joe Ricke and Lisa Ritchie (Hamden, CT: Winged Lion Press, 2016), 55-76.

¹⁹⁸ Lewis, GD, 66-67.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 33.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 33-34.

²⁰¹ Neuhouser, *Exploring*, 67. See also Kerry Dearborn, who notes that “themes of cleansing death and renewal of one’s imagination pervade” George MacDonald’s work, Dearborn, *Baptized Imagination*, 2.

scene.²⁰² Sayer describes the encounter as the purification and transformation of Lewis' imagination,²⁰³ narrowing in upon the "transforming influence on his attitude toward the ordinary, common things around him,"²⁰⁴ what Brown calls the "sacramental ordinary."²⁰⁵ Ralph Wood describes this baptism of imagination as "enabling us to see the world through the lenses of Christian faith."²⁰⁶ In a similar vein, Williams argues that this baptism "allows us to see Christian truths more clearly and deeply when we meet them in the Bible."²⁰⁷ Clyde S. Kilby sees the baptism of the imagination as "the beginning of the road back."²⁰⁸ Biographies by Brown,²⁰⁹ McGrath,²¹⁰ and Green and Hooper²¹¹ quote parts of the *Surprised by Joy* passage but do not explain what this baptism means; presumably, the image is immediately available to readers.

In each of these examples, scholars are highlighting the right conversation points that come from Lewis' comments about this literary conversion space. Occasionally they can press this language too far. Joseph Loconte's historical approach imprints his thesis upon the text in a way that runs contrary to Lewis' own testimony. Loconte says that it "seems that *Phantastes* rescued his imaginative cast of mind from its dark tendencies" that were triggered by the war.²¹² As with each of the scholarly treatments, there is overall merit in considering the transformation of Lewis' imagination, but it is difficult from the text to justify this interpretation of "baptism" as a cleansing from dark tendencies.²¹³ Loconte's over-reading is much rarer, however, than the propensity to reduce Lewis' image of "baptism" merely to Christianization. Inattention to the "death" link in Lewis' own use of the image, however, demonstrates that there is more meaning than this cluster of interpretations of Lewis' baptismal moment has drawn out. Lewis is not merely being

²⁰² Yuasa, *Christian Postmodernism*, 54-55.

²⁰³ Sayer, *Jack*, 108.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 107-108.

²⁰⁵ Brown, *Life Observed*, 90-96.

²⁰⁶ Ralph C. Wood, "The Baptized Imagination: C.S. Lewis's Fictional Apologetics," *The Christian Century* (1995): 812.

²⁰⁷ Williams, *Mere Humanity*, 143.

²⁰⁸ Clyde S. Kilby, *The Christian World of C.S. Lewis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 17.

²⁰⁹ Brown, *Life Observed*, 96.

²¹⁰ McGrath, *C.S. Lewis*, 43.

²¹¹ Green and Hooper, *C.S. Lewis*, 44-45.

²¹² Joseph Loconte, *A Hobbit, a Wardrobe, and a Great War: How J. R. R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis Rediscovered Faith, Friendship, and Heroism in the Cataclysm Of 1914-18* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 2015) Ebook edition, 84.

²¹³ E.g., see McGrath's discussion of Lewis' "growing interest in sadomasochism" and other negative thoughts in his time at Oxford, *C.S. Lewis*, 61-67.

synecdochical; as Neuhouser notes, Lewis' preface to the *Anthology* explicitly links the baptism with an experience of death as it sets in motion Lewis' own long path to the cross.

While not as explicit as Neuhouser, Downing draws the reader back to the idea of death. By an imagination baptism, Downing argues that Lewis is thinking in the tripartite human construct of the medieval worldview where the human personality was composed of three concentric circles: the will at the centre, surrounded by the intellect, which is in turn surrounded by the imagination. Lewis' senior demon has the same anthropological model in mind when he encourages soul destruction along the same lines.²¹⁴ Screwtape's anti-spiritual advice is to decentre the human being so that the patient views virtue as an imaginative construct and sin as a matter of the will. The principle of the concentric circles was innate to Lewis as spiritual director because his own spiritual pathway moved along those lines: "Though his imagination had been baptized by MacDonald, he would not consider himself a Christian until many years later, when his intellect had been satisfied and, lastly and most difficultly, when he had surrendered his will."²¹⁵

The centripetal movement of self-death toward the centre of one's being is critical to Lewis' narrative spiritual theology. In a Galatians 2:19-20 echo, Romans 6 captures the narrative of cruciformity in the sacramental act of baptism. Thinking of Tyndale's language that Lewis admired, believers "have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4, NRSV). In co-crucifixion with Christ, we also experience co-resurrection, so Paul tells believers to "present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life" (Rom 6:13a, NRSV). In baptism, the story of Christ's death and resurrection is brought together with our story—not simply a single symbolic moment of surrender or merely an offer of salvation, but the pattern which we are to live. Synecdochally, baptism for Lewis may simply be a cypher for Christianization. But at the two moments of spiritual transformation we have explored here—the 1916 baptism of imagination and the 1930 dive—there is in each a kind of death at the root of the matter, a letting go, an act of the will that is like a dive.

²¹⁴ Lewis, *Screwtape*, 37.

²¹⁵ Downing, *Planets in Peril*, 29. See also Downing, *Most Reluctant Convert*, 64-67. *Most Reluctant Convert* traces Lewis' return to faith as moving in toward the centre of the concentric circles.

Attending to the U-shaped death-and-resurrection pattern demonstrates critical moments where “baptism” is an apt metaphor in Lewis’ fiction, restoring a depth often missed in Lewis’ conversion story. In *Reflections on the Psalms*, Lewis wrote that our “life as Christians begins by being baptised into a death; our most joyous festivals begin with, and centre upon, the broken body and the shed blood.”²¹⁶ Thinking of these two Anglican sacraments coming together in a single image, Doris Myers suggests that the beginning and end of *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* chiasmatically “resonate with the qualities of the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion.”²¹⁷ The translation of the children to Narnia by water is that imagistic baptismal moment. In chapter three, we explored Eustace’s un-dragoning, which is itself a critical moment of mortification of the flesh that shows the Logic of Cruciformity at work in Lewis’ fairy tale. Central to that scene is not merely Eustace’s un-dragoning, his fantastic disrobing and re-robing, but also the reality that Aslan baptises him in a pool. It is there, in “the imagery of the springs of baptism,”²¹⁸ where Eustace’s pain finally disappears.²¹⁹ Indeed, Kath Filmer notes the link between the bathing scenes of Eustace in *Dawn Treader*, Orual in *Till We Have Faces*, and John’s dive in *Pilgrim’s Regress*, marking a baptismal link between the disparate narratives.²²⁰ Scholars have noted Ransom’s “watery rebirth of Baptism” in *Perelandra*.²²¹ I discussed the unusual nature of Ransom’s anti-baptism in *Perelandra* and the patterns of descent and ascent within the story. Mueller regards Ransom’s experience inside the Perelandran mountain as “evocative of Baptism.”²²² Similarly, Pilgrim John in *The Pilgrim’s Regress* dies to self by diving into “the pool of baptism.”²²³ The Grand Canyon that separates John from his Island “metaphorically marks the rift between God and humans as a result of the Fall” —what I have called Lewis’ Divine Premise—and in “order to cross to the other side, he must hurl himself headlong into the

²¹⁶ Lewis, *Reflections*, 52.

²¹⁷ Myers, *Lewis in Context*, 142.

²¹⁸ *Ibid*, 146.

²¹⁹ Lewis, VDT, 86-87. Eustace’s transformation as a baptismal scene is also noted by Schakel, *Reading*, 56; McGrath, *Lunch*, 78; Chou, “Problem of Faith,” 58; Mueller, *Christology*, 116; Clyde S. Kilby, *A Well of Wonder: Essays on C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and the Inklings*, ed. Loren Wilkinson and Keith Call (Brewster, MA: Mount Tabor Books, 2016), 12.

²²⁰ Filmer, *Mask or Mirrors*, 46-47.

²²¹ Mueller, *Christology*, 67.

²²² *Ibid*, 69.

²²³ Pearce, *Catholic Church*, 1230.

dangerous waters that fill the divide in an act of self-abnegation reminiscent of Christian baptism."²²⁴

Clearly, the cliff can be an important image in Lewis, but so can the streamside. In *Till We Have Faces*, Orual's vision of the gods comes at a poignant moment, as Mueller notes: The god's palace "is glimpsed momentarily by Orual, but only when she kneels by a river, an action which is evocative of Baptism."²²⁵ Orual's full immersion comes in the second part of the novel with her subterranean Dantean journey of self-death.²²⁶ The stream, which at the beginning of *The Silver Chair* is Jill's desperate fear and only source to slake her thirst, becomes at the end of the adventure, in the words of Ward, "a baptismal Lethe, a 'fair fresh stream' in which the dead king Caspian rests upon a bed of 'golden gravel ... with the water flowing over him.'"²²⁷ Aslan asks Eustace to find a thorn in a nearby thicket and drive it into Aslan's paw. When Eustace obeys, "there came out a great drop of blood,"²²⁸ which Aslan allows to drip on the dead king in the stream. At that moment "the dead King began to be changed."²²⁹ This scene of Caspian's resurrection to life and youth confirms Lewis' U-shaped images of cruciformity, in Ward's terms the "Death of a kind and rebirth of a kind"²³⁰ that is central to Lewis' Christology. Fiddes notes the integrative nature of this baptismal passage:

Many biblical echoes of salvation are awoken by this incident—among them the pierced hands of Christ, the ram caught "in a thicket," the waters of death and the waters of baptism—but a new myth is being created which has a power of its own.²³¹

There are characters who are translated or glorified without a preceding moment of death. Reepicheep, for example, is taken into Aslan's country at the great watery end of the world—"a wave endlessly fixed in place"²³²—joining Elijah and Enoch as undying ones who were glorified.²³³ Neither does Ransom die at the close of *That Hideous Strength*, but is taken to join Arthur in the watery world in of Perelandra.²³⁴ For the most part, however,

²²⁴ Woerner, *Quest for Joy*, 9-10.

²²⁵ Mueller, *Christology*, 126.

²²⁶ See Daigle-Williamson, *Reflecting*, 177-200.

²²⁷ Ward, *Planet Narnia*, 138.

²²⁸ Lewis, SC, 202.

²²⁹ *Ibid*, 202.

²³⁰ Ward, *Planet Narnia*, 138.

²³¹ Paul Fiddes, "C.S. Lewis the Myth-Maker," in *A Christian for All Christians: Essays in Honour of C.S. Lewis*, ed. Andrew Walker and James Patrick (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), 147.

²³² Lewis, VDT, 184.

²³³ See Downing, *Region of Awe*, 137; Yuasa, *Postmodern Christian*, 109.

²³⁴ Lewis, THS, 368.

Lewis believed that “nothing will rise which hasn’t in some degree shared the Crucifixion,”²³⁵ and it is intriguing that the stories of Reepicheep and Ransom both end in watery places. When kept in its death-and-resurrection context, Baptism is a symbolically rich image, telling the entire U-shaped story of Crucifixion and Resurrection, death and new life. This comedic, eucatastrophic pattern of baptism is evident in narratives that echo a dive. The narrative pattern of cruciformity is represented in various watery moments of transformation, taking up a U-shaped spiritual theology in the richly symbolic imagery of his fiction and displaying the narrative spirituality that integrates Lewis’ work as a whole.

Conclusion: “The Grand Miracle” and the Zenith of the Cosmic Story

As I have argued in this chapter, Manlove is correct that there is critical value in considering C.S. Lewis’ stories “as sequences and patterns ... embodied in images.”²³⁶ Scholars have used various images, such as chiasm, ring narratives, a linear progression, inversion, conversion, v-patterns, and a circle to describe a certain pattern in Lewis’ symbolically layered, image-rooted, spirituality-infused stories. This structural narrative pattern is what Frye calls a comedy, a U-shaped movement with a Tolkienian eucatastrophic turn toward joy that we see throughout Lewis’ work in the shape of the dive, in patterns of descent and ascent, in the there-and-back-again nature of Lewis’ formal and informal fairy tales, and in metaphorical usages of baptismal imagery. Manlove and others approach in various ways the intimate link between the form and content of Lewis’ work.²³⁷ Lewis himself notes that the bringing together of mental pictures in imaginative work, the artistic

²³⁵ Lewis, “Agape” lecture in “The Four Loves.”

²³⁶ Manlove, “Images and Narrative,” 275.

²³⁷ Attempts to note the unity of form and content from a structural analytical perspective include Samuel Joeckel, “The Spirit of Comedy in *The Chronicles of Narnia*,” in *C.S. Lewis: Views from Wake Forest: Collected Essays on C.S. Lewis*, ed. Michael Travers (Wayne, PA: Zossima Press, 2008), 161-168; Joeckel, *Lewis Phenomenon*, 230-231, cf. 211-214; Hayden Head, “‘Triad Within Triad’: The Tripartite Soul as a Structural Design in C.S. Lewis’s Space Trilogy,” in *C.S. Lewis and the Inklings: Reflections on Faith, Imagination, and Modern Technology*, ed. Salwa Khoddam and Mark R. Hall (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 61-77; Michael Karounos’ paper “Straunger Things: The Absolute Upside Down of the Medieval Model in *The Dark Tower*, *All Hallow’s Eve*, and “*The Lost Road*” at the 2018 Lewis and Friends Colloquium, Taylor University, included analysis of “upside down” and “inside out” in Lewis’ fiction. On Lewis and structuralist theory, see Chou, *Problem of Faith*, 9-12; Margaret Barbara Hiley, “Aspects of Modernism in the Works of C.S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien and Charles Williams” (PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow, 2006), 174; Harry L. Reeder, IV, “C.S. Lewis: The Cartography of Interpretation and Meaning in *An Experiment in Criticism*” (MA thesis, University of Alaska, 2009), 75-78; cf. David C. Downing, “C.S. Lewis Among the Postmodernists,” *Books and Culture* (November-December 1998).

shaping of that work into story, and the emergent meaning of a work is like a “ferment [that] leads to nothing unless it is accompanied with the longing for a Form.”²³⁸

The kinds of structural analyses that I have employed in this survey of Lewis’ diverse corpus have consistently shown the U-shaped pattern—both in the larger structure of the stories and at critical junctures within the tales. Even more than the merely integrative and emergent nature of Lewis’ theological project, these U-shaped patterns are the shape of Lewis’ Logic of Cruciformity, the pattern of death and resurrection that we see played out within the character of God and patterned for the believer in the story of humanity’s U-shaped fall and redemption. The turning point of both of those U-shaped stories—God’s story and the believer’s—is the cross, the nadir of Christ’s great descent and ascent which is also the zenith of the cosmic story. The echo of form and story is played out in the believer’s spiritual life, which is meant to become an echo of the cross.

The narrative pattern of fairy tale echoes the self-death and resurrection to new life that we see in baptism, but not all U-shaped patterns will work. The U-shaped arc of a cricket bat swing or the sweep of the sword are not perfect representations because they represent entirely forward motions. There is in Lewis’ U-shaped comedic pattern a letting go or a surrender that takes place at the lowest point of descent. In the words of Joy Davidman: “This is it, this is nadir, the moment / wet and black at the bottom of the world.”²³⁹ As a result of this death to self there is the eucatastrophic “joyous turn,” the beginning of the ascent, where the story turns from death to new life:

the horizon
bright, painted with brightness, wearing
light, heartbreaking light.
The light is quiet.
The dry bones lift themselves out of the bottomless ditch,
assemble into man and go to get their breakfast.
Sun, rise and shine.²⁴⁰

And within all these images of death and resurrection is God’s Divine Provision, that God provides the initiative for our response. The dive and baptism are thus poignant images, for they are both a doing and a not-doing, an action and an inaction, a plunging in and a letting

²³⁸ Lewis, “Sometimes Fairy Stories,” 35.

²³⁹ Joy Davidman, *A Naked Tree: Love Sonnets to C.S. Lewis and Other Poems*, ed. Don W. King (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 244.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 244-245.

go. These images demonstrate a generative link between Lewis' biography, the stories he told, and his work as a popular Christian teacher and cultural critic.

In turning to the conclusion of Lewis' so-called apologetics trilogy, *Miracles*, we see at the centre of this book a critical usage of the U-shaped pattern. The clear statements of cross-shaped spirituality are penetrating in a book focussed on such a specific philosophical question. Even in his most focussed project of logical philosophy and epistemology, Lewis remains open to the concerns of spiritual theology. In *Miracles*, Lewis treats logic and life brought together in a theology of cruciformity: the enemy Death, "so welcomed, becomes our servant: bodily Death, the monster, becomes blessed spiritual Death to self, if the spirit so wills—or rather if it allows the Spirit of the willingly dying God so to will in it.²⁴¹ This very compact statement of Christian spirituality concludes a chapter entitled, "The Grand Miracle," originally an Eastertide sermon, and lays out the central Logic of Cruciformity that we saw in *Mere Christianity* and *The Problem of Pain*: that a self-surrendering God models and strengthens the believer in voluntary self-death that leads to new and true life. Taken on its own, this Lewis quotation is uncharacteristically elliptical, lacking the clear and welcoming nature of his nonfiction prose. However, Lewis' six-point Logic of Cruciformity is clear. It is also the moment where Lewis identifies an imagistic narrative patterning that portrays the great story of cruciformity. Lewis considers the Incarnation to be the central miracle of Christianity.²⁴² By "Incarnation," Lewis means the entire mytho-historic moment of the coming of God into human form, the life and death of Jesus, and the Resurrection as the beginning of the transformation of the entire cosmos—the Pauline story captured in the Christ hymn of Philippians 2. It is this comedic narrative arc of descent and ascent that Lewis calls "the great story on which the plot turns,"²⁴³ or "The Grand Miracle."

Lewis uses several images in the text of the sermon to capture this grand U-shaped narrative. Lewis paints a picture of a strong man bending low to lift a complicated burden.²⁴⁴ Shifting metaphors, Lewis invites us to imagine a diver, the image we explored at the centre of this chapter.²⁴⁵ The comedic U-shaped patterns told in Lewis' fiction and in his conversion narratives, are here presented as a theological principle in his nonfiction work. This

²⁴¹ Lewis, *Miracles*. 156.

²⁴² *Ibid*, 131.

²⁴³ *Ibid*, 119.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 135.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 135.

narrative arc is echoed again and again in the natural world: the seed that sinks into the earth and springs into new life, the descent from adulthood into egg and sperm, kept in the dark womb of life, and growing again into adulthood. Lewis brings these ideas to the great eucatastrophic pattern at the heart of cruciform theology:

Death and Rebirth—go down to go up—it is a key principle.... The pattern is there in Nature because it was first there in God. All the instances of it which I have mentioned turn out to be but transpositions of the Divine theme into a minor key. I am not now referring simply to the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ. The total pattern, of which they are only the turning point, is the real Death and Rebirth....²⁴⁶

In discussing “this huge descent and reascension,”²⁴⁷ it is evident that the first and second step in the Logic of Cruciformity is at play: the Divine Principle of God’s self-surrender (step 1) worked out in the Divine Pattern of life, that of self-death (step 2). The Divine Provision of Christ’s descent (step 4) is included to address the Divine Premise (step 5), that humanity is fallen. Lewis does consider the alternative, that the Incarnation would have occurred even without human sin, but that “the divine humility would not have been a divine humiliation, the sorrows, the gall and vinegar, the crown of thorns and the cross, would have been absent.”²⁴⁸ Nevertheless, humanity has fallen and needs to be lifted up to experience the Divine Possibility of new life (step 6). The Divine Paradox (step 3) is captured well near the conclusion of the chapter, which combines a traditional theology of the cross with the principle of cruciformity in the believer’s life:

[Christ] tasted death on behalf of all others. He is the representative ‘Die-er’ of the universe: and for that very reason the Resurrection and the Life. Or conversely, because He truly lives, He truly dies, for that is the very pattern of reality. Because the higher can descend into the lower He who from all eternity has been incessantly plunging Himself in the blessed death of self-surrender to the Father can also most fully descend into the horrible and (for us) involuntary death of the body. Because Vicariousness is the very idiom of the reality He has created, His death can become ours.²⁴⁹

Thus all six steps in Lewis’ Logic of Cruciformity are present in the single sermon that was published as “The Grand Miracle.”

²⁴⁶ Ibid, 136.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, 136.

²⁴⁸ Ibid, 148.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, 157.

As *Mere Christianity* guided the conversation in chapter two and *Problem of Pain* in chapter three, the conclusion of Lewis' so-called apologetics trilogy, *Miracles*, makes the final link in the central analysis of Lewis' narrative spiritual theology of the cross. In the following chapter, I problematise this spirituality, providing an opportunity to clarify how deeply this U-shaped, eucatastrophic pattern penetrates into C.S. Lewis' understanding of spiritual life. This interrogation turns out to be generative. As we press in upon Lewis' *theologia crucis*, we discover that this comedic, U-shaped, eucatastrophic pattern emerges from Lewis' thought as an inversive spirituality of promise, explored in chapter six.

Ch. 5: The Long Shadow of the Cross and the Cruciform Heroic in C.S. Lewis

Introduction: A Black and Scarlet Cord: Violence and Death in the Shadowlands

The “great story on which the plot turns”¹ is for C.S. Lewis the U-shaped, eucatastrophic story of Christ’s incarnation, death, and resurrection echoed in the lives of believers. I argue that Lewis patterns this story in his fiction and nonfiction, providing for believers a narrative spirituality of the cross that is shaped by the great descent and ascent of the Gospel story. Reconsidering Lewis’ apologetics trilogy as works of spiritual theology demonstrates that Lewis’ cruciform spirituality is woven deeply into all of his writing, prose and poetry, fiction and nonfiction. The “grand miracle” of the incarnation and our imitation of that movement in spiritual life works out as a sixfold Logic of Cruciformity, the U-shaped Paschal Mystery central to Christian formation. From the great transformational moments of spiritual life to the mundane moments of faith, this spirituality of self-death and resurrection is the “ultimate law” for Lewis and central core of his life and his writing in its diverse forms.

This is Lewis’ “doctrine of death” at the “root” of Christian thought. In practical ways, Lewis focuses upon surrender, the giving up of the self that leads to new life. Peter Kreeft uses the following quotation from *The Problem of Pain* to summarise Lewis’ spirituality:

The proper good of a creature is to surrender oneself to one’s creator, to enact intellectually, volitionally, and emotionally (the three transcendentals) the relationship that results from the mere fact of being a creature.²

Human *being* in the world, then, is about this self-surrender model, so living, living fully and well is about laying down one’s life. In public and in most of his letters, Lewis desires to treat doctrine, ethics, and spirituality that “has been common to nearly all Christians at all times”³—a phrase that is captured in Lewis’ famous title, *Mere Christianity*. The Latin phrase

¹ Lewis, *Miracles*, 119.

² Peter Kreeft, “Lewis’s Philosophy of Truth, Goodness and Beauty,” in *C.S. Lewis as Philosopher: Truth, Goodness, Beauty*, ed. David Baggett, Gary R. Habermas and Jerry L. Walls (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 27. Closely paraphrasing Lewis, PoP, 78.

³ Lewis, MC, viii.

“*ubique quod ab omnibus*” is, according to editor Walter Hooper, an abbreviated quotation from St Vincent of Lerins,⁴ and Lewis uses this phrase in public forums and private letters in referring to theology and spiritual practice.⁵ There is no sense anywhere that Lewis believes he was describing in his spirituality of the cross anything other than historic, mainstream practice—a clarification of Thomas à Kempis’ *Imitatio*, but not a departure from it.

Our distance from Lewis’ space and time, however, provides new perspectives. In a 1932 letter, Lewis writes about the “persistent motif of blood, death, and resurrection, which runs like a black and scarlet cord through all the greater myths.”⁶ While the “black and scarlet cord” is a vivid image, allowing Lewis to link pagan and Jewish images of sacrifice imaginatively with the Christ event, it is also a gruesome one. Except for moments in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* where Lewis is apparently aware that the violence might exceed the comfort of parents,⁷ there is no sense in his work that Lewis pauses to consider the shocking nature of his spirituality of self-death. Some of this cavalier attitude is because Lewis felt like his culture was anaesthetising death, joking once in the voice of Aslan: “He has died. Most people have, you know. Even I have. There are very few who haven’t.”⁸ Lewis’ concentration on death is part of a multi-faceted response to ideas of death in his time. In the face of clinical separation from death, Lewis seems interested in keeping the experience of mortality near to everyday reality. And in the face of a hungry desire for death in the technocracy or war around him he tries to form a tradition in his stories where “noble death is a treasure which no one is too poor to buy,”⁹ a spirituality that teaches that death is where one drinks life, “the best of drinks save one.”¹⁰ Lewis’ project is bound up with a deep reconsideration of mortality for a generation that has experienced war and loss of faith.

But is also true that Lewis’ own comfort with death is bound up with a cruciform spirituality central to Christian thought and praxis—not peculiar to him but held *ubique et*

⁴ CLII 452, n. 375.

⁵ E.g., see CLII 451-2; Lewis, *God in the Dock*, 336.

⁶ CLII 35.

⁷ E.g., Lewis, LWW, 138.

⁸ Lewis, SC, 203.

⁹ Lewis, LB, 88. See Lewis, *George MacDonald*, 34.

¹⁰ Lewis, OSP, 75. Not inconsiderate of the problematic side of a noble death, Lewis may gently mock the romance of this idea in the character of Augray the sorn, who chides the hrossa for sending Ransom on a mountainous pilgrimage unprepared, Lewis, OSP, 97.

ab omnibus for those who believe in Christ's eucatastrophic death and resurrection and its twinned echo in what Lindscoog calls Lewis' idea of "living death."¹¹

Though Lewis' cultural-criticism on this point is fruitful, his popularity and his "standard of plain, central Christianity"¹² can inure sympathetic readers to the shocking nature of his theological word pictures and the impact of these images on lived religion in the past. In the years since conversion or confirmation, in the daily patterns of reading Scripture and prayer, in the weekly liturgies of Eucharist and the repeated homilies of response, Christians can too quickly move past images that critics have noted as disturbing or problematic.¹³ Eustace's un-dragoning, the scene that I argued in chapter three had captured Lewis' Logic of Cruciformity in several imagistic layers, is read differently by others. William Gray argues that "there is something quite disturbing about the cruelty involved in Eustace's 'cure,'"¹⁴ suggesting "sado-masochistic interest."¹⁵ David Holbrook is not alone in being concerned about the "savagery of the killings in Narnia."¹⁶ Anti-Narnian fantasy author Philip Pullman describes Lewis' writing as bullying, hectoring, dishonest, dodgy, unpleasant, scornful, wicked, racist, misogynist, and unreflectively conservative.¹⁷ Even sympathetic authors are occasionally disturbed. Pacifist Stanley Hauerwas notes that "the Narnia Chronicles are war-determined stories,"¹⁸ while Wesley Kort says that "[s]truggle, violence, and warfare are the stuff of his plots."¹⁹ Kort wonders what "injustices, inequalities, and conflicts" are concealed in Lewis unreflective posture towards "political, economic, and social inequities"—including a concern for hierarchy that can appear racist, sexist, and elitist.²⁰

¹¹ Lindscoog, *Mere Christian*, 75.

¹² C.S. Lewis, "Introduction" to *St. Athanasius On the Incarnation* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, 1953), 4.

¹³ See Fisk's critique, *Sex*, 105.

¹⁴ William Gray, *C.S. Lewis* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1998), 73.

¹⁵ Gray, *C.S. Lewis*, 80-81.

¹⁶ David Holbrook. "The Problem of C.S. Lewis," in *Writers, Critics and Children*, ed. Geoff Fox et al. (London: Heinemann, 1976), 116, 119, 124; qtd. in Filmer, *Mask and Mirror*, 28.

¹⁷ Sam Leith, "C.S. Lewis's literary legacy: 'dodgy and unpleasant' or 'exceptionally good'?", *The Guardian*, Nov 19, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/nov/19/cs-lewis-literary-legacy>.

¹⁸ Stanley Hauerwas, "On Violence," in *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, ed. Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 200.

¹⁹ Kort, *Then and Now*, 141.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 157. Wolfe notes that contrary to the claim of some critics, Lewis "has a strong distaste of racism of any kind. The 'racism' arguably implicit in his portrayal of the Calormenes in HHB and LB is a literary Orientalism suitable to the romance genre in which Lewis is writing, rather than a political or anthropological view. Though this no doubt has its own problems, it is a distinct stance..." "On Power," 180.

Though Filmer argues that in writing about monstrosities Lewis is “in some sense attempting to confront the monstrosities within” himself,²¹ the result can be disturbing.²² His spiritual vision is tainted, Filmer asserts, by “the misogynist and the chauvinist beliefs” embedded in his work.²³ In an article that is largely sympathetic with his work, Judith Wolfe nevertheless suggests that strong readers must renounce hierarchical elements in Lewis’ imagistic work, inviting iconoclastic readings of a deeply iconographic writer.²⁴ Hauerwas argues that Lewis’ misunderstanding of pacifism—and thus his misreading of the importance of violence—is centred on the fact that he did not understand that Christian non-violence stems from “the very character of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection”²⁵—a pointed criticism given the topic of this study. If Hauerwas’ critique is warranted, Lewis’ understanding of violence is a place where Lewis has failed to allow the implications of his spiritual theology of the cross to penetrate his moral theology.

“C.S. Lewis’s imaginative writing is all about death,” Gray argues, pressing further to claim that it is all “about the impact on a nine-year-old-boy of the death of his mother.”²⁶ Few find Gray’s psychological argument convincing,²⁷ but positing a psychological context for Lewis’ focus on death in his work would not, in any case, change the reality that Lewis takes this view of death and makes it central to his spirituality: this image of death is critical to living, living fully and well for Lewis. In highlighting problematic points in Lewis’ fiction, these critics help shape conversations that invite rereading of Lewis. Though this chapter cannot be a courtroom rendering judgment upon all of Lewis’ illicit expressions or all the places where we feel discomfort in reading, some interrogation of his spirituality of the cross is warranted. The “black and scarlet cord” of Lewis’ normative spiritual theology of the cross is, in particular, open to critique from the perspective of women’s experience. “Self-

²¹ Filmer, *Mask and Mirror*, 28.

²² *Ibid*, 35.

²³ *Ibid*, 27.

²⁴ Wolfe, “On Power,” 184-185.

²⁵ Hauerwas, “On Violence,” 196.

²⁶ William Gray, *Death and Fantasy: Essays on Philip Pullman, C.S. Lewis, George MacDonald and R.L. Stevenson* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 53.

²⁷ David Holbrook is sympathetic to the psychological approach in *The Skeleton in the Wardrobe: C.S. Lewis’ Fantasies: A Phenomenological Study* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1991). Wilson also provides support to this perspective, “Lewis was profoundly afraid of death. His dread of it, when in the midst of life, had been almost pathological and obsessive. Physical extinction was a perpetual nightmare to him and, whatever his theological convictions and hopes, he was unable, before his wife’s death, to reconcile himself to the transition which death must inevitably entail,” *C.S. Lewis*, 293.

death,” with its corollary of “submission,” is a gendered concept as people in power have pressed spiritual postures of humility, modesty, and self-denial upon women and girls in male-dominated Christendom. Anna Fisk poignantly captures the problem in historical terms: “the crucifixion has cast a long shadow on western Christianity.”²⁸ Taking that symbolic act and making it the paradigm for spiritual practice may work to uphold the patriarchal cultures that have provided *imitatio Christi* motifs and pressed women into particular relational roles with doctrines of self-surrender and self-abnegation.

Fisk’s conversation with feminist theology demonstrates the need to look squarely at the cross, calling us to be unwilling to look away “too quickly” from the Crucifixion as we set our “face towards the bright dawn of Easter Sunday.”²⁹ Following feminist theological concerns with spiritualities of the cross, I turn to feminist conversations about Lewis and women, focusing especially upon Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen’s social scientific critique and developmental thesis, and Ann Loades’ consideration of Lewis’ Christology as integrated into his own life. The observations of the integrative and inversive nature of Lewis’ Christian thought invite a closer consideration of the cruciform centre of Lewis’ *Four Loves* and in his mentorship of Sheldon Vanauken. Finally, Monika Hilder provides a model for rereading Lewis’ fiction attuned to his complete transformation of gendered heroics, arguing that as Lewis feminises his understanding of heroism, he offers a spiritual critique of masculinised violence and control, what she calls “theological feminism.” These scholars invite a deeper look at Lewis’ theology of cruciform love as it forms his spirituality of the cross.

C.S. Lewis certainly could not have anticipated a criticism along feminist theological lines as I attempt here. Indeed, I cannot be certain that his spirituality of the cross can recover fully from such an interrogation. There are moments in Lewis’ life and thought that cause concern for readers sensitive to the power of the text, including a reification of gender hierarchies, a heavily gendered rhetorical style in formal writing, a continuation of complementarian marriage relationships in Christian teachings, tiresome usages of gendered stereotypes in various kinds of texts, a consequential use of violence in children’s literature, and what some argue is a villainisation of femininity or a valorisation of virtues that are gendered masculine in his fiction. However, in conversation with feminist critics and

²⁸ Fisk, *Sex*, 105.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 105.

scholars on Lewis and gender, I argue that there is in Lewis' thought subversive and integrative features that invite a more contextually nuanced and holistic spiritual theology. Ultimately, this feminist theological critique reveals that there is an inversive core in Lewis' thought that is itself the shape of cruciformity—a comedic, eucatastrophic, U-shaped commitment to an “upsidedown” spirituality that offers hopeful transformation and prophetic self-critique within his integrative, emergent, narrative spiritual theology of the cross. In the following chapter, I consider this inversive element in Lewis more carefully, noting how it aligns his entire project in a cruciform pattern. I argue that although Lewis does not allow his cruciform spirituality to fully transform his vision for cross-shaped social relationships, he shows growth in this area in an egalitarianism that develops in his understanding of relationships, and in transformative elements in his fiction.

The Long Shadow of the Cross: A Feminist Critique of Crucicentric Spirituality

As a tool for problematising C.S. Lewis' narrative spirituality of the cross, this section considers the project of feminist Christology, its various approaches and questions rooted in the single principle of ethical, embodied, christological conversation. As a scholar whose feminist theology works within the tension between the shadow of the cross and the hope it offers, I turn to Anna Fisk's *Sex, Sin, and Our Selves: Encounters in Feminist Theology and Contemporary Women's Literature* (2014) to aid in pressing the question of women's experience and the problems that a crucicentric spirituality might offer.

Approaches to Feminist Christologies

Even narrowing in on the questions of Christology and a spirituality of the cross, the feminist theological conversation is complex, diverse, and challenging. For example, in their volume *Controversies in Feminist Theology*, Marcella Maria Althaus-Reid and Lisa Isherwood include a chapter on “Christology.” While narrowed primarily to questions of who Christ is with regards to soteriology, and intending to be nuanced and self-critical, the chapter includes a dizzying array of conversation points. According to Althaus-Reid and Isherwood, the discipline of feminist Christology began by asking whether a male saviour can save women. From that point, the conversation has moved in various directions past the

question of “patriarchal overlay of an otherwise sound doctrine”³⁰ to include projects of Christian theological deconstruction.

Althaus-Reid and Isherwood survey christological questions, including Rosemary Radford Ruether’s concern about male-centred underpinnings at the heart of Christianity. Ruether recognises, however, that those who we “in the West may view as particularly oppressed by the androcentric nature of Christology”—namely women in patriarchal and impoverished cultures, particularly those in the developing world—“do not always have the same problems as we do with the maleness of Christ.”³¹ This dissent of feminists in the southern hemisphere includes for some a Jesus who, born as a male, could best challenge patriarchal societal structures. Others recognise the maleness of the historical Jesus, but assert that maleness is not essential to the risen indwelling Christ who “transcends all particularities.”³² For many feminist theologians, particularly in non-Western settings, it is not a scandal that the eternal God is also a carpenter’s son, but these women trust in the unique Christ for cultural transformation as well as religious significance. Classical Christology claims to have dissolved this “particularity,” and yet abuse and patriarchy have been sealed into women’s experience in the Church. Ruether is therefore unhappy with these countercurrents, pressing theologians to seek freedom from biological determinism and spiritual immaturity by considering Jesus in his entire male, Jewish, Greco-Roman particularity and then asking if Jesus can be “paradigmatic of universal human redemption in a way that can apply to female as well as male, to people of all ethnicities and cultures.”³³ In Ruether’s view, the eschatological Christ who is to come is the fullness of human diversity gathered within the redemptive community, thus doing away with patriarchal order.

