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C.S. LEWIS'S INTERPLANETARY TRILOGY:
"AN IMAGINATIVE REALIZATION OF DOCTRINE"

BY

MARCIA K. HOUTMAN

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A thesis submitted
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree Master of Arts, Major in
English, South Dakota
State University

1978

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C.S. LEWIS'S INTERPLANETARY TRILOGY:

"AN IMAGINATIVE REALIZATION OF DOCTRINE"

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MKH

CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. AN INTRODUCTION TO C.S. LEWIS'S INTERPLANETARY TRILOGY.	1
II. GOD AND MALELDIL.	7
III. THE DEVIL AND THE BENT ONE.	20
IV. GOOD AND EVIL	30
V. HEAVEN AND HELL	44
VI. THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY	61
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	69

CHAPTER I

AN INTRODUCTION TO C.S. LEWIS'S INTERPLANETARY TRILOGY

The reading of C.S. Lewis's interplanetary novel Perelandra prompted the following comment from American critic Chad Walsh:

It transported me into a kind of Elysian Fields--or better yet, an unspoiled Eden, inhabited by the innocent and un-fallen. ...I got the taste and the smell of Christian truth. My senses as well as my soul were baptized.¹

Walsh's impression is indicative of the type of experience made available to each person who chances to read one of the most memorable and celebrated works of science fiction and theology, the trilogy of Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra, and That Hideous Strength. Unusual as the combination may seem, Lewis's trilogy is, indeed, an effective union of the entertaining element of science fiction and the edifying element of theology. Thus it fulfills the traditional double function of quality literature since Horace--providing "sweetness and light."

The trilogy is effective because the vividness and immediacy of its images and actions stimulate the reader's physical senses, creating in his mind a very real picture of fantastic worlds and events. At the same time, the reader's spiritual senses are being reawakened and refreshed just as the indescribable fruit of the floating islands on Perelandra refreshes and revitalizes Dr. Ransom's body and spirit. The

¹Chad Walsh, "Impact On America," in Light On C.S. Lewis, ed. Jocelyn Gibb (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), p. 107.

reader is transported, given a chance to escape to another world. The place that he escapes to is so unlike his own world that his experiences are fresh and new and unburdened by "reality;" yet it is enough like his world that he can recognize the connections and come back to his day-to-day reality having learned something while he was enjoying himself.

Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra, and That Hideous Strength are, in a sense, escape fiction; but they are also much more than that. Lewis's Christianity is something that cannot be separated from his fiction; although he perhaps did not begin writing the trilogy with the idea of making it a Christian apologetic and, in fact, claimed that he never started writing anything with a moral in mind,² his faith was so completely a part of him that it could not help expressing itself even when he did not have that intention in mind. According to Austin Farrer in his article "The Christian Apologist," Lewis never indulged in "the pretension to look deeply into the things of God..., even by implication, either on intellectual or on spiritual grounds."³ What Lewis did do in the trilogy does, however, fit him into Farrer's definition of the theologian:

A systematic theologian may vindicate the rationality of the faith more solidly than any apologist; but he does so simply

²Walter Hooper, "A Note On The Dark Tower," in The Dark Tower and Other Stories, ed. Walter Hooper (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), p. 95.

³Austin Farrer, "The Christian Apologist," in Light On C.S. Lewis, ed. Jocelyn Gibb (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), p. 24.

by thinking it out and articulating the parts. He looks for the heart and sense of the doctrine.⁴

The trilogy does not present complex, controversial points of theology, but rather, the basic beliefs shared by all Christians or, as Lewis called it in another of his works, "mere Christianity."

Out of the Silent Planet introduces the reader to Lewis's unique universe, the "fields of Arbol." Here, Dr. Elwin Ransom, an ordinary sort of middle-aged Cambridge don on a walking tour of the English countryside, is kidnapped by Doctors Weston and Devine and, much to his amazement, flown through "Deep Heaven" to Malacandra. On this planet his contact with the local inhabitants teaches him much about that world and about his own home planet, Thulcandra, the "silent planet," the prison of the "Bent One."

The following, from Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper's biography of Lewis expresses the possible effect of the coexistence of science fiction and theology in one book:

Certainly some readers of Out of the Silent Planet enjoyed it in spite of its Christian background, some because of it--and many without realizing it at all. But perhaps those who enjoyed it most did so in a way described by Dorothy Sayers writing to Lewis on 21 December 1953 about a young friend of hers: 'He told me how, in his undergraduate days, he read Out of the Silent Planet with great enjoyment, accepting it quite simply as a space-travel story until quite suddenly near the end...some phrase clicked in his mind and he exclaimed: "Why this is a story about Christianity. Maleldil is Christ, and Eldila are the angels!"

⁴Farrer, p. 23.

He said it was a most wonderful experience, as though two entirely different worlds had suddenly come into focus together, like a stereoscope, and it's a thing he can never forget.⁵

In bringing together two physical worlds, the familiar earth and the unfamiliar "outer space," Lewis's trilogy may help the reader understand how the physical world and the spiritual world, the one familiar and the other very unfamiliar, work together to provide a complete life for the individual. The adventure and the irrepressible theology of the trilogy work together to provide the reader with an "imaginative realization of doctrine."⁶ In other words, Lewis's fields of Arbol "admits his readers to a mental world of great richness, great vigour and clarity, and in every corner illuminated by his Christian belief."⁷

Richard Purtill, author of a book on the fantasy and philosophy of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, says that in comparison to the other books of the trilogy "Perelandra" is more explicitly theological, for the framework of the story is the temptation of a new Eve and a possible, and only barely averted, new Fall--not of man but of the manlike race inhabiting Venus.⁸ Lewis himself, in a letter to Arthur Greeves, said "The idea is that Venus is at the Adam-and-Eve stage: i.e., the

⁵Roger Lancelyn Green & Walter Hooper, C.S. Lewis: A Biography (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), p. 165.

⁶Farrer, p. 31.

⁷Farrer, p. 26.

⁸Richard Purtill, Lord of the Elves and Eldils: Fantasy and Philosophy in C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), p. 138.

first two rational creatures have just appeared and are still innocent. My hero arrives in time to prevent their 'falling' as our first pair did."⁹ In Perelandra, Good, represented by Ransom, joins in intellectual, spiritual and even physical battle with Evil, represented by Weston, for the soul of the Green Lady and for her whole world. Perelandra, with its rich, compelling imagery and rather overt Christianity, was, according to Lewis's biographers, his personal favorite among his works of fiction.¹⁰

That Hideous Strength, the third book of the trilogy, furthers the reader's experience of the coexistence of science fiction and theology:

That Hideous Strength may be read purely as a thrilling combat between good and evil forces--without adverting to the fact that the evil forces are quite literally diabolical, the powerful beings on the side of good literally angels, and the good side literally God's side.¹¹

In Perelandra, Ransom fought for the side of Good to preserve the un-fallen state of Venus; in That Hideous Strength he comes back to earth, the silent planet, in a transfigured state to lead the good forces in defeating the upsurge of the evil forces threatening to take over the earth. The theme of a battle between good and evil, the basic conflict behind each of the books of the trilogy, can be left at that level, but, as will be seen in subsequent chapters, good and evil ultimately lead to God and the Devil and a "higher" theme. Green and Hooper also

⁹Green & Hooper, p. 170.

¹⁰Green & Hooper, p. 170.

¹¹Purtill, p. 138.

suggest that though "the end of the World was too vast a theme," That Hideous Strength does exhibit "some such judgement of Heaven as the Confusion of Tongues in the Tower of Babel, or the destruction of the Cities of the Plain from which Lot and his family escaped."¹²

In a letter written on 9 July 1939, Lewis had the following remark to make concerning this matter of the dual nature of Out of the Silent Planet and the public's reaction to it:

...You will be both grieved and amused to hear that out of about 60 reviews only 2 showed any knowledge that my idea of the fall of the Bent One was anything but an invention of my own...any amount of theology can now be smuggled into people's minds under cover of romance without their knowing it.¹³

These words might easily apply to Perelandra and That Hideous Strength as well, for the romance of Lewis's entire trilogy masks for some and enhances for others the basic Christian theology that it expresses. In his trilogy Lewis uses strange adventures and fantastic worlds experienced by ordinary people to illustrate his rather orthodox theories about God, Satan, good and evil, heaven and hell, and the Christian community.

¹²Green & Hooper, p. 174.

¹³Green & Hooper, p. 164.

CHAPTER II

GOD AND MAELDIL

According to Walter Hooper's "A Note on The Dark Tower," included in Lewis's The Dark Tower & Other Stories, Lewis's interplanetary books contained a "high theological theme" beyond what is found in the incomplete Dark Tower. Though Lewis claimed that he never started writing "with a moral in mind,"¹ there are many indications of Lewis's Christian theology in Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra, and That Hideous Strength.

To Lewis, theology was a practical map of God, not God Himself. He believed that a direct experience with God was more exciting, but that theology, which is based on what is learned from direct experiences, is necessary to gain a more complete understanding of God. In mere Christianity, Lewis used the ocean as an analogy to explain the difference between direct experience and theology. He said it was like the difference between standing on the beach looking at the ocean and looking at a map of the ocean; the actual thing is more exciting, but one needs the map if he is going to get anywhere.² Therefore, to gain a more complete understanding of the trilogy one should begin with a look at the theology that forms its base:

¹Hooper, p. 95.

²C.S. Lewis, mere Christianity (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), p. 135-136.

Theology means 'the science of God,' and I think any man who wants to think about God at all would like to have the clearest and most accurate ideas about Him which are available.³

The science of God must necessarily begin with a look at God Himself, since He is, according to Lewis's theology as expressed in mere Christianity, the beginning, the source of all things, the being without whom nothing else (even the Devil) could exist. Out of the Silent Planet and Perelandra give the reader several indications of the nature of Lewis's God, reflecting many of the ideas Lewis more expressly displays in his theological works. Discovering that "the Martians are monotheists, who use the name Maleldil for God,"⁴ the reader can put together a picture of the kind of God in which C.S. Lewis believed.

Lewis believed in a Trinitarian God. Although the idea of the Trinity itself is not the concern of this paper nor of the trilogy, it will be helpful to understand that according to this most basic of Christian doctrines God is one being whose essence includes three separate persons: God, the Father; God, the Son (Christ); and God, the Holy Spirit. It is convenient for organization's sake to make divisions between the three persons of the Trinity, but at the same time one must realize that these divisions are somewhat academic. There are three persons each of whom is equally God, but there is only one being, one God, a fact which the theology of the trilogy generally reflects.

³ mere Christianity, p. 135.

⁴ Purtil, p. 134.

