

C. S. LEWIS
(1898 - 1963)

When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.

—1 Corinthians 13:11

Science and the Enlightenment. A revolution began in the 16th and 17th centuries, and the Church backed the wrong side. During the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church endorsed the Ptolemaic ¹ view of the heavens, which saw the earth as the center of the universe, around which everything else revolves. But astronomers such as Copernicus, ² Tycho, ³ Kepler, ⁴ and Galileo ⁵ used careful observations and mathematical calculations to demonstrate that the earth spins on its axis and circles the sun.

Catholics and Protestants alike condemned this new heresy, claiming that it was contrary to Scripture, citing such flimsy evidence as Psalm 93:1 ⁶ and Joshua 10:12-13. ⁷ The Inquisition ⁸ condemned Galileo in 1633, when he was 68, and forced him to recant. But like a massive tsunami, the on-rushing scientific revolution could not be restrained. The printing press, invented by Gutenberg in 1439, spread new ideas and discoveries rapidly, for they could now be disseminated inexpensively.

¹ Ptolemy was a 2nd century Greek astronomer.

² Nicolaus Copernicus, Polish astronomer, 1473-1543

³ Tycho Brahe, Danish astronomer, 1546-1601; while Tycho continued to adhere to the Ptolemaic conception of the universe, with Earth at its center, his careful astronomical observations were helpful to Kepler in disproving this theory

⁴ Johannes Kepler, German astronomer, 1571-1630

⁵ Galileo Galilei, Italian astronomer, 1564-1642

⁶ Psalm 93:1 says, in relevant part: "Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved."

⁷ Joshua 10:12-13 says:

Then Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel,

"O sun, stand still at Gibeon,
And O moon in the valley of Aijalon."

So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped,

Until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies.

Is it not written in the book of Jashar? And the sun stopped in the middle of the sky and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day.

⁸ For more on the Inquisition, see the article, "Predecessors of the Reformation," on this web site.

Inventions based on these new scientific discoveries multiplied, making life easier and businesses more efficient. When Newton's ⁹ discoveries revolutionized physics and astronomy, as well as industry, science became indispensable, for it explained how the world worked—and how human beings could make it work in their favor.

As science advanced, some wondered if the nature of the universe was the only thing the Church might be wrong about. Philosophers questioned not only the truths of Christianity, but the very existence of God. Hobbes ¹⁰ argued that nothing exists except the material world—thus eliminating God, Heaven, and the eternal soul. Spinoza ¹¹ saw God as part of the universe rather than a separate being apart from it—and thus became the leading advocate of pantheism.

The 18th century ushered in The Enlightenment, which advocated Reason over emotion, science over religion, and education as the solution to all problems. The Enlightenment was centered in France, where many leading philosophers were avowed atheists: La Mettrie, ¹² Helvetius, ¹³ Diderot, ¹⁴ and Holbach. ¹⁵ But the unquestioned leader of the Enlightenment was another Frenchman—Voltaire. ¹⁶ Voltaire challenged the Church's every abuse, and nearly every doctrine, stopping only just short of atheism. He denied the existence of miracles, the efficacy of prayer, and the immortality of the soul, and he ridiculed the idea, popularized by Leibniz, ¹⁷ that God had made this the best possible world. ¹⁸

Darwin's *Origin of Species*, published in 1859, provided skeptics with a theory for the development of life that left God out of the picture. ¹⁹ Men such as Marx ²⁰

⁹ Sir Isaac Newton, an English scientist, lived from 1642 to 1727. His greatest work, *The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*—commonly known as the *Principia*, which is the abbreviated version of its Latin title—was first published in 1687. It set out the physical laws of force, motion, and gravity, and explained many revolutionary astronomical ideas—such as the elliptical orbits of the planets and comets, the wobble of the earth's axis as it spins, and the flattened spherical shape of the earth caused by centrifugal force as it spins. Newton is also credited with the invention of calculus.