Althaus-Reid and Isherwood commend Ruether for her ability to provide a christological framework that “does away with patriarchal order and integrates an egalitarian understanding of human nature into Christology.”³⁴ They do not comment about whether Ruether’s critical category shift from Jesus as Redeemer to Jesus as “paradigmatic” of redemption is ideal, or whether a universalism founded in particularity is even possible.

³⁰ Althaus-Reid and Isherwood, *Controversies*, 81.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

³² *Ibid.*, 83.

³³ *Ibid.*, 84, quoting Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Introducing Redemption in Christian Feminism* (London: A&C Black, 1998), 93.

³⁴ Althaus-Reid and Isherwood, *Controversies*, 84-85.

They are concerned, however, with whether this non-patriarchalism is itself another “dominant cultural export” of culture-bound Western feminism.³⁵ There is, they argue, a diversity of thought on the person and work of Christ precisely because feminist Christology is an “ethical affair” and is never merely theoretical.³⁶ This move to ethics is possibly “the greatest contribution that feminist theology has made in this area” as theologians are able “to insist that Christology ... has to be judged by outcomes and not simply by internal logic”³⁷—in our conversation, the shadow or light the spirituality of the cross brings. At its ground, a cohesive feminist theology understands its Christology in the experience of women in their lived realities of spirituality, family, work, and community. The rootedness of this approach is a posture of resistance, working itself out in various perspectives.

In discussing the Sophia-Jesus perspectives of Elizabeth Johnson and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, for example, Althaus-Reid and Isherwood appreciate the everyday reality approach of feminist Christology, for “Sophia as imaged in the Hebrew Bible was in the marketplace with her sleeves rolled up, involved in the everyday life of the people of Israel.”³⁸ The Sophia (wisdom) movement is thus a strong foundation for incarnational theology; and christological reflection without that embedded, embodied reality is problematic, as metaphysics is a “world of male creation, a place in which women will never find legitimation and self-worth.”³⁹ The ongoing feminist insistence that women’s bodies are the starting point for Christology is essential to the theological project.

Beyond the question of the patriarchal context of Christ’s particularity, the gendered nature of metaphysics, and the need for an ethical, incarnational feminist Christology, some question the need of a redeemer or redemption altogether. Mary Daly and others suggest that the concepts of “sin and salvation are myths springing from male arrogance.”⁴⁰ Not all feminists think that the entire edifice of theologies of sin is flawed. Valerie Saiving challenges the anthropology that undergirds contemporary theology, including

... its definition of the human situation in terms of anxiety, estrangement, and the conflict between necessity and freedom; its identification of sin with pride, will-to-power, exploitation, self-assertiveness, and the treatment of others as objects rather than persons; its conception of redemption as restoring to man what he

³⁵ Ibid, 85.

³⁶ Ibid, 85.

³⁷ Ibid, 105.

³⁸ Ibid, 100-101.

³⁹ Ibid, 101.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 89.

fundamentally lacks (namely, sacrificial love, the I-Thou relationship, the primacy of the personal, and, ultimately, peace)....⁴¹

This assessment of the problem, however, does not in Saiving's view adequately address the "universal human situation"—an inadequacy most tellingly revealed by contemporary women who she argues have transcended these limitations of self-understanding.

Challenging masculine theologies of sin that centre around the ideas of pride and will-to-power, Saiving assesses feminine sins as those that tend to the "underdevelopment or negation of the self."⁴² Addressing the mythic creation story of sin and salvation, Mary Grey redefines sin for women as "acting against the relational grain of living."⁴³ While Saiving speaks more of ethical response and overcoming, in this view, salvation and redemption are still needed today. For Grey, however, salvation does not come from the God-hero, but is "painfully striven for in the global community among justice-seekers."⁴⁴ This question of the hero is critical for thinkers like Rita Brock, while theologians like Carter Heyward suggest that the idea of a divine man-Jesus is essentially the problem—not in that one must deny the Incarnation, but that in the particularity of Christ one limits the Incarnation. In subverting these images, Althaus-Reid suggests a re-imagining of Christ as a girl or woman, while others, noted above, look to the image of Wisdom-Sophia.

As feminist Christology is never merely theoretical, a consideration of domestic abuse draws the question of ethics and ideas into a single unit: "It appears that while we continue to think of the death of Jesus as salvific by its very nature, instead of an outrageous act of public torture and social control, we put the lives of women at risk."⁴⁵ Not all feminist theologians agree with this statement,⁴⁶ but some question various aspects of traditional

⁴¹ Valerie Saiving Goldstein, "The Human Situation: A Feminine View," *The Journal of Religion* 40, no. 2 (1960): 107.

⁴² Saiving Goldstein, "Human Situation," 109.

⁴³ Althaus-Reid and Isherwood, *Controversies*, 89, quoting Mary Grey, *Redeeming the Dream: Feminism, Redemption and Christian Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1989), 35.

⁴⁴ Althaus-Reid and Isherwood, *Controversies*, 90.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁴⁶ For example, Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite admits that the centre of Christian symbolism of the cross "can be seen to valorize physical violence," *Women's Bodies as Battlefield: Christian Theology and the Global War on Women* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 173. However, the "suffering and death of Jesus of Nazareth on the cross are not a justification for violence, either violence against women or violence in war. The cross subverts power as dominance....," 173. Elizabeth Gerhardt includes in her theological reflections a "theology of the cross," for she proposes that "a theological foundation for this work of ending violence against women is a theology rooted in the cross of Christ," "Theological Perspectives on the Prophetic Call," in *Beyond Abuse in*

Christology, including “a central concept in patriarchal Christology, that of the Suffering Servant.”⁴⁷ As an ethically centred movement, where “the lines are still drawn around the body,”⁴⁸ the experience of women and girls root questions of Christology in feminist theology. Althaus-Reid and Isherwood are sensitive to various threads of feminist theological concern but are challenged to consider the global, diverse approach of women believers. “[I]t does seem to be the case,” they grant, “that the Suffering Servant model of Jesus can afford many a sense of self-worth and dignity since he went through what they experience and he came out with dignity.”⁴⁹ Althaus-Reid and Isherwood do not note the inversion of heroic perspectives within Suffering Servant motifs, and they could have clarified how this Christology overlaps with but is not the same as Penal Substitutionary Atonement. However, in including a critique of “the notion of the glorious sacrifice”—a concern of everyday women that sacrifice and suffering can often be valourised as salvific rather than faced as “crushing of the very humanity they strive to rejoice in”⁵⁰—they draw the conversation to the heart of the effect of spiritual theologies of the cross in women’s lives.

Anna Fisk and Images of the Cross

Among feminist theologians, there are those who argue that Christianity does not merely contain a “patriarchal overlay of an otherwise sound doctrine”⁵¹ or merely represents the “infrastructures of the edifice of patriarchy,”⁵² but is “fundamentally patriarchal”⁵³ or “patriarchal beyond redemption.”⁵⁴ And there are no doubt feminist theologians who resist equating a theology of the cross with violence against women.⁵⁵ As a

the Christian Home: Raising Voices for Change, ed. Catherine Clark Kroeger et al. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 188.

⁴⁷ Althaus-Reid and Isherwood, *Controversies*, 85.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 96.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 89.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 85.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 81.

⁵² Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), 39.

⁵³ Fisk, *Sex*, xiv.

⁵⁴ Lisa Isherwood and Elizabeth Stuart, *Introducing Body Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 15. Isherwood and Stuart are not here offering their own reading of Christianity but acknowledging the views of others.

⁵⁵ For example, L. Ann Jervis considers a spirituality of the cross “the heart of the gospel,” for Christ-like suffering is a “paradigm for how we are to receive the gospel” and thus invites readers to recognise how Paul believed “that God in Christ has changed the architecture of existence,” *At The Heart of the Gospel: Suffering*

dialogue partner in feminist theology whose work walks the dividing line of this question, Anna Fisk allows us to consider more deeply the disturbing and diverse contexts in which spirituality is lived out, as well as to provide pressure to the concept of cruciformity. Fisk believes that “feminist critique and reinvention of a cultural heritage that is fundamentally patriarchal is not just a matter of scavenging and rebuilding; first there has to be the dismantling and deconstructing.”⁵⁶ While some see the demolition of Christian patriarchy as a preparation for its renovation, including a number of the ground-breaking feminist theologians, Fisk is unable to see it that way:

I myself do not believe that it is possible, or desirable, for feminist theology to rearrange the torn-apart symbols of Christian theology into a new harmonious whole. It has to go too far in the work of deconstruction for reconstruction to be achievable.⁵⁷

Fisk notes the authentic self-critique and hopeful honesty of thinkers like Kathleen Sands and Heather Walton, who “hold fast to a faith that goodness and justice are the essential truth and reality and will ultimately prevail,”⁵⁸ but cannot share that optimism.

Nevertheless, a great number of people for whom Christian faith is an intimate, integrated part of their lives are never touched by the feminist critique. There are other voices engaged in that community, and there may even be a very remarkable man or two amongst them who had a mother (so Woolf). Though I understand Fisk’s reticence, I feel

in the Earliest Christian Message (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 33, 134. Jervis’ core observation that we are “shaped by the form of Christ’s death” and her concern with “the cruciform shape of the Christian life” is the praxeological centre of a spiritual theology of the cross as we explore it in this work, 59, 67, 70. See also Heather Walton, *Writing Methods in Theological Reflection* (London: SCM Press, 2014) Kindle Edition, 800; Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997); Susanne Heine, *Matriarchs, Goddesses, and Images of God: A Critique of Feminist Theology*, trans. John Bowden. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1989), 139-141; Humphrey, *Further Up and Further In*, 4236-4237. Much of the resistance to feminist Christological critiques of this kind comes from non-Euro-American perspectives. For example, Margaret D. Kamitsuka argues that “Christian feminist theology is increasingly recognised for what it has de facto been: a scholarly field dominated by white, middle-class, first-world, heterosexual women. Womanist, *mujerista*, lesbian, Asian American, two-thirds-world, and other self-named women’s theologies are rapidly developing their own discourses, agendas, constituencies—and fractures as well,” *Feminist Theology and the Challenge of Difference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3. See also the conversations in Mercy Amba Oduyoye, “Jesus Christ,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology*, ed. Susan Frank Parsons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 151-170. On a more popular level there are “Jesus Feminist” authors whose writing is crucicentric, including Sarah Bessey, *Jesus Feminist: An Invitation to Revisit the Bible’s View of Women* (New York: Howard Books, 2013).

⁵⁶ Fisk, *Sex*, xiv.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, xv.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, xv, referring readers to Kathleen M. Sands, *Escape from Paradise: Evil and Tragedy in Feminist Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1994). See Walton, *Imagining Theology*, and Walton, *Literature, Theology and Feminism* as positive reconstruction projects noted by Fisk.

bound to attempt a Christian reconfiguration that listens to women's voices while remaining hopeful of theological, devotional, and ethical reintegration. Doubtless, I will be vulnerable to the claim that I have not paid sufficient attention to the breadth of woman's experience or the limited view that my own situation offers. Though I have lived as a racial and religious minority at points in my life—including a period as an immigrant in a dominant race culture that was not my own—my position was even at that time in many ways one of privilege, as it is now. And as much as I may claim to empathise with women's experiences and desire to raise my son as a feminist, I am simply limited in my perspective. Still, I feel compelled to try a reconstruction of crucicentric Christian spirituality. And in doing so, I do not want to look away from one of the more problematic emblems of Christian faith: the cross. The result, I hope, is a recapitulation of the idea in conversation with C.S. Lewis that shows deeper meaning in a spirituality of the cross and highlights counter-current resonances in Lewis' work that are worth considering. Specifically, the U-shaped, subversive, eucatastrophic character of C.S. Lewis' spirituality leads to gender inversions in his narrative spirituality that invite a more holistic, integrated reading of his spirituality and which qualify hierarchical gender essentialism he otherwise assumed but did not consistently live out.

Anna Fisk is a useful partner in this rereading of Lewis' cross-shaped spirituality. In resisting a neat and tidy reconstruction, Fisk's larger project attempts a "feminist theological bone collage," an image "made from women's bones to represent my theological engagement with literature," working autoethnographically as she reads the writing of Michèle Roberts and Sara Maitland.⁵⁹ Neither a harmonious system nor an individualistic demolition, Fisk's "gathering together of fragments"⁶⁰ is concerned with a prophetic critique of feminist theology—in Judith Butler's terms, an "immanent critique"⁶¹—that presses for a more complex theological understanding of women's sin, suffering, and self-sacrifice. The result is a discussion that, among other things, draws the reader to the question of the cross, its inherent violence, its lived history, and feminist relations to sin and salvation relevant to this project.

⁵⁹ Fisk, *Sex*, xvii.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 75.

⁶¹ See Butler's 1999 preface to *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), vii.

Returning to feminist redefinitions of sin mentioned above, Fisk begins her chapter on “Selves” with Valerie Saiving’s redefinition of feminine sin as self-negation. Fisk demonstrates that Judith Plaskow’s *Sex, Sin and Grace* (1979) takes up this argument. In Plaskow’s assessment, women are steered toward a “passive and self-negating” socialization. Using Plaskow and thinking about Sara Maitland’s *Virgin Territory*, Fisk tries to define a “feminist theology of sin” that is not limited to a notion of “women’s sin” being the failure to “awake” to feminist consciousness. Fisk argues that Plaskow contributes to “feminist emphasis on the virtues of autonomy and rejection of malestream theology’s idealization of service and self-sacrifice” in using a Niebuhrian approach that critiques language of self-sacrifice as conflicting with personhood and destructive when it intends to suggest that “the struggle to become a centered self, to achieve full independent selfhood, is sinful.”⁶² In consenting to this primacy of sacrificial love, moreover, a woman will “stifle in herself the desire to be a separate person some part of whose mind, time, and feelings are inviolable.”⁶³ Doubtless language of self-sacrifice is used destructively and has heightened women’s servitude historically. Barbara Andolsen is right that a theological posture of “receptivity ... has been distorted into demeaning passivity, submissiveness, and self-surrender.”⁶⁴ Reflecting on these perspectives and Daphne Hampson’s claim that kenotic theology is inherently problematic because it contradicts women’s autonomy at the heart of feminism, Fisk concludes that feminist theologians have struggled with how to reconcile the conflict between feminist insistence on the need for women to assert themselves as active and autonomous beings, on the one hand, with Christianity’s fundamental principles of service and self-sacrifice on the other.⁶⁵

Beyond the critical question of how autonomy and mutuality relate to self-sacrifice and self-surrender, there is also a history of violence against and forced submission of women in Western Christendom. Submission is a gendered concept in Western culture, and the “self” in “self-surrender” and “self-sacrifice” has been a fiction for many women and girls. In her reading of feminist theologians, Fisk notes that the critique of “the valoration of

⁶² Fisk, *Sex*, 78, quoting Judith Plaskow, *Women’s Experience and the Theologies of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich* (Washington DC: University Press of America, 1980), 87.

⁶³ Plaskow, *Sex, Sin and Grace*, 87.

⁶⁴ Barbara Hilbert Andolsen, “Agape in Feminist Ethics,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 9, no. 1 (1981): 77, qtd in Fisk, *Sex*, 79.

⁶⁵ See Fisk, *Sex*, 79.

self-abnegation ... goes to the heart of the Christian religion.” Indeed, confirming the normative dynamic of Lewis’ spirituality: “The ideals of service and self-sacrifice are not incidental to Christianity. Rather, they are its very basis: the Son of God becoming human and submitting to a painful and humiliating death, in order to save humankind from sin.”⁶⁶ Although “self-sacrifice and obedience are not only virtues but the definition of a faithful identity,”⁶⁷ Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker reject any idea of redemptive suffering. Indeed, to identify with the suffering Christ in any redemptive pattern “is a kind of heresy in certain strands of feminist theology.”⁶⁸ Though Fisk notes it as an overstatement, on the level of spirituality, Mary Daly suggests that *imitatio Christi* motifs like the one at the centre of this thesis are theoretical for men but entirely practical for women. Fisk includes the critiques of cruciform spiritualities by Sharon Ringe, who rejects any kenotic spirituality as oppressive to those already lacking power,⁶⁹ and Beverley Harrison, who argues that it “is one thing to live out a commitment to mutuality and reciprocity as the way to bear up God in the world” and to do so realistically, and quite another thing “to rip the crucifixion of Jesus out of its lived-world context in his total life and historical project and turn sacrifice into an abstract norm for the Christian life.”⁷⁰

“In feminist theology,” Fisk says, “it is best to only glance at the image of the suffering Christ, not to gaze for too long.”⁷¹ Fisk’s concern is that, because of that long shadow of the cross in women’s experience, feminist theologians look away too quickly from the cross as they develop feminist hamartiology and soteriology in an (often realised) eschatological vision. While certainly not universal, as we have seen, Fisk suggests this desire for feminist reintegration is a theological perspective that has too quickly “set its face towards the bright dawn of Easter Sunday in a denial of the darkness of Good Friday.”⁷² In centralising the Paschal Mystery—and in making Lewisian cruciformity also part of Lewisian

⁶⁶ Ibid, 104-105.

⁶⁷ Brown, Joanne Carlson, and Rebecca Parker, “For God So Loved the World?” in *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, ed. Joanne Carlson Brown, Haskell M. Miller, and Carole R. Bohn (New York: Pilgrim, 1989), 26.

⁶⁸ Fisk, *Sex*, 113. It is worth noting that Fisk likens this view to the dualism of her childhood Christian fundamentalism.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 109; cf. Sharon H. Luke, *Westminster Bible Companion* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 158.

⁷⁰ Fisk, *Sex*, 109, quoting Beverly Wildung Harrison, *Making the Connections: Essays in Feminist Social Ethics* (Boston: Beacon, 1985), 19.

⁷¹ Fisk, *Sex*, 105.

⁷² Ibid, 105.

mere Christianity—I risk a cognate danger. While the focal point of spiritual response is to echo the cross in self-surrender, the image moves quickly to the hope of resurrection, to an expectation of new creation. It is important to read C.S. Lewis’ narrative spiritual theology of the cross in light of this concern about self-negation in women’s experience instead of simply pointing to the image of new life that follows the self-death.

Even within Fisk’s critique, and despite her own doubt about Christianity’s capacity for reconstruction, we see a hint of possibility. One of those is a continual question of mutuality and love within the text. Considering the tensions between self-abnegation and rugged individuality, Fisk notes that for Saiving, “the opposite of this self-aggrandisement is self-giving love, ‘the true norm of human existence and the one real solution to the fundamental predicament in which man stands.’”⁷³ And Carter Heyward, Fisk notes, admits that we cannot simply live for ourselves, nor can we disappear into the lives of others: “To live with integrity, we live with others: we are ‘for’ ourselves and ‘for’ others.”⁷⁴ While Fisk admits an attraction to Heyward’s “conception of mutual relation,” she doubts how realistic that approach is in everyday life.⁷⁵

Like Lewis, Fisk is dismissive of the blunt instrument of penal substitutionary atonement theory—though contrary to my argument in chapter two, Fisk uses Lewis’ stone table sacrifice and the logic of the deeper magic in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* as emblematic of that belief.⁷⁶ This theology is worth leaving behind, Fisk argues, and is too often the target of feminist theology. And though feminists struggle with any of the various perspectives that valorise Christ’s suffering, even in reinterpretation, there is within Fisk’s bone collage an image that is meaningful in the cross:

[I]n the enduring image of the human Jesus Christ on the cross, in the compelling narrative of his anguish, arrest, trial and crucifixion, Christianity affirms the reality of suffering, a reality that even God’s Son was subject to.⁷⁷

Embodied, incarnational theology, for Fisk, is not just the images of resurrection and new life captured by feminist eschatologies, but crucifixion and suffering and death—a

⁷³ Fisk, *Sex*, 75, quoting Saiving Goldstein, “Human Situation,” 100.

⁷⁴ Carter Heyward, *Touching Our Strength: The Erotic as Power and the Love of God* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 22, qtd. in Fisk, *Sex*, 85.

⁷⁵ Fisk, *Sex*, 85.

⁷⁶ See *Ibid*, 105-107.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 108.

theological corrective evident in real life.⁷⁸ Unwilling to ignore the damage done, Fisk provides a surprisingly integrative vision of the cross:

[W]hatever ill use it has been put to, the story of Christ's passion has a compelling plot and an incredibly rich array of symbols and cast of characters. The cross is much more than a vehicle of substitutionary sacrifice, or glorification of suffering: is a symbol and story through which we can explore that which is deepest and strongest; the most painful and the most wonderful.⁷⁹

In refusing to look away from the cross, Fisk argues that the cross actually provides a uniquely realistic perspective, a "place from which to see the worst of humanity."⁸⁰ This vision is part of Fisk's immanent critique, neither a lionisation of women nor a soteriological abstraction, but a vision of "the crimes we all take part in ... the real, political way that we are all complicit in injustice; the way that we can all be cowardly and sadistic."⁸¹ Ultimately, what Fisk wants "are ways of identifying with the suffering body of Christ that acknowledge that suffering is how things are, rather than how they ought to be."⁸² Rather than a non-realised eschatology that throws hope forward as it looks away from the cross and suffering, Fisk calls for a realism that takes into account the full weight of the cross and human experience. Intriguingly, in attending to the dark history of women's suffering in the shadow of the cross, Fisk has called us to a deeper vision of what the cross can mean for women—even for those who are not able to fully reconstruct a vision of Christian faith after the deconstruction of feminist theology. We are invited to hold these tensions together, a difficult task, as Natalie Carnes admits in her work on imagery and belief:

Christ suffers rivenness in order to rive it. Christ on the cross breaks brokenness itself. The cross is God's refusal to let violence be determinative. For, on the cross, Christ reveals God to be love all the way down.... For Christ to break brokenness means that Christ is present even to rivenness itself.⁸³

⁷⁸ "When feminist theology wants to focus on the embodiment of the incarnation and resurrection, but not the suffering and death of the crucifixion, it makes the same mistake," Ibid, 116. In the fifth chapter, "Sex and the Sacred," Fisk also explores motifs of self-loss and mutuality in thinking about mysticism and eros.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 116.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 116.

⁸¹ Ibid, 116.

⁸² Ibid, 114. This is precisely the discussion Lewis invites in *The Problem of Pain*, arguing that whatever good may come of suffering—including the awakening of the human to the reality of God (81, 98)—suffering itself is not good and should be resisted, 98-105.

⁸³ Natalie Carnes, *Image and Presence: A Christological Reflection on Iconoclasm and Iconophilia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017), 99.

Kath Filmer and the First Generation of Critics on Lewis and Women

From his baptism of the imagination that was a “kind of death” through his death-rooted conversion to Christianity and into his career as a Christian public intellectual speaking about spiritual life, C.S. Lewis saw self-death in the pattern of Christ’s surrender to the cross as an essential quality of healthy, normative spirituality. Beyond feminist Christology, in many critical ways Lewis is a figure that feminists could use as paradigmatic of the need for feminist criticism: An Edwardian Oxbridge male entrenched in androcentric classical, medieval, and renaissance literature, often writing in modes defined by male writers (fantasy literature, sf, literary criticism, apologetics) who for most of his life had no sisters, mother, or wife and very few women students, colleagues, and peers. In much of his fiction, literary history, and cultural criticism he essentialises gender and determines social roles along gender lines, though he admittedly deconstructs some of those binaries. Yet a survey of critics on Lewis and gender—and there is no area of Lewis’ thinking and life that is more scrutinised than this one—invites fruitful possibilities even within this seemingly male-entrenched résumé. A review of the literature on Lewis and women shows that Lewis’ understanding of gender is complex, nuanced, and at times problematic. There is, though, an inversive tendency in Lewis that offers hopeful possibilities for a deeper conversation about women’s experience and crucicentric spirituality, and that demonstrates the transformative possibilities of Lewis’ *theologia crucis* that is sometimes limited by his essentialisation of gendered hierarchies.

As early as his first *Gedenkschrift*, critics had concerns about Lewis and women in his public work. In an otherwise glowing article, Stella Gibbons admits that there is “much of the ‘crusty bachelor’” in *That Hideous Strength*, whose protagonist is subjected to gender-role mansplaining that shows in Lewis an attitude that is “narrow and unkind.”⁸⁴ This careful criticism begins a strong re-assessment of C.S. Lewis and gender from the 1970s to the current day, predominantly by women Lewis critics.

Close friend of Lewis and fellow Inkling, Owen Barfield, admitted to the New York C.S. Lewis’ Society in 1972 that on the theoretical level Lewis could very well be considered a misogynist, though he was not a misogynist in his personal life.⁸⁵ Biographers note Lewis’

⁸⁴ Stella Gibbons, “Imaginative Writing,” in *Light on C.S. Lewis*, ed. Jocelyn Gibb (New York: HarperCollins, 1965), 93. Gibbons also feels the character of Mrs Beaver is too stereotypical of a fussy woman, 93.

⁸⁵ Green and Hooper, *C.S. Lewis*, 213-214.

complex personal history with women that punctured an overwhelmingly androcentric existence. Despite this past, as a public Christian intellectual Lewis had a series of intimate relationships of mutual literary and devotional mentorship, mostly through letters, with theologian Sr Penelope Lawson, poet Ruth Pitter, and author Dorothy L. Sayers. Most striking are his unusual home situation in Oxford and his late-in-life romance. Lewis took great personal and social risk in living with Janie Moore, a much older married woman without means.⁸⁶ From his return to university after the war until she was moved to palliative care in 1950, Lewis and Moore lived together in various homes, including nearly twenty years with Lewis' brother. Though a tenuous majority opinion has arisen in scholarship that the relationship between Moore and Lewis was sexual in the early years,⁸⁷ later in life Lewis referred to her as his adoptive mother and attended to her in her increasing sickness until her death in 1951. Lewis took a role in raising Moore's daughter, Maureen, just eight years his junior, and ultimately became the godfather of one of Maureen's children. Not long after the passing of Mrs Moore in 1951, Lewis began a friendship with American Jewish-Christian author, Joy Davidman. According to biographer Abigail Santamaria, Davidman left her husband and moved with her children to England to pursue a relationship with Lewis.⁸⁸ In 1956, leading Christian public intellectual C.S. Lewis scandalously married this American divorcée to secure her immigration status in England. Within a year of this secret marriage of convenience, however, they had fallen in love. When Davidman contracted terminal cancer, a priest performed a death-bed sacramental wedding ceremony in 1957. Davidman was healed by this same priest, and she and Lewis enjoyed a three-year reprieve, working together on books—including *The Four Loves*, deemed too sexually charged for American audiences—and developing relationships with others as a couple. In 1960, cancer returned in force and Davidman died in the summer, leaving Lewis reeling in inconsolable grief. Not long after Davidman's death, Lewis shared his feelings in *A Grief Observed*, in which he was explicit about the intimacy and sexuality of his

⁸⁶ See Wilson, *C.S. Lewis*, 64-68, who reveals the risk Lewis took in losing his position at Oxford for sexual indiscretion.

⁸⁷ See Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, *A Sword Between the Sexes: C.S. Lewis and the Gender Debates* (Grand Rapids: BrazosPress, 2010), 100.

⁸⁸ Abigail Santamaria, *Joy: Poet, Seeker, and the Woman who Captivated C.S. Lewis* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing, 2015), esp. 212-223.

marriage.⁸⁹ Two of these Davidman-influenced books, *Four Loves* and *Grief Observed*, are treated in this chapter.

This complex personal history of what is certainly an atypical relational matrix sits in some awkward tension with particular moments of sexism, essentialism, and use of stereotypes—both intimated and overt—that occur in his fiction and his nonfiction. Though rarely are scholarly critiques unmitigated—and no defence of Lewis can justify all comments just as no demolition of Lewis can scrutinise all his ideas—the early criticisms of Lewis’ work are pointed and often personal. In 1976, Margaret Hannay writes that “St. Clive” has become an Evangelical

authority on almost every aspect of Christian life and doctrine, including, unfortunately, the ‘place’ of women. The more Lewis’ works are used to enforce the idea of the domination of men and the subordination of women, the less attractive these works become to ... intelligent men and women....⁹⁰

Hannay cites the “chauvinistic elements which have irritated so many women”⁹¹ and argues that through his encounter with powerful women later in his career, like Sayers and Davidman, Lewis’ view changed from contextually-laden male chauvinism to a more open and egalitarian perspective. Hannay argues that Lewis’ Oxford reputation for women-hating was undeserved in real life and, indeed, Lewis would later praise Cambridge for a more open atmosphere for women scholars, claiming some responsibility in breaking down professional gender barriers in Oxford.⁹² Yet she believes he deserved a reputation for chauvinism in his WWII-era science fiction and his editorial writings about the roles of women. However, Hannay records changes in Lewis’ writing by the 1950s, including caveats in the *Narniad*, a developed language of assessment in his book on sixteenth-century verse over his earlier academic writing, and the character, setting, and narrative of *Till We Have*

⁸⁹ *A Grief Observed* was published pseudonymously until his death in 1963. While all Lewis biographies tell the story of “Joy and Jack,” and there are portrayals of Davidman in the *Shadowlands* film (with Anthony Hopkins and Debra Winger), in the memoir of her son, Douglas H. Gresham, *Lenten Lands: My Childhood with Joy Davidman and C.S. Lewis* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), and Lyle Dorsett’s *And God Came In: The Extraordinary Story of Joy Davidman: Her Life and Marriage to C.S. Lewis* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1983). The only critical biography is that of Santamaria, *Joy*.

⁹⁰ Margaret Patterson Hannay, “‘Surprised by Joy’: C.S. Lewis’ Changing Attitudes Toward Women,” *Mythlore* 4, no. 1 (1976): 15. See also Margaret Patterson Hannay, “C.S. Lewis: Mere Misogyny?,” *Daughters of Sarah* 1, no. 6 (1975): 1-4; Doris T. Myers, “Brave New World: The Status of Women according to Tolkien, Lewis, and Williams,” *Cimarron Review* 17 (1971): 13-19.

⁹¹ Hannay, “Surprised by Joy,” 15.

⁹² C.S. Lewis, “Interim Report,” in *Present Concerns*, ed. Walter Hooper (New York: Harcourt, 1986), 97.

Faces (1956) as it stands in great contrast to his previous adult fiction, *That Hideous Strength* (1945). While Hannay may overplay the growth and weights it too heavily upon the influence of Joy Davidman, she demonstrates convincingly a transformation of Lewis' understanding of sex roles, gender, hierarchy, love, and marriage, evidenced especially in *Till We Have Faces*, *The Four Loves*, and *A Grief Observed*.

Some critics want to defend Lewis against charges of misogyny and sexism by demonstrating positive or counter-stereotypical roles for women and girls in his writing as well as Lewis' positive relationships with women. These critics include Kathryn Lindskoog,⁹³ Corbin Scott Carnell,⁹⁴ Nancy-Lou Patterson,⁹⁵ Karla Faust Jones,⁹⁶ and, more recently, many of the popular-level essays in Carolyn Curtis and Mary Pomroy Key's edited volume *Women and C.S. Lewis* (2015). With some exceptions, scholars do not ignore problematic realities in Lewis. Many of the essays of the 1970s and 1980s try to look seriously at the problematic parts of Lewis' most public work and either contextualise the materials or to problematise earlier readings by discussing egalitarian, contrasting, or hopeful currents within his life and writing.

Not all scholars will go as far as Kath Filmer in 1993, who is disturbed by various resonances within Lewis' fiction and "the misogynist and the chauvinist beliefs" embedded in his work.⁹⁷ Filmer proposes that Narnian evil is weighted upon the figure of the woman, with the White Witch as paradigmatic: "a self-deceived, self-worshipping creature," a blood-thirsty "devouring goddess image" that represents "the negative and fearful aspects of femininity which seem to have had a profound influence upon C.S. Lewis."⁹⁸ While there are scholars distinctively critical of Lewis' work, Filmer represents a unique voice in the scholarly

⁹³ E.g., Kathryn Lindskoog, "C.S. Lewis: Reactions from Women," *Mythlore* 3, no. 4 (1976): 18-20, where she challenges Barfield's claim of misogyny directly by appealing to women's experiences in reading and affirmational moments in Lewis' life and writing. See also Lindskoog, *Mere Christian*, 20, and Lindskoog's entries in *The C.S. Lewis Readers' Encyclopedia*, ed. Jeffrey D. Schultz, and John G. West, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998) on "Sex" (429) and "Women" (429).

⁹⁴ Corbin Scott Carnell, "The Meaning of Masculine and Feminine in the Work of C.S. Lewis," *Modern British Literature* 2 (1977): 153-159. Carnell's conclusions here are part of the assumptions in his *Bright Shadow*, esp. 167-169, 124-127.

⁹⁵ From a Jungian perspective, see Nancy-Lou Patterson, "Guardaci Ben: The Visionary Woman in C.S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia and *That Hideous Strength*," *Mythlore* 6, no. 3 (1979): 6-10 and *Mythlore* 6, no. 4 (1979): 20-24; Patterson, *Ransoming the Waste Land*, 227-33.

⁹⁶ Responding to Dorothy L. Sayers' question, "Are Women Human?" in *Unpopular Opinions* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1946), 106-116. See Karla Faust Jones, "Girls in Narnia: Hindered or Human?" *Mythlore* 13, no. 3 (1987): 15-19.

⁹⁷ Filmer, *Mask and Mirror*, 27.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 110.

material—both in recognising the outlines of a theology of self-surrender in his work and in offering an inconsistent methodology that makes an analysis of her work challenging. A return to the character of Jane shows where Filmer fits in the critical school.

In chapter four, I described Jane and Mark's antipodean paths of self-death that lead to new life in their own self-conception and their relationship. Most scholars recognise that Jane and Mark have unequal pathways, and their pathways of humility are gendered. I argued that Mark is the embodiment of Lewis' critique of the Inner Ring while Jane is the person who strives simply to be left alone and is fearful of being drawn in—each of which is a temptation in Lewis' own spiritual journey. Mark's catastrophic failure, I argued, dwarfs Jane's own fearful resistance and this asymmetry in their twinned paths is symbolised by the fact that Mark travels for miles to return to his wife while Jane merely goes the few steps from the Manor to the guest house. While the entirety of *That Hideous Strength* is peculiarly gendered, including progressive ideas regarding household management, relatively traditional understanding of marriage roles, and cosmic genders descending upon the earth in the apocalyptic climax, one aspect is unambivalent. At the close of the story, as Ransom is ready to leave, and another Arthur *redivivus* will need to come to his place—indeed, a messiah figure that could have been born to Mark and Jane had they not decided to use contraceptive methods to prevent children—Jane is retired of her role as seer: “You will have no more dreams. Have children instead.”⁹⁹ Jean Graham suggests that this moment confirms that Jane's “redemption” is bound up in “taking care of her husband and bearing children in submission to Mr. Fisher-King.”¹⁰⁰ While Alicia Burris admits that Ransom's parting words “seems to be referring to the visionary dreams that Jane has throughout the novel,” she suggests that “it raises the question as to whether Jane must give up all personal dreams for the sake of her marriage” and whether “scholarly dreams are inappropriate because she is married and must therefore restrict herself to the domestic.”¹⁰¹ Burris is here in conversation with Gretchen Bartels, who analyses what she calls Lewis' “theoretical dislike of the emancipated woman” as it is paired with “his theological understanding of

⁹⁹ Lewis, THS, 380.

¹⁰⁰ Jean E. Graham, “Women, Sex, and Power: Circe and Lilith in Narnia,” *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 29, nos. 1-2 (2004): 37.