At the mountain-top gathering of Perelandrans, Tor, the king of Perelandra, spoke of the time when he was driven far away by Maleldil to learn all that he must know to take his rightful position as King of the planet. One of the first things he mentioned was this: "I learned new things about Maleldil and about His Father and the Third One."⁵ Yet, in Out of the Silent Planet, the hrossa told Ransom that "there was one God, ...Maleldil the Young."⁶

In Out of the Silent Planet the hrossa had much to explain to Dr. Ransom and one quite difficult concept for him to grasp was their idea of Maleldil. At first he thought that Oyarsa, the ruler of the planet, was a god, but the hrossa told him that Maleldil was the only God. They explained that Maleldil the Young who made and ruled the world lived with "the Old One." Ransom did not understand their explanation of who "the Old One" was and then asked where he was. A prominent hrossa replied, "He is not that sort that he has to live anywhere." As they went on, Ransom began to understand that "Maleldil was a spirit without body parts or passions" or in the words of the hrossa, "He is not hnau (their word for humanity, including all intelligent creatures on any planet)." (Silent Planet, p. 68.)

The hrossa's explanation of Maleldil is essentially an illustrated restatement of the following explanation of God from mere Christianity:

⁵ C.S. Lewis, Perelandra (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1965), p. 210. All subsequent references will be cited within the text.

⁶ C.S. Lewis, Out of the Silent Planet (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1965), p. 86. All subsequent references will be cited within the text.

"God is not a static thing--not even a person--but a dynamic, pulsating activity, a life, almost a kind of drama. Almost, if you will not think me irreverent, a kind of dance."⁷ In other words, God is a totally different kind of being than any kind of humanity. Though He encompasses all that is human, He is so far beyond and above people that they cannot even grasp what He is. People can relate to their own kind, to something they can see and feel and touch: but a being "without body parts of passions" is very difficult to understand. Knowing that it is part of the fallen human nature to doubt the existence of that which cannot be seen, God found it necessary to become a man through the incarnation of Jesus Christ on earth.

It also seems to be a part of human nature to fear the unseen or unknown. The Christian who accepts the existence of God, a being totally different than himself, may actually be frightened by what he believes in. But he may be comforted by another view of Lewis's concerning the reality of God's being. In Out of the Silent Planet, the Oyarsa of Malcandra was certainly a creature totally different in being than any that Ransom had ever before seen or imagined and, thus, frightened Ransom on their first meeting. Ransom's explanation of this fear sounds much like the fear that a person might feel upon first "meeting" God: "You are unlike me and I cannot see you." To this Oyarsa replied, "Those are not great reasons. You are also unlike me, and, though I see you, I see you very faintly. But do not think we

⁷ mere Christianity, p. 152.

are utterly unlike. We are both copies of Maleldil." (Silent Planet, p. 119-120.) To the unfallen creature the human fear based on physical differences seemed foolish. The great variety among God's creatures should be a source of enjoyment as seen at the gathering of the different Malacandran races at Meldilorn (see Chapter 6), rather than a source of fear and mistrust. And Oyarsa points out that the reason this unity among creatures is possible is that they have a common relationship to Maleldil. All are made in His image. Thus the Christian can find comfort in knowing he, himself, is a small reflection of God, a "copy of Maleldil." He has a familiar frame of reference to draw away the fear of He who once seemed distant and unknown.

Awesome, non-human greatness is an important characteristic of the Christian God, one from which (as the previous paragraphs have pointed out) His believers can derive both fear and comfort. As C.S. Lewis said in mere Christianity, to really know God the Christian must come to terms with His greatness:

In God you come up against something which is immeasurably superior to yourself. Unless you know God as that-- and, therefore, know yourself as nothing in comparison, you do not know God at all.⁸

Part of God's greatness is the fact that He is present in every part of His creation at all times. One of the many speeches of praise uttered on the mountain top of Perelandra explained God's omnipresence in these words:

⁸ mere Christianity, p. 111.

Where Maleldil is, there is the centre. He is in every place. Not some of Him in one place and some in another, but in each place the whole Maleldil, even in the smallness beyond thought. There is no way out of the centre save into the Bent Will which casts itself into Nowhere. Blessed be He! (Perelandra, p. 216.)

Earlier in Perelandra the Green Lady, in her innocent simplicity, touched on the complex theory of omnipresence with her reply to one of Weston's temptations. When he questioned her, "Since Piebald and I have come to your world we have put many things into your mind which Maleldil has not. Do you not see that He is letting go of your hand a little?" She replied, "How could He? He is wherever we go." (Perelandra, p. 105.)

In the earlier book, Out of the Silent Planet, Ransom had similar thoughts in the space ship on his way back to earth. On the way to Malacandra he had feared the unknown, but "space" was no longer unknown to him and, besides that, he had Oyarsa's promise that the eldila would be with him all the way back to his own world. As Ransom thought about "space" or rather "Deep Heaven," as he came to know it, with its fullness of life, and sensed the promised presence of the eldila, he experienced a kind of peace that he had never before felt:

He and all his race showed small and ephemeral against a background of such immeasurable fullness. His brain reeled at the thought of the true population of the universe, the three-dimensional infinitude of their territory, and the unchronicled aeons of their past; but his heart became steadier than it had ever been. (Silent Planet, p. 146-147.)

Ransom experienced what Oyarsa had told Weston at Meldilorn: "If you were subjects of Maleldil you would have peace." (Silent Planet, p. 140.)

According to Ransom's experiences in Deep Heaven it would seem that there is a difference between knowing about God's (or angels') presence and remembering it, thus being able to draw comfort and support from it. As Ransom battled, both physically and intellectually, with Weston on Perelandra, it became evident to him that what he was fighting was Weston's body inhabited by the Devil. And he constantly doubted or questioned his own role in the struggle:

He could not understand why Maleldil should remain absent when the Enemy was there in person.

But while he was thinking this, as suddenly and sharply as if the solid darkness about him had spoken with articulate voice, he knew that Maleldil was not absent. ...More-over, he became aware in some indefinable fashion that it had never been absent, that only some unconscious activity of his own had succeeded in ignoring it for the past few days. (Perelandra, p. 140.)

In the chapter entitled "The Three-Personal God" in mere Christianity, Lewis stated that in the matter of knowing God, the initiative is His. There is nothing a person can do to find God, if He does not chose to show Himself. Some people see much more than others "not because He has favorites, but because it is impossible for Him to show Himself to a man whose whole mind and character are in the wrong condition."⁹ Maleldil was trying to show Himself to Ransom, but could not because Ransom's mind was otherwise occupied.

When a person opens his mind and being to Maleldil (God), He will be there to give that person help and strength. Just as Christ

⁹mere Christianity, p. 144.

commissioned his disciples to serve and promised them the comfort and strength of His constant presence as His last words to them on earth, Oyarsa of Malacandra commissioned Ransom. One of the last messages that Oyarsa gave Ransom was that his mission was just beginning. He must watch and fight the "two bent ones" (Weston and Devine) "and when you have need, some of our people will help. Maleldil will show them to you." (Silent Planet, p. 143.) The Green Lady of Perelandra also spoke of the support Maleldil lends to His creatures:

Only my spirit praises Maleldil who comes down from Deep Heaven into this lowness and will make me to be blessed by all the times that are rolling towards us. It is he who is strong and makes me strong and fills empty worlds with good creatures. (Perelandra, p. 66.)

Other facts about Maleldil revealed in Out of the Silent Planet indicate similarities between Him and the Christian God. For example, Oyarsa told Ransom that Maleldil is the maker of all and that when his world (Malacandra) ends he will give his people back to Maleldil. Christians believe that God created everything and that those who have accepted their Creator will join Him in heaven. Oyarsa also revealed that when the possibility of evil threatened Malacandra, as the cold death was coming on the harandra, Maleldil prevented the triumph of evil by using him (Oyarsa). (Silent Planet, p. 138-139.) According to Oyarsa, the reason that he has the powers he has, that he can do what he can, is that "Maleldil has taught me." (Silent Planet, p. 141.) It is a basic Christian belief that all power, and especially that needed to fight the evil of the world, comes solely from God.

Maleldil would not give up and let evil take over Malacandra, just

as he would not let evil take over on earth. On Malacandra, Maleldil used Oyarsa; on Perelandra he used a man, Ransom; and on Thulcandra He became a man Himself. As Oyarsa told Ransom in Out of the Silent Planet, "We think that Maleldil would not give it (Thulcandra) up utterly to the Bent One, and there are stories among us that He has taken strange counsel and dared terrible things, wrestling with the Bent One in Thulcandra." (Silent Planet, p. 121.)

The events that took place to save Thulcandra from the Bent One were truly awesome and wonderful to the Perelandrans as well as the Malacandrans. In one of many discussions with Ransom, the Green Lady of Perelandra made some interesting revelations that will sound familiar to anyone who has any knowledge at all of the Christian faith:

in your world Maleldil first took Himself this form, the form of your race and mine. ...Since our Beloved became a man, how should Reason in any world take on another form? (Perelandra, p. 62-63.)

This is a clear reflection of the incarnation of Christ as it is revealed in Christian doctrine, since the belief that God became man in the form of Jesus Christ, who came to put mankind right with God by dying for its sins, is the central belief of the entire Christian faith.¹⁰ Or, as Ransom put it, "In our world those who know Maleldil at all believe that His coming down to us and being man is the central happening of all that happens." (Perelandra, p. 213.)

¹⁰ mere Christianity, p. 56-58.

Lewis's mere Christianity gives the reader a more specific picture of what he believed concerning Christ. To Lewis, Christ was the "first instance" of a new stage of evolution. He represents and is the first example of that voluntary transformation from "being creatures to being sons."¹¹ Lewis explains this further by quoting the Biblical passage which states that Christ is the Son of God, "begotten not made." One begets something of his own kind, but makes something of a "different kind." Thus, "what God begets is God; just as what man begets is man."¹² So, if one is to believe the Bible, Christ is the Son of God and is Himself God (Maleldil the Young and the Old One). But He became a creature, a man, to enable the process to work in reverse and to allow the creatures of God to become the sons of God.

Lewis explained Christ's relationship to God the Father in this way: "He (the Son) is the self-expression of the Father--what the Father has to say." This is somewhat comparable to the light coming from a lamp or the heat coming from a fire, but, according to Lewis, the Biblical explanation of the relationship is most accurate: "it is most of all like a Father and his Son (persons, not things) and the love, delight, and respect felt in such a relationship."¹³ Although the trilogy does not present this idea in great detail, it is this Father-Son

¹¹ mere Christianity, p. 185-186.

¹² mere Christianity, p. 138.

¹³ mere Christianity, p. 151.

relationship that is seen illustrated in the Old One and Maleldil the Young.