¹⁰ Thomas Hobbes, 1588-1679

¹¹ Baruch Spinoza, 1632-1677

¹² Julien Offray de La Mettrie, 1709-1751

¹³ Claude Adrien Helvetius, 1715-1771

¹⁴ Denis Diderot, 1713-1784

¹⁵ Paul-Henri Thiry, Baron d'Holbach, 1723-1789 (born Paul Heinrich Dietrich)

¹⁶ Voltaire's real name was Francois Marie Arouet. He lived 1694-1778. Like John Locke (1632-1704), Voltaire advocated tolerance of the beliefs and values of others. He is credited with the famous saying, "I do not agree with a word that you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."

¹⁷ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716)

¹⁸ Voltaire's *Candide* is a satire of Leibniz' philosophy.

¹⁹ For a discussion of evolution, see the article, "Creation and Evolution," on this web site.

²⁰ Karl Marx, 1818-1883

and Nietzsche²¹ were hostile toward religion, which they believed was irrelevant and counter-productive,²² so they seized on Darwin's concept of "survival of the fittest" to justify their new morality. Marx saw mankind's salvation in the overthrow of capitalism by the workers, while Nietzsche advocated the development of "supermen"—men of power and genius—through breeding and education.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, even Christianity's staunchest defenders abandoned reliance upon Reason in its defense. Kant²³ agreed that God was not to be found through Reason, but through faith, feelings, and our moral sense. Kierkegaard²⁴ concluded that a Christian must choose between Reason and Faith, for Christianity calls upon the individual to believe things which our Reason tells us are not possible, such as Christ's incarnation, atonement,²⁵ and resurrection.

The early 20th century continued this trend toward addressing religion—and Christianity in particular—as contrary to Reason, or at least divorced from it. The famous philosopher Bertrand Russell²⁶ worshiped science and mathematics, and rejected religion because it was neither. Russell, and others like him, helped foster an attitude that regarded Christians as anti-intellectual simpletons who preferred a myth over reality. But C.S. Lewis did not fit this mold. He taught at Oxford and Cambridge Universities; he was very intelligent, extremely well-read, a gifted writer—and a sincere believing Christian. Unlike Kant and Kierkegaard, Lewis married Faith and Reason in his writings, and provided Christians worldwide with a firm rational foundation for faith.

Lewis' Family. C.S. Lewis was the son of an Irish solicitor (lawyer), Albert J. Lewis.²⁷ Albert's father, Richard Lewis, grew up in Wales, but later moved to Northern Ireland where he became a businessman and a partner in the firm of Macilwaine & Lewis, "Boiler makers, Engineers, and Iron Ship Builders." Richard's money enabled Albert to obtain a quality education at Lurgan College, Northern Ireland, where his headmaster was W. T. "Kirk" Kirkpatrick.²⁸ Albert studied law in Dublin, and then secured a job as a prosecutor in the police courts of Belfast in 1885, at the age of 22. Albert possessed a quick mind and a sharp memory, and was a gifted

²¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, 1844-1900

²² Marx's hostility toward religion was shared by those who came after him: Lenin, Stalin, Mao Zedong, and the communist regimes of the Soviet Union, China, North Korea, and others.

²³ Immanuel Kant, 1724-1804

²⁴ Soren Kierkegaard, 1813-1855

²⁵ The incarnation refers to God becoming a man in Christ—i.e., the divinity of Jesus Christ. Atonement refers to man being reconciled to God through Christ's death.

²⁶ Bertrand Russell lived from 1872 to 1971.

²⁷ Albert Lewis lived from 1863 to 1929.

²⁸ W.T. Kirkpatrick lived from 1848 to 1921. He was headmaster at Lurgan College from 1874 to 1899. Albert attended Lurgan from 1877 to 1879.

story-teller. C.S. Lewis described him as “the best *raconteur* I have ever heard.”²⁹ Albert was also a dedicated Christian, but unlike most Protestants in Northern Ireland at that time, he harbored no hostility toward Catholics.