¹⁰¹ Alicia D. Burris, “Gender Differentiation and Gender Hierarchy in C.S. Lewis” (BA honours thesis, Georgia Southern University, 2014), 25.

gender.”¹⁰² Burriss concludes her analysis of *That Hideous Strength* suggesting that here we see the deepest problem of Lewis’ sexism: “The Problem of Jane, which supersedes the Problem of Susan, is that for Lewis’s theology to map onto Jane’s experience, she must give up her status as an emancipated woman and instead dwell in the domestic sphere.”¹⁰³

The argument that Lewis demonises women who seek paths of academic or professional work is unconvincing. Beyond the fact that Lewis taught women, worked with them, and married a professional, Lewis is largely sympathetic to Jane as a woman of deep perception who lost her academic vision and is struggling in a world antipathetic to the idea of her as someone of worth. Jane is a woman for whom “marriage had proved to be the door out of a world of work and comradeship and laughter and innumerable things to do, into something like solitary confinement.”¹⁰⁴ Jane’s pain is palpable in the text. I still think that Jane is a strong character when twinned with Mark. However, Burriss, Filmer, and other critics are right that the climactic equation of her story and her role as a mother in Ransom’s blessing is at least inelegant and at most problematic in various ways—even though Jane did, indeed, seek out the Manor at St Anne’s in order to receive the release from her dreams that Ransom offers or predicts. Filmer goes beyond other critics in her interpretation, claiming that Jane “aligns herself with the spirit, if not the actuality, of the evil at Belbury,” which is the pathway for Lewis’ female characters that are not virgins.¹⁰⁵ Filmer says that Jane’s apotheosis is not, as I have argued, a holistic death to self that enables her to receive her humbled husband anew. Instead, the climax of Jane’s development comes when she “is ready to submit sexually to her husband” in a way that is paradigmatic of all female submission to the male.¹⁰⁶ Filmer concludes that in making the scene a moment of revelatory light, Lewis is being “slightly dishonest,” for he is not truly suggesting “the triumph of the *good*” but “the triumph of the *male*.”¹⁰⁷ In Jane’s character, then, “we are treated to a brief but telling glimpse ... of the misogynist and the chauvinist beliefs that so taint his spiritual vision.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² Gretchen Bartels, “Of Men and Mice: C.S. Lewis on Male-Female Interactions,” *Literature & Theology* 22, no. 3 (2008): 324.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 334.

¹⁰⁴ Lewis, THS, 13.

¹⁰⁵ Filmer, *Mask and Mirror*, 100.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

The word “misogyny” is ambiguous in Filmer, used for any development of a female character with a negative character trait as well as for the deepest, most problematic aspects of Lewis’ fiction. It is unclear if Filmer simply means “sexism” by the term or if she thinks that Lewis actually hates women (as the etymology and earlier usage suggests). Beyond problematic terms, Filmer has not done the exegetical work of demonstrating that her conclusion could be true, that Lewis has made Jane a figure paradigmatic of the feminine and the female and that the climax of her story is the model of all women’s relationship to men in real life. Moreover, Filmer’s critique of Lewis’ relationship with women in fiction is bound up with her method, as discussed in chapter one. Using Lewis’ fiction and largely disregarding his nonfiction and biography and his theological community, Filmer seeks to demonstrate that Lewis’ fiction masked and mirrored his own monstrous misogyny. In the case of Jane, the inequity of her character development in Filmer’s analysis is because Lewis has a personal, suppressed “preference for things masculine”¹⁰⁹ rather than a coherent theological understanding of gender that is open to criticism on its own terms.

Most critics, even those sympathetic with Filmer’s concerns about sexism, chauvinism, or misogyny, have ignored Filmer’s conclusions as they arise from her presuppositional approach rather than from the text itself. Monika Hilder is an exception, as we explore below. And Nancy-Lou Patterson offers a response to Filmer’s “monstrosity” thesis¹¹⁰ and critiques Filmer’s approach to Jane on methodological grounds as Filmer fails to distinguish who is speaking in the text, and in what context.¹¹¹ At one point, Filmer asserts that “there is no attempt to show women ... who are simply intelligent and highly competent.”¹¹² This is “simply not true,” Patterson rebuts, showing through text analysis that there is only one unintelligent and another incompetent character who ultimately align themselves with Ransom’s company, and both are men (Tom and Mark, each of whom arrives after the climactic battle). On the deeper issue of Filmer’s resistance to Ransom’s requirement of submission and obedience of women, Patterson argues that the heroes of *St Anne’s* in the text are “individual, feisty, independent, fully developed” resisters of the

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 25-26.

¹¹⁰ Patterson, *Ransoming the Waste Land*, 145-176.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 261. This is the primary argument in Lewis’ discussion with Tillyard in *The Personal Heresy*.

¹¹² Filmer, *Mask and Mirror*, 88.

N.I.C.E. who live “cooperatively in the presence of a leader with whom they have cast their common lot,” and who “are constantly engaged in consultation, discussion, analysis, shared life, group participation, and mutual aid.”¹¹³ Moreover, Patterson challenges Filmer to read the entire text, where Ransom says that obedience is “more like a dance than a drill—specially between man and woman where the roles are always changing.”¹¹⁴ It is a stunning omission for a critic who asserts, as Filmer does, that for Lewis a dedication to “‘higher things’ ... means obedience to men.”¹¹⁵

There are concerns with Filmer’s approach to her critique of Lewis’ spirituality in fiction. Still, I am inclined to agree that moments like Ransom’s final charge to Jane—as well as other examples in Lewis’ fiction that feminist critics have tagged as problematic (including the “Problem with Susan” and Filmer’s correct analysis of Peggy in “The Shoddy Lands” as a female “embodiment of petty selfishness and greed”¹¹⁶)—do taint Lewis’ spiritual vision. Ultimately, these moments of gender imbalance undercut Lewis’ assertion that a posture of self-death is paradigmatic for all, not merely for women, and that the cross is the model for Christian life—the root of the whole matter. As feminist critical evaluations in the following sections demonstrate, however, Lewis has an inversive perspective that could work to subvert two-dimensional moments like these.

Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen and the Second Generation of Lewis Gender Critics

These early considerations of Lewis and gender created an environment that erupted into a wide-reaching conversation beginning in the 2000s. Candice Fredrick and Sam McBride published *Women Among the Inklings* (2001),¹¹⁷ following up with a later paper focusing upon females and combat in the fantasy of Lewis and Tolkien.¹¹⁸ This work invited a reconsideration of the Oxford Inklings and, particularly, the way these men portrayed women in their fiction. In the same period, Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen’s 2004

¹¹³ Patterson, *Ransoming the Waste Land*, 269.

¹¹⁴ Lewis, THS, 149; see Patterson, *Ransoming the Waste Land*, 269-270.

¹¹⁵ Filmer, *Mask and Mirror*, 88.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, 90.

¹¹⁷ Candice Fredrick and Sam McBride, *Women Among the Inklings: Gender, C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Charles Williams* (London: Greenwood Press, 2001).

¹¹⁸ Candice Fredrick and Sam McBride, “Battling the Woman Warrior: Females and Combat in Tolkien and Lewis,” *Mythlore* 35, No. 3/4 (2007): 29-42.

C.S. Lewis Lecture at the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, heightened the conversation. This piece was particularly important as it created the foundation for vigorous debate on Lewis and Gender in a colloquium issue of the *Christian Scholar's Review* in 2007. The special issue centres on two arguments, one by social scientist Van Leeuwen and one by philosopher Adam Barkman, with responses from leading Lewis scholars.

Van Leeuwen's reworking of her keynote lecture concurs with Hannay's thesis by suggesting a developmental pathway for Lewis, moving from a traditionalist, androcentric hierarchicalism and essentialism rooted in classical and medieval archetypes toward an intriguing and inviting near-egalitarianism in his late-in-life thought. In this article and her follow-up book, *A Sword Between the Sexes* (2010), Van Leeuwen argues that although they were often idiosyncratic, diverse, and not altogether consistent, many of Lewis' views of gender "can be explained at least partly by his historical and personal circumstances."¹¹⁹ Van Leeuwen demonstrates a series of clarifications, reversals, and deepening of views, particularly in later books like *Till We Have Faces*, *The Discarded Image*, *The Four Loves*, and *A Grief Observed*. As these works are lesser known, many readers continue to carry around a false "portrait of Lewis as the unchanging defender of gender stereotypes and gender hierarchy."¹²⁰

In the monograph, Van Leeuwen extends both her data on Lewis' life and work and her critique as a social scientist. She carefully considers Lewis' understanding of sex and gender, looking at contextually implicated, literary, and idiosyncratic views of gender roles, hierarchicalism, sex stereotypes, and equalities. Though Lewis purported to represent a "mere Christianity" in his teaching, Van Leeuwen argues that many of his views are *not* representative of most Christians in most times and places. As a result, his personal beliefs as a public intellectual blur his message in a way he had not intended and in a way that until this very day bends the gender conversation in American Evangelicalism—the community of Lewis' most committed readers.¹²¹ In considering Lewis' adult relationships with women, putting Lewis in conversation with philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe and author Dorothy Sayers—two other contemporary Oxonian Christian public intellectuals—Van Leeuwen

¹¹⁹ Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, "A Sword Between the Sexes: C.S. Lewis's Long Road to Gender Equality," *Christian Scholar's Review* 36, No. 4 (2007): 392.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 414.

¹²¹ See Derrick, *Fame of C.S. Lewis*.

suggests that Lewis was “A Better Man than His Theories,” living authentically and generously with women students, friends, partners, and mentors while continuing to hold some hierarchal and essentialist views.¹²² Van Leeuwen demonstrates that in providing his readers with “generalisations” about women and men, he claimed universal experiences despite never having looked for evidence of that universality. While Lewis is effective against materialist reductionism, he carries his own untested Cartesian-Aristotelian-Jungian dualism that bends his views of gender and the social scientific enterprise.¹²³ Beyond the social scientific critique, and though she never mentions Filmer, Van Leeuwen’s thesis is the precise opposite of Filmer’s, who argues that “there was no marked change in Lewis’s attitudes and beliefs.”¹²⁴

The *Christian Scholar’s Review* colloquium included a second keystone paper, Adam Barkman’s “‘All is Righteousness and there is no Equality’: C.S. Lewis on Gender and Justice.” While Van Leeuwen is working as a social scientist, specifically a psychologist, Barkman is working as a philosopher, placing Lewis in conversation with Aristotle and 20th-century systematic theologians of what he calls “Christian orthodoxy.” He provides a focussed survey of Lewis’ ideas of gender, celebrating Lewis’ presentation of what he thinks biblical-historical hierarchical Christian belief should be: “[A]lthough men and women can both achieve the same level of spiritual excellence and may have the same cognitive powers, they are not equal in spiritual essence (which includes function) and may not be equal in spiritual value.”¹²⁵ By “spiritual essence,” Barkman means “roughly-speaking what Aristotle means: that it is the inherent nature of a given thing.”¹²⁶ Though he admits the conclusion is “repugnant” to some, including conservative Evangelicals who want to assert ontological equality, Barkman’s paper is meant both as an apology for reading Lewis this way (against the readings of scholars like Van Leeuwen) and for the idea that Lewis’ hierarchal Aristotelian position is “in line with orthodox Christianity” and is of “contemporary worth.”¹²⁷

¹²² Van Leeuwen, *Sword*, 109-138.

¹²³ The central work of this critique is in Van Leeuwen, *Sword*, 139-165.

¹²⁴ Filmer, *Mask and Mirror*, 3.

¹²⁵ Adam Barkman, “‘All is Righteousness and there is no Equality’: C.S. Lewis on Gender and Justice,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* (2007): 416-417.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, 417.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, 417.

The remainder of the journal colloquium includes respective replies by Van Leeuwen and Barkman and responses by several Lewis scholars. Largely agreeing with Barkman on Scripture, Van Leeuwen clarifies Lewis' view of Scripture¹²⁸ and notes that "Lewis made no appeal to the Gospels to defend his theory of gender archetypes and hierarchy, for the simple reason that there is nothing clearly there to draw on."¹²⁹ This point is the foundation for one rail of her critique of Barkman: that his use of "*selective* Pauline texts ... in attempting to read his Aristotelian/medieval cosmology back into Scripture, the younger Lewis" was in grave error regarding trinitarian and incarnational theology.¹³⁰ This error is Barkman's as well, Van Leeuwen argues, and it is one that Lewis left behind as he "finally acknowledged the confessional non-negotiability of Nicene Trinitarianism."¹³¹ Barkman's response to Van Leeuwen is to emphasise his criticism of her developmental thesis "because she fails to look at all the evidence, but also because she shockingly ignores Lewis's *biblical* reasons for believing in gender hierarchy and gender essentialism."¹³² Barkman argues that a systematic reading of works from the last decade of his life show continued gender essentialism and hierarchy, and responds by showing such evidence in light of biblical links in *Surprised by Joy, Till We Have Faces, Four Loves, Grief Observed, and Discarded Image*.

In response, Doris Myers disagrees with Barkman on the logical flow of his argument: that "the Bible teaches gender inequality; C. S. Lewis believed the Bible; he therefore believed in gender inequality throughout his life."¹³³ Myers draws out two frequently occurring problems in Lewis studies: inattention to Lewis' chronology and his biblical hermeneutics. On the latter point, Myers wishes that scholars were cognizant of the particularly Anglican approach to Scripture of Lewis' time. Most of the respondents share Myers' concern that readers are not clear about Lewis' biblical hermeneutics. Joe Christopher argues that "Barkman is presenting only part of a complexity"¹³⁴ and that Van Leeuwen has not fully appreciated the way Lewis roots gender in Scripture and myth. Harry

¹²⁸ See in more detail Van Leeuwen, *Sword*, 64-70.

¹²⁹ Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, "What Did Lewis Say, and When Did He Say It? A Reply to Adam Barkman," *Christian Scholar's Review* 36, no. 4 (Summer 2007): 439.

¹³⁰ Van Leeuwen, "What Did Lewis Say?" 440.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 444.

¹³² Adam Barkman, "We Must Go Back to Our Bibles': A Reply to Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen," *Christian Scholar's Review* (2007): 445.

¹³³ Doris T. Myers, "Lewis in Genderland," *Christian Scholar's Review* 34, no. 4 (Summer 2007): 456.

¹³⁴ Joe R. Christopher, "Gender Hierarchies and Lowerarchies: A Response to Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen and Adam Barkman," *Christian Scholar's Review* 36, no. 4 (Summer 2007): 463.

Poe presses both Van Leeuwen and Barkman on the period of Lewis' formation regarding thoughts on gender and hierarchy, and agrees with the developmental thesis, since "Lewis changed his mind in small matters and in great."¹³⁵ Poe is convinced by Van Leeuwen's quotation of a passage in *A Grief Observed* that demonstrates that Lewis eventually grew in his understanding, even if he did not achieve full Pauline mutual submission: "In one paragraph, Lewis smashes the essentialist/hierarchical theory to bits.... Here Lewis describes a perfect egalitarian relationship of equals in which both play different parts over the course of the relationship."¹³⁶ Poe argues that Barkman conflates Aristotle's hierarchicalism and orthodox Christianity and thus fails to note Lewis' growth as a person, including his shifting understanding of St Paul and marriage, and his redefinition of "headship" as "rooted in voluntary suffering and self-giving rather than in an essentialist Aristotelian hierarchy."¹³⁷ Furthermore, Barkman's definition of Lewisian-Aristotelian "essence" is, according to Poe, fundamentally opposed to Lewis' view of the fall of humanity.

Beyond concerns about Lewis' view of Scripture and attention to his chronology, other questions of method emerge in the debate. Poe would like to see clearer methodology in terms of how scholars equate Lewis' fiction with his ideas. Concluding the print-colloquium, Diana Pavlac Glycer notes the clearest result of the discussion: an acknowledgement that "Lewis's views on gender, like his views on most things, are more complex than most people realize."¹³⁸ Glycer's essay seeks more precision, such as with Lewis' complex language and ideas about feminine and masculine, female and male, and women and men as terms. Glycer believes that despite his complexity, depth, and sometimes surprising definitions, Lewis' gender-loaded terms of quality are problematic: Lewis uses the term "masculine" as "an umbrella term for strength, initiative, courtesy, protection, frankness, and chivalry, and 'feminine' to mean tenderness, responsiveness, tact, and beauty."¹³⁹ Dissatisfied with the "thinness" of abstract language and the "splintered" nature of contemporary word usage, as Lewis is an imagistic thinker, Glycer argues that more study is needed.

¹³⁵ Harry Lee Poe, "Lewis and the Ladies," *Christian Scholar's Review* 36, no. 4 (Summer 2007): 472.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 475.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, 473.

¹³⁸ Diana Pavlac Glycer, "'We are All Fallen Creatures and All Very Hard to Live With': Some Thoughts on Lewis and Gender," *Christian Scholar's Review* 36, no. 4 (Summer 2007): 477.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, 477.

Glyer agrees with Van Leeuwen and others about development in Lewis' ideas and the importance of contextual reading. Glyer is not certain, however, that his basic commitment to essentialism changes much in his life. Still, Glyer argues that it is important to look at the *quality* of Lewis' term-usage, noting an essential egalitarianism within an unequal world, a more well-rounded view of human personality than one might immediately suppose, a literary interest in his use of gender and sex language, and a softening of an increasing sophistication in his use of gender language—all rooted in a “deeply ingrained *pragmatism*.”¹⁴⁰ Given Lewis' particularity, scholars must be careful about drawing universal or theoretical implications. Emphasising the need to understand the integrated reality of Lewis' life and thought to contextualise his ideas properly, Glyer concludes with a methodological suggestion: “[W]e will not do too badly if ... we seek to follow his example: to advocate unity, to admit liberty, and to practice love.”¹⁴¹

Integrative Cruciformity and Inversive Qualities in Lewis' Life and Work

Ann Loades and Lewis' Christological Inversion

This journal colloquium was part of an ongoing scholarly conversation about the oft-discussed views of Lewis and gender in literary criticism.¹⁴² Ann Loades' articles in 2010 on C.S. Lewis and gender evaluate Lewis' view on the ordination of women,¹⁴³ Lewis' British context concerning women (Edwardian culture, Oxford, WWI, etc.),¹⁴⁴ and his use of gender as metaphor and as part of his worldview.¹⁴⁵ In conversation with Van Leeuwen, Loades demonstrates the transformation of gender-tagged language that was endemic to his world and his usage. Loades contrasts the patterns of masculinity in Lewis' experiences of abuse in boarding schools with Lewis' own much more creative, generous, and capacious views.¹⁴⁶ Loades distinguishes between Lewis' theoretical play of ideas and what is deepest in his work. In those deeper wells, in particular on the christological level, Loades suggests that

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 481.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 483. Cf. Christopher, “Gender Hierarchies,” 468.

¹⁴² E.g., Jennifer L. Miller, “No Sex in Narnia? How Andersen's ‘Snow Queen’ Problematizes Lewis's Narnia,” *Mythlore* 28, nos. 1-2 (2009): 113-130; Emerson, “Innocence as a Super-power,” 131-147.

¹⁴³ Ann Loades, “On Gender,” in *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, ed. Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 162.

¹⁴⁴ Ann Loades, “C.S. Lewis on Gender,” *Priscilla Papers* 24, no. 1 (2010): 19-20.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 168-170; Loades, “Lewis and Gender,” 20-23.

¹⁴⁶ Loades, “Lewis and Gender,” 22-23.

readers “need not follow CSL either in the ventures of his imagination or of his opinions,” but notes that “his understanding of Christ offered a most significant alternative to the cruelty, violence, intimidation, self-seeking, and manipulative behavior of which he was so critical...”¹⁴⁷ The muscular masculinity of his culture is contrasted with Lewis’ Pauline Christology as a “most significant alternative” that “captures something of what he believed about the importance of forgiveness and self-sacrifice in human life.”¹⁴⁸

Rather than dismissing the problematic aspects of Lewis’ work, Loades looks for inversive or transformative moments in his life and writings. Lewis’ christological inversion of gender characteristics is significant, Loades believes, as it is pinned to “Lewis’s portrayal of the loving, self-denying, endlessly crucified Christ.”¹⁴⁹ This link can be positive or negative, and the “regrettable” aspects Loades records are often problematically gendered.¹⁵⁰ Regardless, Loades argues that it is Lewis’ lived experience that most clearly demonstrates the critical importance of his *imitatio Christi* spirituality as it transforms the ideas of masculinity he received from his culture. Though Van Leeuwen, Hannay, and Poe each suggest that Lewis’ view of marriage relations transform dramatically by the late 1950s, as seen in *A Grief Observed*, Loades finds even in his earlier views on marriage something quite striking. Recognising that in marriage his love should look “most like a crucifixion,”¹⁵¹ Lewis models his understanding of a cruciform posture in spiritual life where one becomes “not merely Christlike, but more ‘feminine’”¹⁵²—a view Loades intensifies by noting Lewis’ self-sacrificial care of the dying Joy Davidman. Elsewhere, she argues for a Lewisian view of “Christ-likeness” bound up with a “normative mutuality of give-and-take” that cannot ever be one-sided.¹⁵³ Where Lewis fails theoretically, Loades suggests, is in weighting this Christlikeness on one partner’s roles, in suggesting that self-death for the other was the normal posture for the male alone, for “[b]oth may be Christ-like if either is to be.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 23.

¹⁴⁸ Loades, “On Gender,” 170.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 170.

¹⁵⁰ See Ibid, 173, n. 43, where she references PoP, 36, and *Four Loves*, 128-129.

¹⁵¹ Lewis, *Four Loves*, 121.

¹⁵² Loades, “Lewis and Gender,” 23.

¹⁵³ Loades, “On Gender,” 170.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 170.

Inversive Cruciform Elements in *The Four Loves* and *A Grief Observed*

As a theologian of literature and feminist critic, Loades' move to a crucicentric christological focus is helpful in pressing in upon Lewis' cross-shaped spirituality. It is not necessary here either to re-try or defend Lewis for his problematic or contextual gender views. Our interest is how he uses the image of death and resurrection to pattern believers' lives as ideally about giving up the self into co-crucifixion with Christ. Critics of Lewis on women and gender are cognizant of Lewis' (I believe evolving) understanding of hierarchy and submission in marriage. What none of these studies do is to consider the implications of these views in a "mere Christian" normative posture of self-surrender, self-sacrifice, and death to self—either as these terms are gendered by Lewis or in their application to Christians generally. Indeed, in a world created by a triune God, voluntary self-death is not merely *a* spiritual pattern but the Divine Principle of God's self-revelation to humanity. In Lewis' Logic of Cruciformity, the Divine Principle is that Jesus is in full surrender to God even to death upon the cross, which is then the Divine Pattern for believers. Self-death is central, normative, the crucial organising principle of Christian spiritual life. Beyond the Divine Paradox, that the act of self-death is an affirmation of true selfhood and the hope of new life that is the Divine Possibility of Cruciformity, a spirituality of self-sacrifice that is, for Lewis, the path to living, living fully and well. Though Filmer approaches a feminist critique of cruciformity in her book-length study, and Van Leeuwen's monograph includes substantial criticism, their concerns do not cut as deep as the dark shadow of the cross in Christian history that Fisk wants to address. Loades' focus on Christology comes closer to the mark and reveals that Lewis had not specifically worked out how embodied, Christlike, cross-shaped spirituality operates in tension or in concert with his reified understanding of gender hierarchy. His spirituality, as Loades suggests, wants to subvert power dynamics in hierarchy, and yet these hierarchical dynamics remain in his work until at least the 1950s.

As Fisk and other feminist theologians suggest possibilities of deep meaning in spiritualities of the cross by looking for resonant themes of bearing suffering, integrative love, and mutuality, so there is within C.S. Lewis' own work elements that suggest intriguing possibilities for seeing refreshing and even revolutionary elements in his spiritual theology of the cross—even if they are not carried to their logical conclusions by Lewis himself. Loades' turn to Christology shows the importance of a Lewisian *imitatio Christi* as it works

itself out in social ethics. In looking for moments of hopeful transformation, Loades and Van Leeuwen are, I believe, correct about development in Lewis' own life—noted earlier by Hannay and some authors not particularly attuned to the finer shades of feminist theological critique. For example, A.N. Wilson believes that Lewis' encounter with Joy Davidman in the 1950s enhanced “not only a sense of self-discovery ... but also a readjustment of what he thought about God and hence about everything else.”¹⁵⁵

Given the integrative nature of Lewis' thought and the importance of Lewis' encounter with Davidman, Van Leeuwen and Loades are right to point to Lewis' late-50s projects *The Four Loves*—written with Davidman as editor and conversation partner—and *A Grief Observed*, written in the weeks after Davidman's death. Moving past his study of family love (*storge*) and friendship (*philia*) through the especially gendered nature of his section on *eros*, Lewis concludes with *agape*, a supernatural love that is love itself. In this section, Lewis suggests that all relational loves are taken up by *agape* into a new matrix of unconditional love. As Meilaender explains, in Lewis' understanding the natural loves “image” divine love, but as natural loves “tend to turn back in upon the self,” the lover needs to “permit the natural loves to be transformed by self-giving love.”¹⁵⁶ Because of our natural resistance to this transformation of the loves, God feels to us like “the great rival to the natural loves.”¹⁵⁷ As a result, “self-sacrifice and renunciation may be required to help the self give up its inordinate claims.”¹⁵⁸ Thus we see Meilaender's anticipation of cruciform spirituality in Lewis' theology of love, observing that the “only cure is the drastic one of death and rebirth.”¹⁵⁹

This transformation of natural love, however, is not the fullest function of *agape*—as if *agape* “is the means and the well-being of the natural loves is the end.”¹⁶⁰ Rather, the “ultimate value” of natural, relational love is “to prepare us for *agape* and to provide ... embodiments of *agape* when God gives it, natural altars on which the flame of *agape* can descend.”¹⁶¹ Like all sacred fires from heaven, this descending *agape* can consume or

¹⁵⁵ Wilson, *C.S. Lewis*, 260-261. Wilson's here appropriates Barfield's comment about Lewis' integrative thought.

¹⁵⁶ Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 168-169.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 169.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 169.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 175.

¹⁶⁰ Lewis, “Agape” lecture in “The Four Loves.”

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*.

transform, but this descent of *agape* is necessary for natural love to become infused with the divine. As there is descent there is also ascent. Lewis' understanding of love, like his theology of the cross, is eschatological, pointing toward the resurrection of the body that brings with it "the whole fabric of our natural life with all its affections and relationships."

For this to happen, the cruciform principle is key:

[N]othing will rise which hasn't in some degree shared the Crucifixion.... Natural loves can become eternal only insofar as they have allowed themselves to be taken into the eternity of *agape*, and this always involves a sort of death.¹⁶²

Pressing in on the lived experience of this spirituality, these natural loves can be raised with Christ "only if they have, in some degree and fashion, shared His death; if the natural element in them has submitted—year after year, or in some sudden agony—to transmutation."¹⁶³

The Cruciform Principle and *A Severe Mercy*

Loades notes the integrated nature of *agape* and *eros* love within cruciform spirituality in Lewis' life in his posture toward his own partner. We also see Lewis' spiritual theology of the cross central to his role as mentor to a young American couple in the 1950s. Sheldon Vanauken's memoir, *A Severe Mercy* (1977), tells the story of a rather remarkable mid-century love between the author and his beloved Davy. Committed to undying oneness as a couple, together they created a "doctrine of love" that recognised that the "killer of love is creeping separateness. Inloveness is a gift of the gods, but then it is up to the lovers to cherish or to ruin."¹⁶⁴ That "creeping separateness" is the normal movement of relationships from continual buoyant joy and togetherness to individual pathways of thought, work, love, learning, and interests. To fight against the entropic principle in most relationships, Davy and "Van" erected a "Shining Barrier against creeping separateness"¹⁶⁵—a joyous commitment against the self in favour of selves-together—as well as "against a world of indecencies and decaying standards, the decline of courtesy, the whispering mockers of love."¹⁶⁶ This "us-centred" Shining Barrier became for Van and Davy a kind of

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Lewis, *Four Loves*, 187.

¹⁶⁴ Sheldon Vanauken, *A Severe Mercy* (New York: Bantam Books, 1979).

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 29. See the full description of the "Shining Barrier" in chapter two.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 29.

romantic idolatry, a religious commitment to one another in an erotic paganism of mutual exclusivity that they called (after Charles Williams) the “co-inherence of lovers.” *A Severe Mercy* is not merely a biography of lovers, but a “spiritual autobiography of a love,”¹⁶⁷ for their love would move through several stages that tested the Shining Barrier.

Van and Davy were together through vocational development and served together in Hawaii during WWII—all the while dreaming of living together on the seas. Ultimately, they moved to Oxford to further their education, which transformed their relationship in two ways. First, they became the centre of a diverse, bohemian, intellectual gathering of young scholars and artists. Through this group and through the writings of C.S. Lewis, Van and Davy were introduced to Christianity for the first time. As they struggled to renegotiate their us-centred love in the context of intensive community, they each ultimately converted to Christianity—partly because of the mentorship of Lewis. Over time, including a return to the US, the couple would include a sacred, ritualistic faith within the us-centred nature of their couplehood.

The outward-looking nature of their faith would become essential for their relationship, for upon returning to America Davy became terminally ill. Together they discovered how to surrender to Davy’s illness and prepare for their separation by death—a learned experience of “handing it over” to one another and to God.¹⁶⁸ This discovery of “letting go” was also a deepening of hope, so that Van wrote in a sonnet that though both laughter and tears are “Wind-driven to the centre where ways cross”; he and Davy have come to share the secret that “In death the singing beauty does not die.”¹⁶⁹

In the mortal plane, though, bodies do die. In his grief, Sheldon Vanauken reached out to C.S. Lewis by post as Lewis had provided early wisdom through letters. There had been some problematic aspects with the mutual exclusivity of Davy and Van, but Vanauken felt their commitment to one another to be a *protoevangelium*:

Our shining barrier love, however much we did not know of the meanings of God, was in many ways both innocent and good. Our subordination of self to the Love was, at least, a step towards the dying to self that is the inexorable demand of Christ.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 52.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 166.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 167.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 220.

This cruciform principle that came to centre their love emerged under Lewis' epistolary tutelage. Lewis' letter history with Vanauken grows in concern for his wellbeing and has from the beginning an attentiveness to his spirituality of the cross that would appear peculiar if not for the integrative nature of C.S. Lewis' thought and the intensity of the situation. Lewis begins the correspondence in 1950 with a conversation about the book of Romans,¹⁷¹ before addressing the doing/not-doing reality of that freely-chosen self-death moment of the dive described in chapter four, using swimming as an example.¹⁷² Worried that the hope of heaven can look like a bribe, Lewis points Vanauken instead to "Total Humility"—a concept at the centre of Christian faith and related not merely to conversion but to the cruciform posture. Vanauken would go on to share some of his own conversion poetry with Lewis, including lyrics resonant with the leap that one takes in the dive of faith¹⁷³ and lines that integrate death and rebirth motifs.¹⁷⁴

Following Davy's death in January 1955, Lewis affirms Van in the healthy aspects of his grief but exhorts him to self-care. Lewis presses in on the heart of cruciformity to put Van and Davy's relationship in perspective, that "every merely natural love has to be crucified before it can achieve resurrection."¹⁷⁵ In a tone of twinned emotional and intellectual comfort, Lewis suggests that for couples to achieve that old, happy state of oneness together, their relationship has to "have come through a difficult death and rebirth."¹⁷⁶ In a later letter, Lewis repeats the relational implication of cruciformity: "One way or another the thing had to die. Perpetual springtime is not allowed."¹⁷⁷ There are very many ways that a relationship may die, but "far more have missed the rebirth."¹⁷⁸ Lewis—who likely by this time has himself begun to fall in love with a dying woman—wonders if bereavement is actually "the easiest and least perilous of the ways" through which the "happiness of youthful love" is transformed, for not all youthful love that dies—as it must—is reborn into mature relationship.

¹⁷¹ CLIII 70-71.

¹⁷² CLIII 74-75.

¹⁷³ "Between the probable and proved there yawns / A gap. Afraid to jump, we stand absurd," CLIII 196, n. 104.

¹⁷⁴ See "Advent" in Vanauken, *Severe Mercy*, 120.

¹⁷⁵ CLIII 561; see Vanauken, *Severe Mercy*, 184.

¹⁷⁶ CLIII 561.

¹⁷⁷ CLIII 606.

¹⁷⁸ CLIII 561.

Unless we see the centrality of C.S. Lewis' spirituality of the cross as I have outlined it here, it is difficult to understand specifically why Lewis uses a cruciform spirituality of love's death and resurrection as a means to comfort a bereaved lover. Pointing to death as the cure to love—especially for a lover so committed as Vanauken—may appear insensitive and could easily be misunderstood as nothing more than cruel comfort from a confirmed bachelor. As Vanauken continues to tell the story of his grief, however, we see an unusual intensification of Lewis' crucicentric spirituality. In April 1955 Lewis writes:

Death-corruption-resurrection is the true rhythm: not the pathetic, horrible practice of mummification. Sad you must be at present. You can't develop a false sense of a duty to cling to sadness if—or when, for nature will not preserve any psychological state forever—sadness begins to vanish? There is great good in bearing sorrow patiently: I don't know that there is any virtue in sorrow just as such. It is a Christian duty, as you know, for everyone to be as happy as he can. But you know all this already.¹⁷⁹

Lewis' Paul-styled reminder of what Vanauken "already knows" is a epistolary catechetical intensification necessary when the mentor is concerned that the disciple is not integrating the lesson fully. It is intriguing that this period of concentrated correspondence (February through May 1955) overlaps significantly with his writing of *Till We Have Faces* (March to July 1955¹⁸⁰). I know of no scholar that has made the link between Orual in *Till We Have Faces* and this letter, but I have already shown that Orual's tale is one moving toward a cruciform death to self—"Die before you die"—with an attendant spiritual rebirth according to the U-shaped pattern of Lewis' spirituality of the cross. In Orual's relationship with her sister-daughter Psyche, it is intriguing that she is a character in great danger of mummifying her relationship with Psyche, rather than allowing the relationship to die and be reborn. As such, her love for Psyche develops into one of fierce jealousy and anger at signs of independence by Psyche which intensifies until, Susan McCaslin observes, Orual would "destroy Psyche rather than allow her to pursue her vision"¹⁸¹—or, any independent thought at all. Orual admits, ultimately, that there is a "love like that can grow to be nine-tenths hatred and still call itself love."¹⁸² While Psyche is a sister-daughter in the palace, Orual attempts to keep her as the girl she loved rather than allowing her to find new life.

¹⁷⁹ CLIII 593.

¹⁸⁰ Don W. King, *Out of My Bone: The Letters of Joy Davidman* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 242; CLIII 640.

¹⁸¹ McCaslin, "Critical Study," 4.

¹⁸² Lewis, TWHF, 266.

And in memory, after Psyche is sacrificed to the god of the mountain, the mummification of Psyche is so great that Orual came to see that she has deluded herself for most of her life, allowing her grief and sorrow and loss to transform love into hatred.

After Davy's death, Van spent each day reading every letter and journal note and listening to every record Van and Davy shared, chronologically moving back through their relationship. Lewis' warning about Vanauken's mummification of Davy was prescient. Davy and Van had understood the one-flesh nature of love in their us-centred commitment, but Van was in danger of forgetting that "this One Flesh must not (and in the long run cannot) 'live to itself.'"¹⁸³ Their relationship must deepen from the "us" of the Shining Barrier to "us and God" and finally to "God and us."¹⁸⁴ Lewis suggests that Vanauken was jealous of Davy's love for God, just as Orual is jealous of Psyche's love for the god on the mountain. Vanauken came to see that "the Shining Barrier had been breached by God's assault troops."¹⁸⁵ Indeed, as Meilaender notes about Lewis' theology of love and as an echo of Orual's experience, Vanauken later discovers that his own jealousy of God has "been one of the sharp and shattering insights of y agonized grief."¹⁸⁶

Lewis himself would have to learn this lesson in his own love affair, begun around the time of Vanauken's mourning in 1955 and consummated ultimately in bereavement in 1960. In *A Grief Observed*, he writes that his memories and thoughts "have been about myself, and about [Davidman], and about God. In that order. The order and the proportions exactly what they ought not to have been."¹⁸⁷ In the integrative nature of Lewis' Christian thought, there is evidence that Lewis' experiences deepen and challenge his understandings, and Lewis admitted that his own grief caused him to see his advice to Vanauken in a new light.¹⁸⁸ It is a deepening, though, and not a repudiation, as Lewis' cruciform advice that came before his own love and loss was nevertheless essential to Vanauken and central to Lewis' recovery in *A Grief Observed*. In growth together and in faith, Davy and Van had developed a hope of "love overcoming death."¹⁸⁹ This outward-looking posture would turn out to be essential for Van, as part of their Shining Barrier

¹⁸³ CLIII 605.

¹⁸⁴ CLIII 606.

¹⁸⁵ Vanauken, *Severe Mercy*, 214.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 214-215.

¹⁸⁷ Lewis, *AGO*, 52.

¹⁸⁸ Vanauken, *Severe Mercy*, 228.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 173.

commitment was an understanding that they would die together—either in adventure or shared illness or in suicide together—so as never to be separate. In becoming Christians, they had put away the idolatrous aspects of their us-centredness, but Davy feels the need to remind Van before slipping into a coma that “[y]ou must hold on to your promise ... not to die by your own hand.”¹⁹⁰ It is a poignant observation by a sick lover because, after grieving Davy through months of intensive memory rituals, this temptation to join Davy becomes very great indeed.