"The Third One," known to Christians as the Holy Spirit, embodies a concept a bit more difficult for most people to grasp than that which lies behind the first two persons of the Trinity. Lewis attempted to explain the Spirit's relationship to the two more familiar persons of the Trinity by extending the family analogy. When members of a family (whatever kind of "family" that may be) get together, said Lewis, one finds that a kind of family "spirit" exists (this could also be called "team spirit"). And "what grows out of the joint life of the Father and Son is a real Person, is in fact the Third of the three Persons who are God."¹⁴ So, the Holy Spirit, according to Lewis, can be spoken of as the "family spirit" that grows out of the Father-Son relationship between God, the Father and Christ. To relate all of this to the individual Christian, Lewis explained in mere Christianity that the Father is ahead of you (leading you); the Son is beside you; and the Spirit is inside you.¹⁵

Much of what the reader of the interplanetary trilogy finds out about Lewis's view of the Spirit is learned through the negative example of Dr. Weston in Perelandra. Approximately mid-way through the epic struggle between good and evil in that book, Dr. Weston changed his

¹⁴ mere Christianity, p. 152.

¹⁵ mere Christianity, p. 152.

tactics, trying to convince Ransom that they really were not on opposite sides. He told Ransom that he had undergone a change of heart:

Man in himself is nothing. The forward movement of Life--the growing spirituality--is everything. ...To spread spirituality, not to spread the human race, is henceforth my mission. ...I worked first for my self; then for science; then for humanity; but now at last for Spirit itself--I might say, borrowing language which will be more familiar to you, the Holy Spirit. (Perelandra, p. 91.)

All of this might easily sound very noble, very convincing, but as Weston went on telling Ransom about his newfound "religious view of life," Ransom's suspicions began to be aroused. Convincing as the argument sounded, he sensed something inconsistent or faulty in Weston's philosophy and eventually answered him in these words:

I don't know much about what people call the religious view of life. You see, I'm a Christian. And what we mean by the Holy Ghost is not a blind, inarticulate purposiveness. (Perelandra, p. 91.)

Now it becomes clearer that Ransom speaks for Christianity--not necessarily for religion--but for Christianity. And the type of Christianity that he expounds is the type that C.S. Lewis firmly believed.

Lewis believed that the Holy Spirit works within people guiding those decisions made "with the intention of pleasing God"¹⁶ and in doing this makes use of such outside influences as the Scripture, Church, friends, and books. Also, Lewis warned that sensations or feelings were not to be wholly trusted: "The real thing is the gift of the

¹⁶Kathryn Ann Lindskoog, C.S. Lewis: Mere Christian (Glendale, California: G/L Publications, 1973), p. 30.

Holy Spirit which can't usually be--perhaps not ever--experienced as a sensation or emotion."¹⁷ He certainly did not trust the emotion or sensation of the moment which expressed Weston's new "faith."

There has to be a stronger and more concrete base for faith. As Weston talked on about "pure spirit" and "a great, inscrutable Force" Ransom asked, "By the way, is it in any sense at all personal--is it alive?" (Perelandra, p. 92.) For Lewis the Holy Spirit, God, must not be just some vague, spiritual force. "God is indeed more personal than we can imagine." He is definite; he has "overwhelming life, energy, joy, and concreteness."¹⁸

¹⁷Lindskoog, p. 30-31.

¹⁸Lindskoog, p. 20-21.

CHAPTER III

THE DEVIL AND THE BENT ONE

If God is definite and concrete, an unavoidable person, His arch-enemy the Devil is equally so and the folly of denying his existence is almost as great as denying the existence of God. According to Lewis, people often make one of two basic errors about devils: one of these is to have "an excessive and unhealthy interest in them," and the other is not to believe in them at all.¹ In all events, it is necessary for the Christian to accept the existence of this very real, very formidable enemy or he will find that he has left himself vulnerable to attack. In each of the books of the trilogy, the Devil is a definite, concrete, and unavoidable reality.

The reader first meets Lewis's devil in Out of the Silent Planet. Here the Oyarsa of Malacandra, upon first meeting Ransom asked him:

Now tell me of Thulcandra. Tell me all. We know nothing since the day when the Bent One sank out of heaven into the air of your world, wounded in the very light of his light. (Silent Planet, p. 123.)

Earlier in that same exchange the Oyarsa attempted to explain to Ransom the Malacandran's knowledge of earth in these words:

Thulcandra is the world we do not know. It alone is outside the heaven, and no message comes from it. ...It was not always so. Once we knew the Oyarsa of your world--he was brighter and greater than I--and then we did not

¹Green & Hooper, p. 193.-

call it Thulcandra. It is the longest of all stories and the bitterest. He became bent. (Silent Planet, p. 120-121.)

Oyarsa went on to talk of the evil nature of this Bent Oyarsa and how Maleldil wrestled with him, eventually confining him on earth. Perhaps most important, from a Christian standpoint, was Oyarsa's conviction that Maleldil would not give up the earth to the devil.

The above quotation reveals two basic characteristics of Lewis's devil. Number one, he is bent and, number two, he is not equal to God/Maleldil. Because of their unfallen, innocent state, the Malacandrans had a difficult time explaining the Oyarsa of Thulcandra: they simply had no word for evil. As Edmund Fuller has said, "They grope for the concept through the word 'bent.'" Since being "bent" is never the first state of a thing, one knows there was a previous condition:

It contains various possibilities, though not certainties, of a future condition: restored to the original state, remaining the same, or becoming more bent to the point of being broken.²

Fuller also pointed out that a bent object will malfunction or not function at all.³ This image reflects the conventional literary portrayal of evil as seen in such characters as Shylock and the Hunchback of Notre Dame in whom physical infirmity is a signal of spiritual infirmity. This aspect of the Bent One's nature becomes more apparent as it is illustrated in the character of Weston whose particular brand of evil

²Edmund Fuller, "The Christian Spaceman: C.S. Lewis," in Books With Men Behind Them, (New York: Random House, 1962), p. 161.

³Fuller, p. 161.

will be explored later in this chapter.

In Perelandra Weston brings up the second basic characteristic of the Christian devil through the topic of dualism. In his own perverted way of making deception and lies sound almost exactly like truth, the devil (speaking through Weston) takes for granted the "fact" that dualism is not really possible:

It is a most interesting thing in popular religion, this tendency to fissiparate, to breed pairs of opposites: heaven and hell, God and Devil. I need hardly say that in my view no real dualism in the universe is admissible. ...Your Devil and your God are both pictures of the same force. (Perelandra, p. 93.)

The Christian would agree with Weston until that last sentence; yet even that sounds like a fairly reasonable conclusion when the actual truth of the matter is not closely examined and understood.

Lewis believed in the existence of devils, but not in Dualism; he believed in angels and believed that those angels who abused their free will became enemies of God or, in other words, devils. "Devil is the opposite of angel only as Bad Man is the opposite of Good Man."⁴ For Lewis, Satan is not the opposite of God, but rather, the opposite of say, for example, the archangel Michael. This is the conclusion of Kathryn Ann Lindskoog in her book C.S. Lewis: Mere Christian. There she says that Lewis believed that Satan is not the same as or equal to God: "the Dark Power is a parasite, a fallen angel, created by

⁴Green & Hooper, p. 192-193.

the Good power. ...Gcd and Satan are not twins."⁵

In mere Christianity, Lewis sums up his view of the dualistic image of God and the Devil:

And do you now begin to see why Christianity has always said that the devil is a fallen angel? That is not a mere story for the children. It is a real recognition of the fact that evil is a parasite, not an original thing. The powers that enable evil to carry on are powers given it by goodness.⁶

The Malacandran Oyarsa reflected this belief in his talk with Ransom, for it is there that the reader is told that the devil is the Oyarsa of earth; he is not a bent Maleldil--he is a bent Oyarsa. He may have been "brighter and greater" than other Oyarsas, but he was not a god.

Weston, the character that Edmund Fuller described as "the man-centered materialist to whom religion is superstition,"⁷ is revealed as an evil or, at least, corrupted person already in Out of the Silent Planet. His allegiance is clearly defined at the council of Meldilorn:

You say your Maleldil let all go dead. Other one, Bent One, he fight, jump, live--not all talkee-talkee. Me no care Maleldil. Like Bent One better: me on his side.
(Silent Planet, p. 140.)

This allegiance to the Bent One is brought to the ultimate conclusion in Perelandra where it becomes apparent that Weston freely abandons his humanity, is possessed by the Devil and eventually becomes Satan

⁵ Lindskoog, p. 24-25.

⁶ mere Christianity, p. 50.

⁷ Fuller, p. 154.

completely. Weston is used as a vehicle by an evil power:

Weston's body, travelling in a space-ship, had been the bridge by which something else had invaded Perelandra--whether that supreme and original evil whom in Mars they call The Bent One, or one of his lesser followers, made no difference. (Perelandra, p. 111-112.)

Weston's "desperately immoral outlook" provided just the "toe-hold" that Satan needed to carry out his plan of attack against Perelandra.⁸

According to critic Edmund Fuller, Weston "displays the most dangerous form of bentness. It is the corruption of great gifts."⁹ Just as the Devil had been "brighter and greater" before he became bent, Weston had been a brilliant physicist with great potential to do good. But as Fuller points out, in Perelandra Weston is completely taken over by the Devil: "the true Weston dies while his body remains an 'unman,' animated by the Power." This matter of demonic possession involves an invitation by the possessed person for, in Fuller's words, "God will not force Himself upon the soul who does not invite Him, and Satan cannot."¹⁰ Again it can be seen that the Devil is not all-powerful, but he will take full advantage of the opportunities given him by corrupt souls.

Lewis plainly tells the reader that Weston becomes more than just a "bad" person: "the Un-man was the representative of Hell." (Ferelandra, p. 141.) Critic Richard Purtill commented on the extent of

⁸Green & Hocper, p. 163.

⁹Fuller, p. 162-163.

¹⁰Fuller, p. 162-163.

Weston/the Un-man's evil saying that he was a terrible, despicable creature and quoting the following from Perelandra:

It did not defy goodness, it ignored it to the point of annihilation...The extremity of its evil had passed beyond all struggle into some state which bore a horrible similarity to innocence.¹¹

One can see that though Weston's evil had been brought to the ultimate extremity, it would not be easy to fight because of its amazing similarity to truth. Lewis commented in another of his works that for the Christian the difficulty does not so much lie in deciding which side to choose, as in determining which side is which.

Lewis's biographers, in comparing Perelandra to Milton's Paradise Lost, said that while Lewis used the same story from Genesis 3 that Milton:

his Eve is far more intelligent than Milton's; but then so is his Satan. Though Lewis's hero, Ransom, feels defenseless in the face of Satan's dizzying barrage of logic, illogic and half-truths, he eventually sees that the fallen archangel, by choosing to make Evil his 'Good', has come to regard intelligence 'simply and solely as a weapon,' which it had no more wish to employ in its off-duty hours than a soldier has to do bayonet practice when he is on leave. Thought was for it a device necessary to certain ends, but thought in itself did not interest it.¹²

Once again Satan is seen as a powerful and intelligent being not to be ignored or taken lightly. He is capable of making his corrupt thought sound very convincing and thus presents a very real and great danger

¹¹Purtill, p. 139.