C.S. Lewis’ mother, Florence “Flora” Augusta Hamilton Lewis,³⁰ came from three generations of Irish Protestant clergymen, although her more distant roots were Scotch. Her father, Rev. Thomas Hamilton, had served as a naval chaplain in the Baltic and in Rome before returning to Belfast to serve as Rector of St. Mark’s, Dundela. Flora obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from Queen’s College in Belfast. C.S. Lewis described Flora’s family as unemotional, but happy and affectionate, in contrast to the emotional and less contented Lewises. The contrast made him suspicious of emotions from an early age. His father’s temper, which often spun out of control, would have dire consequences for his relationship with his children.

Albert and Flora were married on August 29, 1894. Both were in their early 30’s, and Flora was about a year older than Albert. They made up for their relatively late start on marriage by having children quickly. Their oldest, Warren “Warnie” Hamilton Lewis, was born on June 16, 1895, a mere nine-and-a-half months after their wedding. Their second son, Clive Staples (C.S.) Lewis—whom everyone called “Jack”—arrived three-and-a-half years later, on November 29, 1898.

As boys, Jack and Warnie were inseparable. They played together, to the exclusion of the other children in the neighborhood, and each invented an imaginary land—Warnie’s “India,” based loosely on the real India (which was then a British possession), and Jack’s “Animal-Land,” peopled by animals dressed up as kings, queens, and knights. The two brothers drew pictures and maps of their imaginary lands, and later wrote stories about them, eventually linking them into a single realm which they named “Boxen.” Although Warnie was older, Jack was the smarter and the more dominant of the two.

Flora taught the boys French and Latin, but their governess, Annie Harper, handled most of their education. The Lewises also employed a maid and a cook. In April 1905 the family moved to the outskirts of Belfast, into a very large house which they nicknamed “Little Lea.” The house was poorly constructed, but had two features which earned Jack’s undying affection: (1) an attic sitting room which Jack called the “Little End Room,” and which became Jack’s sanctuary, and (2) rooms filled with books, for Albert loved to read. Warnie soon left for a small English boarding school, Wynyard House, and Jack immersed himself in these books. He and Warnie maintained their close relationship through frequent correspondence, and renewed their imaginary adventures when Warnie came home during school breaks. But in 1908 the boys’ lives changed forever.

²⁹ *Surprised by Joy*, p. 4.

³⁰ Flora Lewis lived from 1862 to 1908.

Three Losses. In March 1908, Flora became seriously ill and was diagnosed with cancer. Albert’s emotional pain multiplied when his father, Richard, suffered a stroke on March 24th, and died on April 2nd. As Flora steadily declined, Albert grew more volatile. In the best of times Albert’s emotions were often out of control, but under the stress of losing his father and watching his wife slowly die a horrific death, his explosions of temper became more frequent and more terrifying. Albert never resorted to physical violence, but his verbal harangues were loud and long, and often included threats he had no intention of carrying out, such as sending Warnie and Jack off to school year-round. The boys took these threats very seriously. In the midst of losing their mother, they grew increasingly estranged from their father. They retreated into the safety of each other’s company, and established a bond that would last a lifetime.

Meanwhile, nine-year-old Jack prayed for his mother’s recovery, for he had been taught that prayers offered in faith would be granted. But these were a child’s prayers, offered to God as if He were a vending machine—pay the price and get what you want:

I had approached God, or my idea of God, without love, without awe, even without fear. He was, in my mental picture of this miracle, to appear neither as Savior nor as Judge, but merely as a magician; and when He had done what was required of Him I supposed He would simply—well, go away. It never crossed my mind that the tremendous contact which I solicited should have any consequences beyond restoring the *status quo*.³¹

Flora died on August 23, 2008. Jack found her funeral repulsive, for he disliked formal, public gatherings. The following month, Albert lost his only brother, Joe, whom Jack described as clever and kind, “and especially fond of me.”³² That same month Albert sent Jack to Wynyard House, the private religious school Warnie had been attending for the previous three years.