Lewis seems to have seen the warning signs concerning Vanauken’s suicidal ideation. Already having written in a way that could look cold and academic, Lewis takes an even greater risk with Vanauken, stating flatly that “suicide is out of the question.”¹⁹¹ There are not sufficient grounds for believing, Lewis warns, “that death by *that route* w[oul]d reunite you with her. Why should it? You might be digging an eternally unbridgeable chasm. Disobedience is not the way to get nearer to the obedient.”¹⁹² Lewis then suggests that rather than dying to be with Davy, Davy may continue to be of use to him as a midwife in his own spiritual rebirth.

Lewis knows that writing of this spiritual danger of suicide is risky: “There’s no other man, in such affliction as yours, to whom I’d dare write so plainly. And that ... is the strongest proof of my belief in you and love for you.”¹⁹³ Lewis’ words turn the blood cold as they sit on the page. Lewis said many comforting things and sent sonnets to strengthen and encourage, but to speak of a “severe mercy” of cruciform spirituality in this moment of grief and to hint at damnation or the loss of eternal love in suicide is worrisome. Yet, for Vanauken, the cure was as important as the diagnosis: “After this severe and splendid letter I loved Lewis like a brother. A brother and father combined.”¹⁹⁴ Vanauken receives the letter as a cure to the self-delusion that he was wallowing in. Moving beyond suicide ideation, with this letter Vanauken can finally mourn in a spiritually healthy way.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid 173.

¹⁹¹ CLIII 606.

¹⁹² Ibid, 606.

¹⁹³ Ibid, 606.

¹⁹⁴ Vanauken, *Severe Mercy*, 212.

Lewis' Deepening Cruciform Inversion of Hierarchy in Love

C.S. Lewis' spiritual theology of the cross is never merely theoretical; within the theme of this chapter, it is also important to note that his spirituality is worked out in a complex gender matrix. Lives of cruciform love, Lewis believes, are played out in a gendered world, so that one is mother, father, wife, husband, daughter, son.¹⁹⁵ Even friendship is gendered in Lewis' thought. Lewis laments the way that sexist cultures of education and work often divide women from intellectual circles,¹⁹⁶ notes anthropological evidence for both sex-divided work cultures and sex-blended ones,¹⁹⁷ and ultimately falls in love with a friend. For Lewis, however, there was "no sound I like better than adult male laughter."¹⁹⁸ Lewis lived in sex-divided friend worlds, even when he broke the pattern or thought the pattern repressive. What is critical, however, is that in *agape*, which for Lewis really is cruciform love, all people live in the cross-shaped potential of supernatural love.

In Lewis's view, *agape* lifts the individual out of gendered reality without negating their experience as sexual beings. As a result, Lewis came to believe that marriage reconciled that which divided men and women—a "sword between the sexes" demonstrated in human "arrogance" to "call frankness, fairness, and chivalry 'masculine' when we see them in a woman" or to "describe a man's sensitiveness or tact or tenderness as 'feminine.'"¹⁹⁹ Having experienced the fullness of erotic love in marriage, and having been torn from his love, Lewis thought it was "warped" to try and justify an essentialisation of gendered realities—a claim problematised by the fact that over a lifetime of public teaching he did precisely that, as Loades and Van Leeuwen argue. Lewis discovers in married love something deeper than the gendered positions of giver and receiver as he had imaged them in his work. Burris analyses Lewis' thought of the period and concludes that hierarchical thinking "did not play such a vital role in his marriage as his philosophy might have indicated, and that Lewis did not seem to have any theological problem with the

¹⁹⁵ Though binary in his practical writing, Lewis suggests in THS there are seven genders, but only two are linked to sex, 325. In *Perelandra* he speaks of "the real meaning of gender,"²⁰⁰ and thinks that SciFi is a good place to conceive of a third sex, "Unreal Estates," in *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*, ed. Walter Hooper (New York: Harvest, 1994), 94. Beyond Hilder's work as it is narrowly focussed upon gendered heroics, no comprehensive study of Lewis and gender in contemporary theory is yet available.

¹⁹⁶ Lewis, "Philia" lecture in "The Four Loves."

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. See Lewis, *Four Loves*, 94-95.

¹⁹⁸ See Jacobs, *Narnian*, xvii.

¹⁹⁹ Lewis, *AGO*, 43.

matter.”²⁰⁰ Marriage, for Lewis, healed the broken understanding of gender and brought him into oneness with another, a “one flesh” unity that Van Leeuwen argues is Lewis’ critical move past hierarchy.²⁰¹ Lewis likens this new relationship to a dance, as “sexuality leads us out beyond our sexes” to where we are “‘taken out of ourselves’ by the loved one”²⁰² so that we can we experience the “constant impact of something very close and intimate yet all the time unmistakably other, resistant.”²⁰³ In reversing “his earlier assumptions about gender hierarchy,”²⁰⁴ Lewis notes the multiple roles that a partner plays in the dance that is marriage:

What was H.[Davidman] not to me? She was my daughter and my mother, my pupil and my teacher, my subject and my sovereign; and always, holding all these in solution, my trusty comrade, friend, shipmate, fellow-soldier. My mistress; but at the same time all that any man friend (and I have good ones) has ever been to me.²⁰⁵

This statement is the inversion of every gender hierarchy Lewis had ever drawn upon.

What roots these higher understandings in Lewis—a deepening of an understanding of love in *Four Loves* and *Grief Observed*—is an encounter with “other” that draws both self and other to a higher state of mutual love where that love looks most like Christ on the cross. This love involves a kind of death to the self in the encounter with the other, and it seems that Lewis needs the encounter with other (Davidman) to achieve a death to the ideas of gender hierarchy that are less organic to the core of his “spiritual vision,” to use Filmer’s cogent term. While there is for Lewis the greater hope of full reconciliation in the final resurrection of the body, this eschatological hope—the “birth” that follows “death” in the cosmic echo of the grand miracle—is realised in the dance of lovers that demonstrates transformative potential in Lewis’ spirituality. While developmental theses can be overdrawn, Lewis’ integrative understanding of living, living fully and well deepens and transforms within his experience of love and loss.

²⁰⁰ Burris, “Gender Differentiation,” 16.

²⁰¹ Van Leeuwen, *Sword*, 57.

²⁰² Lewis, *AGO*, 43.

²⁰³ *Ibid*, 17.

²⁰⁴ Van Leeuwen, *Sword*, 57.

²⁰⁵ Lewis, *AGO*, 41.

Monika Hilder and the Lewisian Spiritual “Feminine” Heroic

Deeply interested in what she calls “theological feminism” is Canadian literary critic Monika Hilder, whose trilogy of books on Lewis and gender offers a transformative vision of Lewis’ life and work. In dialogue with the critics discussed above, Hilder’s integrative approach to Lewis’ entire corpus argues that rather than a developmental thesis (so Hannay, Poe, and Van Leeuwen), Lewis is operating with an embedded system of gender thought that requires a rereading of his entire project. Hilder develops a framework which she describes as a “feminine heroic” that exists with remarkable consistency throughout Lewis’ work. As readers have become increasingly conscious of how gender stereotypes and assertions of sexual hierarchies have contributed to the suffering of women historically, Lewis’ playful, medieval-soaked imagistic approach to gender might suggest damaging exclusivities. Granted that history of abuse and exclusion, Hilder argues that by contrast, Lewis “uses gender metaphor ... to convey spirituality in a surprisingly gender-inclusive way.”²⁰⁶ Rather than merely confirming historical sexism, within his often dangerous and troublesome play with literary ideas of sex and gender Lewis offers pathways to women’s liberation and relational interdependence by subverting the values embedded within misogynistic gender assumptions. Placed in the context of Lewis’ spiritual theology as I have framed it, Hilder’s construct demonstrates the inherently cruciform nature of Lewis’ thought.

In particular, Hilder demonstrates that “without exception, Lewis extols as heroic qualities that which Western thinking has gendered as ‘feminine.’”²⁰⁷ In contrast to “masculine” heroic qualities that tend to be valued in literature and culture in the West, Lewis inverts these values by highlighting a spiritual feminine perspective in his fiction. Hilder contrasts a classical “masculine” heroic model with a spiritual “feminine” heroic model to develop a concept of “theological feminism” in Lewis’ work. The result is that gendered characteristics within the classical masculine heroic model are subverted, inverted, and transformed into more deeply rich feminine-spiritual heroic traits in the characters and narrative development of his fiction; reason is twinned with and superseded by imagination, autonomy by interdependence, activity by passivity, aggression by care,

²⁰⁶ Hilder, *Feminine Ethos*, 6.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 8.

conquest by submission, deceit by truthfulness, and pride by humility. Without blindly valourising Lewis, and with particular attention to detail, Hilder treats with great care the grand experiment of gender imagery that saturates Lewis' work, revealing a theological feminism that gives cultural-critical energy to a new image of liberation and joy.

Hilder demonstrates that the shining values of Lewisian heroes take up the dramatic figure of the feminine-spiritual hero, engendering a spirit of imagination, interdependence, thoughtfulness, truthfulness, humility, and a wise understanding of human relationality. That is, feminine-spiritual heroes know when to rely on friends, when to submit to greater authority or wisdom, and when to take a stand. In the Ransom books and Narnia, some of the greatest moments include the recovery of the character from a masculine-classical model to a feminine-spiritual one. Hilder lists as examples discussion points in this thesis, including Lucy's recovery of trust, Eustace's and Edmund's loss of self, and Mark's and Jane's conversion from independent, flailing, self-doubtful masculine characters to humbled-yet-robust feminine heroes receptive to connection. In her analysis, Hilder attends to classical-masculine traits as they are teased out in the overarching narrative of the independent, self-reliant, hubristic hero of strength in the classical model often reproduced in speculative fiction. She then contrasts this narrative with the creative, imaginative, sensitive, self-surrendering, humble (feminine) hero of spiritual imagination. Though each of the "spiritual heroes" in Lewis' task has his or her own classical heroism to overcome and repent of, Lucy is perhaps the greatest example in the corpus of the spiritual hero. The anti-Lucy, then, must be the White Witch—not a stereotype of the corrupt, immoral crone, but a classical image of masculine leveraging of power that fails in the face of self-sacrificial love. Lewis thus redraws a picture of what a person of strength and valour looks like, pitting Lucy against the White Witch or Uncle Andrew.

Hilder, therefore, offers an immanent critique of Lewis readers who have too quickly judged gendered characteristics by their own masculine classical expectations of heroic strength. In integrating Lewis' entrenchment in gendered identity markers rather than demonising them or explaining them away, Hilder demonstrates that Lewis subverts the primary classical masculine trope of the hero with what I have argued is a cruciform spirituality. While the classical hero strikes out alone to actively carry out violent conquest according to his proud certainty, Aslan is the spiritual hero who humbly submits to the violence, receiving it unto his body in love. There can be no greater contrast between the

power principle of classical hero stories than Aslan in his passion. Yet Aslan's self-abdication taps into a "deeper magic of humility," a spiritual story "of death to greater life."²⁰⁸ Hilder argues that Aslan is paradigmatic of a medieval feminine spiritual hero that defines the truly heroic in his fiction, and thus is a feminine character in Lewis' critical inversion. These inversions are what John Bowen calls the "little-known spiritual secret in Narnia."²⁰⁹

Hilder uses this framework to work through the catalogue of Lewis' fiction. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* with its theme of royalty and "becoming yourself," the four Pevensie children move along individual paths towards certain truths about leadership, "a high and difficult calling," and "spiritual heroism [that] is a transformative and lifelong commitment."²¹⁰ In taking on the mantle of leadership, "the Pevensies grow into 'feminine' spiritual heroes" in contrast to the "'anti-royal' nature of the 'masculine' classical heroic ethos in the White Witch" and those who have chosen her side.²¹¹ Each character in Narnia, Hilder argues, "wrestles with the opposing heroic paradigms and experiences the life-or-death drama that unfolds" in their ultimate transformation into a spiritual-feminine hero.²¹² Prince Caspian, for example, "flees the heritage of Telmarine 'masculine' imperialism for the true Narnian kingdom of 'feminine' spirituality" and must learn to "be at peace with this paradox" of leadership strength in weakness.²¹³ Whether in Aslan's Stone Table sacrifice, Edmund's moral quandary, or the Narnian resistance against tyranny, an imaginative, cooperative, receptive, empathetic, truthful, humble, self-sacrificing spiritual posture is the definition of faithful Narnian leadership. Each character learns to adopt this posture in order to find their Narnian transformative courage—whether it is the courage to assert one's own convictions, the courage to confront a friend, or the courage of battle and adventure.

Hilder's argument for the feminine spiritual inversion in Lewis' work cuts across some of the conversations about Lewis and gender. In an intriguing response to "the Problem with Susan," Hilder suggests that Susan's rejection of Narnia for lipstick and parties is not a judgement against the feminine in the text (or the sexual in general) but Susan's particular rejection of a feminine heroic for masculine societal expectations for "grown-up"

²⁰⁸ *Feminine Ethos*, 29.

²⁰⁹ Hilder, *Spirituality*, 85.

²¹⁰ Hilder, *Feminine Ethos*, 21.

²¹¹ *Ibid*, 21-22.

²¹² *Ibid*, 40.

²¹³ *Ibid*, 45.

women. Beyond gendered symbols of growth, Lewis viewed the desire to reject childish realities for adultish things as “a mark of really arrested development.”²¹⁴ Thus, Hilder argues, Susan turns to lipstick and parties not as an expression of adult femininity but as a rejection of the Narnian childlike posture of transformative power. As noted before, Jill takes up traditionally male roles in *The Last Battle* in being an excellent scout and marksman. In Hilder’s argument, these are “noteworthy” traits. That Jill takes up these male-patterned skills with excellence, however, is “beside the point of what constitutes her spiritual heroism,” which is the “tender and firm commitment to Narnia.”²¹⁵

This pattern of humility, loyalty, and feminine spiritual response continues in other parts of Lewis’ fiction. Ransom in outer space must learn to surrender to Maleldil’s will and submit his mind, fears, will, and body in order to become a heroic instrument of transformation: “Ransom’s ethos of ‘feminine’ surrender, paradoxically, is what empowers him with unparalleled courage against the foe.”²¹⁶ In extensive contrast of the “‘masculine’ classical heroism posed in the N.I.C.E. and the ... ‘feminine’ spiritual heroism developed in the community of St. Anne’s,” all the characters of *That Hideous Strength* have to decide “whether to choose self-reliance or obedience to the divine.”²¹⁷

Hilder does not demonise classically masculine traits like reason and aggression, though there is a tendency for the classical-masculine ethos to represent anything negative. Hilder could have gone further in understanding how some of these categories find new synthesis in Lewis’ work or are shaped by his work in (often gendered) medieval allegory. “Reason,” for example, is a masculine trait in Hilder’s framework but is gendered feminine in *Pilgrim’s Regress*.²¹⁸ There are complications in her model that, if addressed, could have accentuated the essential value of her theoretical approach. In her study of Eustace, Hilder presses the traitor boy too easily into the classical-masculine mould. Greed, blood-lust, gold-fury, and self-delusion are *not* classical hero characteristics but rather the monstrous transformation of masculine traits. Attending to the complication shows that Eustace really does represent a complex inversion of the classical hero trope that aptly demonstrates

²¹⁴ Lewis, “On Three Ways,” 25.

²¹⁵ *Ibid*, 153.

²¹⁶ Hilder, *Gender Dance*, 61.

²¹⁷ *Ibid*, 85-86.

²¹⁸ See David C. Downing, “The Pilgrim’s Paradox: Female Characters in *The Pilgrim’s Regress*,” in *Women and C.S. Lewis*, ed. Carolyn Curtis and Mary Pomroy Key (Oxford: Lion Books, 2015), 127-133.

Hilder's thesis. After all, Eustace slays the dragon as we would expect of a classical male hero, but the dragonish Eustace brings mortality upon his own body. The death is self-death, and the sword a spiritual tool rather than a weapon. Eustace's victory is one of self-slaughter; the final thrust of the victor is into his own heart. And it is not done through heroic striving but through humble self-surrender and Aslan's help. Hilder's analysis of the root metaphors of the feminine-spiritual hero is especially helpful in describing Eustace's transformation, but it is not merely from classical male hero to spiritual-feminine hero: it is the classical dragon-villain who transforms into the spiritual feminine hero. Using the binary opposition heuristically can allow ambiguities to bring clarity to the value of the model itself, but exceptions are important tools in proving the rule.

Specifically, Hilder's attentiveness to inversive patterns in Lewis' work confirms a cruciform shape to his thought that she likens to a death and rebirth.²¹⁹ Inversion is a U-shaped movement, and Lewis' interest in subverting and transforming expectations follows the pattern of descent and ascent that so defines his cruciform narrative spirituality. We may not be able to accept Lewis' constructs of sex and gender. "Gender difference, for Lewis," Hilder argues, "is not the inequity we associate with sexism, but a metaphor for the human condition: a picture of spiritual reality that is inclusivist."²²⁰ Hilder's presentation of Lewis as one "who subverts typical religious and general cultural chauvinism"²²¹ that offers a "counter-text to modernism"²²² has intriguing potential.

Moreover, Hilder challenges readers in the expectations they bring to the text. Because we "tend to read 'gender' through the lenses of classical heroism, ... we tend to misread Lewis's representation of gender" and "miss much insight into the spirituality that Lewis's application of gender metaphor offers."²²³ In challenging the reader, Hilder's interest is partly to counteract "a deep-going epistemological chauvinism" in Western culture that results in "the double cultural marginalisation of both spiritual heroism and femininity."²²⁴ Like Fisk, Hilder is offering a feminist analysis that is also a feminist self-critique. Lewis is a resource for Hilder in this project, even if a somewhat idiosyncratic one:

²¹⁹ Hilder, *Gender Dance*, 10.

²²⁰ Hilder, *Feminine Ethos*, 4.

²²¹ *Ibid*, 19.

²²² Hilder, *Gender Dance*, 5.

²²³ Hilder, *Feminine Ethos*, 159-160.

²²⁴ *Ibid*, 11.

“My argument is that a rereading of Lewis’s affinity with hierarchical cosmology ... [is] a living picture of spiritual liberation which the socio-political paradigm misses.”²²⁵ Lewis’ “theological feminism,” the grand inversive revolution of power matrices in Hilder’s terms, “convey[s] spirituality in a surprisingly gender-inclusive way” as it subverts “typical gender discourse in ways intended to challenge and to liberate from chauvinism.”²²⁶

Lewis as Conversation Partner in a Cruciform Spirituality of Sex and Gender

It is in an *imitatio Christi* spiritual posture of self-sacrifice and mutuality that Loades wants to root the hopeful aspects of her reading of Lewis and gender. Hilder sees a similar kind of transformation in Lewis’ work, not naming it as “Christological” but recognising a spiritual principle that transforms all things. Van Leeuwen’s extensive work on the developmental thesis captures an essential truth in Lewis’ thought. In each of these critical approaches, there is a similarly shaped inversion in play that shows the integrative nature of his life and work. Critics acknowledge in Lewis’ life that although submission and self-sacrifice are terms that are gendered feminine—both in Lewis’ belief that all humans are gendered feminine in relation to God and in the specific relation of the sexes as he understood it in the 1930s and 40s—in his deepest relationship he took on this posture of submission, humility, and self-sacrifice. There is some sense in which Christian life and relationships supersede limitations and reductions within hierarchies of gender and ultimately inverts them, as Van Leeuwen and Loades argue. Hilder’s analysis is the most deeply invested in the way this upside-down nature is infused in Lewis’ thought.

Not all Lewis critics find this argument convincing, as we saw of Barkman above, who looks to Lewis to restore gender hierarchies, essentialism, and complementarianism. Critiquing theses of inversion from another angle, Laura Lee Smith argues that “even if we admit that Lewis was engaging in a countercultural theological feminism,... we should not expect feminists to embrace Lewis as a long-overlooked ally.”²²⁷ Meanwhile, Evangelical “Jesus Feminist” Sarah Bessey intimates this inversive argument, asking readers to imagine

²²⁵ Ibid, 19.

²²⁶ Hilder, *Gender Dance*, 6.

²²⁷ Laura Lee Smith, review of *Surprised by the Feminine: A Rereading of C.S. Lewis and Gender*, by Monika B. Hilder, *Mythlore* 34, no. 1 (2015): 167.

that “Aslan is on the move” as she speaks of a growing spirituality of Christlike egalitarianism. This Aslanic egalitarianism is “destabilizing old power structures” and moving outside of sacred cells to be with misfits, rebels, courageous lovers, the vulnerable, and those deemed “not worthy enough or right enough.”²²⁸ No single reading of Lewis’ understanding of gender and sexuality will be convincing to all. Despite limitations and caveats, Lewis’ inversive perspective provides no reason that demonstrates that his spirituality of the cross should cast a shadow upon women’s experience. While not free from the propensity toward difficulty—and spiritual direction must occasionally take risks, as we saw with Vanauken’s story—Lewis’ cruciform understanding of love and his transvaluation and inversion of gendered matrices of power in his fiction and teaching give hopeful possibilities for a holistic spirituality that looks at the cross without looking away from women’s experiences. Without negating the fact that the cross has cast a long shadow within Christian history, Lewis’ call for Christians to echo the cross can lead to a healthy spiritual life—a Christian spirituality about living, living fully and well. By interrogating C.S. Lewis’ narrative spirituality of the cross, inversive features in his life and thought reveal a shape like his comedic, eucatastrophic spirituality theology. Cruciformity, like inversive thought, is U-shaped as it turns perspectives on their heads to reveal greater depths. This thesis concludes by exploring the inversive nature of C.S. Lewis’ spiritual theology of the cross.

²²⁸ Bessey, *Jesus Feminist*, 15.

Ch. 6: The Inversive Shape of C.S. Lewis' Theology of the Cross

Introduction: The Shape of Lewis' Spiritual Theology

In chapters one and two, I argued that there is a spiritual theological tendency in C.S. Lewis' work. Though not systematic, Lewis' thought is integrative, emergent, and often instinctive. Despite his lack of theological training, and granted the great diversity of works in which his thought appears, there is an almost universally acknowledged unity to Lewis' theology. Thinking of Lewis' integrative, holistic spiritual theology, Meilaender is correct that Lewis' "manner of thinking theologically seems itself to be consistent with the matter of his theology"¹—a confirmation that for Lewis, the shape of his Christian thought is the shape of his spirituality. In attending to Lewis' claim that "*death* is at the root of the whole matter,"² I argued that a "tilt of the head" informed by Peterson's project of spiritual theology is valuable for discerning the ways in which Lewis orients his theological writing toward the development of spiritual life. Using Gorman's biblical-theological analysis, I argued that there is a "Logic of Cruciformity" to Lewis' thinking, a cruciform narrative spiritual theology that clarifies and moves past the *Imitatio Christi* to present a death-and-resurrection pattern of normative Christian spirituality. I argued in chapter four that in following Frye's structuralist analytics and Tolkien's theoretical work on fantasy literature, Lewis' cruciformity takes on a particular shape, a U-patterned, eucatastrophic, comedic narrative spiritual theology. We see this embedded theology in Lewis' use of the fairy tale, in there-and-back-again story patterns, in cosmic descent and ascent, and in other emergent uses of the U-shaped comedic form, including the dive and the symbolic reality of baptism.

In chapter five, I interrogated this Lewisian spiritual theology of the cross by considering feminist theological critique. Given that, in Fisk's terms, the cross has cast a shadow upon women's experiences, what is the cost of making cruciformity a normative pattern for Christian spirituality? Lewis scholars suggest various proposals for rereading Lewis' spirituality within this feminist theological interrogation. Loades in considering Lewis' Christology and Van Leeuwen in social scientific critique each suggest transformative elements in Lewis' theological core. Hilder's study argues that Lewis' entire project is bound

¹ Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 241.

² CLI 971.

up with a subversive and complex reorientation of gender valuation that undercuts masculine power dynamics. While Hilder does not note the full dimension of *imitatio Christi* realities in Lewis' thought, her framework for understanding Lewis' valorisation of a normative, subversive, and dynamic feminine-spiritual heroic is understood here as an echo of Christ's self-surrender to the cross, and thus her inversive matrix is a "cruciform" narrative spiritual theology.

I have been attentive in this thesis to form and movement. In chapter two, I invited a "tilt of the head" from doctrinal to praxeological analysis. In chapter three, I argued that the Christ hymn of Philippians 2:5-11 imagistically structures Lewis' Logic of Cruciformity. Within Christ's kenosis and exaltation is a dramatic U-shaped pattern that is Frye's death-and-resurrection pattern of comedy and Tolkien's greatest example of eucatastrophe. Paul contextualises the Christ-hymn as theology for imitation in life, so the believer's life echoes this U-shaped pattern in the giving up of self. This is precisely the U-patterned form of Lewis' narrative spiritual theology demonstrated by copious examples in chapter four. To use Meilaender's analysis of Lewis' theology of love, which I argued in chapter five is cruciform in nature, the believer "imitates the shape of God's own action."³ In problematising this spiritual theology of the cross in chapter five, an inversive tendency in Lewis' life and thought emerges in each of the critical responses by Lewis scholars (Van Leeuwen, Loades, and Hilder). Attending to the form of Lewis' thought, this inversive quality is inherently U-shaped. The "shape of cruciformity" in Lewis is the shape of his spiritual theology, an inversive nature in his comedic, eucatastrophic understanding of spiritual life that works through the whole of Lewis' thought. To reconfigure Northrop Frye's conclusion on the biblical Job, the "prophetic element" in C.S. Lewis' thought "is thus connected with its narrative shape."⁴

In this chapter, I bring together discoveries that emerged from the interrogation of chapter five with this attention to narrative shape by exploring the inversive comedic tendency in Lewis' theological project. As each of the previous chapters has used a Lewis nonfiction text and attention to Lewis' fiction to structure his spiritual theology, in this sixth chapter, I use a text that bridges the worlds of fiction and nonfiction, *The Screwtape Letters*,

³ Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 123.

⁴ Frye, *Great Code*, 198.

to explore Lewis' inversive and subversive narrative spiritual theology. In these discussions, I discern a "theology of the small" that is at the heart of Lewis' upside-down spirituality, a final U-shaped image to close the thesis. A chapter that explores the inversive, comedic nature of Lewis' thoughts inevitably leads to incongruities and ironies that Lewis refuses to collapse into unruffled doctrines of assurance. Instead, what emerges are "sacred paradoxes" that Lewis holds together in his spiritual theology; I conclude this thesis reflecting on those divine tensions in chapter seven.

Comedy, Satire, and Ironic Inversion in Lewis' Work

In the 2007 responses to Van Leeuwen and Barkman on Lewis and gender, Myers argues that a Lewisian critic must be sensitive to the historical, liturgical, and contextual nuances of Anglican approaches to Scripture in Lewis' time. Myers argues that Lewis believes "that one can take Scripture seriously, but also lightly and with humor at the same time."⁵ In dialogue with Lewis' only book-length contemplation on Scripture, *Reflections on the Psalms*, Myers clarifies Lewis' hermeneutic of humour with the "common Anglican attitude that 'the proper Christian approach to life and religion is ironical,' and 'our duties are to be taken seriously but gently, as befits a redeemed race of gloriously comic beings.'"⁶ In *Reflections on the Psalms*, Lewis speaks of paradox and elusive teaching that makes pinning down texts like "trying to bottle a sunbeam."⁷ The noted irony, combined with the subversive elements in the previous section, alert us to the other inversive qualities in Lewis' spiritual perspective. Hilder's gender inversion model highlights the fact that to a certain degree, an upside-down perspective, an ironic twist, and a subversive element are essential to Lewis' spiritual theology. The approaches, whether in satire, humour, or moral inversion, are U-shaped frames that support the eucatastrophic turn of Lewis' comedic, cruciform spirituality.

Longform treatments of Lewis' theology and spirituality that we have discussed above have not satisfactorily attended to these inversive aspects of his spiritual theology. Griffin's idiosyncratic approach is limited, but he is perceptive in dedicating a chapter to the place of humour in spiritual life—mostly made up of quotations of funny things Lewis said,

⁵ Myers, "Lewis in Genderland," 460.

⁶ Ibid, quoting Martin Thornton, *English Spirituality: An Outline of Ascetical Theology According to the English Pastoral Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1986), 10, 302.

⁷ Lewis, *Reflections*, 113.

especially from *Screwtape*. However, Griffin makes some startling claims. In his view, comedy must always be in bad taste and must always be cruel.⁸ Despite this deeply limited understanding of the tradition, he does make two insightful comments.

First, “comedy is always conservative in nature,”⁹ and thus “scourges the assumed inanity of the present by contrasting it with the presumed sanity of the past.”¹⁰ While hardly a demonstrable claim to universality, the image of comedy requiring a foundation against which to push is a good description of Lewis’ cultural critical project. Terry Lindvall in *Surprised by Laughter: The Comic World of C.S. Lewis* (1996)—ironically, one of the longest topical monographs in Lewis studies and the only study in humour—concurs with the grounded nature of cultural-critical comedy, or satire. “Common sense is the foundation of satire,”¹¹ he argues, for “[I]evity needs a solid foundation,”¹² and both irony and satire require a “norm” for them to be funny.¹³ As incongruity is the foundation of humour, the incongruous needs, by definition, a congruous reality or “moral base” from which the surprise can arise. Otherwise, it becomes a kind of “grinning tragedy,” “a mocking of all life with no hope for the curative or restorative role” that satire can play.¹⁴ Griffin and Lindvall note how social humour is rooted in value structures and social expectations as much as it overturns them.

Second, Griffin argues that comedy is a “mirror” of our imperfections.¹⁵ Lindvall uses the same metaphor and twins it with a scientific metaphor: Comedy “works as a microscope that forces the reader to place himself or herself on the slide and be examined.”¹⁶ At its best, “satire shakes and shocks the very being of us sinners and hypocrites” and “holds us upside down.”¹⁷ The inversive realities of comedy, in concert, provide Lewis with a point of view for cultural criticism, while helping him (and his readers) to look inward. A “perception

⁸ Griffin, *Spirituality*, 113. By contrast, see the humour that emerges from mere difference in the meeting of the races on Malacandra, where only one of the forms of humour fall into Griffin’s category of “cruelty”: “the comic spirit arose chiefly from the meeting of the different kinds of *hnau*.... [Ransom] thought he could see differences in kind—as that the *sorns* seldom got beyond irony, while the *hrossa* were extravagant and fantastic, and the *pfifltriggi* were sharp and excelled in abuse,” *OSP*, 17.

⁹ Griffin, *Spirituality*, 113.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 113.

¹¹ Lindvall, *Surprised by Laughter*, 355.

¹² *Ibid*, 152.

¹³ *Ibid*, 359.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 412. On incongruity and comedy as a sign of health, see Humphrey, *Further Up and Further In*, 719-731.

¹⁵ Griffin, *Spirituality*, 113.

¹⁶ Lindvall, *Surprised by Laughter*, 398.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 411.

reversed,” Como argues, is “typically Lewisian.”¹⁸ Reflecting on troubling and humorous passages in *Great Divorce*, Griffin writes: “Our vanity has been exposed and ridiculed for what it is. Our urn is cracked, our helmet dented, our garters crossed, and yet we continue to think ourselves perfect.”¹⁹ While much of satire and public comedy is cultural-critical, in Lewis the “sword of satire” is also the surgeon’s scalpel turned on the self. Even when it is focussed upon the role of fighting cultural problems, “[s]atire generally seeks to be redemptive and beneficial,”²⁰ and is indeed “sharpest and most piercing when it slices into its subject and cauterizes the sore....”²¹

Lindvall is probably correct to root Lewis in Chesterton’s brand of humour. Chestertonian humour is inherently inversive: “Chesterton was famous for setting the world as we see it on its head. He turned the ordinary upside down, topsy-turvy, and breathed new breath, life, and joy into the banal and mundane.”²² Chesterton’s wit, often self-deprecating but also parodic and satirical, serves the twofold goal of Lewis’ comedy: shining a light on self while providing a cultural critique. By using humour to turn “everything upside down,” Lindvall argues, “one can look at facts from different angles and see another side.”²³ Lindvall’s section on Lewis’ theory of humour is helpful, showing how his ideas were rooted in literature and theology.²⁴ Incongruity reveals “that something is not right with this world.”²⁵ With his inversive mind, Lewis uses incongruity both to expose that not-rightness and to address it with the Gospel.²⁶ There is dark humour in Lewis’ work,²⁷ but as it is entrenched in joy,²⁸ ultimately Lewis’ humour turns to hope and reconciliation in Frye’s “comedic” form. Thus, Lewis’ humour serves to provide a “fresh perspective [that] can revive a weary soul. It can, in wonderfully Chestertonian style, turn something on its head and allow us to see it anew.”²⁹ This upending is a critical point in understanding Lewis’ work.

¹⁸ Como, *C.S. Lewis*, 54.

¹⁹ Griffin, *Spirituality*, 118.

²⁰ Lindvall, *Surprised by Laughter*, 381.

²¹ *Ibid*, 383. See also Terry Glaspey, *Not a Tame Lion: The Spiritual Legacy of C.S. Lewis and the Chronicles of Narnia*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Cumberland House, 2005), 125-128.

²² Lindvall, *Surprised by Laughter*, 31.

²³ *Ibid*, 17.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 243-260.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 259.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 244.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 298.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 52-114, esp. 70.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 17.

“Fantasy is a perfect mode for subverting false perception,”³⁰ Colin Duriez argues, and Lewis’ fiction is a project of subversion and restoration.

One critical tool for inversive authors is satire. Peter Schakel argues that although “satire appears prominently in many of C. S. Lewis’s works and is an important part of his thought and style,” it is neglected to the peril of scholarship.³¹ Although Lewis wrote no formal satire, much of his work, Schakel argues, includes a satiric quality that “adds a light, often witty, usually trenchant edge to his stories,... established by such devices as mockery, a reversal of normal expectations, exaggeration, and belittlement—and through irony.”³² Schakel analyses the irony, satire, and dashes of humour in *Pilgrim’s Regress*, showing *Regress* to be a particularly useful cultural critical tool.³³ Lewis’ satirical portraits extend to the character of Weston in *Out of the Silent Planet* and the N.I.C.E. in *That Hideous Strength*, where Lewis uses “brilliant satire, mocking an unreasonable and foolish philosophy by reducing it to absurdity”³⁴ in a book “heavily dependent on satire and irony.”³⁵ Essential to his programme of spiritual growth and cultural criticism, wit and satire are, Schakel argues, part of the integrative nature of Lewis’ project, “deeply embedded in the way he thought and talked.”³⁶ Humphrey says that to achieve sublimity in his fiction, Lewis combines seriousness of matter with humour, thus throwing “open a window to air out our stuffy self-importance, and to help us get beyond ourselves.”³⁷

While Schakel remains focussed upon the critical aspects of irony and satire and the text, including Lewis’ “sustained satire on autocratic regimes,”³⁸ his analysis demonstrates the full power of Lewis’s mind working within his inversive perspective. Though Lewis’ “works which are the most mythical are the least satiric,”³⁹ and though “satire largely

³⁰ Colin Duriez, *Bedeviled: Lewis, Tolkien and the Shadow of Evil* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 155.

³¹ Peter J. Schakel, “The Satiric Imagination of C.S. Lewis,” *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 22, no. 2 (1989): 129.

³² *Ibid*, 129. Though Schakel argues that satire is weighted to Lewis’ earlier fiction, Lindvall dedicates an entire chapter to satire in Lewis’ fiction and poetry, *Surprised by Laughter*, 384-412.

³³ Lewis admits in a later introduction to *Regress* that his uncharitable temper and bitterness weakened the book, and that some of the critiques were dated, but he felt like it could remain useful in drawing together polar aspects of culture that were themselves sickly sweet or overly bitter; see the “Afterward” to the 3rd edition, 207-217; see Schakel, “Satiric Imagination,” 132.

³⁴ Schakel, “Satiric Imagination,” 138.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 141.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 134.

³⁷ *Further Up and Further In*, 423-425.

³⁸ Schakel, “Satiric Imagination,” 142.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 147.

disappears from Lewis's prose after 1947,"⁴⁰ it is worth noting that all of Lewis' fiction is saturated with "theological irony" even within the mythic materials that seem to resist satiric currents.⁴¹ It is useful, then, to turn to Lewis' most formal work of satire, *The Screwtape Letters*, to discern the inversive nature of this theological irony.