¹²Green & Hooper, p. 194.

to those who have not chosen their allegiance and even to those who have definitely chosen the side of "Good."

In the above quotation Green and Hooper equate Weston, the Un-man with Satan. Through Perelandra the reader watches Weston change from a corrupt person, to a possessed person and finally to Satan himself. In mere Christianity Lewis stated that Satan's sin was putting himself first; wanting to be God.¹³ Early in Perelandra this characteristic and its results are seen in Weston as he speaks:

I am the Universe. I, Weston, am your God and your Devil.
I call that Force into me completely...

Then horrible things began happening. A spasm like that preceding a deadly vomit twisted Weston's face out of recognition. As it passed, for one second something like the old Weston reappeared--the old Weston, staring with eyes of horror and howling, 'Ransom, Ransom! For Christ's sake don't let them-----' (Perelandra, p. 96.)

But it was too late for Weston; his invitation had been accepted.

Weston drew farther and farther away from recognizable humanity and eventually reached a point at which there could be no more doubt for Ransom or for the reader as to his true identity:

The creature suddenly threw back its head and cried in a voice so loud that it seemed the golden sky-roof must break, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani.'

And the moment it had done so, Ransom felt certain that the sounds it had made were perfect Aramaic of the First Century. The Unman was not quoting; it was remembering. These were the very words spoken from the Cross, treasured through all those years in the burning memory of the outcast creature which had heard them. (Perelandra, p. 153.)

¹³ mere Christianity, p. 53.

In That Hideous Strength Satan is not personified in any one individual, but his presence may be recognized from time to time through archetypal symbols of Satanic presence such as the violent movement and the shrieking, animal-like laughter in the following scene involving Frost and Wither at the N.I.C.E. headquarters:

Suddenly in that silent room there was a crash. Who's Who had fallen off the table, swept onto the floor as, with sudden swift convulsive movement, the two old men lurched forward towards each other and sat swaying to and fro, locked in an embrace from which each seemed to be struggling to escape. And as they swayed and scrabbled with hand and nail, there arose, shrill and faint at first, but then louder and louder, a cackling noise that seemed in the end rather an animal than a senile parody of laughter.¹⁴

Even the men's names contribute to the picture of evil: frost can be deceptively beautiful, but it is cold and it can kill; "wither" suggests a physical deformity which, in turn, suggests spiritual deformity.

The frightful immediacy of all these images suggests that Lewis intended his characters and his readers to realize that "the dangers represented by the forces behind Weston are 'not temporal but eternal.'"¹⁵

Out of the Silent Planet and Perelandra both speak of the seriousness of the threat presented by Satan. The first book carries the following warning:

And we have also evidence--increasing almost daily--that 'Weston,' or the force or forces behind 'Weston,' will play a very important part in the events of the next few centuries

¹⁴C.S. Lewis, That Hideous Strength (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1965), p. 243. All subsequent references will be cited within the text.

¹⁵Purtill, p. 135.

and, unless we prevent them, a very disastrous one.
 ...The dangers to be feared are not planetary but
 cosmic, or at least solar, and they are not temporal
 but eternal. (Silent Planet, p. 153.)

Along with the warnings of the gravity of the situation, the responsibility of the Christian to act on his knowledge is stated: "unless we prevent them," great disasters will overtake the earth and even, perhaps, the entire universe.

Ransom warns his friend Lewis of the danger early in Perelandra as he prepares to tell the story of his adventures on Venus. He tells Lewis, "The black archon--our own bent Oyarsa--is meditating some sort of attack on Perelandra" (Perelandra, p. 23) and he indicates that both the Devil and God will use regular people like themselves to wage the upcoming battle. As he begins to sense the urgency of the message, Lewis questions Ransom, "This isn't child's play. Are you quite certain that this depraved Oyarsa of Tellus, really exists?" (Perelandra, p. 22.) One glance from Ransom was enough to completely convince Lewis that there was no doubt.

Lewis extended the commission to fight God's war with the Devil using Ransom's words:

Now your idea that ordinary people will never have to meet the Dark Eldila in any form except a psychological or moral form--as temptations or the like--is simply an idea that held good for a certain phase of the cosmic war; the phase of the great siege, the phase which gave to our planet its name of Thulcandra, the silent planet. But supposing that phase is passing? In the next phase it may be anyone's job to meet them. (Perelandra, p. 24.)

Lewis's Devil, "The Bent One," was no more a vague, spiritual force than was his God. As presented in the trilogy, the Devil is a

formidable enemy, a most concrete threat which each individual must be prepared to meet.

CHAPTER IV

GOOD AND EVIL

Christians believe that there is a "Dark Power" which, created by God, was originally good, but fell and became evil. The fall and the introduction of evil into the world also introduced a never-ending war between good, which from the beginning was God's intended state for the world, and the more recently arrived evil. This battle between the originally intended state of the world and its actual present state, according to C.S. Lewis in mere Christianity, is not a battle between independent powers, but rather, a civil war and "...we are living in a part of the universe occupied by the rebel. Enemy-occupied territory--that is what this world is."¹ God and the rebel Satan, both concrete persons in Lewis's theology, are, themselves, present in the world waging this war. But the conflict does not end there: the civil war goes beyond the two people originally involved. The presence of God and Satan is manifested in the world by the presence of good and evil in people. Good is an extension of God and evil is an extension of the Devil.

Critic Kathryn Ann Lindskoog in her book C.S. Lewis: Mere Christian said that "Lewis insisted above all else that God is good:" He is not evil in any way. This concept of God's complete goodness

¹ mere Christianity, p. 50-51.

has raised much controversy in the minds of many people, even Christians; when people see the great evil in the world it often becomes a struggle for them to understand how a good God could allow such things. They may reach the conclusion that if God is good, His idea of goodness must be very different from that of His people. But, according to Lindskoog, Lewis believed that God's goodness is not the opposite of His people's (and there is a fairly universal concept of good): the difference lies in that "His [goodness] is perfect and complete. We are children drawing crooked wheels; His goodness is a perfect circle."² Imperfect as a person's goodness may be, it is essentially a loving attempt to imitate God. Demonstrating this idea in That Hideous Strength, "Lewis gives a modern version of Augustine's 'two cities'--the Manor at St. Anne's, founded on love of God, and Belbury, founded on love of self."³

Since goodness is an imitation or extension of God, one's idea of goodness becomes very important because he is representing God, Himself. According to Lewis some people have the misconception that "provided you are 'good,' it does not matter being a fool." Actually, God wants people "to use what sense they have." They should try to be as clever as they can. "He wants us to be simple, single-minded, affectionate, and teachable, as good children are; but He also wants every bit of intelligence we have to be alert at its job, and in

² Lindskoog, p. 22-23.

³ Purtil, p. 94.

first class fighting trim."⁴

Goodness is not weakness and insipidity; it should be an admirable characteristic. As will be seen in the more complete description in Chapter Six of Lewis's "good" characters, the admirable characters are active: health and vigor are symbolic of moral goodness. But, as Dr. Richard L. Purtill said in Lord of the Elves and Eldils:

...the traits which make these characters basically attractive are just those which attract us to people in real life--concern, respect, and affection for others, humility, courage, openness to experience, and appreciation of all good things.⁵

Goodness also must have "overwhelming life, energy, joy and concreteness."⁶

In mere Christianity, Lewis said: "Goodness is, so to speak, itself: badness is only spoiled goodness."⁷ As seen in Chapter II, Satan is not original, he is only a fallen, "spoiled" angel. Perhaps because goodness is the original thing, it is more knowledgeable, more capable of complete understanding. Knowledge of good and evil is another of the basic topics of Christianity. To be able to do anything about evil, one must be able to recognize it. This ability, according to Lewis, rests with the "good": "Good people know about both good

⁴mere Christianity, p. 74-75.

⁵Purtill, p. 93.

⁶Lindskoog, p. 20-21.

⁷mere Christianity, p. 49.

and evil: bad people do not know about either."⁸ As a further explanation he said: "When a man is getting better, he understands more and more clearly the evil that is still left in him. When a man is getting worse, he understands his own badness less and less."⁹

Even though a person may be beginning to get better and beginning to understand and recognize evil, the task of facing evil is never an easy one. Choosing the "good" and living out that choice is not an easy task either. In Out of the Silent Planet Ransom struggled with the question "how came it that the instincts of the hrossa so closely resembled the unattained ideals of that far-divided species Man whose instincts were so deplorably different?" (Silent Planet, p. 74.) He had found creatures who were able to instinctively live the truly "good life" that even the best of humankind found to be a constant battle.

As a character in Perelandra Lewis expressed one of the difficulties to be met in choosing for the "good":

I felt sure that the creature was what we call 'good' but I wasn't sure whether I liked 'goodness' so much as I had supposed. This is a very terrible experience. As long as what you are afraid of is something evil, you may still hope that the good may come to your rescue. But suppose you struggle through to the good and find that is also dreadful? How if food itself turns out to be the very thing you can't eat, and home the very place you can't live, and your very comforter the person who makes you

⁸mere Christianity, p. 87.

⁹mere Christianity, p. 87.

uncomfortable? Then, indeed, there is no rescue possible: the last card has been played. (Perelandra, p. 19.)

Goodness may not necessarily fit the warm, comfortable, reassuring image that a person expects of it. And in finding his long-held expectations to be unfulfillable, he may very understandably feel empty or cheated and begin to experience the same disturbing doubt felt by those who do not understand how a good God could allow evil in the world. It is not a simple matter to part with a cherished image.

Another matter that complicates a person's choice of "good" is that it does not seem consistent. There is no easy set of specific rules that provide all the answers, that are specifically applicable to every person, every situation, and every place. The Green Lady of Perelandra had to deal with this problem when she compared what she learned of Thulcandra from Ransom to what she knew of her own world. On Perelandra Maleldil had expressly forbidden living on the solid land, while on Thulcandra everyone lived on solid land. In fact, as Ransom said, "The very thought of a world which was all sea like yours would make my people unhappy and afraid." (Perelandra, p. 75.) It was a great struggle for the Green Lady to take in this new bit of knowledge, especially since she had only recently begun to understand what "good" meant for her personally:

First to have learned that I walk from good to good with my own feet...that was a stretch enough. But now it seems that good is not the same in all worlds, that Maleldil has forbidden in one what He allows in another. (Perelandra, p. 75.)

Edmund Fuller, in summarizing the reasons for Perelandra's effectiveness, touched on what may be the underlying problem of all the problems one encounters in trying to be "good." In his article "After the Moon Landings: A Further Report on the Christian Spaceman C.S. Lewis," Fuller said that in the war between God and the Devil, the hard thing for some (perhaps most) people is not so much choosing sides, but figuring out which side is which (see Chapter III). The problem in identifying God's side is what gives drama and immediacy to Perelandra: "It has not diminished in value with progress in space exploration, it has increased. The technology has nothing to do with it, but the value questions have everything to do with it."¹⁰ In Perelandra the reader sees fictional characters facing the same basic questions of value that he has to face himself. How is one to determine when he is seeing actual goodness and when he is merely being cleverly deceived by Satan. The "good" can be so frightening and the "evil" can be so attractive.