Wynyard House. Wynyard was run by Rev. Robert Capron, nicknamed “Oldie,” who administered beatings with a cane, and behaved as a tyrant even toward his own family. Oldie and his adult son educated the older students, while an usher³³—and later, Oldie’s youngest daughter—instructed the younger ones.

Wynyard House taught its students the fear of God, but not much else. The students went to church twice on Sundays, where they heard rousing sermons about

³¹ *Surprised by Joy*, p. 21

³² *Surprised by Joy*, p. 43

³³ An usher is like an apprentice teacher.

God, sin, and Hell. These sermons prompted Jack to seriously attempt to practice Christianity. He prayed, read the Bible, and tried to conform to Christian morals.

Jack hated everything about Wynyard—the food was bad, the sanitation poor, the beds were cold, and perhaps worst of all, it had no library. Jack continued to read, of course, but he found little that was stimulating or challenging. Jack and Warnie tried to persuade Albert to remove them from Wynyard, but without success. Even when a public scandal over Oldie’s abuse reduced enrollment to a mere nine students in the fall of 1909, Jack remained. Warnie, however, had grown too old for Wynyard, and moved on to Malvern College.³⁴

“Northernness” and Atheism. In the summer of 1910, Wynyard House closed,³⁵ so Albert enrolled Jack in Campbell College in Belfast. But Jack developed a serious respiratory illness and withdrew at mid-term to recover at home. For reasons unknown to Jack, he never returned to Campbell. Instead, in January 1911 Albert sent him to Cherbourg Preparatory School,³⁶ in Malvern, England, only a short distance from Malvern College where Warnie was enrolled. Jack was 12.

Cherbourg was a relatively small school, though a bit larger than Wynyard, and the students were reasonably well cared for. Here Jack first learned to love school, for the teaching was interesting and challenging, and the teachers recognized his intellectual abilities. He made friends among his fellow students, and discovered a passion for what he called “Northernness”—the romantic tales of the Norse gods and the music of Richard Wagner³⁷—sparked by a magazine review of the book, *Siegfried and the Twilight of the Gods*. Jack read everything he could find on the subject. And when Warnie later helped him purchase a copy of the *Siegfried* book, Jack was ecstatic.

Jack found an excitement in this “Northernness” that was missing from the legalistic Christianity he had been taught. At Cherbourg, teachers dismissed other religions—such as the Greek and Roman gods—as myths and nonsense, and Jack wondered whether Christianity was not the same, especially since he now began to view the world as a hostile and imperfect place. His doubts were fed by the disdain of most of his teachers and fellow students toward religion, as well as his own desire to be rid of Christianity, which he found burdensome and frustrating. Many nights he had stayed up late trying to perfect his prayers so that they would be “good enough,” but always without success. Now he saw an opportunity to throw off this burden. Jack became an atheist.

³⁴ In *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis refers to this as Wyvern College.

³⁵ Rev. Capron died in 1911.

³⁶ In *Surprised by Joy*, C.S. Lewis refers to this school as “Chartres.”

³⁷ Richard Wagner lived from 1813 to 1883. He is famous for his German operas, such as *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin*, *Die Meistersinger*, *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Siegfried*, and *Götterdämmerung*.

Fagging. Jack stayed at Cherbourg until the summer of 1913, when at age 14 he won a scholarship to Malvern College. So in the fall Jack enrolled at Malvern just as Warnie was leaving.³⁸ Albert sent Warnie to Great Bookham, a village south of London, for private tutoring with Albert's old headmaster, W.T. "Kirk" Kirkpatrick, in an effort to gain entrance to the Royal Military College at Sandhurst.³⁹

Jack detested Malvern, primarily because of the fagging system. This system allowed the older boys—the "Bloods"—to call upon any of the younger boys to perform any desired task, such as polishing a Blood's boots or making him tea. There was no equity in this system—no one ensured that tasks were evenly distributed, or that the assigned tasks did not deprive the younger boys of time needed for their school work. The fagging system created a sinister meanness among the boys, for rank in this system trumped friendship and morality. Even social status or wealth would not protect a boy, but sex could—some of the boys ingratiated themselves with the influential Bloods by providing homosexual favors.