The Screwtape Letters as Moral Inversion

Lewis himself argued that "satire as a literary kind must be distinguished from the satiric, an element which can occur (like the pathetic, or the heroic) in almost any composition."⁴² This is the distinction that was of concern to Schakel and that David Mark Purdy emphasises in his chapter on "satirical misreadings" of *The Screwtape Letters*—though Purdy is probably correct to redefine Screwtape as double inversion rather than a single satiric movement,⁴³ something akin to Hsiu-Chin Chou's designation of "double irony" in *Screwtape*.⁴⁴ Scholars have long argued that Lewis shows significant skill in developing "the upside-down thinking necessary to approximate a devil's point of view."⁴⁵ As *Screwtape* "diametrically inverts all valuations," Purdy argues, it creates a "moral dichotomy" as the reader is inverting the narrator's inversions.⁴⁶ This inversion is critical to *Screwtape's* power so that even the name Screw-tape is a "turned story" in avatar form.

A few moments from *Screwtape* will suffice to show Lewis' peculiar turn of mind. The first letter begins with the mentor Screwtape accusing his nephew of naïveté in the latter's approach to temptation. Atheists and apologists root their refutation and defence of Christianity in logic and reason. Screwtape, however, turns the approach upside down: "It sounds as if you supposed that argument was the way to keep him out of the Enemy's [i.e.,

⁴⁰ Ibid, 147.

⁴¹ Ibid, 145. Schakel suggests that the "imagination which gives rise to myth or fantasy and that which creates satire commonly seem to run in opposite directions," 147.

⁴² Lewis, OHEL, 468.

⁴³ David Mark Purdy, "Red Tights and Red Tape: Satirical Misreadings of *The Screwtape Letters*," in *Both Sides of the Wardrobe: C.S. Lewis, Theological Imagination, and Everyday Discipleship*, ed. Rob Fennell (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2015), 75-84. *Screwtape* is commonly categorised as satire, Filmer, *Mask and Mirror*, 2, 62, 112, 133; Charles A. Huttar, "The Screwtape Letters as Epistolary Fiction," *Journal of Inklings Studies* 6, no. 1 (2016): 91; Raymond M. Potgieter, "Revisiting C.S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters* of 1941 and exploring their relation to 'Screwtape Proposes a Toast,'" *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* (2016): 1-8, who suggests parody as a possible genre as well.

⁴⁴ Chou, *Interplay*, 93-94.

⁴⁵ Lindvall, *Surprised by Laughter*, 121-12.

⁴⁶ Purdy, "Red Tights," 81.

God's] clutches."⁴⁷ That may have worked with past cultures capable of integrating philosophical contemplation and applied morality, but today Wormwood's patient "has been accustomed, ever since he was a boy, to have a dozen incompatible philosophies dancing about together inside his head."⁴⁸ In an intellectual world that presumes that believers would shy away from philosophy and science because of a threat to faith, Lewis turns that expectation upside down with Screwtape's approach to temptation: "The trouble about argument is that it moves the whole struggle onto the Enemy's own ground.... By the very act of arguing, you awake the patient's reason; and once it is awake, who can foresee the result?"⁴⁹ "Jargon, not argument, is your best ally in keeping him from the Church,"⁵⁰ Screwtape opines, combining jargon with bodily appetite and a lurid commitment to cultural normalcy. The belief that something "just couldn't be true" is more powerful than successful logic—and less dangerous, from Screwtape's perspective, in case the logic fails.⁵¹ Screwtapeian temptation is about "befuddlement," in Lindskoog's terms, not indoctrination.⁵² Rigney describes Wormwood's job as to "confuse and obscure our perceptions of reality."⁵³

This upside-down point of view continues into Screwtape's antispirituality. When Wormwood's patient becomes a Christian, Screwtape suggests that churchgoing can be used as an advantage, for real or perceived hypocrisy combined with the fact that Christians are simply absurd are traits that make for strong antidotes to holistic faith. Paradoxically, Wormwood should keep the patient's mind on the "inner life," so as to divorce spiritual thoughts from duties.⁵⁴ Demons should not be afraid of devotion, but should sculpt it in a certain way:

You must bring him to a condition in which he can practise self-examination for an hour without discovering any of those facts about himself, which are perfectly clear to anyone who has over lived in the same house with him or worked the same office.⁵⁵

⁴⁷ Lewis, *Screwtape*, 11.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 11.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 12.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 12.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 14.

⁵² Lindskoog, *Lion of Judah*, 1695-1696.

⁵³ Rigney, *Christian Life*, 83.

⁵⁴ Lewis, *Screwtape*, 20.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 20-21.

The dualistic “heads I win, tails you lose”⁵⁶ approach is critical, but within this upside-down perspective, Screwtape presses the spirit-flesh dualism further. Wormwood should make sure prayers are always “spiritual” rather than connected to relational life. “I have had patients of my own,” Screwtape brags, “so well in hand that they could be turned at a moment's notice from impassioned prayer for a wife's or son's 'soul' to beating or insulting the real wife or son without a qualm.”⁵⁷ Screwtape must divorce the human body from the spirit, for God is really a vulgar “hedonist at heart”⁵⁸ who “is cynically indifferent to the dignity of His position, and ours, as pure spirits.”⁵⁹ As God is a lover and inventor of pleasure,⁶⁰ through “unnatural liaisons”⁶¹ and at great risk God remembers what many tempters forget, that humans are animals,⁶² amphibians dwelling in both spirit and flesh.⁶³ Whatever “their bodies do affects their souls.”⁶⁴ Thus, tempters must deal with the tedium of working in the flesh, a “cruel” disadvantage because God “has filled His world full of pleasures.... Everything has to be twisted before it's any use to us.”⁶⁵ Thus, Screwtape's approach is to divorce body experience from spiritual health.

This destruction of holistic Christian life that causes dehumanisation is the heart of Screwtape's antispirituality, an approach filled with paradox and irony. What is haunting behind the overt lessons—the moral inversion behind the text—is the cruciform principle, particularly as it is framed in terms of imitation and obedience. Viewed upside-down, within *Screwtape* is the call to the death to self is a focus upon the filling of the self. An example of the contrast between the cruciform perspective and the demonic one is Screwtape's belief that for the demon “a human is primarily food” and thus the tempter's “aim is the absorption of its will into ours.”⁶⁶ By contrast, God wants

to fill the universe with a lot of loathsome little replicas of Himself—creatures, whose life, on its miniature scale, will be qualitatively like His own, not because He has absorbed them but because their wills freely conform to His. We want cattle who can finally become food; He wants servants who can finally become sons.... Our

⁵⁶ Ibid, 137; cf. 49.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 22.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 112.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 26.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 49.

⁶¹ Ibid, 17.

⁶² Ibid, 17, 25.

⁶³ Ibid, 44.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 25.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 113.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 45-46.

war aim is a world in which Our Father Below [i.e., Satan] has drawn all other beings into himself: the Enemy wants a world full of beings united to Him but still distinct.⁶⁷

As we saw in *The Great Divorce*, there is a loss of self, either to demonic devouring or the discovery of the true self in God. Hell is defined in *Screwtape* as the “absorption” of all selves into homogeneity following a Darwinian devouring of the other⁶⁸—“a retreat into the self, a denial of community,”⁶⁹ in Meilaender’s terms that leads, as Stephen Prickett observes, to “a diminished self.”⁷⁰

The Logic of Cruciformity is the death to self that engenders true self in a “die before you die” spiritual reality—“You die and die and then you are beyond death,” in *Screwtape*’s own words.⁷¹ While cruciform spirituality is perhaps less overtly stated in *Screwtape* than in other WWII-era texts, we must recognise that *Screwtape* himself would lack full clarity regarding the principle, being limited in point of view and antipathetic to love as a divine reality. But he understands the opposite, that when demonic temptation embroils the victim in himself or herself, it will succeed in splitting the believer from holistic faith and turn the individual into a nonindividual. In an inverted cruciform pattern, *Screwtape* fears anything that might draw individuals out of themselves to look at God or neighbour, whether pleasure or tribulation.⁷² Self-entrenchment leads to *Screwtapian* success; any loss of self, no matter how small, is a renunciation of hell.

This is the pattern of Satan’s downfall in Lewis’ understanding of Miltonic terms: “In the midst of a world of light and love, of song and feast and dance, he [Satan] could find nothing to think of more interesting than his own prestige.”⁷³ As argued above, the cruciform loss of self that is the precise reverse of Satan’s self-obsession is also, Meilaender argues, at the heart of Lewis’ social ethic: it is “through love that persons are able to overcome isolation and enter into community.”⁷⁴ This “delight in otherness” problematises

⁶⁷ Ibid, 45-46.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 91-93.

⁶⁹ Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 87.

⁷⁰ Stephen Prickett, “Informing the Inklings: C.S. Lewis’s Debt to George MacDonald,” in *Informing the Inklings: George MacDonald and the Victorian Roots of Modern Fantasy*, ed. Michael Partridge and Kirstin Jeffrey Johnson (Hamden, CT: Winged Lion Press, 2018), 8.

⁷¹ *Screwtape*, 138.

⁷² See Ibid, 30-32 and Wormwood’s blunder in letter XIII.

⁷³ Lewis, *Preface*, 94. This link first noted by Devin Brown, “*The Screwtape Letters: Telling the Truth Upside Down*,” in *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy: Volume 2: Fantasist, Mythmaker, and Poet*, ed. Bruce L. Edwards (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 178.

⁷⁴ Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 91.

“the direct opposite of love,” which is pride,⁷⁵ where a being rejects the principle of existence and tries to “exist for itself.”⁷⁶ “The taste for the other” is for Lewis “the very capacity for enjoying good,”⁷⁷ and as long as this exists in some way, there is still life. But the person who “has his wish ... to lie wholly in the self and to make the best of what he finds there” will find only hell.⁷⁸

Based on this principle, Lewis is concerned that love can be turned into a kind of “auto-eroticism.”⁷⁹ The pervasive image of “devouring” in *Screwtape*, Meilaender argues, is thus a “highly successful attempt to portray a condition completely opposed to love.”⁸⁰ The demonic devouring is a “‘bloated spider parody’ of God’s desire for human beings,” Rigney argues.⁸¹ In an echo of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, Stackhouse adds that “dialectics in Lewis’s thought” leave a fundamental choice: to draw “the world in to oneself, devouring it and shrinking at the same time ... or to seek God, thus being drawn out into the world to enjoy it, God, and oneself fully and forever.”⁸² *Screwtape*’s antispirituality is bound up, then, in the self. His road to success is human self-absorption, which is ultimately hell-absorption, where each individual is being “forever conjoined but not reconciled.”⁸³ In the words of Devin Brown, as Lewis is able to present the “story from the other point of view”⁸⁴ in order to “tell the truth upside down,”⁸⁵ this self-absorption principle is the precise mirror of the self-death element in the Logic of Cruciformity. In a precise unity of form and content, *The Screwtape Letters* is a perfect tool to display the inversive, comedic quality of Lewis’ cruciform spirituality as it moves people to live, live fully and well. As a project of moral inversion, *Screwtape* is comedic in its incongruity, in its ability to invert expectations, and in narratological analysis. The shape of cruciformity is, after all, the shape of comedy.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 91. The text falsely attributes this phrase to Lewis.

⁷⁶ Lewis, PoP, 63.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 111.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 111. See Kort, *Then and Now*, 22; Lewis, SBJ, 168.

⁷⁹ Lewis, SBJ, 168. Cf. Filmer-Davies, “C.S. Lewis,” 662.

⁸⁰ Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 90.

⁸¹ Rigney, *Christian Life*, 89.

⁸² Stackhouse, *Making the Best of It*, 53.

⁸³ Lewis, *Screwtape, with Toast*, 171.

⁸⁴ Brown, “Upside Down,” 176.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 176-177.

Comedy and Inversive Thinking

In each of these Screwtapian examples, we see moral inversion, satire, irony, paradox, and comedy put to use in the characteristic “upsidedownedness”⁸⁶ that defines Lewis’ fictional and cultural-critical approach. Lindvall’s study shows that Lewis’ diverse project is soaked through with humour, wit, and an upside-down look at the world. Not all of Lewis’ morally infused tales are as skillfully handled as *Screwtape*. The didacticism of *Perelandra* sometimes mars what is a beautiful book, and Jonathan Himes argues that the “particular inversion of our world in Othertime” in *The Dark Tower* is crude, resulting in “pornographic bathos.”⁸⁷ Despite inelegant moments, and even when he wrote problematically, such as his reification of gender archetypes—as Van Leeuwen, Wolfe, and Patterson discuss from their different perspectives—two things remain inviting. First, as Hilder demonstrates, Lewis’ inversive perspective offers a self-critical standpoint. A proper, even self-deprecating, view of humanity allows him to see the limitations of his own view. The demonic inspiration for *Screwtape*’s strategy is not psychological research or the demonisation of his enemies, but Lewis’ own experience of temptation.⁸⁸ The turn of the screw in his mental framework allows for hopeful possibilities in his work, so that we as readers can take Lewis further than he was able to go. This is why, in the views of Hilder, Loades, and Van Leeuwen, Lewis is an important partner in conversations about gender, even granted his limitations.

Second, granted this self-critical standpoint and recalling the integrative nature of his project, Lewis was open to growth. He admitted to Vanauken that experience in marriage deepened his views, as we see in his move toward an egalitarian gender dance in *Four Loves* and *Grief Observed*. Through an encounter with others and a deepening of his own spirituality of the cross, the inversive quality of his cruciform perspective finds its way through to self-deprecating humour. “It was a good *riposte*, dear,” Lewis says to his wife when she once challenged him when he once relied on gender stereotypes.⁸⁹ And in that moment Davidman is not merely Lewis’ wife, understood within his hierarchal framework.

⁸⁶ CLIII 395.

⁸⁷ Jonathan B. Himes, “The Allegory of Lust: Textual and Sexual Deviance in *The Dark Tower*,” in *Truths Breathed Through Silver: The Inklings’ Moral and Mythopoeic Legacy*, ed. Jonathan B. Himes (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2008), 64.

⁸⁸ Lewis, *Screwtape, with Toast*, xiii.

⁸⁹ Lewis, AGO, 42.

At that moment she is daughter and mother, pupil and teacher, subject and sovereign, trusty comrade, friend, shipmate, fellow-soldier, mistress, sister, and brother.⁹⁰ For Lewis, the “hierarchies were never fixed,”⁹¹ but all relational matrices are caught up in the great dance that is the foundation of Lewis’ social ethic, what Meilaender calls “the reciprocities of mutual love.”⁹² Lewis’ basic definition of love that is central to his Christian thought as a whole is recorded in *The Problem of Pain*: “For in self-giving, if anywhere, we touch a rhythm not only of all creation but of all being.”⁹³ And thus the cross-shaped spirituality of C.S. Lewis has that inversive, transformative potential to reshape even his own understanding. In the next section, I argue that this reshaping is visible in his fiction through his inversion of privileged perspective that captures the upside-down, cruciform nature of his thought—what I call a “theology of the small.”

“As High as My Spirit, As Small as My Stature”: C.S. Lewis’ Theology of the Small⁹⁴

How deeply does this project of cruciform moral inversion penetrate Lewis’ work? As we saw in *Screwtape*, which reveals inversion both in form and content, Lewis likes turning things upside-down for transvaluation and reconstruction of ideas within a Christian worldview. Sometimes this is classic Chestertonian inversion, such as Lewis’ foundation for an apologetics argument in *Problem of Pain*⁹⁵ or *Miracles*.⁹⁶ Elsewhere, as Jacobs points out, Lewis proposes that the Freudian explanation for spiritual feelings is precisely backwards: Joy is not sublimated sex, but sex is a kind of sublimated spiritual ecstasy. As I argued in chapter four, in *Out of the Silent Planet* Lewis challenges “what everyone knows” by revealing that “outer space” is, in fact, the deepest heavens, and that civilised humanity is truly barbarous in the face of the Malacandran aboriginal’s understanding of reality.⁹⁷

⁹⁰ Ibid, 41-42.

⁹¹ Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 53.

⁹² Ibid, 61.

⁹³ Lewis, PoP, 140.

⁹⁴ The argument in this section was presented as “Concerning Hobbits and How They Save the World” for the St Dunstan’s University Institute for Christianity and Culture “Theology on Tap” series on 28 Jan 2016.

⁹⁵ See Lewis, PoP, 12.

⁹⁶ See Lewis, *Miracles*, 80-81. See Chesterton’s introduction to *The Everlasting Man* (New York: Image Books, 1955), 11-19, a book that was profoundly important to Lewis’ Christian intellectual development.

⁹⁷ Lewis, OSP, 68. See Courtney Petrucci, “Abolishing Man in Other Worlds: Breaking and Recovering the Chain of Being in C. S. Lewis’s Ransom Trilogy” (MA Thesis, Signum University, 2016).

Indeed, the greatest irony of *Silent Planet* is that Ransom discovers true humanity when he meets people who are specifically non-human, to the point that Ransom feels the need at one point to prove to the Malacandrans that “the human species also were *hnau*”—the diegetic term for sentient-sapient beings of any species.⁹⁸ In the words of *Silent Planet*, Lewis is working here to “turn the universe rather oddly inside out” for readers.⁹⁹

Oxford critic W.W. Robson was perhaps hasty in 1966 when he suggested that Lewis’ work was already fading and that Lewis “will be left behind.”¹⁰⁰ Yet he is right to struggle with the degree to which Lewis’ inversive tendency is Chestertonian. Indeed, Robson thinks Lewis was “stultified by this Chestertonianism” and puzzles over why “Lewis was attracted by this confusion” of thought¹⁰¹ and resultant “philistinism.”¹⁰² Robson suggests that Lewis “was sometimes betrayed by his promptness to defend the common man and common things against the facile contempt of literary intellectuals.”¹⁰³ If Robson is correct, the embedded class assumptions in this statement may invite further exploration of Lewis’ social thought. In approaching the puzzle in another direction, Robson states that Lewis’ “Chestertonian paradoxicality, tiresome as it could be, was often a way of stirring up stodgy minds”¹⁰⁴—a technique Lindvall reveals as effective. However this destodgification was meant to happen, though, Robson found Lewis’ “forensic victories” of Christian argumentation unconvincing because “for good or ill the common reader to-day rarely seems to share the boyish romanticism ... responsible for some of Lewis’s worst sillinesses” and “for what was best and purest in his response to literature.”¹⁰⁵

For other critics, Lewis’ inversive nature is less puzzling where his rejection of dominant class values, his boyish delight, and his desire to rouse a slumbering world are combined in a synchronous whole. For the humourologist Lindvall, Lewis’ inversiveness is about the foundation for a cultural-critical project and Lewis’ desire to “turn something on its head and allow us to see it anew.”¹⁰⁶ Lindvall is able to see the integrative links in Lewis

⁹⁸ Ibid, 77; cf. 74-81.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 95.

¹⁰⁰ W.W. Robson, “The Romanticism of C.S. Lewis,” *Cambridge Quarterly* 1 (1966): 260.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 259.

¹⁰² Ibid, 261.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 261.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 262. Contrast Filmer-Davies, “C.S. Lewis,” 663.

¹⁰⁵ Robson, “Romanticism,” 269.

¹⁰⁶ Lindvall, *Surprised by Laughter*, 17.

when Robson is not, so that this “boyish romanticism”—others would call it “childlike wonder”¹⁰⁷—is inherently linked to an inversive cultural criticism. Jacobs agrees:

This turning of the tables on conventional wisdom, this paradoxical inquiry into the legitimacy of what “everyone knows,” is very Chestertonian—and, Chesterton would insist, very Christian, Christianity comprising largely paradoxes, starting with “God became human.”¹⁰⁸

Jacobs’ biography of imagination links the Chestertonian upside-downness with Lewis’ other literary mentor, George MacDonald. For MacDonald scholar Kerry Dearborn, the “childlike is at the heart of truth for MacDonald,”¹⁰⁹ and this child’s perspective is critical to Lewis’ work.

MacDonaldite childlikeness and Chestertonian “upside-downness” come together in Lewis’ famous essay, “On Three Ways of Writing for Children.” Lewis begins the essay by arguing that to design a book for “what children want” is precisely the wrong way to write. Instead, Lewis changes his perspective so that he is beside children rather than above them, writing what he himself likes to read.¹¹⁰ Part of this perspectival shift is Lewis’ belief that writing is at least partly about a relational fusion between author and reader, where a “community, a composite personality, is created and out of that the story grows.”¹¹¹ Condescension, for Lewis, is the opposite of this cooperative reality necessary for storytelling. Lewis speaks of “the proper meeting between man and child as independent personalities,” where they meet chest-to-chest, “man to man,” and the author is “an equal.”¹¹² The “right sort” of children’s writers, Lewis argues elsewhere, “work from the common, universally human, ground they share with the children.”¹¹³

But the investment in a child’s perspective is deeper for Lewis. In his “Three Ways” essay, Lewis clearly distinguishes between childishness and childlikeness, so that anyone intensely concerned with being an adult is betraying “a mark of really arrested development.”¹¹⁴ Walsh argues that in his approach to storytelling, Lewis “speaks to the

¹⁰⁷ E.g., Campbell, “Effoliation,” 360; Hilder, *Feminine Ethos*, 171; Edwards, “Enduring American Reception,” 16.

¹⁰⁸ Jacobs, *Narnian*, 132.

¹⁰⁹ Dearborn, *Baptized Imagination*, 82.

¹¹⁰ Lewis, “On Three Ways,” 22.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 34.

¹¹³ C.S. Lewis, “On Juvenile Tastes,” in *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*, ed. Walter Hooper (New York: Harvest, 1994), 41.

¹¹⁴ Lewis, “On Three Ways,” 25.

adult, the child, and the child within the adult”¹¹⁵—what King calls in the MacDonald tradition a “childlike attitude” not defined by age.¹¹⁶ Some of the childlike attributes King notes include humility, innocence, unpretentiousness, a sense of awe, limitless imagination, a suspicion that there is more to life, a willingness to suspend disbelief, and a “longing for a deeper, more meaningful experience than is available in the daily march of time.”¹¹⁷ King could make good arguments for adding “justice, honesty, faith, earnestness, loyalty, discretion”¹¹⁸—and Hilder’s project of the feminine-spiritual subversion essentially does this, bringing childlikeness into the feminine heroic.¹¹⁹ King then explores the characters in Narnia under the binary of childish vs. childlike: In “childlike characters we see a more constructive side of ourselves—self-sacrifice, wonder at life’s mysteries, and longing for a world cleaner and more alive than our own.”¹²⁰

Jacobs argues that Lewis endeavours to remain childlike through his entire life. Jacobs uses poet Ruth Pitter’s recollections of Lewis to help readers visualise this perspective:

In fact his whole life was oriented & motivated by an almost uniquely-persisting child’s sense of glory and of nightmare. The adult events were received into a medium still as pliable as wax, wide open to the glory, and equally vulnerable, with a man’s strength to feel it all, and a great scholar’s & writer’s skills to express and to interpret.¹²¹

Scholars are certainly aware of this aspect of Lewis’ literature, “the childlike joy of life” that “covers the entire landscape of Narnia.”¹²² Manlove notes the characteristics of innocence and childlikeness as critical concepts of Lewis’ fiction, as seen in the fairy-tale structure of his work, in the characters of the Lady of *Perelandra* and Orual’s sister Psyche, in Pilgrim John’s childhood vision of the island, in Ransom’s growth to childlikeness, and in Mark and Jane Studdock of *That Hideous Strength*, where they “must rediscover a childlike—not a

¹¹⁵ Walsh, *Literary Legacy*, 157.

¹¹⁶ King, *Plain*, 15. “For my part,” writes MacDonald, “I do not write for children, but for the childlike, whether of five, or fifty, or seventy-five,” in *Dish of Orts*, 191.

¹¹⁷ King, *Plain*, 16.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 16.

¹¹⁹ Esp. Hilder, *Gender Dance*, 46.

¹²⁰ King, *Plain*, 19.

¹²¹ Jacobs, *Narnian*, xxi. See Don W. King, *Hunting the Unicorn: A Critical Biography of Ruth Pitter* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2008), 149.

¹²² Ethan Campbell and Robert Jackson, “‘Good, Not Safe’: Structure vs. Chaos in Narnia and the Writing Workshop,” *Mythlore* 26, nos. 1-2 (2007): 57.

childish—yielding of themselves to better directors than themselves of their confused lives.”¹²³ Lewis is not a sentimentalist, but “he simply regards children as more open to experience.”¹²⁴

While there may be some debate about the success of Lewis’ use of childlikeness as a perspective¹²⁵ and the way Lewis’ work relates to MacDonald’s own Victorian fiction, there is no doubt that Lewis valorised the childlike and encased that ideal in his characters. Of Lewis’ cast of main characters over the course of fourteen novels, there is none so small in size and so tall in personality as Reepicheep. Sir Reepicheep, the chief mouse and a knight of the Most Noble Order of the Lion, makes up what he lacks in size with bravery, vigour, and courage. This “Small One,” as Aslan calls Reepicheep,¹²⁶ is an Arthurian character attentive to every detail of courtly honour. And yet, unlike Arthur, Reepicheep is a mystic in search of his heart’s joy, which is his “great calling.”¹²⁷ As Lindskoog notes, “Reepicheep is at the fore of every battle, but the culmination of his career is his journey to the utter East, to the land of Aslan.”¹²⁸ Of all Lewis’ characters, Reepicheep is the smallest, yet he is the one who “represents the courage and devotion to honor that are really potential human virtues.”¹²⁹

It is perhaps not unusual that a small character or one who is insignificant in terms of power does great things in a story. What is more critical in Lewis’ tales is that Reepicheep is, as McGrath argues, a character whose bravery and selfless nobility is most thoroughly integrated.¹³⁰ Loconte is correct that “[e]ven the smallest of creatures ... can display the greatest of human virtues.”¹³¹ This principle is deeper than what the word “can” in that sentence suggests. Manlove is incorrect in saying that, “for Lewis, mere size is nothing, and ‘proportion’ alien to the Christian view of reality.”¹³² Size is *precisely* the point, and it is no

¹²³ C.N. Manlove, “The ‘Narnia’ Books,” in *C.S. Lewis*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2006), 84.

¹²⁴ Manlove, “Narnia Books,” 84.

¹²⁵ Eg., Brian Melton, “The Great War and Narnia: C.S. Lewis as Soldier and Creator,” *Mythlore* 115/116 (2011): 133, contra Manlove, “Narnia Books,” 84, 86.

¹²⁶ Lewis, PC, 177.

¹²⁷ McGrath, *Lunch*, 101; Downing, *Region of Awe*, 136-138.

¹²⁸ Lindskoog, *Lion of Judah*, 1781-1782.

¹²⁹ Williams, *Mere Humanity*, 106.

¹³⁰ McGrath, *Lunch*, 101-102.

¹³¹ Loconte, *Hobbit*, 9.

¹³² Manlove, “Narnia Books,” 86.

accident that Lewis' smallest hero is also the one with the greatest courage, the most expansive numinous vision, and the most unwavering loyalty.

I argue that Reepicheep and Lucy of Narnia illustrate a critical theological point for Lewis' narrative spirituality, what I call a "theology of the small" that integrates childlikeness into its upside-down perspective as an implication of cruciform spirituality.

Within Hilder's framework of ironic subversion presented above, she notes how Reepicheep is paradigmatic. Reepicheep "illustrates the relativity of size in Aslan's kingdom,"¹³³ and is "an extraordinary example of the 'feminine' heroic" valorised in Lewis' fiction."¹³⁴ As Reepicheep is a male and "the supreme chivalric hero," Hilder recognises that people may doubt her conclusion when chivalry in modern times is "the active male saving the passive female in a reductionist manner, as if these qualities were limited to gender and signifying worth (activity) or lack of worth (passivity)." However, Hilder argues, "the Medieval chivalric ideal combines paradoxical qualities that modern humanity has gendered in an exclusive binary fashion...." In inverting these expectations and transcending that binary, the character of Reepicheep illustrates a "combination of 'feminine' meekness and 'masculine' sternness" that Lewis believes to be the heart of the chivalric ideal.¹³⁵ Lewis thus effects a transvaluation of gendered norms in Narnia. Yet Reepicheep's sex, size, and species are not unimportant to Lewis' project, for as a mouse Reepicheep "gently destabilises the sexist association of heroism with the human male,"¹³⁶ especially those associations within chivalric honour codes. Although it is Lucy's voice that is the prime guide to wisdom in Narnia, Reepicheep is also a guide as he moves toward his prophetic vision of Aslan's country in the utter east. Though Reepicheep is the first to draw his own sword in defence of honour or another's life, it is no surprise that his last deed is to cast the sword away, where it stands momentarily upon the waters before sinking—an image that combines Arthurian and Christ motifs.

The subversive irony that Hilder argues reorients all of Lewis' fiction is not incidental to his spirituality but embodies the U-shape comedic inversion of cruciformity. What Hilder calls Lewis' theological irony is the outworking in fiction of what is central, the sneaking past

¹³³ Hilder, *Feminine Ethos*, 47.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 70-71.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 71.

watchful dragons of culture and stained-glass associations of religion to tell stories that are “about Christ.” The character of Reepicheep is thus integral to C.S. Lewis’ spiritual vision in his fiction. As such, theologian Edith Humphrey introduces her “Orthodox Conversations” with Reepicheep, that “Dauntless mouse.”¹³⁷ “This small creature,” Humphrey argues, “is a living gift from Aslan” for Narnian heroes.¹³⁸ Humphrey argues that the “knightly mouse Reepicheep, with all his idiosyncrasies, is the exploring pilgrim” who invites the adventure of faith from Lewis’ Christocentric, incarnational, creational perspective.¹³⁹

C.S. Lewis’ narrative spiritual theology is one of letting go, giving up, surrendering the self. This self-death pattern is where the plot turns, but it is captured in the stature of Lewis’ heroes. Reepicheep the brave is also Reepicheep the small in stature and great in spirit.¹⁴⁰ It is Polly and Digory in *Magician’s Nephew*, two small children, who face Uncle Andrew the magician and the tall and stately Jadis of Charn. The child Caspian is a greater and more loyal king than his usurping uncle, despite all Miraz’s power and experience. Ransom is a highly unlikely hero: timid, unremarkable, powerless, naked, “a tall, white, shivering, weary scarecrow of a man,” piebald, ugly, ridiculous.¹⁴¹ Humphrey is correct that Ransom grows in a certain kind of strength through the series¹⁴²; as Hilder says, he “begins his journey to Perelandra with the conviction that he, like ‘ordinary people’ everywhere, is fighting in a cosmic battle against dark powers and principalities.”¹⁴³ It is an unfair fight for “a sedentary scholar with weak eyes and a baddish wound from the last war”¹⁴⁴ to set himself against the great Oyarsa of Thulcandra, and yet he must.

And when that fight returns to earth, Ransom sets up an improvised coterie of aged and disadvantaged resistance fighters in a small English manor as they face the N.I.C.E. — staffed to the brim, endlessly funded, with a research team on hand and a police force to do its bidding, and its own ministry of propaganda. The resistance movement is made up of a wounded philologist, a female physician, a couple of scholars and their wives, a blue-collar worker whose husband is in jail, a resident sceptic, and some animals. The sceptic struggles

¹³⁷ Humphrey, *Further Up and Further In*, 78.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, 81-84.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, 91-93.

¹⁴⁰ Lewis, VDT, 20.

¹⁴¹ Hilder, *Gender Dance*, 60.

¹⁴² Humphrey, *Further Up and Further In*, 2795-2797.

¹⁴³ Hilder, *Gender Dance*, 60.

¹⁴⁴ Lewis, *Perelandra*, 146.

with the powerlessness of their position, wondering how any sensible person would think “we’re going to defeat a powerful conspiracy by sitting here growing winter vegetables and training performing bears.”¹⁴⁵ Yet this is the life-blood of the counter-conspiracy. Within the very humble, idiotically simplistic nature of innocence at St Anne’s Manor, there is that which will defeat the N.I.C.E. and save the world from great suffering. And even the great human weapon, Merlin—“in conventional terms ... the most powerful masculine figure in this story”¹⁴⁶—has his role as warrior-mage entirely subverted, undergoing a particularly striking “transformation into a ‘feminine’ spiritual hero.”¹⁴⁷

There are other of Lewis’ characters who capture, in Peter Kreeft’s terms, the “joy of the underdog.”¹⁴⁸ But aside from Aslan, Lucy is far and away the paradigmatic human hero of Narnia. Manlove says that Lucy is “the most spiritually perceptive,” whose name suggests lucidity or light.¹⁴⁹ Patterson calls Lucy the “seeress” of the Chronicles,¹⁵⁰ and notes that Lucy alone sees the albatross that is the Aslanic embodiment in *Dawn Treader*, comparing her with the prophet Isaiah.¹⁵¹ David Emerson argues that Lewis has favoured Lucy in drawing her character as she discovers Narnia and “seems to have an especially close bond with Aslan.”¹⁵² Indeed, she sees Aslan earlier and more often than most characters. These characteristics produce or are produced by deep empathy. Emerson discusses Lucy’s “innate sense” of the characters she meets,¹⁵³ and her concern for Tumnus provides the Pevensies with the moral reason they need to intervene in the civil war.

These are three of the four interconnected characteristics of Lucy that are critical to her character: deep empathy, spiritual perceptivity, and relational connection to Aslan. A fourth feature, subversive leadership, is less often noted by scholars. Yet these three features are combined to demonstrate Lucy’s essential leadership in Narnia. As Manlove

¹⁴⁵ Lewis, THS, 192.

¹⁴⁶ Hilder, *Gender Dance*, 134.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 134.

¹⁴⁸ Peter Kreeft, *C.S. Lewis for the Third Millennium* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 19. Sarah Smith, a nondescript mother who suffers her husband’s narcissism becomes a goddess in *The Great Divorce*. Menelaus of Greek heroic legend becomes in Lewis’ incomplete story “After Ten Years,” in contrast to Agamemnon, an “underdog who grasps intuitively what is life-giving,” Hilder, *Surprised by the Feminine*, 52. The story may have remained incomplete because Lewis could not find that great, complex game-dance of gender relationality that he describes in *A Grief Observed* regarding his own discovery of marriage.

¹⁴⁹ Manlove, “Narnia Books,” 96.

¹⁵⁰ Patterson, *Ransoming the Waste-Land*, 60, 120, cf. 68, 229-259.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 68.

¹⁵² Emerson, “Innocence as a Super-power,” 137.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, 138.

argues, Peter often relies on Lucy's insight in making decisions.¹⁵⁴ And it is Lucy's instinct about Mr Beaver, invited by Peter, that provides the Pevensies' first allegiance with true Narnians.¹⁵⁵ The most prominent example of Lucy's leadership is in *Prince Caspian*. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Peter the High King began, in the words of Devin Brown, "a lesson that will take him two books to fully learn."¹⁵⁶ In *Prince Caspian*, the centuries have changed the Narnian landscape and they are lost in the wilderness. Peter's leadership is insufficient, as he will admit when he finally encounters Aslan: "I've been leading them wrong ever since we started and especially yesterday morning."¹⁵⁷ Peter's leadership error is not simply geographical, but he fails by choosing not to trust Lucy.¹⁵⁸ Lucy's empathetic, relational perceptivity is crucial to their role in the civil war, and the Pevensies' failure to follow her lead is nearly fatal. As Emily Kempton notes, "Lucy leads her siblings towards an Aslan only she can see," and in eventually following Lucy they do see Aslan.¹⁵⁹

While Hannay is a perceptive feminist critic of Lucy, it can only be true that "the leadership roles are given to the Pevensie boys" if we reduce leadership to sexist categories.¹⁶⁰ Lucy's leadership is certainly not defined in either a classical heroic or a modern Fortune 500 vision, but her leadership is essential to the saving of Narnia. As Hilder argues, in this reconfiguration of leadership principles in the character of Lucy—as well as the person of Reepicheep, noted above—"Lewis subverts the typical understanding that consolatory females have lesser roles than military males."¹⁶¹ In her own version of what I am extending to a "theology of the small" in Lewis' narrative spirituality, Hilder continues:

Lewis subverts the classical heroic in creating the youngest and female child as the spiritual leader. Unlike the self-reliant and egotistical male hero of superior physical and sometimes intellectual stature, Lucy, the loving female of least physical stature, embodies the humility characterizing spiritual heroism.... Lucy is a guide into the heart of Narnia, Aslan himself.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁴ Manlove, "Narnia Books," 96-97.

¹⁵⁵ Lewis, LWW, 62.

¹⁵⁶ Brown, *Inside PC*, 142.

¹⁵⁷ Lewis, PC, 133.

¹⁵⁸ See Brown, *Inside PC*, 144.

¹⁵⁹ Emily Rose Kempton, "Hope for Susan: Moral Imagination in The Chronicles of Narnia" (MA thesis, Brigham Young University, 2016), 9.