The Green Lady of Perelandra did eventually realize that what "the Un-man" was trying to get her to do was go against God's will or, in other words, turn to evil. To her state of innocence and purity the very idea was preposterous:

How can I step out of His will save into something that cannot be wished? Shall I start trying not to love Him--

¹⁰ Edmund Fuller, "After the Moon Landings: A Further Report on the Christian Spaceman C.S. Lewis," in Myth Allegory and Gospel, ed. John Warwick Montgomery (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1974), p. 87-88.

or the King--or the beasts? It would be like trying to walk on water or swim through islands. Shall I try not to sleep or to drink or to laugh? I thought your words had a meaning. But now it seems they have none. To walk out of His will is to walk into nowhere. (Perelandra, p. 116.)

Again the reader sees a being whose instincts closely resemble human-kind's unattained ideals. The Christian, the person who is enough "better" to recognize the evil in himself, at least, would agree that his life consists mainly of trying to do God's will. To knowingly go against that will is unthinkable; yet it is often, if not constantly, done.

The Green Lady's words also bring out an important characteristic of evil and that is that evil is totally apart from God. As was seen earlier, according to Lewis's theology, God is in no way evil; therefore, anything evil has no part with God. In their Biography Green and Hooper cite an example of how Lewis illustrated this idea in another of his works, The Screwtape Letters. In advising his junior devil, Screwtape points out that the size of the sin doesn't make that much difference; the important thing is that man is separated from God.¹¹

Evil means separation from God and separation from God is signaled by a loss of humanity. Brought to utter humility and shame for his race after Weston had shot the hrossa, Hyoi, Ransom tried to explain: "We are all a bent race. We have come here to bring evil on Malacandra. We are only half hnau...." (Silent Planet, p. 81.) All of humankind

¹¹Green & Hooper, p. 195.

is inherently evil and, thus, somewhat less than human, less than what humanity was originally meant to be.

In Lord of the Elves and Eldils, Richard Purtill uses That Hideous Strength as an example of Lewis's loss-of-humanity idea. He said that according to Lewis, when one cuts himself off from God, he loses everything good. "The evil characters in Strength represent the end result of this process." They have lost much of their humanity; they have become mere caricatures. "Lewis's attitude towards them is that very few human beings ever actually reach such an extreme stage of separation from goodness, but it is possible for them to do so."¹² Lewis uses the extreme example to point out what is possible. The seeds of this total loss of humanity are found in each person who ignores God's will. It is important for each person to recognize what is beginning in him and put a stop to it before it is too late.

Purtill also cites an example from Perelandra which illustrates the essential originality and intelligence expected of "good" and the lack of humanity which is characteristic of "evil":

The 'bent' (evil) chief angel of our world (Satan) must also act through a representative; but whereas Ransom is left on his own (even having to partly figure out the problem and its solution for himself), Satan's representative, formerly the scientist Weston, is now a mere puppet manipulated by Satan, his own personality superseded and almost destroyed.¹³

¹²Purtill, p. 82.

¹³Purtill, p. 78.

The presence of God in this world is reflected in the "good" and their independent actions, and the presence of Satan is seen in the "evil" and their manipulated actions.

In Perelandra, Weston provides the reader with Lewis's clearest illustration of the progression of evil in a human being. Weston eventually loses his identity as a man and becomes merely an "un-man." In his battle with Weston's evil, Ransom came to realize that Weston had lost his humanity and began to feel more pity than hatred for him. He understood that "Weston was not now a man at all. The forces which had begun, perhaps years ago, to eat away his humanity had now completed their work." (Perelandra, p. 130.)

This process and a hint at its end result are already seen in Out of the Silent Planet. Here, Cyarsa speaking to Weston, explains some of what evil can do to a person:

He (Maleldil) has left you this one because a bent hnau can do more evil than a broken one. He has only bent you; but this Thin One (Devine) who sits on the ground he has broken, for he has left him nothing but greed. He is now only a talking animal and in my world he could do no more evil than an animal. If he were mine I would unmake his body for the hnau in it is already dead. But if you were mine I would try to cure you. (Silent Planet, p. 139.)

In Perelandra Weston, too, reaches the point where he can no longer be cured:

It did not defy goodness, it ignored it to the point of annihilation. Ransom perceived that he had never before seen anything but half-hearted attempts at evil. This creature was whole-hearted. The extremity of its evil had passed beyond all struggle into some state which bore a horrible similarity to innocence. It was beyond vice as the Lady was beyond virtue. (Perelandra, p. 110-111.)

Weston had become totally evil and in doing so had lost all of his humanity.

One of the evils that the reader sees in Weston and the other evil characters of the trilogy is pride. Lewis's opinion of pride is clearly seen in the following quotation from mere Christianity:

According to Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. ...it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind.¹⁴

Lewis also said, "It (Pride) comes direct from Hell. It is purely spiritual: consequently it is far more subtle and deadly."¹⁵ It is Weston's pride, his desire to become a kind of god that makes him so dangerously evil. He is cunning and subtle just as the snake in the garden was cunning and subtle.

Wanting to be like God (or Maleldil), attempting to assume power which no mere human being was meant to have, is the essence of pride. This most basic vice is seen in several forms in the trilogy. It is at times spoken of as man's attempt to be a "little Oyarsa" or a "little Maleldil." In the following quotation from Out of the Silent Planet Oyarsa of Malacandra explains to Ransom how Satan has taken a perfectly honorable human virtue and through his subtle deceptions has made it into a sin of pride to which human beings have become enslaved:

I see now how the lord of the silent world has bent you.
There are laws that all hnau know, of pity and straight

¹⁴ mere Christianity, p. 109.

¹⁵ mere Christianity, p. 112.

dealing and shame and the like, and one of these is the love of kindred. He has taught you to break all of them except this one, which is not one of the greatest laws; this one he has bent till it becomes folly and has set it up, thus bent, to be a little, blind Oyarsa in your brain. And now you can do nothing but obey it,...

(Silent Planet, p. 138.)

As Ransom told the sorns of Malacandra about the evil of earth they puzzled over how such conditions could exist and one of their number found the answer to be the sin of pride:

They (the sorns) were astonished at what he (Ransom) had to tell them of human history--of war, slavery and prostitution.

'It is because they have no Oyarsa,' said one of the pupils.

'It is because every one of them wants to be a little Oyarsa himself,' said Augray. (Silent Planet, p. 102.)

In his temptation of the Green Lady, Weston uses the subtle danger of pride as one of his main weapons. He presents pride as if it were a desirable characteristic:

Their (the women of earth) minds run ahead of what Maleldil has told them. They do not need to wait for Him to tell them what is good, but know it for themselves as He does. They are, as it were, little Maleldils. (Perelandra, p. 106.)

This is very similar to the account in Genesis Chapter three of the temptation of Eve by the serpent ("more subtil than any beast of the field"). He tempted her by telling her that disobeying God's command not to eat of "the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden" would not mean her death, but would bring her knowledge equal to God's:

For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. (Genesis 3:5)

It was pride that caused Eve's fall and pride which almost led the Green Lady of Perelandra to fall into sin.

Dr. Weston was the slave of that form of pride discussed earlier which involves the love of kindred. Weston became obsessed with the idea that the human race must continue at all costs; his mission on Malacandra was to take over that world so the human race would have a place to go should it ever become necessary to vacate the earth. Ransom attempted to explain this philosophy, so foreign to the innocent Malacandrans, for their Oyarsa. He told them that Devine was no real danger because his main motivation was greed:

But the other means evil to you. I think he would destroy all your people to make room for our people; and then he would do the same with other worlds again. He wants our race to last for always, I think, and he hopes they will leap from world to world...always going to a new sun when an old one dies...or something like that. (Silent Planet, p. 123.)

Oyarsa's amazed reply was, "Is he wounded in his brain?" Such extreme pride was incomprehensible to him in his closeness to Maleldil's will. Earlier in Out of the Silent Planet Augray the sorn reflected Maleldil's will in this matter in his reply to one of Ransom's questions. As they viewed the barren harandra (the planet's surface) Ransom asked why Oyarsa had not stopped its destruction and Augray replied, "...a world is not made to last forever, much less a race; that is not Maleldil's way." (Silent Planet, p. 100.) Perhaps the reason that it is not Maleldil's way is that too much permanence would inflate man's idea of his own importance to the point that he would no longer serve God as an "immeasurably superior" being. Edmund Fuller believed that this

form of pride and its consequences are the main point of the trilogy:

In the trilogy, Lewis focuses attention upon forms of the sin of pride: the desire to affirm man as God or godlike, the ambition to dominate the universe, to supersede other species, to live forever.¹⁶

An evil closely connected to pride is selfishness. Selfishness means being ultimately concerned with one's own good no matter what that might mean to others. In telling the Horssa about evil men, Ransom said, "They would kill even a hnau, knowing it to be hnau, if they thought its death would serve them." (Silent Planet, p. 82.) According to Richard Purtill, "the pride, selfishness, and cruelty illustrated in Lewis's evil characters all arise from the fatal choice of self instead of God."¹⁷ Earlier in this chapter it was seen that in That Hideous Strength the evil society was founded on love of self, while the good society was founded on love of God.

In mere Christianity Lewis explained that it is man's nature to be self-centered and not want to be around anything that makes it ("the natural life in each of us") feel small:

It is afraid of the light and air of the spiritual world, just as people who have been brought up to be dirty are afraid of a bath. And in a sense it is quite right. It knows that if the spiritual life gets hold of it, all its self-centredness and self-will are going to be killed and it is ready to fight tooth and nail to avoid that.¹⁸

¹⁶ Books With Men Behind Them, p. 161.

¹⁷ Purtill, p. 94.

¹⁸ mere Christianity, p. 154.

It is understandable that Weston was uncomfortable around the Oyarsa of Malacandra and it is no wonder that he would hold nothing back in his battle with Ransom on Perelandra.

In Lewis's trilogy the reader can see the pride, selfishness, and lack of humanity that are evidence of evil, which, in turn, is evidence of Satan's presence in the world. But the world has not been left to the total control of Satan; God is also present in the compassionate intelligence and originality of goodness.

CHAPTER V

HEAVEN AND HELL

The final result of God and the "good " is heaven and the final result of Satan and the "evil" is hell. According to C.S. Lewis's theology, everyone chooses one or the other of these goals; there is no middle ground. In mere Christianity Lewis said that with every choice a person makes throughout his life, he is making himself "a heavenly creature" or "a hellish creature:"

either into a creature that is in harmony with God, and with other creatures, and with itself, or else into one that is in a state of war and hatred with God, and with its fellow creatures, and with itself. To be the one kind of creature is heaven: that is, it is joy and peace and knowledge and power. To be the other means madness, horror, idiocy, rage, impotence and eternal loneliness.