Jack felt oppressed and victimized by the fagging system, and constantly tired, for it frequently deprived him of time needed for sleep and studies. His bitterness is obvious in this passage from *Surprised by Joy*, the story of his early life and his conversion to Christianity:

If some neighboring V.I.P. had irresistible authority to call on you for any service he pleased at any hour when you were not in the office—if, when you came home on a summer evening, tired from work and with more work to prepare against the morrow, he could drag you to the links and make you caddy till the light failed—if at last he dismissed you unthanked with a suitcase full of his clothes to brush and clean and return to him before breakfast, and a hamper full of his foul linen for your wife to wash and mend—and if, under this regime, you were not always perfectly happy and contented; where could the cause lie except in your own vanity?⁴⁰

Other than the classroom, the one place where Jack could escape this bullying was the library, so of course he spent as much time there as possible. He also found inspiration from one of his teachers, Harry Wakelyn Smith,⁴¹ nicknamed "Smugy" (pronounced "Smewgy"). Smugy taught Latin and Greek, but he also taught Jack to appreciate poetry and good manners. Smugy called his students "gentlemen" and

³⁸ One of Lewis' biographers, A.N. Wilson, says that Warnie was forced to leave Malvern after being caught smoking in the summer of 1913.

³⁹ Sandhurst is located about 30 miles west-southwest of London.

⁴⁰ *Surprised by Joy*, pp. 105-106

⁴¹ Harry W. Smith died in 1918 during the influenza epidemic.

treated them with courtesy, fairness, and respect. He was also a fine teacher, able to explain the most complicated concepts in simple terms that made them easy to grasp.

Jack endured a year of misery at Malvern, during which he felt estranged from God, his father, and even from Warnie. Ironically, although Jack was now an atheist, he resented God for not making a better world, and for not existing. Albert earned Jack's disdain for seeking to maintain a closeness Jack no longer felt, and for infringing on Jack's growing desire for independence. Problems between Jack and Warnie centered on their disagreements about Malvern; Warnie had enjoyed his time there, and couldn't understand Jack's hatred of the place.

Jack convinced Albert to allow him to withdraw from Malvern in June 1914. But that created a dilemma—where was Jack to go to complete his schooling? Albert came up with a delightful solution.

“The Great Knock.” In September 1914, Albert sent 15-year-old Jack to study with W.T. Kirkpatrick, who had been so successful in tutoring Warnie that he was not only accepted into the Royal Military College, but was near the top of the list of accepted candidates. That success turned bittersweet when World War I broke out in August 1914. The British Army accelerated Warnie's military training, and by November he was in Europe fighting the Germans as part of the British Expeditionary Force. Because of the War, Jack and Warnie saw little of each other during the next three years. Fortunately for Jack, he soon found a new confidant.

In the spring or summer of 1914, Jack went to see a young man named Arthur Greeves, who was ill. Arthur was about Warnie's age,⁴² and had lived close to the Lewises in Belfast for many years. He tried to become friends with the Lewis brothers, but Jack and Warnie valued their limited time together too much to allow anyone else to share it. During Jack's visit he discovered that Arthur shared Jack's love of books and Norse mythology. They quickly developed a strong and enduring friendship. When Jack returned to England in September, he and Arthur corresponded regularly.

Jack arrived in Great Bookham on September 19, 1914. Kirkpatrick—whom Jack referred to as “the Great Knock”—was an intensely logical man who insisted that terminology be precise and that opinions be backed up with facts. Kirkpatrick's tutoring style emphasized self-study. Jack enjoyed this style of learning immensely, and thrived in it. He learned Greek by translating Greek classics, such as *The Iliad*, and later learned Latin, French, Italian, and some German the same way. Mornings and evenings were spent studying, but Jack had enough free time in the afternoons to take long walks. Jack also had time in the afternoons to answer the weekly letters from Arthur or his father, or the occasional letter from Warnie. The brothers' old animosities over Malvern College were now forgotten. Indeed, Jack was now

⁴² Arthur Greeves lived from 1895 until 1966.

enthralled by his older brother, whose military experience had matured him and whose military pay made him seem wealthy by comparison.