¹⁶⁰ Hannay, "Changing Attitudes," 15.

¹⁶¹ Hilder, *Feminine Ethos*, 30.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, 37.

Moreover, this inverted and oft-misunderstood quality of leadership is “like the victory of Christ’s passion” in “the weakness that overcomes Satanic strength.”¹⁶³ The connection between Aslan as Christ-model and the *Imitatio Leonis* motif is essential in Lewis’ cruciformity, and Hilder roots her analysis in the “centrality of Aslan’s ‘feminine’ self-sacrifice”¹⁶⁴ where “weakness shall o’ercome Satanic strength.”¹⁶⁵ This Christ example, patterned in Aslan and characters like Lucy, is what Crystal Hurd calls the “transformational leadership” model in her analysis.¹⁶⁶

There are puzzles about Lucy’s character, such as the question of why she moves from being primarily a healer in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* to leading as a warrior in *The Horse and His Boy*. But we see a theology of the small in Lewis’ childlike perspective, the main thrust of Lewis’ heroes, the nature of the feminine-spiritual inversion in Lewis as it demonstrates an upside-down perspective, and the characters of Reepicheep and Lucy. No doubt this theology of the small is anchored in Lewis’ reading of Scripture. Frye, who notes that the Bible prefers irony to tragedy, argues that the biblical worldview “does not accept the Greek conception of the hero, the figure of greater-than-ordinary human size, power, descent, and articulateness, who so often seems to have a divine destiny almost within his grasp.”¹⁶⁷ Likewise, Lewis was influenced by the inversive nature of Christ’s parables, where there is a focus on “the least of these” (Matt 25:40, NRSV) and where “the last will be first” (Matt 20:16; Mark 10:31; Luke 13:30). According to Clark, Lewis mentions the “least of these” reference at least eight times in his works.¹⁶⁸ The idea of the last being first is the paradigmatic parable for Lewis’ cruciform spirituality. Beyond these Gospel utterances, and beyond the Chestertonian inversiveness¹⁶⁹ combined with MacDonaldite childlikeness, we must admit that Lewis’ Narnian theology of the small is also a Hobbit’s theology. As it is no accident that the youngest character in Narnia is Lucy and that the smallest hero is Reepicheep, the Hobbits’ size is not incidental. Hobbits are the perfect embodiment of Tolkien’s eucatastrophic vision, discussed in chapter four, for the hobbits are themselves like a “sudden and miraculous grace” and inherent in the sudden

¹⁶³ Ibid, 30.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 30.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 8, quoting Milton, *Paradise Regained* 1.161.

¹⁶⁶ Hurd, “Transformational Leadership,” esp. 105-114.

¹⁶⁷ Frye, *Great Code*, 181.

¹⁶⁸ Clark, *C.S. Lewis*, 146.

¹⁶⁹ Filmer calls Lewis’ self-surrender spirituality a “Chestertonian paradox,” *ibid*, 663.

joyous “turn” of the tale.¹⁷⁰ Too small to be of significance to the enemy, the coming of the Hobbits into the story of the war of the ring is “like the falling of small stones that starts an avalanche in the mountains.”¹⁷¹

The shared vision of Tolkien’s and Lewis’ mythmaking project, at least in this detail, also shares a subversive element I call the theology of the small. It is not that size is irrelevant (contra Manlove), or simply that little guys can do big things too (contra Loconte). Instead, essential to Lewis and Tolkien’s vision of the U-shaped, eucatastrophic tale prefigured in the Gospel and played out in their speculative worlds is a “last will be first” element built into the very heart of their tales. In my reading, Lewis is working in what Sallie McFague calls “parabolic theology”—though McFague thinks that “Tolkien’s fantasy of little people and strange creatures, of evil powers and gracious rescues” is more successful than even the most parabolic of Lewis’ novels, *Out of the Silent Planet*.¹⁷² In any case, this tendency to inversion, subversion, “upsidedownness,” and the U-shaped parable in Lewis is a development of his spiritual theology of the cross in fictional form.

Thinking of Lucy as someone with integrative and transformative spiritual vision in Lewis’ theology of the small, we can see his project of moral inversion in play. Hilder’s construct is a formal analysis of this, but the motif of the “child that shall lead them” is suggestive on its own of a subversive element beyond a transvaluation of heroics or reorientation of gendered values. An unusual aspect of the story is part of the aftermath of Peter’s rejection of Lucy’s leadership in *Prince Caspian*. Although the forgiven and reformed Edmund sides with Lucy, all in their party doubt that she has seen Aslan and knows the right direction. The doubt and patronising attitudes of her siblings cause Lucy’s eyes to fill with tears, and when they finally choose to go against Lucy’s direction, the chapter concludes with these words: “Lucy came last of the party, crying bitterly.”¹⁷³ When Lucy does begin to guide the group after Peter’s disastrous failure as a leader, she encounters Aslan. Though Aslan is warm and welcoming, it is clear that in following her oldest brother, the High King, Lucy has herself been disobedient to her call. Though there is a certain hierarchy in the

¹⁷⁰ Tolkien, “On Fairy-stories,” 81.

¹⁷¹ J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Two Towers* (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1999), 115.

¹⁷² Sallie McFague, *Speaking in Parables: A Study in Metaphor and Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 133. Part of McFague’s argument is that among authors of transcendence, C.S. Lewis (and Charles Williams) come too close to allegory, and human experience is more “parabolic, metaphorical, ... historical, and complex” than allegory can capture, 133-134.

¹⁷³ Lewis, PC, 113.

Narnian world that puts Lucy at the bottom—an issue Brown is wrestling with above—Lucy *did* have the choice to strike out on her own.

With this revelation, and with fear and trembling, Lucy challenges her siblings at their next confrontation: “I do hope,” said Lucy in a tremulous voice, “that you will all come with me. Because—because I’ll have to go with him whether anyone else does or not.”¹⁷⁴ Susan is furious and urges Peter to assert his leadership according to his station, for Lucy is “being downright naughty.”¹⁷⁵ When Peter prevaricates, Susan sets herself against Lucy: “You’ve no right to try to force the rest of us like that. It’s four to one and you’re the youngest.”¹⁷⁶ Here Susan appeals both to democracy and hierarchy, but neither is an unambivalent winner in Narnian logic. There is a spiritual authority in Narnia that can never be trumped by sociopolitical authority, even though the vision is both democratic and hierarchical. Therefore, Lucy sees Aslan and follows him, and the others eventually submit to her leadership.

Scenes such as this should demonstrate that Lewis’ reorientation of heroic values in cruciform patterning is an attempt to hold certain kinds of tension together. On the one hand, the *Imitatio Christ*—or *Imitatio Leonis* within Narnia—is a laying down of one’s life, a surrendering of the will, meekness, a childlike innocence, a surrender, a death to self, a submission. And yet, there is a certain call to integrity and courage within Lewis’ fiction that means this submission of the will is not—to use a word that offends etymological sensibilities—mere submissiveness. Meekness and courage hang together in Lewis’ spirituality of the cross—meeting at the nadir of the U-shaped self-death and resurrection pattern, where the believer’s loss of self turns on the “journey homeward to habitual self,” to use Lewis’ Keatsian quote in Lewis’ famous sermon, “The Weight of Glory.”¹⁷⁷ This seemingly contradictory set of traits that bring meekness, submission, and childlikeness together with rugged courage and decisive action in a single, inversive image of heroics is a distinctive outworking of Lewis’ spiritual theology of the cross. By way of conclusion, the following chapter explores similar tensions—what Lewis calls “sacred paradoxes.” These sacred paradoxes confirm the resurrection-directed nature of Lewis’ comedic,

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 128.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 128.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 129.

¹⁷⁷ Lewis, “Weight of Glory,” 40.

eucaustrophic cruciform spirituality; they also help outline some of the limitations of this thesis and offer possibilities for further work.

Ch. 7: Conclusion: Sacred Paradoxes in C.S. Lewis' Spiritual Theology

Introduction

Throughout all of C.S. Lewis' writing, whether Narnian children's tales, WWII-era sci-fi, Christian apologetics, cultural criticism, or literary theory and criticism, there is a single image that I argue in chapter one is the central organising feature that unites Lewis' Christian thought across his diverse *œuvre*—an image that can be missed due to reductive readings of Lewis as merely an apologist or uncritical attention to the merely doctrinal aspects of his Christian thought. By organically shifting our angle of approach and reconsidering Lewis as a spiritual theologian in chapter two, I argue in chapter three that Lewis clarifies and moves past Thomas à Kempis' *imitatio Christi* motif with a cross-shaped spirituality, what Michael Gorman calls "Cruciformity." This cruciform spirituality, where the believer's life is an echo of Christ's surrender to death on the cross and resurrection to new life, is worked out as a six-point Logic of Cruciformity in his apologetic books and embedded in narrative form within poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. Lewis' Cruciformity is, in the narratological analysis of Northrop Frye I undertake in chapter four, U-shaped: a comedic form of descent and ascent akin to J.R.R. Tolkien's theory of eucatastrophe. As an outworking of his belief that "*death* is at the root of the whole matter,"¹ a U-shaped pattern appears in Lewis' character development, plotlines, and poetic movements everywhere in his diverse corpus. When pressed in chapter five by the feminist theological criticism of Anna Fisk and her argument about the danger of cross-shaped spiritualities, we discover that the shape of Lewisian cruciformity is also the shape of his spiritual theology. In conversation with Monika Hilder's analysis of spiritual feminine "heroics" in Lewis, we discover an inversive, subversive spirituality in Lewis that offers hopeful possibilities. I explore these possibilities in chapter six, tracing Lewis' project of moral inversion that is ultimately demonstrated in what I call a "theology of the small." It is this comedic, eucatastrophic, narrative spiritual theology of the cross that is, I argue, the central

¹ CLI, 971.

organising feature of C.S. Lewis' diverse *œuvre*, discovered everywhere in Lewis' writing and offering hopeful possibilities for readers.

This thesis is structured around specific core concepts. Chapters two, three, and four are guided by three core terms rooted in the work of three individual scholars, with the critical materials drawn from Lewis' three apologetics books. The core term for chapter two is "spiritual theology," an emerging discipline that Eugene Peterson describes as the "attention that the church community gives to keeping what we think about God (theology) in organic connection with the way we live with God (spirituality)."² Spiritual theology is a bridging discipline as it offers systematic thought about spiritual life. Lewis' most popular book of apologetics, *Mere Christianity*, focusses upon spiritual life, demonstrating that the turn from systematic theology to spiritual theology is organic to Lewis' way of thinking. The core methodological idea for chapter three is "Cruciformity," a term coined by biblical theological Michael Gorman to describe the believer's commitment to a cross-shaped spirituality, where spiritual life is lived as an echo of the cross. Lewis' theodicy *The Problem of Pain* reveals a sixfold Logic of Cruciformity that undergirds his thinking. The core term in chapter four is "narrative," where we are interested in the way that Lewis embeds his spirituality in storied form within his work in formal and informal ways. Our story is patterned after the story of Christ's death and resurrection, Lewis argues, and we use the narratological methods of Northrop Frye in chapter four to analyse the ways that cruciform patterns emerge from Lewis' work. Selections from Lewis' fiction close each chapter two and three, offering a rationale for the methodological approach of spiritual theology and the cruciform centre of Lewis' Christian thought. Chapter four is a much deeper dive into Lewis' storytelling, working extensively through his entire corpus.

Heather Walton's terms "interrogate" and "generate" are the guiding approaches of chapters five and six, respectively. In chapter five, we use Anna Fisk's feminist theology to interrogate Lewis' normative cross-shaped spirituality. While revealing weaknesses and inconsistencies in Lewis, the problematisation of his spiritual theology of the cross in chapter five is generative in revealing a deeply inversive nature to Lewis' Christian thought. Exploring this inversive core to Lewis' theology in chapter six reveals a joyful, integrative spirituality that offers hopeful possibilities. This inversive, cruciform principle is captured in

² Ibid, 16.

what I call a “theology of the small” in Lewis as we discover how Lewis challenges our understanding of heroics in his fiction in what Monika Hilder calls a “theological feminism.”

Lewis instinctive and embedded transvaluation of heroics and his inversive spirituality mean that he must hold various kinds of tensions together. By way of conclusion, this chapter brings together the arguments in this thesis about Lewis’ spiritual theology of the cross by exploring the surprising contradictions that conclude chapter six. In his characteristic upsidedown spiritual theology, Lewis is able to hold various tensions together in “sacred paradoxes” that define his *theologia crucis* and provide imaginative possibilities for living, living fully and well. As Edith Humphrey argues of C.S. Lewis’ Christian thought:

Paradox is everywhere: freedom through self-sacrifice, blessing through curse, life through death. Lewis does not dispel these wonders, but leads us to appreciate them more fully, where they have been misrepresented or misused in some expressions of Christianity.³

Lewis wants to hold together death and life, surrender and free will, childlikeness and maturity, leadership and followership—traits that are bound together in a spiritual heroic modelled after Christ’s self-sacrificial surrender to death on the cross that challenges our cultural understanding of strength and courage. To explore more deeply how these tensions of assertion and submission hold together in the way that believers respond, we close this chapter by turning to Lewis’ book-length essay in literary theory, *An Experiment in Criticism*, and to his memoir of loss, *A Grief Observed*. These books written in the same season of 1960 demonstrate that Lewis refuses to relieve the tensions between free will and providence, activism and passivism, choosing firmly and surrendering the will. As we saw in chapter four, a dive is a doing and a not-doing, an action and a release of action. This paradoxical posture, central to the *imitatio* motif in the Logic of Cruciformity, is required for those who would follow Lewis’ theology of the small as paradigmatic for a Narnian, Lucy-like spirituality.

Criticism as Conversion: C.S. Lewis’ *Experiment in Criticism*⁴

Robson calls Lewis’ *An Experiment in Criticism* disappointing,⁵ and Jacobs calls it “flawed” in many ways and yet wonderful in its defiant stance and its instance on

³ Humphrey, *Further Up and Further In*, 2172-2173.

⁴ Parts of this section were presented as “Criticism as Conversion: Active Surrender in C.S. Lewis’ Spiritual Theology” at the 2016 meeting of the International Society for Religion, Literature, and Culture in Glasgow.

⁵ Robson, “Romanticism,” 262.

celebrating “the Reader.”⁶ In considering Lewis’ literary theory, Logan notes that this book, having a lifetime of experience behind it, “benefits from that softening and moderation of tone observable across the whole range of his writings”⁷—though the argument itself is dubious. In a similarly paradoxical review, George Watson sees it as predicting the French critical turn, though warning that a “French avant-garde, in any case, does not wish to be told that an Englishman has been saying it all for years.”⁸ Problematic, evocative, and controversial, *Experiment* is Lewis’ penultimate comment on literary criticism from a theoretical standpoint. Intriguingly, it has at its heart an approach informed by a cruciform spirituality. Moreover, it provides an interesting starting point for a discussion about the essential tensions of the cruciform posture, where the dive is an action and a non-action, where agency and surrender meet in spiritual perspective.

“We must surrender ourselves with childlike attention to the mood of the story,” Lewis writes in 1954.⁹ This idea of “surrendering” to a text was one that Lewis would develop through his whole career, perhaps with roots in his initial encounter with MacDonald’s *Phantastes*. Brian Hudson analyses the posture of “receptivity” at the heart of Lewis’ reading project. In particular, the critical reader is not merely a literary person, but a “receptive one ... exhibiting a childlike character to receive what is there.”¹⁰ The attention to childlikeness is noteworthy given Lewis’ theology of the small, but both emerge from the cruciform posture that informs his entire philosophical foundation. *An Experiment in Criticism* is written concurrently with *A Grief Observed* in the months after Joy Davidman’s death, thus emerging out of a particular historical moment for Lewis. The essay provided for Lewis an opportunity to think about the practical implication of his spiritual theology in the context of literary criticism.

Harry Reeder notes that Lewis’ literary critical project came primarily out of “practice” rather than a preconceived theoretical framework. This standpoint reconfigures the aim of literary criticism, locating “the locus of judgment not in the book but in the reader,”¹¹ and likewise reflects the turn to praxis in this project. In this turn to strong

⁶ Jacobs, *Narnian*, 295.

⁷ Logan, “Literary Theorist,” 34.

⁸ Watson, *Critical Essays*, 4.

⁹ Lewis, “Edmund Spenser, 1552-99,” in *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, ed. Walter Hooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 137.

¹⁰ Hudson, “Learning,” 5.

¹¹ Reeder, *Cartography*, 24.

readers for evaluating literature, Lewis makes a distinction between *receiving* a work of art and *using* it. To be a critical reader, ultimately, means receiving the work by laying ourselves open to the art that is before us: “The first demand any work of any art makes upon us is surrender. Look. Listen. Receive. Get yourself out of the way.”¹² It is only after surrendering that one can critique a work. Cassidy is perceptive in noting that this surrender includes a “twofold action”:

[F]irst, the negative action of setting aside one’s prejudgments of a work..., and second, the positive action of attending fully to the work in its essence: “We must look, and go on looking till we have certainly seen exactly what is there”¹³

Cassidy describes the action/non-action that we see in the “dive” of chapter four, a doing and a release of control. We get ourselves out of the way while at the same time we “Look. Listen. Receive.”¹⁴ Enacting this surrender, Cassidy notes, is not merely “something that can be willed into action. In fact, one has to will one’s self *out* of action, to submit to what the book (or any other artwork) has to say.”¹⁵

Schakel describes this intentional suspension of the will as “disengagement before engagement.”¹⁶ It is not clear that Schakel has this chronology correct, for it seems that engagement—the choice to read—precedes disengagement, a pattern we see in the dive. Mother Kirk says that the “art of diving is not to do anything new but simply to cease doing something. You have only to let yourself go.”¹⁷ Whatever the precise formula in learning to be a receiver of art rather than a user—and we must admit some perhaps intentional unresolved ambiguity—the reader experiences an “enlargement of being,” in Schakel’s terms.¹⁸ He argues that “[r]eceiving is a much deeper, richer imaginative response” than plain judgment, as it re-enacts “the fresh, surprising connections made by the creative artist” and enters “the meaningful relationships through which the work elicits profound and powerful feelings and impact.”¹⁹ In a famous passage in *Experiment*, Lewis invites us to imagine this enlargement of being:

¹² Lewis, EIC, 18-19.

¹³ Cassidy, “Risk,” 94.

¹⁴ Lewis, EIC, 19.

¹⁵ Cassidy, “Risk,” 94.

¹⁶ Schakel, “Imagination,” 13.

¹⁷ Lewis, *Regress*, 172.

¹⁸ Schakel, “Imagination,” 15.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 14.

We want to be more than ourselves. Each of us by nature sees the whole world from one point of view with a perspective and a selectiveness peculiar to himself.... But we want to escape the illusions of perspective.... We want to see with other eyes, to imagine with other imaginations, to feel with other hearts, as well as with our own.²⁰

This Lewisian self-transcendence is both an embracing of diversity in the encounter with the other as well as a recovery of the self—predictable once Lewis’ Logic of Cruciformity has been identified as a “road right out of self.”²¹ Cassidy is right that this phenomenon of personal growth past particularised perspective “entails both an ‘enlargement’ and a ‘temporary annihilation of the self.’”²² This statement captures well the Divine Paradox that leads to Divine Possibility: in losing the self, one finds a true self of developing potential. Although the *Experiment* is a literary-theoretical essay, Cassidy suggests that Lewis’ idea of “surrender” in reading “is informed by, and informs, other aspects of life.”²³ I would argue that the intersection between theology and literature for Lewis is a cruciform spiritual theology.

I have already argued that Lewis’ thought is emergent and integrative, so Cassidy’s comment is not surprising. In considering what he calls “the mystery of surrender in Lewis’s life,” however, we must think about the implications for response: in giving art and literature or even God this kind of agency, are we, in turn, negating our own? Lewis suggests that this is an old paradox, quoting Matt 10:39, “He that loseth his life shall save it”—the cruciform principle at the centre of this thesis. For Lewis, this posture before the text can be alternately described as either “an enlargement or as a temporary annihilation of the self”²⁴—and Lewis feels comfortable holding those aspects of emptying and filling, kenosis and theosis together because, for him, self-death is intimately connected to resurrection and new life. The result is a kind of transcendence that he parallels with love, mysticism, and the pursuit of good work:

... in reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself.... I see with a myriad eyes, but it is still I who see. Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do.²⁵

²⁰ Lewis, EIC, 137.

²¹ Lewis, SBJ, 220.

²² Cassidy, “Risk,” 95.

²³ *Ibid*, 95.

²⁴ Lewis, EIC, 138.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 141.

The transcendence of the self in reading is a recovery of the self, the Divine Paradox in Lewis' Logic of Cruciformity. This self-discovery comes with the surrender of the self—not for the sake of self-abnegation as a virtue, but in order to engage in an imaginative partnership with the text and author. This, then, is not merely a passive activity, as if it is only defined by the not-doing-something side of the equation, the surrender. Instead, it is the proper attention appropriate to the discernment of the text. This reader's "conversion" to the text leads to the only authentic consideration of the text possible, one where the synchronous partnership of author and reader works toward the unity of the story or poem. Paradoxically, with this loss of self and metaphorical death comes a literary resurrection, the "enlargement of our being"²⁶ rooted in the grand diversity that the world has to offer beyond the particular point of view of the situated self.

Active Surrender to the Other: On *A Grief Observed*

Reading the famous ending of *Experiment in Criticism*, where the reader mystically takes in the experience of myriad others while remaining an individual, we are reminded of another moment where Lewis turns to "otherness." The conversation about otherness in *A Grief Observed* lacks any of the theoretical distance it has in *Experiment*, written in the same period. As we explored in chapter five, the bereaved Lewis' pain is palpable. Writing memoir, though, forces Lewis to consider his relationship with his partner now that she is a memory, an historical fact, and no longer someone with whom he is continually feasting "on love, every mode of it."²⁷

There is a oneness in marriage, represented by the surrender of the self to the other that is the cruciform metaphor of the journeys of Jane and Mark in *That Hideous Strength*. Of his own experience, however, Lewis writes that the "most precious gift that marriage gave me was this constant impact of something very close and intimate yet all the time unmistakably other, resistant—in a word, real."²⁸ A consummate bachelor, this otherness came as a shock. When it was gone, Lewis cries out to God and to his dead lover:

Is all that work to be undone? ... Oh my dear, my dear, come back for one moment and drive that miserable phantom [of bachelor independence] away. Oh God, God,

²⁶ Ibid, 137.

²⁷ Lewis, AGO, 7.

²⁸ Ibid, 18.

why did you take such trouble to force this creature out of its shell if it is now doomed to crawl back—to be sucked back—into it?²⁹

It was not simply that Joy gave him a new experience of otherness; it was that in meeting and falling in love and marrying that he emerged as a self for the first time. The enfleshment of marriage also means the emergence of the individual. Part of Lewis' crisis in grief is that the "rough, sharp, cleansing tang of her otherness is gone."³⁰ The entire, bodily, habitual life of the lover is now broken, shattered. But it is not the "Sameness" of the other that creates this expectation; it is her complexity, described above. We saw in chapter five that Lewis reconfigures the classic hierarchical familial and social relationships, allowing them to collapse into the mutual experience of lovers. When Lewis has finally experienced the married love that he had previously described from a distance, felt that love deepen, and then lost it, the old stories that revel in hierarchy slip away for him; his essentialised view of gender no longer seems central. In Lewis' experience, otherness experienced in the oneness of marriage brings a renewed sense of self.

In just a teaser of his thought, we see in Lewis a radical affirmation of mutuality, imaged in the act of reading and laid bare by his experience of the erotic other. We see the self-affirming, life-giving, expansive, promising nature of cruciformity. Yet it reveals a tension that is never fully resolved in Lewis' work. The reality of active-surrender in reading is mirrored in his relational discovery and in spiritual commitment—or perhaps the opposite is true. In the act of falling in love, in reading a particularly good author, and in the climaxes of Lewis' narratives, there is some compulsion in this surrender. This compulsion, though, is the invitation to the enlargement of being, and ultimately the discovery of the authentic self that comes in the voluntary, active surrender of the self to the other.

However, we would be right in wondering about agency when it comes to the question of the free choice. In one sense, it is very clear that this surrender is never coerced—that, in fact, the choice to surrender the will has no value unless it is given freely. And yet, in Lewis' biography, there is ambiguity at the very core of the cruciform choice, where the active choice meets submitted will. Now that a fuller view of Lewis' Logic of Cruciformity and his integrative move to living, living fully and well is clear, we might have

²⁹ Ibid, 19.

³⁰ Ibid, 20.

predicted the transformation that takes place in Lewis' understanding of marital roles. Lewis, however, does not appear to have seen it coming, and so this fullest vision of the mutually submitted relationality is unbidden on Lewis' part. "I never knew it could be like this, and now it is gone" summarises *A Grief Observed*. As we cannot predict the degree to which the surrender to self-death will provide new life in resurrected possibility, to what degree are we consenting in the act of transformative love?

Even in his conversion narrative, Lewis' ambiguity stands in contrast to the stark emphasis of agency in his fiction. Lewis describes how after a series of literary and philosophical encounters, he recognises "that before God closed in on me, I was in fact offered what now appears a moment of wholly free choice."³¹ This choice was to open a door or keep it shut, to unbuckle his armour—there the military image again—or remain prepared for resistance. There was no sense of duty, no threat, no promise, but Lewis knew the choice was "incalculable," though it was unemotional.³² Immediately though, Lewis prevaricates: "I say, 'I chose,' yet it did not really seem possible to do the opposite."³³ Lewis understands the consequences of his admission:

You could argue that I was not a free agent, but I am more inclined to think that this came nearer to being a perfectly free act than most that I have ever done. Necessity may not be the opposite of freedom, and perhaps a man is most free when instead of producing motives, he could only say, "I am what I do."³⁴

Near the end of his life, Lewis expands on this moment in a way that heightens the tension between free agency and divine action. An interviewer notes that Lewis had once described his entry to faith "kicking and screaming" and asked whether Lewis made a "decision" for Christ:

I would not put it that way.... I feel my decision was not so important. I was the object rather than the subject in this affair. I was decided upon. I was glad afterwards at the way it came out, but at the moment what I heard was God saying, "Put down your gun and we'll talk."³⁵

³¹ Lewis, SBJ, 224.

³² Ibid, 224.

³³ Ibid, 224.

³⁴ Ibid, 224.

³⁵ Lewis, "Cross-Examination," 261.

The interviewer suggests that this sounds very much like a decision, so Lewis responds: “I would say that the most deeply compelled action is also the freest action. By that I mean, no part of you is outside the action. It is a paradox.”³⁶

The tension of activism and passivism, doing something and letting go, choosing and surrendering the will—all of these actions bound up in the moment of self-death at the nadir of the U-shaped cruciform pattern—collectively reveal a paradox. Lewis wants to keep both the freedom of the will and some loss of that choice. For Donald Williams, Lewis is able to grasp this “mystery of the divine-human interface” and describe it in fiction.³⁷ As there has always been irony and inversion in the Divine Paradox of Lewis’ Logic of Cruciformity, to bring the threads of this thesis together, I close this chapter by turning to paradox to shape our final questions about Lewis’ spiritual theology and to invite thinking past this work.

Sacred Paradoxes: Limitations and Possibilities for Other Work

In exploring C.S. Lewis’ theology, Edith Humphrey warns about collapsing binaries in Lewis’ thought:

Lewis subtly uses his interwoven stories, images, and characters in order to make us think again. It is too easy to see these things opposed: sacrifice versus victory, works versus grace, human self-condemnation versus divine justice, daily experience versus divine revelation.³⁸

As this project is a discussion of narrative spiritual theology, I am looking at the way spiritual theology is “interwoven” into fiction, poetry, and nonfiction rather than a focussed interest in Lewis’ spiritual biography (so Brown, Griffin, Filmer, and Downing) or a programmatic reading of discipleship (so Bowen, Rigney, and Dorsett). Like Williams on systematic theology, Stackhouse on a theology of culture, and Meilaender on social ethics, this project is a concentrated work of spiritual theology that integrates the whole of Lewis’ corpus. Unlike these other scholarly approaches to their respected disciplines, this project is more akin to Sr Galligan’s treatment on “conversion” in Lewis’ writings, since I am using a single concept to organise my reading of Lewis. While I suggest that cruciformity is the cohesive organising feature of Lewis’ spiritual theology, a Lewisian spiritual theology could be

³⁶ Ibid, 261.

³⁷ Williams, *Deeper Magic*, 161.

³⁸ Humphrey, *Further Up and Further In*, 2516-2518.

approached in other ways. Rigney's incomplete study on "dualisms" is suggestive of a useful dialectical approach that is invited by Lewis' own hermeneutics.³⁹ The work of Ward, Daigle-Williamson, Boenig, and Armstrong invites an approach to a medievalist consideration of Lewis' spirituality informed by conversations about spiritual theologies of the cross. As Lewis is an autographically invested thinker, a spiritual theological autoethnography could prove engaging. Considering the fact that Peterson is a pioneer of contemporary spiritual theology invites approaches, including a Lewisian version of the creation-history-community exploration in *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places* or a Lewisian practice of reading along the lines of Peterson's *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading*. And, of course, there is important work to be done in putting Lewis' cruciformity in theological and intertextual dialogue with kenotic theologies, ideas of theosis and the Paschal Mystery that are being taken into Catholic and Protestant spirituality, and medieval theologies of the cross, including *Theologia Germanica* and a deeper conversation with the *Imitation*.

The thesis is not antipathetic to practical application, as Gorman has within his definition of narrative spirituality the idea of being in Christ as "a living exegesis of the narrative of Christ, a new performance of the original drama of exaltation following humiliation...."⁴⁰ Lewis shares what Gorman calls St Paul's "fondness" for telling the story of his religious experience within his theological works,⁴¹ which Lewis does in both formal autobiography and more instinctively in reflexive spiritual writings. In this way, both Paul and Lewis share, in Gorman's words, "a spirituality that tells a story ... that corresponds in some way to the divine 'story.'"⁴² Lewis' spiritual theology as developed in fiction and nonfiction is cruciform, most obvious in *imitatio* motifs and informed throughout by a U-shaped, comedic, eucatastrophic pattern that shows how our lives echo the Gospel story. And like Paul, Lewis codifies this spiritual theology in "recognizable narrative patterns" including "brief allusions" and "creedal or kerygmatic formulae"—a narrative spirituality that is presuppositional to his work as a whole.⁴³

In inviting a "tilt of the head" from systematic to spiritual theology, I argue that there is throughout Lewis' diverse collection of works an integrative, emergent spirituality that is

³⁹ Rigney, *Christian Life*, 18-20.

⁴⁰ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 92.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 3.

⁴² *Ibid*, 4, 400.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 75-76. Gorman is here using language from Jürgen Becker.

shaped like the “grand miracle” and is, indeed, an echo of the death and resurrection of Christ. In problematising this cruciform spirituality, we discern a cohesive project of moral inversion in Lewis that shares the U-shaped pattern of Lewis’ spirituality. As a way of thinking about that inversive spiritual theology, this concluding chapter has explored aspects of Lewis’ project of upside-down cultural criticism and spiritual development, ultimately describing a “theology of the small” at the heart of Lewis’ work. In Lewis’ perspective, a theology of weakness is not weak; neither is a spirituality of submission to God’s will a wholly passive or in the popular sense a submissive approach. There is an active-passivism in Lewis’ thought that we saw with the dive, an action and a non-action paradoxically combined in the same moment of intentionality and release. As an echo of Christ’s self-sacrifice on the cross, this spirituality has transformative possibilities and is oriented toward new life; however, this self-death is rooted in the believer’s giving up the will and cannot be coerced.

Given the complexity of this thought and at least some degree of ambiguity on Lewis’ part—keeping in mind the instinctive, emergent, amateur nature of Lewis’ theological project—more work is needed is needed to move this project from spiritual theology as “[w]riting about the Christian life” to the most practical aspects of living, living fully and well.⁴⁴

For example, in thinking about the potential damage that a spiritual theology of the cross can cause, as we discussed in chapter five, we might want to include some provisos about Lewis’ understanding of the nature of self-surrender. C.S. Lewis’ spiritual theology of self-loss sits in contradistinction to theologies of self-abasement and complete negation. Even of the *Imitation of Christ* itself, Lewis would need to provide a caveat. For in his concept of self-death, Lewis is unable to accept an approach that says that “[t]hou oughtest therefore to ascribe nothing of good to thyself.”⁴⁵ Contrary to Internet memes, Lewis never said anything as quotable as this: “Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less.”⁴⁶ However, he did try to deconstruct humility in a similar vein in *Mere Christianity*, proposing that humility is not characterised in “a sort of greasy, smarmy

⁴⁴ Peterson, *Christ Plays*, xi, 29.

⁴⁵ Kempis, *Imitation*, 125.

⁴⁶ William O’Flaherty, *The Misquotable C.S. Lewis* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018), 8-9.

person, who is always telling you that, of course, he is nobody.”⁴⁷ Lewis suspects that humble people are cheerful, intelligent, and engaged in what you have to say. In a Chestertonian twist, Lewis argues that the humble person “will not be thinking about humility: he will not be thinking about himself at all.”⁴⁸ In *Screwtape*, the paradigm of humility is that of an architect who “could design the best cathedral in the world, and know it to be the best, and rejoice in the fact, without being any more (or less) or otherwise glad at having done it than he would be if it had been done by another.”⁴⁹ True humility, which sits at the nadir of the U-shaped descent of self-death in the movement of active surrender, is a discovery of true self, not a complete negation thereof.

Paradoxically, inversively, Lewis even goes so far to argue that “the humblest, the most childlike, the most creaturely of pleasures” is the “great and undisguised pleasure in being praised.”⁵⁰ This upside-downness is part of the boyish delight that Robson disdained and acclaimed. It is also indicative of Lewis’ vision for spiritual life. He did not underestimate the Divine Premise, the fallenness of humanity. In *The Problem of Pain*, he chides those who imagine that God looks smilingly upon the “pious illusion” of saintly humility, for saints are speaking with “scientific accuracy” when they call themselves vile.⁵¹ And yet there is that gleeful desire for praise bound up in the same concept of humility in what Kelly Belmonte calls Lewis’ “high view of humanity.”⁵² Self-abasement is not part of the definitional quality of humility, but self-death is. To call Lewis’ spirituality “negative” is to miss the collapsed binary of cruciformity, which is an active-passivism, an action that is a non-action, a self-death that leads to life. Lewis describes the “sacred paradoxes” where this “self-rejection will turn out to be also a self-finding ... that to die is to live.”⁵³ Lewis wants to hold these disparate realities together in a spiritual theology of death that is itself life-giving.

Thus, it is critical that this spirituality is not imposed upon the believer from the outside—as if spirit and flesh could be divided within the echo of the cross. The Divine Pattern is endemic in all things, natural to the human experience, for “nothing will rise

⁴⁷ Lewis, MC, 128.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 128.

⁴⁹ Lewis, *Screwtape*, 73.

⁵⁰ Lewis, “Weight of Glory,” 37.

⁵¹ Lewis, PoP, 56.

⁵² Kelly Belmonte, “Bridging the Chasm Between Us,” in *Women and C.S. Lewis*, ed. Carolyn Curtis and Mary Pomroy Key (Oxford: Lion Books, 2015), 156.

⁵³ Lewis, “Religion Without Dogma,” 131.

which hasn't in some degree shared the Crucifixion."⁵⁴ To live, live fully and well, in Lewis' view, is bound up with self-death: "[M]an himself must undergo some sort of death if he would truly live."⁵⁵ The nature of what it means to "truly live" in Lewis' vision of spiritual life is bound up in true knowledge of the self. For we are both as "vile" as saints and sinners, and yet we are possible gods and goddesses.⁵⁶ As fully integrated beings—Screwtape uses the term "amphibians," both spirit and flesh⁵⁷—the call to self-death is absolute: "[T]he point is that 'He who loses his life shall save it' is *totally* true, true on every level. *Everything* we crucify will rise again: *nothing* we try to hold onto will be left us."⁵⁸ The call is absolute, but the expectation is entire liberation, an image of deification, theosis, transformation, and resurrection that is, in Lewis' terms, "the weight of glory." The ultimate choice of the "will" in *The Great Divorce*, discussed in chapter two, is so powerful that in some sense the reality of heaven works backwards into life, so that heaven transforms earthly life. Of course, the truth of hell is the same for those who will not die to self. But, as George MacDonald says in *The Great Divorce*, "No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find. To those who knock it is opened."⁵⁹ This is the sacred paradox in Lewis' own journey and foundational to his fiction project.