Heaven, then, is seen as the ultimate presence of God. In a sermon delivered at the Church of St. Mary the Virgin on Sunday, 8 June 1941, Lewis said that "for those who begin with a vision of God and who try to obey him, Heaven turns out to be the consummation of their earthly discipleship." And he spoke of the "joys of the redeemed soul's union with God."² In other words, Heaven will be the culmination of the process of becoming like Christ,³ the final result toward

¹mere Christianity, p. 86.

²Green & Hooper, p. 204.

³Lindskoog, p. 91.

which all things have been striving since the beginning of time.

Lewis uses dance or the "Great Dance" as a symbol of heaven. As Edmund Fuller put it, the Great Dance "is the ultimate order and purpose of all created things."⁴ All beings, not just those analogous to man, are involved. "It (Lewis's universe) is the whole created realm of God, harmonious in the Great Dance, which is the motion of galaxies and stars and of all things, great and small, atom and organism."⁵ As was seen in Chapter II, Lewis referred to God, Himself, as a dance so it is fitting that heaven is also seen as a dance. It is of vital importance for the individual Christian to take his or her part in this whole process of God, of becoming Christlike, and thus living up to the standards of the name Christian:

The whole dance, or drama, or pattern of the three-Personal life is to be played out in each one of us: or (putting it the other way around) each one of us has got to enter that pattern, take his place in that dance.⁶

Lewis also dealt with the idea of the heavenly dance in The Problem of Pain. There he commented that earthly pain and pleasure are a part of the beginning of the dance, but that both "sink almost out of sight" as we get closer to the "uncreated rhythm:"

There is joy in the dance, but it does not exist for the sake of joy. It does not even exist for the sake of good, or of love. It is Love Himself, and Good Himself, and

⁴ Books With Men Behind Them, p. 168.

⁵ Books With Men Behind Them, p. 153.

⁶ mere Christianity, p. 153.

therefore happy. It does not exist for us, but we for it.⁷

Great joy will be one of the rewards for the Dance, since it means becoming a part of God or, in other words, the body of Christ. The pains of this world will disappear when all creatures, in complete selflessness, join in existing for the purpose of God.

In Perelandra the Great Dance becomes a major symbol of ultimate glory and the subject of both explanation and praise at the final, great council held before Ransom's departure. One of the eldila (Ransom could not tell where the voice was coming from) gave the following speech explaining this intricate union and touching on the importance of each individual's part in it:

In the plan of the Great Dance plans without number interlock, and each movement becomes in its season the breaking into flower of the whole design to which all else had been directed. Thus each is equally at the centre and none are there by being equals, but some by giving place and some by receiving it, the small things by their smallness and the great by their greatness, and all the patterns linked and looped together by the unions of a kneeling with a sceptred love. Blessed be He! (Perelandra, p. 217.)

Being part of a plan (in the case of the trilogy, God's plan) gives the human character stability and thus comfort, as the reader can see in the example of Dr. Ransom:

It was strange that the utter loneliness through all these hours had not troubled him so much as one night of it on Malacandra. He thought the difference lay in this, that mere chance, or what he took for chance, had turned him adrift in Mars, but here he knew that

⁷C.S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. 1962), p. 153.

he was part of a plan. He was no longer unattached, no longer on the outside. (Perelandra, p. 50.)

The rhythm, harmony, and pattern of the Dance provide the reader with a picture of both the joy and the stability that will come with heaven's ultimate union with God.

In mere Christianity and in each of the books of the trilogy, Lewis touched on the role that the physical senses and desires will play in the heavenly plan. He stated that many people find it difficult to want heaven: first, because their minds are trained to be fixed on this world and second, because people do not recognize the desire when they have it. "Most people, if they have learned to look into their own hearts, would know that they do want, and want acutely, something that cannot be had in this world." For example:

The longings which arise in us when we first fall in love, or first think of some foreign country, or first take up some subject that excites us, are longings which no marriage, no travel, no learning, can really satisfy.⁸

Lewis reasoned that "creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists" and he goes on to suggest the possibility that earthly pleasures are only supposed to arouse, not satisfy these desires. In other words, they are merely a hint of "the real thing."⁹

In the trilogy Lewis illustrated that the physical longings and corresponding satisfactions experienced in this life can give a person a

⁸ mere Christianity, p. 119.

⁹ mere Christianity, p. 120.

small beginning of a picture of Heaven. At different points in the trilogy he showed the characters experiencing common human desires which are easy for the reader to identify with or, at least, to recognize. For example, Mark Studdock, in That Hideous Strength, begins to sense the stability and happiness of his part in the Great Dance when his imprisonment at Belbury finally triggers his choice for the good:

As the desert first teaches men to love water, or as absence first reveals affection, there rose up against this background of the sour and the crooked some kind of vision of the sweet and the straight. Something else--something he vaguely called the 'Normal'--apparently existed. He had never thought about it before. But there it was--solid, massive, with a shape of its own, almost like something you could touch, or eat, or fall in love with. It was all mixed up with Jane and fried eggs and soap and sunlight and the rooks cawing at Cure Hardy and the thought that somewhere outside, daylight was going on at that moment. He was not thinking in moral terms at all; or else (what is much the same thing) he was having his first deeply moral experience. (Strength, p. 299.)

Earlier in the book, Mark's wife Jane had come to a somewhat similar point in her "spiritual life." In the presence of the transfigured Ransom, she experienced "a kind of deep calm: and for a time "was hardly conscious of anything but peace and well-being, the comfort of her own body in the chair where she sat, and a sort of clear beauty in the colours and proportions of the room." (Strength, p. 146.) For both Mark and Jane, the first essentially "religious" experience was revealed in very concrete, earthly terms.

In Out of the Silent Planet Ransom's return to earth was marked by very vividly earthly desires: "Wild, animal thirst for life, mixed with homesick longing for the free airs and the sights and smells of

earth--for grass and meat and beer and tea and the human voice--awoke in him." (Silent Planet, p. 148.) When Ransom awoke on earth, his desires were most warmly and completely satisfied:

He awoke in almost complete darkness in the midst of a loud continuous noise, which he could not at first identify. It reminded him of something--something he seemed to have heard in a previous existence. It was a prolonged drumming noise close above his head. Suddenly his heart gave a great leap.

'Oh God,' he sobbed. 'Oh God! It's rain.'

He was on earth. The air was heavy and stale about him, but the choking sensations he had been suffering were gone. ...He found the manhole and slithered, drinking great draughts of air, down the outside of the sphere; slipped in mud, blessed the smell of it, and at last raised the unaccustomed weight of his body to its feet. He stood in pitch-black night under torrential rain. With every pore of his body he drank it in; with every desire of his heart he embraced the smell of the field about him--a patch of his native planet where grass grew, where cows moved, where presently he would come to hedges and a gate.

He had walked about half an hour when a vivid light behind him and a strong, momentary wind informed him that the space-ship was no more. He felt very little interest. He had seen dim lights, the lights of men, ahead. He contrived to get into a lane, then into a road, then into a village street. A lighted door was open. There were voices from within and they were speaking English. There was a familiar smell. He pushed his way in, regardless of the surprise he was creating, and walked to the bar.

'A pint of bitter, please,' said Ransom. (Silent Planet, p. 150-151.)

The fulfillment that Ransom felt is, of course, only a shadow of the "real" fulfillment of heaven. Such mundane pleasures will undergo a kind of transformation or, as Lewis speaking as a character in Perelandra, said, "...in Ransom's opinion the present function and appetites of the body would disappear, not because they were atrophied but because they were, as he said 'engulfed.'" (Perelandra, p. 32.) They would disappear because the satisfaction of Heaven would transcend them.

Ransom began to feel the effect of this transcendence over earthly appetites when he experienced the heavenly pleasures of one of the floating islands of Perelandra:

The smells in the forest were beyond all that he had ever conceived. To say that they made him feel hungry and thirsty would be misleading; almost, they created a new kind of hunger and thirst, a longing that seemed to flow over from the body into the soul and which was a heaven to feel. (Perelandra, p. 41.)

The glory and joy of heaven are dimly hinted at in the pleasures of this life, but they will go far beyond what is in a person's power to describe. Ransom expressed the frustration of his inability to describe heavenly experiences in the following exchange with Lewis upon his return from Perelandra:

I (Lewis) was questioning him (Ransom) on the subject--which he doesn't often allow--and had incautiously said, 'Of course I realize it's all rather too vague for you to put into words,' when he took me up rather sharply, for such a patient man, by saying, 'On the contrary, it is words that are vague. The reason why the thing can't be expressed is that it's too definite for language.' (Perelandra, p. 33.)

In first Corinthians 13, verse 12, the Apostle Paul said it this way: "What we see now is like the dim image in a mirror; then it will be complete, as complete as God's knowledge of me." In other words, the pleasures one experiences now are comparable to Heaven, as a person's reflection in a mirror is comparable to the living, breathing person.

There are certain archetypal images used in the Bible and in other literature to help the reader put together a picture of Heaven to which he can relate. According to Lewis, Biblical imagery of heaven is symbolic

of things in the present that most nearly suggest certain states of being. For example, music suggests ecstasy and infinity; crowns suggest splendour and power; and gold suggests timelessness and preciousness.¹⁰ In the trilogy, Lewis uses laughter and light as well to suggest the glory and joy of heaven. Lewis believed that all of this imagery was effective because it appealed to certain universal longings or "the romantic yearning after a transcendent joy"¹¹ which was a favorite theme of his.

In Out of the Silent Planet Ransom's experience with laughter is one of Lewis's illustrations of joy. On the way to the council of Meldilorn Ransom was led up to the planet's surface, known in Malcandrian language as the harandra:

He (Ransom) was on the very frontier of that heaven he had had known in the spaceship, and rays that the air-enveloped worlds cannot taste were once more at work upon his body. He felt the old lift of the heart, the soaring solemnity, the sense, at once sober and ecstatic, of life and power offered in unasked and unmeasured abundance. If there had been air enough in his lungs he would have laughed aloud. (Silent Planet, p. 99.)

Once at the gathering of Meldilorn, Ransom discovered that the bringing together of Maleldil's creatures brought about a "comic spirit:"

He (Ransom) learned more of Malacandrian humour and of the noises that expressed it in this one night than he had learned during the whole of his life on the strange planet hitherto. Indeed, nearly all Malacandrian conversations in which he had yet taken part had been grave. Apparently the comic spirit arose chiefly from the meeting of the different kinds

¹⁰ mere Christianity, p. 121.

¹¹ Green & Hooper, p. 188.

of hnau. (Silent Planet, p. 117.)

In this example one can see the closeness in meaning between God and heaven. Lewis attempted to explain the Trinity with a family analogy: there is God, the Father and God, the Son; and the third person arises as the "family spirit" that "grows out of the joint life of the Father and the Son." And at the council of Meldilorn, the meeting of various creatures who are a part of Maleldil's one universe gives rise to a similar "spirit."