By 1915, Jack was displaying such promise that Kirkpatrick began preparing him to try to get into Oxford. Jack took the Oxford scholarship examination in late 1916, and learned just before Christmas that he had not only been “elected” to Oxford’s University College, but that he had been awarded a scholarship as well. He did not enter Oxford until April 1917, however, because he needed to pass “Responsions,” which consisted of mathematics and algebra.⁴³ So he spent a few more months studying with The Great Knock. And although Jack was still an atheist, he also went through Confirmation and his first Communion, because of his fear of Albert’s disapproval if he didn’t.

World War I. With World War I dragging on, Jack volunteered for the British Army when he became old enough. He began his military training in May 1917, shortly after entering Oxford, and in June he moved to Keble College, a military barracks on the Oxford campus. Roommates at Keble were assigned alphabetically, so Jack was paired with Edward Francis Courtenay “Paddy” Moore,⁴⁴ who was from Bristol, England.⁴⁵ Paddy received regular visits from his mother, Mrs. Janie King Moore,⁴⁶ and his twelve-year-old sister, Maureen. Janie was a kind and generous woman who liked Jack immediately. And the feeling was mutual. When Jack received a month’s leave in September, he spent the time with the Moores in Bristol, rather than returning to see Albert in Belfast. As much as Jack enjoyed the Moores, he also resented his father, who had refused several invitations to come to England for a visit. Jack did not know that Albert’s refusal was the result of heavy drinking.

Jack was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant on September 25, 1917, and in October the Army sent him to France. Jack reached the front line trenches near the village of Arras on his 19th birthday—November 29, 1917. He soon found that he enjoyed many aspects of Army life. The camaraderie among his fellow officers and soldiers was an especially pleasant surprise. One who was particularly kind was Sergeant Ayres, who taught Jack a lot about war and Army life. The trenches were not so unpleasant as he had feared, and since his sector of the front was relatively quiet at first, he had a lot of time to read. That time multiplied in February, when he was briefly hospitalized with “trench fever.”⁴⁷

⁴³ In fact, C.S. Lewis never passed Responsions. When he returned from the War, former servicemembers were exempted from the requirement.

⁴⁴ Paddy Moore lived from 1898 to 1918.

⁴⁵ Bristol is approximately 85 miles west-southwest of Oxford.

⁴⁶ Janie Moore lived from 1873 to 1951. C.S. Lewis sometimes called her “Minto,” after her favorite candy. She was married to Courtenay Edward Moore, although they were separated by the time she met Lewis. Mr. Moore died in 1951, a few months after Janie’s death.

⁴⁷ Trench fever was common in World War I, and in 1918 was found to be caused by a bacteria

Shortly after he returned to the front, the Germans launched a spring offensive. German shells landed about every 20 seconds, and the English responded in kind. On April 15, 1918, on Mount Berenchon, during the Battle of Arras, shrapnel from one of those shells struck Jack in the chest, left knee, left hand, and face. He was fortunate. The wounds were merely a “Blighty”—serious enough to get him transferred from the front lines, but not serious enough to cause death or loss of limb. Sergeant Ayres, standing nearby, was killed instantly.