This Joy that MacDonald mentions, so essential to Lewis' theology that he used it as the guiding image of his spiritual autobiography, could be a focal point for further spiritual theological work initiated by my discovery of Lewis' cruciformity. Likewise, in conversation with the treatments of Lewis' theology of love by Meilaender and Lepojärvi, what has not been recognised is the cruciform centre of Lewis' teachings. Co-crucifixion with Christ reorders a person's sense of self in relation to God and other. The divine love that takes all natural loves into itself for perfection is cruciform, and Lewis uses death and resurrection images to describe the process.⁶⁰ Love and joy meet in Lewis' images of heaven, which are bound up with beauty and numinous joy, as well as mutuality and relational unity.

It is not that Lewis was ignorant of the difficulty of the mortification of the flesh, though he almost always uses "mortify" and "mortification" in semi-humorous moments of

⁵⁴ Lewis, "Agape" lecture in "The Four Loves."

⁵⁵ Lewis, *Reflections*, 107.

⁵⁶ Lewis, "Weight of Glory," 45.

⁵⁷ Lewis, *Screwtape*, 44.

⁵⁸ CLII 617.

⁵⁹ Lewis, GD, 66-67.

⁶⁰ E.g., Lewis, *Four Loves*, 186.

self-deprecation. The role of duty was important to Lewis; the chastening of life and the mortification of the flesh had their role in spiritual development, Lewis argues: It is “much better to begin (at least) learning humility on this side of the grave than to have it all as a fresh problem on the other.”⁶¹ But the focal point for Lewis was not the dutiful self-flagellation of spiritual discipline; instead, forgiveness and grace are central. Lewis’ colleague, John Lawlor, concludes his consideration of Lewis’ literary legacy by asking of Lewis what is “four-square and irrefutably ... absolutely distinctive—perhaps unique—in his make-up.”⁶² Intriguingly, Lawlor’s observation was that what is distinctive of Lewis is “his being able to accept, with unusual simplicity and absolute constancy, the concept of Divine forgiveness of sin.”⁶³ Lewis was able to “unforcedly” receive it in his life, and thus there is no “dwelling on failure” in a spirituality focussed on the newness of life.⁶⁴ It is a remarkable statement of the integrative nature of Lewis’ life and thought.

Even if Lewis faltered in conscience, the statement is consistent with his concept of self-knowledge at the centre of humility. Lewis thought self-knowledge important, and yet Barfield is correct that Lewis rejected disciplines designed to inculcate self-knowledge as potential symptoms of “spiritual megalomania.”⁶⁵ Somehow, a certain kind of self-forgetfulness sits together with humility’s self-knowledge. Absurdly, Lewis writes in his memoir that his conversion “cured me of the time-wasting and foolish practice of keeping a diary.”⁶⁶ Rigney’s chapter on “Healthy Introspection” goes some distance in walking “the precarious path to self-knowledge”⁶⁷ in “imaginative honesty” as it explores this quirky rejection of contemplation in Lewis.⁶⁸ But this rejection of self-analysis combined with the necessity of self-knowledge remains one of the “sacred paradoxes” that must inform any understanding of Lewis’ spiritual theology. After all, when it was suggested that Lewis’ spiritual theology in *Screwtape* came from “the ripe fruit of many years’ study in moral and ascetic theology,” he countered that “an equally reliable, though less creditable, way of

⁶¹ CLIII 150.

⁶² Lawlor, *C.S. Lewis*, 122.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 122.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 122.

⁶⁵ Qtd in Lawlor, *C.S. Lewis*, 97.

⁶⁶ Lewis, SBJ, 233.

⁶⁷ Rigney, *Christian Life*, 187.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 198.

learning how temptation works. ‘My heart’—I need no other’s—‘showeth me the wickedness of the ungodly.’”⁶⁹

Arising from the same instinct, contrary to Humphrey,⁷⁰ Lewis resisted “asceticism” as a primary spiritual discipline even as he found value in *askesis* as an intellectual discipline. In her treatment of Lewis’ ideas of conversion in everyday life, Sr Galligan observes that for Lewis, “the nucleus of spiritual vitality, the very pith of the call to conversion, is proclaimed in Jesus’ paradoxical statement” in Matt 16:24-25.⁷¹ Galligan notes that believers “live in tension, in an uneasy alliance with the natural self and the authentic self in Christ.” And yet, Lewis was cautious about ascetic practices of self-denial, writing to Dom Bede Griffiths that “self-denial can become a kind of hobby,”⁷² and in *The Screwtape Letters* he aligns self-denial with Shakespeare’s villain, Shylock over against religious freedom.⁷³ Moore-Jumonville summarises Lewis’ view: “Self-denial, self-discipline, *askesis*, asceticism, the spiritual disciplines—these are not somehow ends in themselves, somehow intended to save us from having too much fun or pleasure.”⁷⁴ Lewis does not negate self-denial altogether, recognising that it is essential to our relationships,⁷⁵ but he seldom mentions it except to put “self-denial in its proper subordinate place.”⁷⁶ While many would be concerned that self-denial could become a kind of self-abuse, Lewis was concerned about the degree to which it was a kind of self-love, an autoeroticism that is the antithesis to a healthy cross-shaped spirituality.⁷⁷

⁶⁹ Lewis, *Screwtape, with Toast*, xiii. Lewis quotes Psa 36:1 from the BCP.

⁷⁰ Humphrey, *Further Up and Further In*, 1650, speaking of “the arduous ascetical way laid down for the Christian who must follow the paths of the One crucified.”

⁷¹ Galligan, “Slow-Paced,” 169.

⁷² CLII 188.

⁷³ Lewis, *Screwtape*, 146. Self-denial is also pictured in a very negative light in the poem, “Ichabod,” King, CP, 385-386, or in the character of Dr Filostrato in THS. In “Screwtape Proposes a Toast,” asceticism and self-denial are part of the blend that makes up the finest wine of human anguish upon which they sup in hell’s banquets, Lewis, *Screwtape, with Toast*, 172.

⁷⁴ Moore-Jumonville, “The End,” 10.

⁷⁵ See Lewis, *Four Loves*, 81; *Reflections*, 15.

⁷⁶ Greg M. Anderson, “The Sermons of C.S. Lewis: The Oxford Don as Preacher,” in *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy: Volume 3: Apologist, Philosopher, and Theologian*, ed. Bruce L. Edwards (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 85.

⁷⁷ On Lewis resisting asceticism, see Green and Hooper, *C.S. Lewis*, 229; Lewis, CLIII 580; CLII 282; CLIII 1150; Lewis, *Regress*, 159-160; Lewis, THS, 299; C.S. Lewis, “Hero and Leander,” in *Selected Literary Essays*, ed. Walter Hooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 64; C.S. Lewis, “Some Thoughts,” in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 147; Lewis, “Christian Apologetics,” 102-103; Jensen, “Thick Christianity,” 20.

Ultimately, self-denial is simply a tool for spiritual development. “The New Testament has lots to say about self-denial,” Lewis argues, “but not about self-denial as an end in itself.”⁷⁸ Brown summarises Lewis’ approach:

Knowing that Christians, and humans in general, have a tendency to gravitate toward one extreme or the other, Lewis ... charts a course away from both an ascetic renunciation of all pleasures, the view that enjoying the pleasures of life is somehow sinful in and of itself, and a gluttonous insistence that one’s sensual desires always be satisfied.⁷⁹

The value of self-denial and asceticism is, then, largely of a corrective, prophetic self-critique. This is what Sr Galligan calls “an uneasy alliance” between enjoyment and renunciation,⁸⁰ or Meilaender a “dialectic of enjoyment and renunciation.”⁸¹ In his essay, “Two Ways with the Self,” Lewis rejects self-hatred of one kind because it ignores the Lord’s commandment to love neighbour as one loves the self, and yet he encourages the Christian to “wage endless war against the clamour of the ego as ego.”⁸² We must hold the two together. “The wrong asceticism torments the self,” Lewis argues, while “the right kind kills the selfness” that leads to healthy spiritual death.⁸³

In recognising that Lewis is so invested in these sacred paradoxes at the centre of cruciform spirituality, there is revealed a slight imbalance in this thesis since it treats images of death more extensively than images of new life. After all, the entire endless estate of hell in *The Great Divorce* can fit in a poppyseed’s-width crack in heaven’s soil, so any move away from “new life” in Lewis will be an imbalance. Lewis’ fiction is soaked through with images of new life, resurrection, deification, self-discovery, heroism, apotheosis, and hope. In focussing on Lewis’ “doctrine of death,” I have endeavoured to mitigate against the imbalance by approaching a definition of spirituality that takes into account not merely lived experience but also a certain *quality* of life. The exploration of spiritual life in chapters one and two, then, is meant to prepare the reader for the theosis that follows the kenotic echo of Christ’s self-emptying in our own self-deaths. The two are essentially linked, as Jensen

⁷⁸ Lewis, “Weight of Glory,” 25.

⁷⁹ Brown, “Upside Down,” 192.

⁸⁰ Galligan, “Slow-Paced,” 224.

⁸¹ Meilaender, *Taste for the Other*, 20-44.

⁸² Lewis, “Two Ways with the Self,” in *The Weight of Glory, and Other Addresses* (New York: HarperOne, 2000), 194.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 195.

argues: “Salvation as theosis ... accents human healing and transformation, looking to the Cross, certainly, but also to the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the sending of the Holy Spirit.”⁸⁴ “All conversion involves death and re-birth,” Lewis explains of Charles Williams’ theological poetry, “but sometimes the one, sometimes the other, of these elements is more noticeably present....”⁸⁵ As I have focussed on one or the other of the elements, Lewis’ *Logic of Cruciformity* in chapter three and the narrative patterning of chapter four show they are ultimately linked.

A final invitation for further work moves beyond spiritual theology in its focus on the believer to questions about the believer in community, as Gorman has done in his later works.⁸⁶ A movement of theological deepening by looking outward to the community invites questions of Lewis’ cruciform narrative spiritual theology. Considering Lewis’ cross-shaped theology of love, particularly in his understanding of friendship and the ways that relationships transform because of divine love, in what ways can Lewis’ fiction and apologetics inform Christian community and church life? As Lewis’ narrative spirituality intensifies the cross-shaped form of Christian life, how does that spiritual theology inform our understanding of sacramentality or patterns of spiritual direction? In what ways does participation in Lewisian cruciformity—in living out Lewis’ call to a U-shaped, eucatastrophic imitation of Christ in daily life—bring light to God’s work in our world? How can Lewis’ fiction be read missionally and prophetically? In particular, on a question that has haunted me throughout the entire writing of this thesis, what does cruciformity look like as a lived social ethic? All through the ages, the often-unasked question of Christ-followers is this: Do we in the Christian community look like Christ on the cross, denying power and ambition and control as we lay down our lives for the world? Or do we look like the Romans who put Christ on the cross? It is a chilling question, and one that is prescient for readers of Lewis in today’s Anglo-American sociopolitical climate.

Gorman concludes *Cruciformity* by arguing that a Pauline narrative spiritual theology of the cross is a comprehensive and imaginative spirituality that is charismatic, communal,

⁸⁴ Jensen, “Thick Christianity,” 23.

⁸⁵ Lewis, *Arthurian Torso*, 347.

⁸⁶ E.g., his discussion of a New Covenant model of the atonement, *Death of the Messiah* (2014), and his turn to missional spiritual theology in *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015) and *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018).

told in story form, costly, and prophetic.⁸⁷ The most open-ended and yet deeply inviting implication of this project of Lewisian narrative spiritual theology is whether those who look to Lewis as a teacher, mentor, and guide will pay the cost of having Lewis' prophetic vision of self-death work into their lives. Lewisian cruciformity is a thoroughgoing, dynamic, holistic project of inversion, where Lewis' upside-downness challenges the degree to which our heart-alliances are defined by the N.I.C.E. or the Manor at St Anne's, by Jadis' or Lucy's approach to power. But it is not simply about choosing the right path. "You cannot take all luggage with you on all journeys," Lewis describes in the preface to *The Great Divorce*; "on one journey even your right hand and your right eye might be among the things you have to leave behind."⁸⁸ Indeed, Lewis will go on in the dream-vision to say that it is our entire life that must be given. A death to self, to good things and bad, to sins and insecurities as much as ambitions and hopes, an ultimate surrender of the will: everything—even our most sincere love and spiritual practice—must "be crucified before it can rise again."⁸⁹ The "further work" of this thesis is really how much we as readers of Lewis are willing to say "Thy will be done" in this and every matter. Lewis readers are often caught by the vision of resurrected heavenly life in *The Last Battle*, as friends of Narnia race "further up and further in" to beauty, joy, and goodness. But first, there is a death. It is not just our mortality, but the "very formula of reality"⁹⁰ includes this essential principle—a lesson learned with great difficulty in Orual's journey: "Die before you die. There is no chance after."⁹¹

This death-to-self that leads to new life is the principle that "runs through all life from top to bottom," as Lewis says in the words that close his classic text on the spiritual life, *Mere Christianity*.⁹² When we move beyond reductive readings of Lewis as merely an apologist, Lewis emerges as a critical, productive, and life-giving spiritual theologian whose emergent, integrative spirituality of the cross contains a Logic of Cruciformity wherein the lives of believers echo the self-sacrificial death and cosmos-transforming resurrection of Christ. This U-shaped, eucatastrophic pattern of cruciformity pierces Lewis' poetry and prose and infuses his Christian thought with an inversive, comedic form. What is the central

⁸⁷ Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 382-386.

⁸⁸ Lewis, GD, 7.

⁸⁹ CLII 608.

⁹⁰ CLII 185-186.

⁹¹ Lewis, TWHF, 279.

⁹² Lewis, MC, 226.

organising feature that has led Lewis scholarship to agree with Owen Barfield's statement that "what Lewis thought about everything was secretly present in what he said about anything?"⁹³ The heart of Lewis' Christian thought, "the all-encompassing, integrating narrative reality" that patterns Lewis' life and writing is what Lewis calls "the great story on which the plot turns,"⁹⁴ the "Grand Miracle" that shapes Christian thought, namely a MacDonaldite-Pauline cruciformity that defines Lewis' narrative spiritual theology. This is Lewis' "doctrine of death"⁹⁵ that is at the "root"⁹⁶ of his understanding of spiritual life, a legacy of Lewisian spirituality formed by the mytho-historic sacrifice of Christ. Christian life, in Lewis' theology as it is embedded in story form within in his diverse *œuvre*, is cross-shaped, so that the normative Christian posture is that of self-surrender, and the universal Christian hope is for new life.

⁹³ Barfield, "Preface," 1.

⁹⁴ Lewis, *Miracles*, 119.

⁹⁵ Lewis, PoP, 91.

⁹⁶ CLI 971.

Bibliography

C.S. Lewis Bibliography

- Lewis, C.S. *The Abolition of Man*. Glasgow: Fount Paperback, 1978.
- . *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*. London: Oxford University Press, 1936.
- . "Answers to Questions on Christianity." In *God in the Dark: Essays on Theology and Ethics*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 48-62. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970.
- . "The Anthropological Approach." In *Selected Literary Essays*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 301-311. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.
- . "Before We Can Communicate." In *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 254-257. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970.
- . "Bluspels and Flansferes." In *Selected Literary Essays*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 251-265. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.
- . *Broadcast Talks*. London: Geoffrey Bless, 1942.
- . "Christian Apologetics." In *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 89-103. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970.
- . "Christian Reunion." In *Christian Reunion, and Other Essays*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 17-21. London: Fount, 1990.
- . "Christianity and Literature." In *Christian Reflections*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 1-11. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967.
- . "Cross-Examination." In *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 258-267. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970.
- . "Dante's Statius." In *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 94-102. London: Harvest, 1991.
- . *The Dark Tower and Other Stories*. Edited by Walter Hooper. London: Fount, 1977.
- . *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964.
- . "'Early Prose Joy': C.S. Lewis's Early Draft of an Autobiographical Manuscript." *SEVEN* 30 (2013): 13-49.

- . "Edmund Spenser, 1552-99." In *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 121-145. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- . *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1954.
- . *An Experiment in Criticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965.
- . *Fern-seed and Elephants: And Other Essays on Christianity*. Edited by Walter Hooper. Glasgow: Fontana, 1975.
- . "The Four Loves." Lecture Series. The Episcopal Media Center, 1958.
- . *The Four Loves*. New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1960.
- . *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*. Edited by Walter Hooper. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970.
- . "God in the Dock." In *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 240-244. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970.
- . "The Grand Divorce." *The Guardian*, Nov 10, 1944, 399.
- . "The Grand Miracle." In *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 80-88. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970.
- . *The Great Divorce: A Dream*. London: Geoffrey Bles, 1945.
- . *A Grief Observed*. New York: HarperCollins, 1996.
- . "Hero and Leander." In *Selected Literary Essays*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 58-73. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.
- . *The Horse and His Boy*. London: Fontana Lions, 1980.
- . *Image and Imagination: Essays and Reviews*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- . "Imagery in the Last Eleven Cantos of Dante's 'Comedy.'" In *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 78-93. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- . "The Inner Ring." In *The Weight of Glory, and Other Addresses*, 141-157. New York: HarperOne, 2000.
- . "Interim Report." In *Present Concerns*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 92-99. New York: Harcourt, 1986.
- . "Introduction" of *St. Athanasius On the Incarnation*, 3-10. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, 1953.

- . *The Last Battle*. London: Fontana Lions, 1980.
- . "Learning in War-Time." In *Fern-seed and Elephants*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 26-38. Glasgow: Fontana Books, 1975.
- . *Letters to Children*. Edited by Lyle W. Dorsett and Marjorie E. Mead. New York: Macmillan, 1985.
- . *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*. London: Geoffrey Bles, 1964.
- . *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. London: Fontana Lions, 1980.
- . "The Literary Impact of the Authorized Version." In *Selected Literary Essays*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 126-145. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.
- . *The Magician's Nephew*. London: Fontana Lions, 1980.
- . "Man or Rabbit?" In *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 108-113. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970.
- . *Mere Christianity*. San Francisco: Harper, 2001.
- . *Miracles: A Preliminary Study*. London: Geoffrey Bles, 1947.
- . "Myth Became Fact." In *God in the Dark: Essays on Theology and Ethics*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 63-67. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970.
- . "The Mythopoeic Gift of Rider Haggard." In *Of This and Other Worlds*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 128-132. New York: Harvest, 1994.
- . "Neoplatonism in the Poetry of Spenser." In *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 149-163. London: Harvest, 1991.
- . "A Note on Jane Austen." In *Selected Literary Essays*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 175-186. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.
- . *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*. Edited by Walter Hooper. New York: Harcourt, 1994.
- . *Of This and Other Worlds*. Edited by Walter Hooper. New York: Fount, 1982.
- . "On Juvenile Tastes." In *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 39-41. New York: Harvest, 1994.
- . "On Stories." In *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 3-21. New York: Harvest, 1994.
- . "On the Transmission of Christianity." In *God in the Dark: Essays on Theology and Ethics*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 114-119. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970.

- . "On Three Ways of Writing for Children." In *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 22-34. New York: Harvest, 1994.
- . *Out of the Silent Planet*. New York: Macmillan, 1964.
- . *Perelandra*. New York: Macmillan, 1965.
- . *The Pilgrim's Regress: Wade Annotated Edition*. Edited by David C. Downing. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014.
- . *A Preface to Paradise Lost*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1942.
- . *Prince Caspian*. London: Fontana Lions, 1980.
- . *The Problem of Pain*. London: Geoffrey Bles, 1940.
- . *Reflections on the Psalms*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1958.
- . "Rejoinder to Dr Pittenger." In *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*. Edited by Walter Hooper. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970.
- . "Religion Without Dogma?" In *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 129-146. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970.
- . *The Screwtape Letters*. London: Geoffrey Bles, 1942.
- . *The Screwtape Letters, with Screwtape Proposes a Toast*. Rev. ed. New York: Collier Books, 1982.
- . *The Silver Chair*. London: Fontana Lions, 1980.
- . "Some Thoughts." In *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 147-150. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970.
- . "Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's to be Said." In *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 35-38. New York: Harvest, 1994.
- . *Spirits in Bondage: A Cycle of Lyrics*. Edited by Walter Hooper. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984.
- . *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1955.
- . *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*. Edited by Walter Hooper. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- . *Studies in Words*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967.
- . *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1955.
- . *That Hideous Strength*. New York: Collier Books, 1965.
- . *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold*. Harcourt, 1984.

- . "Unreal Estates." In *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 86-96. New York: Harvest, 1994.
- . "Version Vernacular." *The Christian Century* 75 (Dec 31, 1958): 1515.
- . "The Vision of John Bunyan." In *Selected Literary Essays*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 146-153. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.
- . *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. London: Fontana Lions, 1980.
- . *The Weight of Glory, and Other Addresses*. New York: HarperOne, 2000.
- . "William Morris." In *Selected Literary Essays*. Edited by Walter Hooper, 301-311. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.
- Lewis, C.S., ed. *George MacDonald: An Anthology*. London: Fount, 1990.
- Lewis, C.S., and Charles Williams. *Taliessin Through Logres, The Region of the Summer Stars, Arthurian Torso*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974.
- Lewis, C.S., with Alastair Fowler. *Spenser's Images of Life*. Cambridge: Canto Classics, 2013.

Secondary Source Bibliography

- Althaus-Reid, Marcella Maria, and Lisa Isherwood. *Controversies in Feminist Theology*. London: SCM Press, 2007.
- Anderson, Greg M. "The Sermons of C.S. Lewis: The Oxford Don as Preacher." In *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy: Volume 3: Apologist, Philosopher, and Theologian*, edited by Bruce L. Edwards, 75-105. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007.
- Andolsen, Barbara Hilkert. "Agape in Feminist Ethics." *Journal of Religious Ethics* 9, no. 1 (1981): 69-83.
- Armstrong, Chris R. "Ticket to heaven': Lewis's Debt to the *Theologia Germanica* on Self-will, Death, and Heaven." In *Both Sides of the Wardrobe: C.S. Lewis, Theological Imagination, and Everyday Discipleship*, edited by Rob Fennell, 46-59. Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2015.
- . *Medieval Wisdom for Modern Christians: Finding Authentic Faith in a Forgotten Age, with C.S. Lewis*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016.
- Auden, W.H. "Red Lizards and White Stallions." *The Saturday Review*, Apr 13, 1946.
- Aumann, Jordan. "Spiritual Theology in the Thomistic Tradition." Dominican Central Province. Accessed Apr 29, 2019.

<http://opcentral.org/resources/2013/04/08/jordan-aumann-o-p-spiritual-theology-in-the-thomistic-tradition/>.

- Barfield, Owen. *Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1973.
- . "Preface." In *The Taste of the Pineapple: Essays on C.S. Lewis as Reader, Critic, and Imaginative Writer*, edited by Bruce L. Edwards, 1-2. Bowling Green, KY: Popular Press, 1988.
- Barkman, Adam James. "'All is Righteousness and there is no Equality': C.S. Lewis on Gender and Justice." *Christian Scholar's Review* (2007): 415-436.
- . "'We Must Go Back to Our Bibles': A Reply to Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen." *Christian Scholar's Review* (2007): 445-453.
- . "The Philosophical Christianity of C.S. Lewis: Its Sources, Content and Formation." PhD dissertation, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2009.
- Bartels, Gretchen. "Of Men and Mice: C.S. Lewis on Male-Female Interactions." *Literature & Theology* 22, no. 3 (2008): 324-338.
- Bartlett, Sally A. "Humanistic Psychology in C.S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*: A Feminist Critique." *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 22, no. 2 (1989): 185-198.
- Bassham, Gregory, ed. *C.S. Lewis's Christian Apologetics: Pro and Con*. Boston: Brill, 2015.
- Baukham, Richard. *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- Bebbington, David W. *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Belmonte, Kelly. "Bridging the Chasm Between Us." In *Women and C.S. Lewis*, edited by Carolyn Curtis and Mary Pomroy Key, 155-159. Oxford: Lion Books, 2015.
- Bessey, Sarah. *Jesus Feminist: An Invitation to Revisit the Bible's View of Women*. New York: Howard Books, 2013.
- Beverluis, John. *C.S. Lewis and the Search for Rational Religion*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2007.
- Boenig, Robert. *Lewis and the Middle Ages*. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2012.
- Bouyer, Louis. *The Spirituality of the New Testament and the Fathers*. London: Burns & Oates, 1968.

- Bowen, John P. *The Spirituality of Narnia: The Deeper Magic of C.S. Lewis*. Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2007.
- Brock, Rita Nakashima and Rebecca Ann Parker. *Proverbs of Ashes: Violence, Redemptive Suffering, and the Search for What Saves Us*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2001.
- Brown, Devin. *Inside Narnia: A Guide to Exploring The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Grand Rapids: BakerBooks, 2005.
- . "The Screwtape Letters: Telling the Truth Upside Down." In *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy: Volume 2: Fantasist, Mythmaker, and Poet*, edited by Bruce L. Edwards, 175-208. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007.
- . *Inside Prince Caspian: A Guide to Exploring the Return to Narnia*. Grand Rapids: BakerBooks, 2008.
- . *Inside The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. Grand Rapids: BakerBooks, 2010.
- . *A Life Observed: A Spirituality Biography of C.S. Lewis*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2013.
- Brown, Joanne Carlson, and Rebecca Parker. "For God So Loved the World?" In *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, edited by Joanne Carlson Brown, Haskell M. Miller, and Carole R. Bohn, 1–30. New York: Pilgrim, 1989.
- Buchanan, Travis. "An Unwelcome Transposition: Review Essay of Paul H. Brazier's *C.S. Lewis: Revelation and the Christ*." *SEVEN* 33 (2016): 101-120.
- Burris, Alicia D. "Gender Differentiation and Gender Hierarchy in C.S. Lewis." BA honours thesis, Georgia Southern University, 2014.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Calin, William. *The Twentieth-Century Humanist Critics: From Spitzer to Frye*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007.
- Campbell, Ethan, and Robert Jackson, "'Good, Not Safe': Structure vs. Chaos in Narnia and the Writing Workshop." *Mythlore* 26, nos. 1-2 (2007): 41-59.
- Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968.
- Campbell, Richard Brett. "Assisting the Effoliation of Creation: J.R.R. Tolkien's Sub-Creation Theory and C.S. Lewis's Imagination." PhD thesis, Union Institute & University, 2010.
- Carnell, Corbin Scott. *Bright Shadow: C.S. Lewis and the Feeling Intellect*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974.

- . "The Meaning of Masculine and Feminine in the Work of C.S. Lewis." *Modern British Literature* 2 (1977): 153–159.
- . "Ransom in Perelandra: Jungian Hero?" *Mythlore* 8, no. 2 (1981): 9–10.
- Carnes, Natalie. *Image and Presence: A Christological Reflection on Iconoclasm and Iconophilia*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017.
- Cassidy, Aaron. "To Risk Being Taken In: C.S. Lewis on Self-Transcendence Through Surrender." In *C.S. Lewis and the Inklings: Discovering Hidden Truth*, edited by Salwa Khoddam and Mark R. Hall, 94-120. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012.
- Chalke, Steve, and Alan Mann. *The Lost Message of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004.
- Chan, Simon. *Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998.
- Chesterton, G.K. *The Everlasting Man*. New York: Image Books, 1955.
- Chou, Hsiu-Chin. "The Problem of Faith and the Self: The Interplay between Literary Art, Apologetics and Hermeneutics in C.S. Lewis's Religious Narratives." PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2008.
- Christensen, Michael J. *C.S. Lewis on Scripture: His Thoughts on the Nature of Biblical Inspiration, the Role of Revelation and the Question of Inerrancy*. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1979.
- Christopher, Joe. R. "Considering *The Great Divorce* [Parts III, IV, and V]." *Mythcon* II (1971): 12–21.
- . "An Introduction to Narnia: Part II: The Geography of the Chronicles." *Mythlore* 2 no. 3 (1971): 12-16, 27.
- . "An Introduction to Narnia Part IV: The Literary Classification of The Chronicles." *Mythlore* 3, no. 1 (1973): 12-15, 27.
- . "Gender Hierarchies and Lowerarchies: A Response to Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen and Adam Barkman." *Christian Scholar's Review* 36, no. 4 (Summer 2007): 461-468.
- . "The Dantean Structure of *The Great Divorce*." *Mythlore* 29, no. 3/4 (2011): 77-99.
- Clark, David G. *C.S. Lewis: A Guide to His Theology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.
- . *C.S. Lewis Goes to Heaven: A Reader's Guide to The Great Divorce*. Hamden, CT: Winged Lion Press, 2012.

- Cohen, Norman J. *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon: A View from Within, A Response from Without*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.
- Como, James T., ed. *Remembering C.S. Lewis: Recollections of Those Who Knew Him*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992.
- . *C.S. Lewis: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. Kindle Edition.
- Curtis, Carolyn, and Mary Pomroy Key. *Women and C.S. Lewis*. Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2015.
- Daigle-Williamson, Marsha. *Reflecting the Eternal: Dante's Divine Comedy in the Novels of C.S. Lewis*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2015.
- Daly, Mary. *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1978.
- Davidman, Joy. *Smoke on the Mountain: An Interpretation of the Ten Commandments*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954.
- . *A Naked Tree: Love Sonnets to C.S. Lewis and Other Poems*. Edited by Don W. King. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015.
- Dearborn, Kerry. *Baptized Imagination: The Theology of George MacDonald*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2006.
- Demarest, Bruce, ed. *Four Views on Christian Spirituality*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.
- Derrick, Stephanie. *The Fame of C.S. Lewis: A Controversialist's Reception in Britain and America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Dickerson, Matthew T., and David O'Hara. *Narnia and the Fields of Arbol: The Environmental Vision of C.S. Lewis*. Lexington, KY: University Press Kentucky, 2009.
- Dickieson, Brenton D.G. "Antisemitism and the Judaistic Paul: A Study of I Thessalonians 2:14-16 in Light of Paul's Social and Rhetorical Contexts and the Contemporary Question of Antisemitism." MCS thesis, Regent College, 2005.
- . "'Die Before You Die': St. Paul's Cruciformity in C.S. Lewis's Narrative Spirituality." In *Both Sides of the Wardrobe: C.S. Lewis, Theological Imagination, and Everyday Discipleship*, edited by Rob Fennell, 32-45. Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2015.
- Donaldson, Mara E. "Orual's Story and the Art of Retelling: A Study of *Till We Have Faces*." In *Word and Story in C.S. Lewis*, edited by P.J. Schakel and C.A. Huttar, 157-170. Columbia MO: University of Missouri Press, 1991.
- Dorsett, Lyle W. *And God Came In: The Extraordinary Story of Joy Davidman: Her Life and Marriage to C.S. Lewis*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1983.

- . *Seeking the Secret Place: The Spiritual Formation of C.S. Lewis*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2004.
- Downey, Michael. *Understanding Christian Spirituality*. New York: Paulist Press, 1997.
- Downing, David C. *Planets in Peril: A Critical Study of C.S. Lewis's Ransom Trilogy*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992.
- . "C.S. Lewis Among the Postmodernists." *Books and Culture* (November-December 1998).
- . *The Most Reluctant Convert: C.S. Lewis's Journey to Faith*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002.
- . *Into the Wardrobe: C.S. Lewis and the Narnia Chronicles*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005.
- . *Into the Region of Awe: Mysticism in C.S. Lewis*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006.
- . "The Pilgrim's Paradox: Female Characters in *The Pilgrim's Regress*." In *Women and C.S. Lewis*, edited by Carolyn Curtis and Mary Pomroy Key, 127-133. Oxford: Lion Books, 2015.
- Dunai, Amber. "The Process of Salvation in *Pearl* and *The Great Divorce*." *Mythlore* 37, no. 1 (2018): 5-22.
- Dunckel, Mona. "C.S. Lewis as Allegorist: *The Pilgrim's Regress*." In *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy: Volume 3: Apologist, Philosopher, and Theologian*, edited by Bruce L. Edwards, 29-49. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007.
- Duquoc, Christian, ed. *Spirituality in Church and World*. New York: Paulist, 1965.
- Duriez, Colin. *Bedeveled: Lewis, Tolkien and the Shadow of Evil*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015.
- Edwards, Bruce L. *C.S. Lewis: An Examined Life*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007.
- . "An Examined Life: Introducing C.S. Lewis." In *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy: Volume 1: An Examined Life*, edited by Bruce L. Edwards, 1-15. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007.
- . "The Christian Intellectual in the Public Square: C.S. Lewis's Enduring American Reception." In *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy: Volume 4: Scholar, Teacher, and Public Intellectual*, edited by Bruce L. Edwards, 1-18. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007.

- . "Patches of Godlight': C.S. Lewis as Imaginative Writer." In *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy: Volume 2: Fantasist, Mythmaker, and Poet*, edited by Bruce L. Edwards, 1-11. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007.
- Elmore, Steven. "'The Abolition of Woman': Gender and Hierarchy in Lewis' Space Trilogy." In *Women and C.S. Lewis: What His Life and Literature Reveal for Today's Culture*, edited by Carolyn Curtis and Mary Pomroy Key, 109-120. Oxford: Lion Books, 2015.
- Emerson, David. "Innocence as a Super-power: Little Girls on the Hero's Journey." *Mythlore* 28, nos. 1-2 (2009): 131-147.
- Feinendegen, Norbert. "The Philosopher's Progress: C.S. Lewis' Intellectual Journey from Atheism to Theism." *Journal of Inklings Studies* 8, no. 2 (2018): 103-143.
- Feinendegen, Norbert, and Arend Smilde. "The 'Great War' of Owen Barfield and C.S. Lewis: Philosophical Writings 1927-1930." *Inklings Studies Supplement* 1 (2015).
- Fiddes, Paul. "C.S. Lewis the Myth-Maker." In *A Christian for All Christians: Essays in Honour of C.S. Lewis*, edited by Andrew Walker and James Patrick, 132-155. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990.
- . "On Theology." In *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, edited by Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward, 89-104. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Filmer, Kath. *The Fiction of C.S. Lewis: Mask and Mirror*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.
- Filmer-Davies, Cath. "C.S. Lewis." In *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology*, edited by Andrew Hass, David Jasper, and Elizabeth Jay, 655-668. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Fisk, Anna. *Sex, Sin, and Our Selves: Encounters in Feminist Theology and Contemporary Women's Literature*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014.
- Fleming, John V. "Literary Critic." In *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, edited by Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward, 15-28. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Foster, Richard J., and Kathryn A. Helmers. *Life with God: Reading the Bible for Spiritual Transformation*. New York: HarperOne, 2008.
- Fowler, Alastair. "C.S. Lewis: Supervisor." *The Yale Review* 91, no. 4 (2003): 64-80.
- Frankel, Valerie Estelle. "The Double-Sided Wardrobe: The Hero's and Heroine's Journey through Narnia." In *Doors in the Air: C.S. Lewis and the Imaginative World*, edited by Anna Slack, 81-106. Vitoria, Spain: Portal Editions, 2010.

- Fredrick, Candice, and Sam McBride. *Women Among the Inklings: Gender, C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Charles Williams*. London: Greenwood Press, 2001.
- . "Battling the Woman Warrior: Females and Combat in Tolkien and Lewis." *Mythlore* 35, No. 3/4 (2007): 29-42.
- Froula, John. "Joy as Spiritual Perception in C.S. Lewis." *Heythrop Journal* 59, no. 1 (Jan 2018): 56-65.
- Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971.
- . *The Great Code: The Bible as Literature*. Toronto: Penguin, 1990.
- Galligan, John Sheila. "'Slow-Paced We Come': Conversion in the Writings of C.S. Lewis." PhD dissertation, Pontificiam Universitatem S. Thomae de Urbe, 1985.
- Gerhardt, Elizabeth. "Theological Perspectives on the Prophetic Call." In *Beyond Abuse in the Christian Home: Raising Voices for Change*, edited by Catherine Clark Kroeger et al., 184-197. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008.
- Gibb, Jocelyn, ed. *Light on C.S. Lewis*. New York: Harcourt, 1966.
- Gibbons, Stella. "Imaginative Writing." In *Light on C.S. Lewis*, edited by Jocelyn Gibb, 86-100. New York: HarperCollins, 1965.
- Glaspey, Terry. *Not a Tame Lion: The Spiritual Legacy of C.S. Lewis and the Chronicles of Narnia*. 2nd ed. Nashville: Cumberland House, 2005.
- Glyer, Diana Pavlac. "'We are All Fallen Creatures and All Very Hard to Live With': Some Thoughts on Lewis and Gender." *Christian Scholar's Review* 36, no. 4 (Summer 2007): 477-483.
- Goldstein, Valerie Saiving. "The Human Situation: A Feminine View." *The Journal of Religion* 40, no. 2 (1960): 100-112.
- Gonzalez, Darlene. "A Comparison of *The Divine Comedy* and *The Great Divorce*." *The Lamp-post of the Southern California C.S. Lewis Society* 16, no. 1 (1992): 8-11.
- Gorman, Michael J. *Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018.
- . *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015.
- . *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.
- . *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009.