Light is another important symbol of Heaven. Heaven's constancy and clarity are reflected in Ransom's observations of "space" in Out of the Silent Planet: "Awe fell upon him: there were no mornings here, no evenings, and no night--nothing but the changeless noon." (Silent Planet, p. 29.) And later, Ransom's reaction to these conditions provides an illustration of the desirability of heaven:

Often he (Ransom) rose after only a few hours' sleep to return, drawn by an irresistible attraction, to the regions of light; he could not cease to wonder at the noon which always awaited you however early you went to seek it. (Silent Planet, p. 31.)

Light illuminates and brings joy as well as understanding and God's light is constant, never-changing.

Jane's initial meeting with Ransom in That Hideous Strength is described in terms of some of the archetypal images already discussed. When Jane entered the "throne room" at St. Anne's and faced Ransom it seemed to her that all the light in the room ran "towards the gold hair and the gold beard of the wounded man:"

The voice also seemed to be like sunlight and gold. Like gold not only as gold is beautiful but as it is heavy: like sunlight

not only as it falls gently on English walls in autumn but as it beats down on the jungle or the desert to engender life or destroy it. (Strength, p. 142-143.)

The Manor at St. Anne's housed what Lewis presented as a society founded on the love of God and, as such it is a symbol of heaven. Jesus, Himself, in John Chapter 14, verse 2 used a similar symbol when He said, "There are many rooms in my Father's house, and I am going to prepare a place for you." Jane's impression of St. Anne's suggests that it is to be seen as a reflection of our "Father's house:"

The house, larger than Jane had at first supposed, was warm and very silent, and after so many days spent in fog, the autumn sunlight, falling on soft carpets and on walls, seemed to her bright and golden. (Strength, p. 141.)

The unexpected largeness, warmth, and golden light of the mansion reflect the freedom, comfort, and knowledge to be had in Heaven.

The ecstasy and infinity of Heaven are hinted at through the symbolic use of music in the trilogy. Ransom described the King of Pere-landra as a self-portrait of the "Holy One" using these words: "Nay, the very beauty of it lay in the certainty that it was a copy, like and not the same, an echo, a rhyme, an exquisite reverberation of the un-created music prolonged in a created medium." (Perelandra, p. 206.)

Heaven will be a place or perhaps a state of ultimate triumph over evil and this too is expressed in Perelandra in terms of music as the reader sees Ransom finally achieving victory over the un-man:

At the same moment he was conscious of a sense of triumph. But it was not he who was triumphant. The whole darkness about him rang with victory. He started and half raised himself. Had there been any actual sound? Listening hard he could hear nothing but the low murmurous noise of warm wind and gentle swell. The suggestions of music must have

been from within. But as soon as he lay down again he felt assured that it was not. From without, most certainly from without, but not by the sense of hearing, festal revelry and dance and splendour poured into him--no sound, yet in such fashion that it could not be remembered or thought of except as music. It was like having a new sense. It was like being present when the morning stars sang together. (Perelandra, p. 107.)

Music is, again, used as an image as the speeches of the eldila celebrate the triumph of good:

The speeches followed one another--if, indeed, they did not all take place at the same time--like the parts of a music into which all five of them had entered as instruments or like a wind blowing through five trees that stand together on a hilltop. (Perelandra, p. 214.)

Lewis brings all of his imagery of heaven together in the description of the arrival of Glund-Oyarsa (the King of Kings, but not to be confused with "his Maker") at the final gathering of St. Anne's in celebration of the victory of Logres:

Before the other angels a man might sink: before this he might die, but if he lived at all, he would laugh. If you had caught one breath of the air that came from him, you would have felt yourself taller than before. Though you were a cripple, your walk would have become stately: though a beggar, you would have worn your rags magnanimously. Kingship and power and festal pomp and courtesy shot from him as sparks fly from an anvil. The pealing of bells, the blowing of trumpets, the spreading out of banners, are means used on earth to make a faint symbol of his quality. It was like a long sunlit wave, creamy-crested and arched with emerald, that comes on nine feet tall, with roaring and with terror and unquenchable laughter. It was like the first beginning of music in the halls of some King so high and at some festival so solemn that a tremor akin to fear runs through young hearts when they hear it. (Strength, p. 326-327.)

Here the reader sees all the healing power; the overwhelming, timeless splendour; and ecstatic joy that are, according to C.S. Lewis's theology,

the signals of ultimate union with God.

The only alternative to heaven is ultimate separation from God--Hell. However, according to Lewis's theology, a dualistic view of heaven and hell is no more admissable than a dualistic view of God and the Devil.

In The Problem of Pain he said:

...hell was not made for man. It is in no sense parallel to heaven: it is 'the darkness outside,' the outer rim where being fades away in nonentity.¹²

The example of Weston has already illustrated the "nonentity" of evil which includes, among other things, the loss of humanity characteristic of a soul on its way to Hell. Lewis said that the lost souls in Hell are "banished from humanity. ...to have been a man--to be an ex-man or 'damned ghost'--would presumably mean to consist of a will utterly centered in its self and passions utterly uncontrolled by the will."¹³ It was Weston's pride that eventually turned him into the "Un-man." When Ransom was fighting Weston he could not even tell if he had been fighting Weston or someone or something else:

There was, no doubt, a confusion of persons in damnation: what Pantheists falsely hoped of Heaven bad men really received in Hell. They were melted down into their Master, as a lead soldier slips down and loses his shape in the ladle held over the gas ring. (Perelandra, p. 173.)

Weston also provides the reader with an illustration of Lewis's philosophy on the vital matter of the soul's harmony or war with God. Weston's great sin of Pride, his obsession with making the human race last forever,

¹²The Problem of Pain, p. 127.

¹³The Problem of Pain, p. 125-126.

separated him from God and eventually brought him down to Hell. Lewis believed that "a preoccupation with immortality can,...., corrupt our thoughts about Heaven and Hell--meaningless apart from the presence or absence of God--and corrupt us whenever we treat mere 'survival' as an end in itself."¹⁴

The corrupted person will eventually lose his being and identity in the misery of Hell; it is the end result in the process of becoming truly possessed by the Devil. According to Kathryn Ann Lindskoog, "The idea of the Devil possessing a human mind and body was the horror of the unforgettably beautiful space novel Perelandra."¹⁵

Lindskoog has said that according to Lewis's theology, Hell will be a place of clarity, of "anguish and bewilderment," of "despair, horror, and astonishment." The joyful laughter of Heaven will be disgusting and a "direct insult to the realism, dignity, and austerity of Hell."¹⁶ Lewis also called Hell a place of "complete degradation and misery."¹⁷ In That Hideous Strength he illustrated the bewilderment and misery found in Hell with a picture of the "dog-eat-dog" society headquartered at Belbury, where everyone was out to get everyone else. Mark Studdock, for example, was "bamboozled by Wither, betrayed by Feverstone, snubbed by Steele, used by Cosser, bullied and blackmailed by Hardcastle, and

¹⁴Green & Hooper, p. 109.

¹⁵Lindskoog, p. 104.

¹⁶Lindskoog, p. 103.

¹⁷Green & Hooper, p. 116.

'trained' by Frost."¹⁸

A place of such anguish would seemingly not be very desirable; yet, according to Lewis, those who are in Hell have chosen it. For example, in That Hideous Strength, both Frost and Wither have the chance to be saved, but reject it.¹⁹ Wither was unmoved by the knowledge that he was lost. Lewis believed that in the last moments before damnation a person sees what's happening, but some "fatal lethargy" seems more important than

the choice between total joy and total destruction. With eyes wide open, seeing that the endless terror is just about to begin and yet (for the moment) unable to feel terrified, he watches passively, not moving a finger for his own rescue, while the last links with joy and reason are severed, and drowsily sees the trap close upon his soul. So full of sleep are they at the time when they leave the right way. (Strength, p. 353.)

The individual is, then, in a sense, responsible for his own damnation: he makes choices all his life that are leading him to that end and when the final time comes he is so blinded that he can no longer really see what he is doing and, thus, makes the final, fatal choice.

In That Hideous Strength, Hell is represented by Belbury which, in turn, is seen as a city shrouded in a fog that disguises its obscenities, a "dismal, twilight city" founded on love of self. Lewis uses this selfishness, as well as other qualities seen in Belbury and its residents essentially in opposition to Heaven, to illustrate his own view of Hell. As Kathryn Ann Lindskoog has said:

¹⁸Purtill, p. 85.

¹⁹Lindskoog, p. 105-106.

...he (Lewis) portrayed Hell as a dismal twilight city in which people, consumed with self, moved light years away from each other. Everything there is rather shoddy and insubstantial, no one has joy, but all can have possessions galore by wishing for them. As one cynical resident put it, it's a flop, just like everything else he ever visited. He was led to expect red fire and devils and all sorts of interesting people like Henry VIII sizzling on grids²⁰ but when you get there it is just like any other town.

Too literal an interpretation of the typical imagery of Hell can lull people into expectations for which they will find only an eternity of disappointment. These images must always be looked at in the light of the symbols or conditions that they were meant to suggest. According to Lewis, the three main symbols or conditions of Hell are: 1) punishment; 2) destruction; and 3) privation, exclusion, or banishment. Fire is used as an image because it suggests "torment and destruction,"²¹ not because it is interesting or exciting.

In each of the books of the trilogy the reader can find typical images of Hell that reflect the conditions mentioned above. For example, early in Out of the Silent Planet the evil of Weston and Devine and their plans is hinted at in the symbolic use of darkness:

For one glorious moment the door was open, the fresh night air was in his face, he saw the reassuring stars and even his own pack lying in the porch. Then a heavy blow fell on his head. Consciousness faded, and the last thing of which he was aware was the grip of strong hands pulling him back into the dark passage, and the sound of a closing door. (Silent Planet, p. 20.)

²⁰Lindsay, p. 106.

²¹The Problem of Pain, p. 124-125.

It was thus that Ransom was dragged into the darkness and closed off from the freedom of fresh air and light and from the reassuring stability of concrete, familiar objects. He became the victim of optical illusions as his "normal" sight was altered and in his drugged state, he even became the victim of auditory illusions. In a foreshadowing of the Babel-like confusion of tongues incident in That Hideous Strength, Ransom thought he heard Devine "saying that he was industrial all down both sides but could never get an experiment to fit him in London." (Silent Planet, p. 17.) Such confusion is indicative of the abnormality of Hell.