After being hospitalized for awhile in France, Jack returned to England in May, and was hospitalized at Endsleigh Palace in London. He longed for a visit from his father during his convalescence, and invited him at least once, but Albert declined, further deepening the rift between them. On the other hand, Janie Moore made regular visits. During one of those visits, Jack learned that Paddy was missing; he would be confirmed dead a few months later. Mrs. Moore continued to visit Jack when he was transferred to a convalescent home in Bristol in July. The two of them developed a close friendship that endured until her death. Janie Moore was about 25 years older than Jack, so perhaps she served as the mother he had lost in childhood. On her part, Janie Moore treated Jack like a son, and often referred to him that way. However, some have claimed that their relationship was more than Platonic. Lewis never discussed it. In *Surprised by Joy*, he mentions Janie Moore only in passing.⁴⁸

Jack continued to exchange letters with Arthur Greaves, and also completed a book of poetry, which was published in 1918 under the title *Spirits in Bondage* and the name Clive Hamilton (his mother’s maiden name). The reviewers liked it, but the public didn’t. The book did not sell well.

A Student at Oxford. In October 1918, Jack’s convalescence ended. Fortunately, Germany surrendered on November 10th, shortly before his scheduled return to France. By January he was back at Oxford, where he quickly began to distinguish himself as one of the top undergraduate students. In 1920, he achieved a top score—called a “First”—in his examination on Greek and Latin Literature. In spring 1921, his composition, “Optimism,” won the Chancellor’s English Essay Prize as the best English essay. In June 1922, he achieved another First, this time in Philosophy.

Lewis still retained his atheistic views, and enjoyed verbally jousting with Christians, pummeling them with difficult questions, such as: “Why does your God create a nature so immensely cruel?” or “Why does your God allow babies to die?” Most Christians he encountered did a poor job of defending their faith. One exception

which is transmitted by body lice.

⁴⁸ “[At Oxford] I read algebra (devil take it!) with old Mr. Campbell of Hertford, who turned out to be a friend of our dear friend Janie M.” (*Surprised by Joy*, p. 187)

was Owen Barfield.⁴⁹ Barfield shared many of Jack's interests, but consistently disagreed with his opinions. Since Barfield was Jack's equal in intellect and learning, many arguments ensued, and over time a deep respect and a close friendship emerged. Barfield began to break down some of Lewis' beliefs and biases, including his "chronological snobbery"—the prejudice against old ideas and beliefs as being less worthy than modern ideas and beliefs, because ancient peoples were believed to be less intelligent or less sophisticated.

In his senior year (1922-1923), Jack developed a close friendship with another Christian—Nevill Coghill. Jack met Nevill in an English discussion class,⁵⁰ and would later call him "clearly the most intelligent and best-informed man in that class."⁵¹ As a Protestant growing up in a Catholic area of Ireland, Nevill had been threatened many times, but he displayed no anger or bitterness.

Barfield and Coghill openly exhibited values which Jack had once considered outmoded, such as chivalry, honor, and courtesy. Yet now he found these values strangely attractive. And Christian writers fascinated him—famous writers such as George MacDonald, G. K. Chesterton, Samuel Johnson, Edmund Spenser, and John Milton, as well as Christian writers he encountered in his studies, such as William Langland, John Donne, Thomas Browne, and George Herbert. In contrast, he felt that non-Christian writers—even such famous writers as George Bernard Shaw, Herbert George (H.G.) Wells, John Stuart Mill, Edward Gibbon, Voltaire, and Sir Francis Bacon—while often entertaining, lacked depth.

The arguments of Barfield, Coghill, and others eventually led Jack to abandon his atheistic beliefs in favor of a belief in an "Absolute Mind," but this was nothing like belief in a personal God. The Absolute Mind took no interest in humans, so It did not need to be feared or obeyed, and prayer was of course irrelevant.

Jack's primary interests during these undergraduate years were philosophy and poetry. He indulged the latter by composing a long mythological poem called *Dymer*. Coghill loved the poem, and in 1926 helped Jack find a publisher for it.⁵² Like *Spirits in Bondage*, *Dymer* was published under the pseudonym Clive Hamilton and did not sell well.

In the summer of 1920, Janie Moore and her daughter Maureen moved to Oxford, and Jack visited them often. He frequently studied there and sometimes even brought some of his Oxford friends. In June 1921 he moved in with the Moores. Jack's relationship with Mrs. Moore—whatever its nature—was carefully concealed from the Oxford University administrators, who would not have approved.