- . *The Death of the Messiah and the Birth of the New Covenant: A (Not So) New Model of the Atonement*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014.
- Graham, Jean E. "Women, Sex, and Power: Circe and Lilith in Narnia." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 29, nos. 1-2 (2004): 32-44.
- Gray, William. *C.S. Lewis*. Plymouth: Northcote House, 1998.
- . *Death and Fantasy: Essays on Philip Pullman, C.S. Lewis, George MacDonald and R.L. Stevenson*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008.
- Green, Roger Lancelyn, and Walter Hooper. *C.S. Lewis: A Biography*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974.
- Greenman, Jeffrey P. "Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective." In *Life in the Spirit*, edited by Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis, 23-35. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010.
- Gresham, Douglas H. *Lenten Lands: My Childhood with Joy Davidman and C.S. Lewis*. New York: Macmillan, 1988.
- Grey, Mary. *Redeeming the Dream: Feminism, Redemption and Christian Tradition*. London: SPCK, 1989.
- Griffin, William. *C.S. Lewis: Spirituality for Mere Christians*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007.
- Groothuis, Rebecca Merrill. *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997.
- Habermas, Gary R., and Antony G.N. Flew, "From Atheism to Deism: A Conversation Between Antony Flew and Gary R. Habermas." In *C.S. Lewis as Philosopher Truth, Goodness and Beauty*, edited by David Baggett, Gary R. Habermas, and Jerry L. Walls. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006.
- Haigh, John D. "C.S. Lewis and the Tradition of Visionary Romance." In *Word and Story in C.S. Lewis*, edited by Peter J. Schakel and Charles A. Huttar, 182-198. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1991.
- Hannay, Margaret Patterson. "C.S. Lewis: Mere Misogyny?" *Daughters of Sarah* 1, no. 6 (1975): 1-4.
- . "'Surprised by Joy': C.S. Lewis' Changing Attitudes Toward Women." *Mythlore* 4, no. 1 (1976): 15-20.
- Harrison, Beverly Wildung. *Making the Connections: Essays in Feminist Social Ethics*. Boston: Beacon, 1985.

- Hauerwas, Stanley. "On Violence." In *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, edited by Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward, 189-202. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Head, Hayden. "'Triad Within Triad': The Tripartite Soul as a Structural Design in C.S. Lewis's Space Trilogy." In *C.S. Lewis and the Inklings: Reflections on Faith, Imagination, and Modern Technology*, edited by Salwa Khoddam and Mark R. Hall, 61-77. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015.
- Heck, Joel. D. *From Atheism to Christianity: The Story of C.S. Lewis*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017.
- Hein, Rolland. *The Harmony Within: The Spiritual Vision of George MacDonald*. Eureka, CA: Sunrise Books, 1982.
- Heine, Susanne. *Matriarchs, Goddesses, and Images of God: A Critique of Feminist Theology*, translated by John Bowden. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1989.
- Heyward, Carter. *Touching Our Strength: The Erotic as Power and the Love of God*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989.
- Hilder, Monika B. *The Feminine Ethos in C.S. Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia*. New York: Peter Lang, 2012.
- . *The Gender Dance: Ironic Subversion in C.S. Lewis's Cosmic Trilogy*. New York: Peter Lang, 2013.
- . *Surprised by the Feminine: A Rereading of C.S. Lewis and Gender*. New York: Peter Lang, 2013.
- Hiley, Margaret Barbara. "Aspects of Modernism in the Works of C.S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien and Charles Williams." PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2006.
- Himes, Jonathan B. "The Allegory of Lust: Textual and Sexual Deviance in *The Dark Tower*." In *Truths Breathed Through Silver: The Inklings' Moral and Mythopoeic Legacy*, edited by Jonathan B. Himes, 51-80. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2008.
- Hintz, Connie. "The Theme of Desire in the Writings of C.S. Lewis: Implications for Spiritual Formation." *Inklings Forever* 6 (2008).
- Hoff, Jacobo E. "The Idea of God and Spirituality of C.S. Lewis." PhD dissertation, Instituto Theologiae Spiritualis Pontificiae Universitatis Gregoriana, 1969.
- Holbrook, David. "The Problem of C.S. Lewis." In *Writers, Critics and Children*, edited by Geoff Fox et al., 116-124. London: Heinemann, 1976.

- . *The Skeleton in the Wardrobe: C.S. Lewis' Fantasies: A Phenomenological Study*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1991.
- Holder, Arthur, ed. *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005.
- Hooper, Walter, *C.S. Lewis: A Companion and Guide*. New York: HarperCollins, 1996.
- . "It All Began with a Picture: The Making of C.S. Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia." In *C.S. Lewis and His Circle: Essays and Memoirs from the Oxford C.S. Lewis Society*, edited by Roger White et al., 150-163. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Hooper, Walter, ed. *Boxen: The Imaginary World of the Young C.S. Lewis*. London: Collins, 1985.
- , ed. *The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis: Volume 1: Family Letters 1905-1929*. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004.
- , ed. *The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis: Volume 2: Books, Broadcasts, and the War 1931-1949*. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004.
- , ed. *The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis: Volume 3: Narnia, Cambridge, and Joy 1950-1963*. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2007.
- Houston, James M. "The Prayer-Life of C.S. Lewis." *Crux* 24, no. 1 (Mar 1988): 2-10.
- Hudson, Brian. "Learning in the Shadowlands: The Educational Vision of C.S. Lewis." *Inklings Forever* VII (2010): 1-12.
- Humphrey, Edith M. *Further Up and Further In: Orthodox Conversations with C.S. Lewis on Scripture and Theology*. Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2017. Kindle Edition.
- Hurd, Crystal. "Transformational Leadership in the Life and Works of C.S. Lewis." EdD thesis, East Tennessee State University, 2012.
- Huttar, Charles A. "C.S. Lewis's Narnia and the 'Grand Design.'" In *The Longing for a Form: Essays on the Fiction of C.S. Lewis*, edited by Peter J. Schakel. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1977.
- . "The Screwtape Letters as Epistolary Fiction." *Journal of Inklings Studies* 6, no. 1 (2016): 87-125.
- Isherwood, Lisa, and Elizabeth Stuart. *Introducing Body Theology*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.

- Jacobs, Alan. *The Narnian: The Life and Imagination of C.S. Lewis*. New York: HarperOne, 2005.
- . "The Chronicles of Narnia." In *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, edited by Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward, 265-280. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- James, Richard. "Guidelines for Spiritual Reading from C.S. Lewis." *Inklings Forever* 7 (2010).
- Jasper, David. "Study of Literature and Theology." In *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology*, edited by Andrew Hass, David Jasper, and Elizabeth Jay, 15-33. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Jeffrey, David Lyle. "C.S. Lewis, the Bible, and Its Literary Critics." *Christianity and Literature* 50, no. 1 (2000): 95-109.
- Jensen, Chris. "Thick Christianity: C.S. Lewis, Transformation, and the Ancient Doctrine of Theosis." *Transformational Theology* (Spring/Summer 2010): 20-25.
- Jervis, L. Ann. *At The Heart of the Gospel: Suffering in the Earliest Christian Message*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.
- Joeckel, Samuel. "The Spirit of Comedy in *The Chronicles of Narnia*." In *C.S. Lewis: Views from Wake Forest: Collected Essays on C.S. Lewis*, edited by Michael Traver, 161-168. Wayne, PA: Zossima Press, 2008.
- . *The C.S. Lewis Phenomenon: Christianity and the Public Sphere*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2013.
- Johnson, Luke Timothy. *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity: A Missing Dimension of New Testament Studies*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998.
- Jones, Karla Faust. "Girls in Narnia: Hindered or Human?" *Mythlore* 13, no. 3 (1987): 15-19.
- Kamitsuka, Margaret D. *Feminist Theology and the Challenge of Difference*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Kamran, Shezra. "Fantastic languages: C.S. Lewis and Ursula K. Le Guin." PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2014.
- Karounos, Michael. "Straunger Things: The Absolute Upside Down of the Medieval Model in *The Dark Tower*, *All Hallow's Eve*, and 'The Lost Road.'" Conference Paper. C.S. Lewis and Friends Colloquium, Taylor University, Upland, IN, 2018.
- Kempton, Emily Rose. "Hope for Susan: Moral Imagination in The Chronicles of Narnia." MA thesis, Brigham Young University, 2016.

- Kilby, Clyde S. *The Christian World of C.S. Lewis*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964.
- . *A Well of Wonder: Essays on C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and the Inklings*, edited by Loren Wilkinson and Keith Call. Brewster, MA: Mount Tabor Books, 2016.
- King, Don W. "Dymer." In *The C.S. Lewis Readers' Encyclopedia*, edited by Jeffrey D. Schultz and John G. West, Jr., 144-146. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.
- . "Columns of Light: The Preconversion Narrative Poetry of C.S. Lewis." In *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy: Volume 2: Fantasist, Mythmaker, and Poet*, edited by Bruce L. Edwards, 209-232. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007.
- . "Topical Poems: C.S. Lewis's Postconversion Poetry." In *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy: Volume 2: Fantasist, Mythmaker, and Poet*, edited by Bruce L. Edwards, 259-311. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007.
- . *Hunting the Unicorn: A Critical Biography of Ruth Pitter*. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2008.
- . *Plain to the Inward Eye*. Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2013.
- King, Don W., ed. *Out of My Bone: The Letters of Joy Davidman*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009.
- . *The Collected Poems of C.S. Lewis: A Critical Edition*. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2015.
- Kodham, Salwa. "From Ruined City to Edenic Garden in C.S. Lewis's *The Magician's Nephew*." In *Truths Breathed through Silver: The Inklings' Moral and Mythopoeic Legacy*, edited by Jonathan B. Himes, 27-50. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008.
- Kreeft, Peter. *C.S. Lewis: A Critical Essay*. Front Royal, Virginia: Christendom College Press, 1988.
- . *C.S. Lewis for the Third Millennium*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994.
- . "Lewis's Philosophy of Truth, Goodness and Beauty." In *C.S. Lewis as Philosopher: Truth, Goodness, Beauty*, edited by David Baggett, Gary R. Habermas and Jerry L. Walls, 23-36. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008.
- Kreglinger, Gisela H. "Storyed Revelations: The Influence of George MacDonald upon J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis." *Sewanee Theological Review* 57, no. 3 (2014): 301-320.

- Latta, Corey. *C.S. Lewis and the Art of Writing: What the Essayist, Poet, Novelist, Literary Critic, Apologist, Memoirist, Theologian Teaches Us about the Life and Craft of Writing*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016.
- Lawlor, John. *C.S. Lewis: Memories and Reflections*. Dallas: Spence Publishing Co., 1998.
- Lazo, Andrew. "Correcting the Chronology: Some Implications of 'Early Prose Joy.'" *SEVEN* 29 (2012): 51-62.
- Lee, Jong-Tae. "'Into the Region of Awe': C.S. Lewis, Wonder and the Re-Enchantment of the World." PhD dissertation, Graduate Theological Union, 2015.
- Lee, Matthew. "To Reign in Hell or to Serve in Heaven: C.S. Lewis on the Problem of Hell and Enjoyment of the Good." In *C.S. Lewis as Philosopher: Truth, Goodness and Beauty*, edited by Jerry L. Walls, Gary Habermas, and David Baggett, 159-174. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006.
- Leith, Sam. "C.S. Lewis's literary legacy: 'dodgy and unpleasant' or 'exceptionally good'?" *The Guardian*, November 19, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/nov/19/cs-lewis-literary-legacy>.
- Lepojärvi, Jason. "Worship, Veneration, and Idolatry: Observations from C.S. Lewis." *Religious Studies* 51, no. 4 (2015): 1-20.
- . "Praeparatio Evangelica—or Daemonica? C.S. Lewis and Anders Nygren on Spiritual Longing." *Harvard Theological Review* 109, no. 2 (2016): 207-232.
- Lindskoog, Kathryn. *The Lion of Judah in Never-Never Land: The Theology of C.S. Lewis Expressed in His Fantasies for Children*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973. Kindle.
- . "C.S. Lewis: Reactions from Women." *Mythlore* 3, no. 4 (1976): 18–20.
- . *C.S. Lewis: Mere Christian*. Rev. ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1981.
- . "Sex." In *The C.S. Lewis Readers' Encyclopedia*, edited by Jeffrey D. Schultz, and John G. West, Jr., 429. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.
- . "Women." In *The C.S. Lewis Readers' Encyclopedia*, edited by Jeffrey D. Schultz, and John G. West, Jr., 429. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.
- Lindvall, Terry. *Surprised by Laughter: The Comic World of C.S. Lewis*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996.
- Linzey, Andrew. "C.S. Lewis's Theology of Animals." *Anglican Theological Review* 80, no. 1 (1998): 60-81.
- Loades, Ann. "C.S. Lewis on Gender." *Priscilla Papers* 24, no. 1 (2010): 19–24.

- . "On Gender." In *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, edited by Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward, 150-173. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Lobdell, Jared C. "An Irritation of Oysters: C.S. Lewis and the Myth in Mythopoeia." *Extrapolation* 39, no. 1 (1998): 68-84.
- . *The Scientifiction Novels of C.S. Lewis: Space and Time in the Ransom Stories*. London: McFarland & Co., 2004.
- Loconte, Joseph. *A Hobbit, a Wardrobe, and a Great War: How J. R. R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis Rediscovered Faith, Friendship, and Heroism in the Cataclysm Of 1914-18*. New York: Thomas Nelson, 2015. Ebook edition.
- Logan, Stephen. "Literary Theorist." In *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, edited by Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward, 29-42. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Loney, Douglas. "Immortal Horrors and Everlasting Splendours." *Mythlore* 63 (Autumn 1990): 28-33, 36-37.
- Luke, Sharon H. *Westminster Bible Companion*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1995.
- MacDonald, George. *A Dish of Orts: Chiefly Papers on the Imagination, and on Shakespeare*. N.p., n.d. Kindle Edition.
- . *Thomas Wingfold, Curate*. N.p., n.d. Kindle Edition.
- . *Wilfred Cumbermede*. N.p., n.d. Kindle Edition.
- . *Unspoken Sermons: Series I, II, III*. N.p.: Renaissance Classics, 2012.
- . *Dealings with the Fairies*. Miami: HardPress, 2017.
- Manlove, Colin. *C.S. Lewis: His Literary Achievement*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987.
- . "'Caught Up into the Larger Pattern': Image and Narrative Structures in C.S. Lewis's Fiction." In *Word and Story in C.S. Lewis*, edited by Peter J. Schakel and Charles A. Huttar, 256-276. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1991.
- . "The 'Narnia' Books." In *C.S. Lewis*, edited by Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2006.
- MacSwain, Robert. "Introduction." In *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, edited by Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward, 1-12. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Markos, Louis. *Lewis Agonistes: How C.S. Lewis Can Train Us to Wrestle With the Modern and Postmodern World*. Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2003.

- Marsden, George M. *C.S. Lewis's Mere Christianity: A Biography*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016.
- Martin, Thomas L. "Merlin, Magic, and the Meta-fantastic: The Matter of *That Hideous Strength*." *Arthuriana* 21, no. 1 (2011): 66-84.
- Martindale, Wayne. *Beyond the Shadowlands: C.S. Lewis on Heaven & Hell*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005.
- Mattern, Adam. "An Image of the Discarded: C.S. Lewis's Use of the Medieval Model in His Planetary Fiction." MA thesis, Signum University, 2019.
- McCaslin, Susan. "A Critical Study of C.S. Lewis' *Till We Have Faces*." *Crux* 15, no. 3 (1979): 3-8.
- McGrath, Alister E. *Luther's Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther's Theological Breakthrough*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
- . *C.S. Lewis: A Life: Eccentric Genius, Reluctant Prophet*. Carol Streams, IL: Tyndale, 2013.
- . *If I Had Lunch with C.S. Lewis: Exploring the Ideas of C.S. Lewis on the Meaning of Life*. Carol Streams, IL: Tyndale, 2014.
- Meacock, Heather. "Narnia, Genre, and Children's Spirituality." *Journal of Children's Literature Studies* 8, no. 3 (2011): 96-112.
- Meilaender, Gilbert. *The Taste for the Other: The Social and Ethical Thought of C.S. Lewis*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978.
- Melton, Brian. "The Great War and Narnia: C.S. Lewis as Soldier and Creator." *Mythlore* 115/116 (2011): 123-142.
- Menzies, James W. *C.S. Lewis and Joseph Campbell on the Veracity of Christianity*. Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2015.
- Metcalf, Stephen. "Language and Self-consciousness: The Making and Breaking of C.S. Lewis' Personae." In *Word and Story in C.S. Lewis*, edited by Peter J. Schakel and Charles A. Huttar, 109-144. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1991.
- Miller, Jennifer L. "No Sex in Narnia? How Andersen's 'Snow Queen' Problematizes Lewis's Narnia." *Mythlore* 28, nos. 1-2 (2009): 113-130.
- Mitchell, Christopher W. "Introductory Note to Owen Barfield's Essay 'Death.'" *SEVEN* 25 (2008): 43-44.
- Moltmann, Jürgen. *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*. New York: Harper & Row, 1974.

- . *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993.
- Moore-Jumonville, Robert. "The End for Which We Are Formed: Spiritual Formation through C.S. Lewis." *Inklings Forever* 7 (2010).
- Mosley, David Russell *Being Deified: Poetry and Fantasy on the Path to God*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016.
- Mueller, Steven Paul. "Christology in the Writings of C.S. Lewis: a Lutheran's Evaluation." PhD thesis, University of Durham, 1997.
- Myers, Doris T. "Brave New World: The Status of Women according to Tolkien, Lewis, and Williams." *Cimarron Review* 17 (1971): 13–19.
- . "Growing in Grace: The Anglican Spiritual Style in the Narnia Chronicles." In *The Pilgrim's Guide: C.S. Lewis and the Art of Witness*, edited by David Mills, 185–202. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- . *Bareface: A Guide to C.S. Lewis's Last Novel*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2004.
- . "Lewis in Genderland." *Christian Scholar's Review* 34, no. 4 (Summer 2007): 455-460.
- Ness-Bergstein, Evrea. "The Garden as Unfinished Narrative of the Good in C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*." *The Journal of Inklings Studies* 2, no. 1 (2012): 49-80.
- Neuhouser, David L. *Exploring the Eternal Goodness*, edited by Joe Ricke and Lisa Ritchie. Hamden, CT: Winged Lion Press, 2016.
- Newell, Roger J. *The Feeling Intellect: Reading the Bible with C.S. Lewis*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010.
- Neylan, Mary. "My Friendship with C.S. Lewis." *The Chesterton Review* 17, no. 3/4 (1991): 404-411.
- Noll, Mark. "Opening a Wardrobe: Clyde S. Kilby (1902-1986)." *Reformed Journal* 36, no. 12 (1986): 6-7.
- Northey, Wayne. "Rene Girard and Violence." *Clarion Journal of Spirituality and Justice* (2006),
https://clarionjournal.typepad.com/clarion_journal_of_spirit/2006/06/rene_girard_and.html.

- Oduyoye, Mercy Amba. "Jesus Christ." In *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology*, edited by Susan Frank Parsons, 151-170. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- O'Flaherty, William. *The Misquotable C.S. Lewis*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018.
- Patrick, James. "C.S. Lewis and Idealism." In *A Christian for All Christians: Essays in Honour of C.S. Lewis*, edited by Andrew Walker and James Patrick, 156-173. Toronto: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990.
- Patterson, Nancy-Lou. "Guardaci Ben: The Visionary Woman in C.S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia and *That Hideous Strength*." *Mythlore* 6, no. 3 (1979): 6–10 and *Mythlore* 6, no. 4 (1979): 20–24.
- . *Ransoming the Waste Land: Papers on C.S. Lewis's Space Trilogy, Chronicles of Narnia, and Other Works: Volume I*, edited by Emily E. Auger and Janet B. Croft. Clifford, ON: Valleyhome Books, 2015.
- Pearce, Joseph. *C.S. Lewis and the Catholic Church*. 2nd ed. Charlotte, NC: St. Benedict Press, 2013.
- Pelikan, Jaroslav. "Fundamentalism and/or Orthodoxy? Toward an Understanding of the Fundamentalist Phenomenon." In *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon: A View from Within, A Response from Without*, edited by Norman J. Cohen, 3-21. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.
- Persyn, Catherine. "'In My End is My Beginning': The *fin-negans* Motif in George MacDonald's *At the Back of the North Wind*." *Mythlore* 24, no. 3-4 (2006): 53-69.
- Peterson, Eugene. *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
- . *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2006.
- Petrucci, Courtney. "Abolishing Man in Other Worlds: Breaking and Recovering the Chain of Being in C. S. Lewis's Ransom Trilogy." MA thesis, Signum University, 2016.
- Phemister, Mary Anne, and Andrew Lazo, eds. *Mere Christians: Inspiring Stories of Encounters with C.S. Lewis*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009.
- Phillips, Justin. *C.S. Lewis at the BBC: Messages of Hope in the Darkness of War*. London: HarperCollins, 2003.

- Plaskow, Judith. *Sex, Sin and Grace: Women's Experience and the Theologies of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich*. Washington DC: University Press of America, 1980.
- Poe, Harry Lee. "Lewis and the Ladies." *Christian Scholar's Review* 36, no. 4 (Summer 2007): 469-476.
- Poe, Harry Lee, and Rebecca Whitten Poe, eds. *C.S. Lewis Remembered: Collected Reflections of Students, Friends and Colleagues*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006.
- Potgieter, Raymond M. "Revisiting C.S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters* of 1941 and exploring their relation to 'Screwtape Proposes a Toast.'" *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* (2016): 1-8.
- Prickett, Stephen. "Informing the Inklings: C.S. Lewis's Debt to George MacDonald." In *Informing the Inklings: George MacDonald and the Victorian Roots of Modern Fantasy*, edited by Michael Partridge and Kirstin Jeffrey Johnson, 5-16. Hamden, CT: Winged Lion Press, 2018.
- Propp, Vladimir. *Morphology of the Folktale*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1968.
- Purdy, David Mark. "Red Tights and Red Tape: Satirical Misreadings of *The Screwtape Letters*." In *Both Sides of the Wardrobe: C.S. Lewis, Theological Imagination, and Everyday Discipleship*, edited by Rob Fennell, 75-84. Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2015.
- Randall, Ian. "'Live Much Under the Shadow of the Cross': Atonement and Evangelical Spirituality." In *The Atonement Debate: Papers From The London Symposium On The Theology Of Atonement*, edited by Derek Tidball, David Hilborn, and Justin Thacker, 293-312. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.
- Reeder, Harry L., IV. "C.S. Lewis: The Cartography of Interpretation and Meaning in *An Experiment in Criticism*." MA thesis, University of Alaska, 2009.
- Redick, Kip. "Wilderness, Arcadia and Longing: Mythic Landscapes and the Experience of Reality." In *C.S. Lewis: Views from Wake Forest: Collected Essays on C.S. Lewis*, edited by Michael Travers, 137-157. Wayne, PA: Zossima Press, 2008.
- Reppert, Victor. *C.S. Lewis's Dangerous Idea: A Philosophical Defense of Lewis's Argument from Reason*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2003.
- Richie, Tony. "Awe-Full Encounters: A Pentecostal Conversation with C.S. Lewis Concerning Spiritual Experience." *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 14, no. 1 (2005): 99-122.
- Rigney, Joe. *Lewis on the Christian Life: Becoming Truly Human in the Presence of God*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018.

- Robertson, Allen B. "Two Paths to Joy: C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien on Joy and Eucatastrophe." In *Both Sides of the Wardrobe: C.S. Lewis, Theological Imagination, and Everyday Discipleship*, edited by Rob Fennell, 20-31. Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2015.
- Robson, W.W. "The Romanticism of C.S. Lewis." *Cambridge Quarterly* 1 (1966): 252-272.
- Root, Jerry, and Mark Neal. *The Surprising Imagination of C.S. Lewis*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2015.
- Rovang, Paul R. "A Spenserian in Space: *The Faerie Queene* in C.S. Lewis's *Perelandra*." *Mythlore* 33, no. 1 (2014): 37-52.
- Rowe, Karen. "Till We Have Faces: A Study of the Soul and the Self." In *C.S. Lewis: Life, Works, and Legacy: Volume 2: Fantasist, Mythmaker, & Poet*, edited by Bruce L. Edwards, 135-156. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007.
- Ruether, Rosemary Radford. *Introducing Redemption in Christian Feminism*. London: A&C Black, 1998.
- Sadler, Glenn Edward. "Defining Death as 'More Life': Unpublished Letters by George MacDonald." *North Wind* 3 (1984): 3-18.
- Sands, Kathleen M. *Escape from Paradise: Evil and Tragedy in Feminist Theology*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1994.
- Santamaria, Abigail. *Joy: Poet, Seeker, and the Woman who Captivated C.S. Lewis*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing, 2015.
- Saunders, Paulette. "Through the Lens of *The Four Loves*: The Concept of Love in *The Great Divorce*." *Inklings Forever* VII (2010): 1-11.
- Sayer, George. *Jack: A Life of C.S. Lewis*. 2nd ed. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994.
- Sayers, Dorothy L. *Unpopular Opinions*. London: Victor Gollancz, 1946.
- Schakel, Peter J. *Reading with the Heart: The Way into Narnia*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979.
- . *Reason and Imagination in C.S. Lewis: A Study of Till We Have Faces*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984.
- . "The Satiric Imagination of C.S. Lewis." *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 22, no. 2 (1989): 129-148.
- . *Imagination and the Arts in C.S. Lewis: Journeying to Narnia and Other Worlds*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002.

- . *Is Your Lord Large Enough? How C.S. Lewis Expands Our View of God*. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2008.
- Schneider, Sandra M. "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality." In *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, edited by Arthur Holder, 15-33. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005.
- Schofield, Stephen, ed. *In Search of C.S. Lewis*. South Plainfield, NJ: Bridge Publishing, 1983.
- Schroeder, Sharin. "Genre Problems: Andrew Lang and J.R.R. Tolkien on (Fairy) Stories and (Literary) Belief." In *Informing the Inklings: George MacDonald and the Victorian Roots of Modern Fantasy*, edited by Michael Partridge and Kirstin Jeffrey Johnson, 149-79. Hamden, CT: Winged Lion Press, 2018.
- Schwartz, Sanford. *C.S. Lewis on the Final Frontier: Science and the Supernatural in the Space Trilogy*. Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Seegert, Alf. "'Harsh to the Feet of Shadows': The Wild Landscape of the Real in C.S. Lewis' *The Great Divorce* and William Faulkner's *The Bear*." In *Doors in the Air: C.S. Lewis and the Imaginative World*, edited by Anna Slack, 167-194. Vitoria, Spain: Portal Editions, 2010.
- Sheldrake, Philip. *Spirituality and Theology: Christian Living and the Doctrine of God*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998.
- Shippey, Tom. "The Ransom Trilogy and the Discovery of Myth." In *Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, edited by Rob McSwain and Michael Ward, 237-250. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Shumaker, Wayne. "The Cosmic Trilogy of C.S. Lewis." *Hudson Review* 8 (1955): 240-254.
- Simon, Caroline J. "On Love." In *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, edited by Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward, 146-159. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Smith, Laura Lee. Review of *Surprised by the Feminine: A Rereading of C.S. Lewis and Gender*, by Monika B. Hilder. *Mythlore* 34, no. 1 (2015): 165-171.
- Snyder, K. Alan. *America Discovers C.S. Lewis: His Profound Impact*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016.
- Stackhouse, John G., Jr. *Making the Best of It: Following Christ in the Real World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

- Stanifer, John. "Tale as Old as Time: A Study of the Cupid & Psyche Myth, with Particular Reference to C.S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*." *Inklings Forever* 7 (2010): 1-11.
- Starr, Charlie W. *The Faun's Bookshelf: C.S. Lewis on Why Myth Matters*. Kent, OH: Black Squirrel Books, 2018.
- . "Date Corrections, Confirmations or Narrowings, and Dates for Undated Poems in Don King's *Collected Poems of C.S. Lewis: A Critical Edition*." Private document, 2019.
- Storey, Ian C. "The Classical Sub-text to *Till We Have Faces*." In *C.S. Lewis: Views from Wake Forest*, edited by Michael Travers, 237-353. Wayne, PA: Zossima Press, 2008.
- . "An Annotated Bibliography to C.S. Lewis: *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold*." Trent University, 2013.
- Stott, John R.W. *The Cross of Christ*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006.
- Sturch, Richard. *Four Christian Fantasts: A Study of the Fantastic Writings of George MacDonald, Charles Williams, C.S. Lewis, and J.R.R. Tolkien*. Zurich: Walking Tree Publishers, 2001.
- Sys, Jacques "'Look out! It's Alive!': C.S. Lewis on Doctrine." In *A Christian for All Christians: Essays in Honour of C. S. Lewis*, edited by Andrew Walker and James Patrick, 174-189. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990.
- Taliaferro, Charles, and Rachel Traugher. "The Atonement in Narnia." In *The Chronicles of Narnia and Philosophy: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, edited by Gregory Bassham and Jerry L. Walls, 245-59. Chicago: Open Court, 2005.
- Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. London: Belknap Press, 2007.
- Thistlethwaite, Susan Brooks. *Women's Bodies as Battlefield: Christian Theology and the Global War on Women*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- Thornton, Martin. *English Spirituality: An Outline of Ascetical Theology According to the English Pastoral Tradition*. Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1986.
- Thurston, Bonnie. "The New Testament in Christian Spirituality." In *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, edited by Arthur Holder, 55-70. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005.
- Tidball, Derek, David Hilborn, and Justin Thacker, eds. *The Atonement Debate: Papers From The London Symposium On The Theology Of Atonement*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.

- Tolkien, J.R.R. "On Fairy-stories." In *Essays Presented to Charles Williams*, edited by C.S. Lewis, 38-89. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966.
- . *The Two Towers*. London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1999.
- Vanauken, Sheldon. *A Severe Mercy*. New York: Bantam Books, 1979.
- Van Der Weele, S.J. "From Mt. Olympus to Glome: C.S. Lewis's Dislocation of Apuleius's 'Cupid and Psyche' in *Till We Have Faces*." In *The Longing for a Form: Essays on the Fiction of C.S. Lewis*, edited by Peter J. Schakel, 182-192. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1977.
- Van Leeuwen, Mary Stewart. "A Sword Between the Sexes: C.S. Lewis's Long Road to Gender Equality." *Christian Scholar's Review* 36, No. 4 (2007): 391-414.
- . "What Did Lewis Say, and When Did He Say It? A Reply to Adam Barkman." *Christian Scholar's Review* 36, no. 4 (Summer 2007): 437-444.
- . *A Sword Between the Sexes: C.S. Lewis and the Gender Debates*. Grand Rapids: BrazosPress, 2010.
- Vasiliiu, Daniela. "C.S. Lewis: The Romantic Rationalist." *Linguaculture* 2 (2014): 105-122.
- Vaus, Will. *Mere Theology: A Guide to the Thought of C.S. Lewis*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006.
- . *The Hidden Story of Narnia: A Book-by-Book Guide to C.S. Lewis' Spiritual Themes*. Cheshire, CT: Winged Lion Press, 2010.
- Velaidum, Joe. "Typology and Theology in Northrop Frye's Biblical Hermeneutic." *Literature and Theology* 17, no. 2 (2003): 156-169.
- Walker, Andrew. "Under the Russian Cross: A Research Note on C.S. Lewis and the Eastern Orthodox Church." In *A Christian for All Christians: Essays in Honour of C.S. Lewis*, edited by Andrew Walker and James Patrick, 63-67. Toronto: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990.
- Walsh, Chad. *C.S. Lewis: Apostle to the Skeptics*. New York: Macmillan, 1949.
- . "The Reeducation of the Fearful Pilgrim." In *The Longing for a Form: Essays on the Fiction of C.S. Lewis*, edited by Peter J. Schakel, 64-72. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1977.
- . *The Literary Legacy of C.S. Lewis*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979.
- Walton, Heather. *Literature, Theology and Feminism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007.

- . *Writing Methods in Theological Reflection*. London: SCM Press, 2014. Kindle Edition.
- Walton, Heather, ed. *Literature and Theology: New Interdisciplinary Spaces*. Surrey: Ashgate, 2011.
- Ward, Michael. "The Son and the Other Stars: Christology and Cosmology in the Imagination of C.S. Lewis." PhD thesis, University of St. Andrews, 2005.
- . *Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C.S. Lewis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- . "'Looking Along the Beam': Divine and Literary Hiddenness in C.S. Lewis's *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'*." In *C.S. Lewis and the Inklings: Discovering Hidden Truth*, edited by Salwa Khoddam and Mark R. Hall, 10-33. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012.
- Ware, Kallistos. "Sacramentalism in C.S. Lewis and Charles Williams." In *C.S. Lewis and His Circle: Essays and Memoirs from the Oxford C.S. Lewis Society*, edited by Roger White et al. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Watson, George. *Critical Essays on C.S. Lewis*. Leister: Scolar Press, 1992.
- Weems, Reggie. "Universalism Denied: C.S. Lewis' Unpublished Letters to Alan Fairhurst." *Journal of Inklings Studies* 7, no. 2 (Oct 2017): 87-98.
- Weyant, Curtis A. "Praxeology and Literature: The Intersection of Action and Imagination." MA thesis, Signum University, 2017.
- White, William Luther. *The Image of Man in C.S. Lewis*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1969.
- Williams, Donald T. *Mere Theology: A Guide to the Thought of C.S. Lewis*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004.
- . *Mere Humanity: G.K. Chesterton, C.S. Lewis, and J.R.R. Tolkien on the Human Condition*. Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2006.
- . *Deeper Magic: The Theology Behind the Writings of C.S. Lewis*. Baltimore, MD: Square Halo Books, 2016.
- Williamson, James T. "The Fourfold Myth of Death and Rebirth in George MacDonald's *Phantastes*." *North Wind* 33 (2014): 35-69.
- Wilson, A.N. *C.S. Lewis: A Biography*. London: Flamingo, 1991.
- Woerner, Jody R. "The Quest for Joy: C.S. Lewis's Use of the Quest Narrative in His Fiction." PhD thesis. Arizona State University, 2001.

- Wolfe, Judith. "On Power." In *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, edited by Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward, 174-188. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Wood, Ralph C. "The Baptized Imagination: C.S. Lewis's Fictional Apologetics." *The Christian Century* (1995): 812-815.
- Wright, N.T. *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*. New York, HarperCollins, 2007. Kindle Edition.
- Yandell, Stephen. "Medieval Models of Loss in *Till We Have Faces*." In *C.S. Lewis: Views from Wake Forest*, edited by Michael Travers, 255-274. Wayne, PA: Zossima Press, 2008.
- Yuasa, Kyoko. *C.S. Lewis and Christian Postmodernism: Word, Image, and Beyond*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016.
- Zogby, Edward G., S.J. "Triadic Patterns in Lewis's Life and Thought." In *The Longing for a Form: Essays on the Fiction of C.S. Lewis*, edited by Peter J. Schakel, 20-47. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1977.

Primary Sources and Archival Material

- The Anglican Church of Canada. *The Book Of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church: Together with the Psalter or Psalms of David According to the Use of the Episcopal Church*. Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1962.
- Augustine. *The Confessions of St. Augustine*. Translated by E.B. Pusey. London: Dent, 1907.
 CSL MS-52 B, Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton, IL.
 Dep.d.809, Bodleian archive, Oxford, UK.
 Dep.d.241, Bodleian archive, Oxford, UK.
 MS.Eng.misc.c.1109, The Dark Tower fragment, Bodleian archive, Oxford, UK.
 MS.Eng.lett.c.220/1, Bodleian archive, Oxford, UK.
 MS.Eng.lett.c.220/5, Bodleian archive, Oxford, UK.
- Milton, John. *Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained*. Edited by Christopher Ricks. Markham, ON: Penguin Books Canada, 1982.
- Thomas à Kempis. *Of the Imitation of Christ*. Toronto: Thomas Nelson and Sons, n.d.
All Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).