After Ransom's conclusive victory over the Un-man, he made a journey through the underground regions of Perelandra in what is perhaps a reflection of Dante's Inferno and perhaps a reflection of Christ's "descent into hell." In any case, Ransom's journey provides the reader with much of the typical imagery of Hell. Ransom remembered the un-man saying that these regions were "all beautiful on the surface, but down inside--darkness, heat, horror, and stink," and he found this to be an accurate description. After Ransom had travelled for some time through this "world of darkness," "the starvation for light became very painful" and he became "unpleasantly hot." He was given some hope by the sight of a "very dim, tiny, quivering luminosity, slightly red in colour," but upon reaching the supposed light he discovered that it was the "infernal fire:" (Perelandra, p. 177-180.)

He staggered to his feet, splashed across the river (which was hot to the touch) and approached the cliff edge. The fire appeared to be thousands of feet below him and he could not see the other side of the pit in which it swelled and roared and writhed. His eyes could only bear it for a second or so, and when he turned away the rest of the cavern seemed dark. The

heat of his body was painful. (Perelandra, p. 180.)

Early in That Hideous Strength the true nature of Belbury is hinted at and its destruction foreshadowed when the building of the N.I.C.E. headquarters is spoken of as "the conversion of an ancient woodland into an inferno of mud and noise and steel and concrete." (Strength, p. 90.) Here, the term inferno suggests the fires of Hell, and at the end of the book, as Feverstone flees the destruction of the entire town of Edgestow, the reader sees more of the imagery of Hell:

...the valley seemed to have turned into Hell. The pit of fog had been ignited and burned with blinding violet flame, water was roaring somewhere, buildings crashing, mobs shouting. (Strength, p. 367.)

Throughout the trilogy Lewis uses confusion, fire and heat, and darkness as images of the punishment and destruction characteristic of the state of ultimate separation from God. In the following from That Hideous Strength he poses the very real possibility of Hell becoming incarnate on earth and speculates on what the results might be:

Perhaps few or none of the people at Belbury knew what was happening; but once it happened, they would be like straw in fire. What should they find incredible, since they believed no longer in a rational universe? What should they regard as too obscene, since they held that all morality was a mere subjective byproduct of the physical and economic situations of men? The time was ripe. From the point of view which is accepted in Hell, the whole history of our Earth had led up to this moment. There was now at last a real chance for fallen Man to shake off that limitation of his powers which mercy had imposed upon him as a protection from the full results of his fall. If this succeeded, Hell would be at last incarnate. Bad men, while still in the body, still crawling on this little globe, would enter that state which, heretofore, they had entered only after death, would have the diuturnity and power of evil spirits. Nature, all over the globe of Tellus, would become their slave; and of that dominion no end, before

the end of time itself, could be certainly foreseen.
 (Strength, p. 203-204.)

Here the reader sees what the total domination of Pride would bring-- man with almost unlimited power to control the universe. This kind of dominion does not bring glory to those who exercise it; they are only "crawling" on a "little globe," not even seeing or understanding what has happened to them. They would be totally involved in themselves and beyond the help of those who are totally involved in God.

As Lewis's theology would have it, each person (even each creature) in the entire universe, with each choice he makes, is moving toward one of two goals. Those who side with God will live in eternal ecstatic joy in His presence and those who do not will be cast into "the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." (Revelation 21:8.)

CHAPTER VI

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

In a letter of 28 May 1945 to Sister Penelope, C.S. Lewis said:

The truth is we shall never get on...till we have stamped out 'religion.' 'Religion' as it is called--the vague slush of humanitarian idealism, Emersonian Pantheism, democratic politics and material progressiveness with a few Christian names and formulae added to taste like pepper and salt--is almost the great enemy. If one can't talk to a Christian then give me a real believing member of some other religion or an honest clear-headed sceptic like J.S. Mill. One can at least get some sense out of them.¹

Lewis was adamant about the vitality and intelligence expected of the Christian. He expressed his opinion of pious talk and "religion" through Ransom's words to Weston in Perelandra: "'I don't know much about what people call the religious view of life,' said Ransom wrinkling his brow. 'You see, I'm a Christian.'" (Perelandra, p. 91.) What is of vital importance for Lewis here is that a person become totally involved in living his beliefs and be motivated by the spirit of the law instead of following just the letter of the law. Precedents for Lewis's attitude toward self-righteous, "religious" people can be found in Christ's opinion of the Pharisees, a people of His day who held closely to the letter of the law but lacked internal commitment to the spirit of the law. The Gospel of Luke records Christ's reply to a Pharisee who "marvelled that he had not washed before dinner:"

39...Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and

¹Green & Hooper, p. 226.

wickedness.

40 Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?

42 But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought yet to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

44 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them. (Luke 11:39-44.)

Luke also recorded the parable of the Pharisee and the publican (tax collector) praying in the temple. According to Christ, the self-righteous Pharisee went away unjustified while the publican went away blessed "for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Luke 18:14.) Christ held back little in His attack on self-righteousness and might well have responded to Weston the same way that Ransom did.

That Hideous Strength provides the clearest illustrations of what for Lewis would be the ideal Christian life. In the community of St. Anne's-on-the-Hill, the reader sees examples of truly admirable, likable people: they are what good people (see Chapter IV) should be. According to Richard Purtill, Lewis's theme in That Hideous Strength is

that morally good people, people who act on the Christian principles of love and justise--even if, like MacPhee, they are honest unbelievers--are people it is good to be among; and morally evil people, whose lives are based on self-love and hatred of others--even if, like Straik, they use the language of religion--are people it is bad to be among.²

²Purtill, p. 87.

In mere Christianity, Lewis said that "the one really adequate instrument for learning about God, is the whole Christian community, waiting for Him together."³ In the trilogy, St. Anne's is that instrument. Purtill has said, "the society at St. Anne's, the headquarters of Ransom and his companions, is one based on mutual respect and affection, which extends even to the bear, Mr. Bultitude."⁴ It is the ideal society, founded on Christian love and is, thus, a state desirable for both the characters and the reader. As Purtill has also said:

No one in his right mind would want to be a part of the 'society' at Belbury, and it requires very strong prejudices indeed not to be attracted by the company at St. Anne's.⁵

The residents of St. Anne's are believable people: they are by no means perfect and, thus, are easy for the reader to identify with. Jane Studdock, for example, struggles with Christianity throughout the book. In the words of Green and Hooper, Lewis showed a "deep and delicate understanding of Jane's pilgrimage to grace from the self-centered superficiality and synthetic agnosticism of typical modernity."⁶ Grace Ironwood is the literal "grace" to which Jane eventually presents herself. As a kind of receptionist and group leader Miss Ironwood is the strong, yet compassionate woman of action, in direct contrast to the perverted "Fairy" Hardcastle of the society at Belbury. MacPhee is the "honest

³ mere Christianity, p. 144..

⁴ Purtill, p. 86.

⁵ Purtill, p. 87.

⁶ Green & Hooper, p. 175.

clear-headed sceptic" whose constant questioning demands that the other members of the group make sense. The inclusion of the maid, Ivy Maggs, indicates that there should be no class distinction in the ideal Christian society: all people, all creatures, will live together in harmony. Her transformation in preparation for Ransom's departure is an illustration of the individuality that will remain in the transfiguration of Heaven:

The commonplace had not exactly gone from her form and face, the robe had taken it up, as a great composer takes up a folk tune and tosses it like a ball through his symphony and makes of it a marvel, yet leaves it still itself. A 'pert fairy' or 'dapper elf,' a small though perfect sprightliness, stood before them: but still recognizably Ivy Maggs. (Strength, p. 362.)

Arthur and Camilla Denniston provide perhaps the closest companionship for Jane; they are of her generation and her social level and, thus, most comfortable for her to be around. During the "descent of the gods" Jane saw the Dennistons in a transfigured state:

a sort of brightness flowed from them that dazzeled her, as if the god and goddess in them burned through their bodies and through their clothes and shone before her in a young double-natured nakedness of rose-red spirit. (Strength, p. 322.)

In contrast to the Dennistons' youth is Margaret and Cecil Dimble's maturity. Mrs. Dimble is presented as a strong mother figure: she is even referred to most frequently as Mother Dimble. As she dons her robe in preparation for Ransom's departure, Jane sees her true character revealed:

For now this provincial wife of a rather obscure scholar, this respectable and barren woman with grey hair and double chin, stood before her, not to be mistaken, as a kind of

priestess or sybil, the servant of some prehistoric goddess of fertility--an old tribal matriarch, mother of mothers, grave, formidable, and august. (Strength, p. 363.)

Jane sees the Dimbles' "descent of the gods" transfiguration thus:

their faces appeared to her transfigured. She could no longer see that they were old--only mature, like ripe fields in August serene and golden with the tranquility of fulfilled desire. (Strength, p. 322.)

Jane, Grace, MacPhee, Ivy, the Dennistons, the Dimbles--this wide variety of people is Lewis's example of the blessed variety and community of Heaven.

The one member of this company yet to be discussed is the Director, Mr. Fisher-King, Dr. Elwin Ransom. In the illustration of That Hideous Strength, Ransom becomes the image of the "rightful king" mentioned by Lewis in the following from mere Christianity:

Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage.⁷

The story of the trilogy is the story of Christianity and Ransom is a representative of Christ, whose "ransom" saved the earth and its people.

Richard Purtill commented on Ransom's role:

Again, Ransom (to some extent) plays the role of Christ not because he allegorically represents Him (as Cupid represents falling in love) but because in reality every real Christian is really called upon in some measure to enact Christ.⁸

Ransom is, perhaps, an "extreme" example, the ultimate Christian who truly becomes Christ-like in all ways. He has admirable "intellectual

⁷ mere Christianity, p. 51.

⁸ Purtill, p. 136-137.

and heroic qualities."⁹ Even before going to Perelandra he exhibited the qualities of "humanity and decency." After the visit, he was younger, "larger than life," and had great "vigor and energy." Jane's impression of him was one of power: "For the first time in all those years she tasted the word King itself with all liked associations of battle, marriage, priesthood, mercy, and power."¹⁰

All of these qualities make Ransom awesome, in a sense; yet he is not so overwhelmingly "good" that he loses his warm, identifiable humanity. The reader can see him as a real person. Modeled after actual, living Christians--Lewis's friends Charles Williams, Owen Barfield, and J.R.R. Tolkien,¹¹ for example--Ransom becomes a lovable, believable character:

On Perelandra his (Ransom's) struggles, temptations, and victories are such as we can make our own: we hope that we would do as well as Ransom in his place, fear that we would do worse. Humility, charity, and courage are not easy¹² characteristics to convey--we find them all in Ransom.

Just as Christ is the center of all things in the Christian faith, Ransom becomes the central image of Lewis's entire trilogy. Through him and his friends the reader sees reflected the "goodness" of God and the glorious fulfillment of union with God in Heaven. The "evil" of Satan and the punishment, destruction, and privation of separation from God in Hell are presented in contrast to him. Ransom, his friends,

⁹Hooper, p. 96.

¹⁰Purtill, p. 89-90.

¹¹Hooper, p. 96.

¹²Purtill, p. 89.

and his adventures in Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra, and That Hideous Strength are Lewis's illustration of basic Christian theology.

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