⁴⁹ After completing his education, Owen Barfield became a solicitor (lawyer) in London.

⁵⁰ The study of English literature at Oxford at this time also included history and language development, so that each work could be understood in the context in which it was written.

⁵¹ *Surprised by Joy*, p. 212

⁵² Coghill was by then the English tutor at Exeter College, Oxford.

Jack often helped Mrs. Moore with chores and household expenses, even as Albert continued to pay his school expenses. Albert was aware of Jack's affection for Janie Moore, and did not approve of it, which was yet another source of friction between father and son. They often quarreled during Jack's occasional visits to Belfast. Warnie attempted to play peacemaker between the two, but this only antagonized Jack and strained the relationship between the brothers.

When Jack completed his undergraduate studies in the spring of 1923, he achieved yet another "First," this time on his English examination (only he and Nevill Coghill did so). Reading University⁵³ offered Jack a teaching job, but he turned it down because he wanted to stay close to Janie and Maureen Moore. So he continued his education at Oxford, studying Old English and Middle English. Albert reluctantly agreed to continue to provide the needed financial support, while Jack earned extra money by tutoring and grading papers.

In the fall of 1924, E.F. Carritt, a philosophy tutor who had once tutored Jack, received a year-long professorship at Ann Arbor University in Michigan. His absence created a temporary opening for a philosophy tutor at Oxford's University College, and Jack received the position. The job required him to live on campus, so he now saw Janie Moore only at lunch and on weekends. Jack held the position until May 1925, when, at the age of 27, he accepted a five-year appointment as a Fellow in English at Oxford's Magdalen College.

Financial Independence. As a Fellow, his duties included delivering a weekly lecture, teaching an undergraduate philosophy class and a weekly class at a nearby women's college, assisting with the administration of Magdalen College, and "tutoring"—that is, meeting weekly with each of his students. In these meetings, which were the most time-consuming part of the job, the student would read an essay he had written during the week, and then he and Jack would discuss it. Lewis often amazed his students with his photographic memory and his ability to quote lines from almost any portion of the work under consideration.

Jack was generally patient and considerate with his students, but he could also be abrasive, and at times verbally abusive. Just as Kirkpatrick had done with him, Jack worked diligently to make his students better thinkers. He was always very demanding, insisting that each student become familiar with not only such famous English authors as Shakespeare and Chaucer, but also less prominent writers, as well as the Biblical and classical literature that influenced all of them. And Jack enjoyed having fun. Every term he held a dinner for his students called the "English binge," which included heavy drinking, risqué songs, and conversation. In his defense, these evenings were all male.

Jack's new position gave him financial independence, and also came with an

⁵³ Reading is located about 27 miles south of Oxford.

unfurnished three-room apartment on campus. No longer dependent upon his father for financial support, Jack's attitude toward Albert immediately changed from hostility to gratitude. When Jack returned to Ireland for a two-week visit in September, 1925, the two had a very pleasant time together.

Jack's colleagues on the Oxford faculty included several men who were openly Christian, such as the newly arrived J.R.R. Tolkien, a professor of Old English. Like Barfield and Coghill, these Christians held a strange attraction for Lewis, and he spent a lot of time with them.

Theism and Christianity. By 1926, Jack's religious views had undergone another transformation. Since childhood, he had sought, and occasionally experienced, an intense longing, which he described as both painful and delightful, and which he referred to in his later writings as "Romanticism," "Desire," and "Joy."⁵⁴ He had briefly found this Joy in books or in Norse mythology, but it didn't last. By 1926, he had come to realize that this Joy he had been seeking was something very real, and yet not anything which could be known by the senses—Joy resulted from unity with God. This was not the God of Christianity, or of any organized religion. In fact, it was not necessarily even a personal God, but it was a Spirit, separate from human beings. Lewis was gradually moving toward theism.

In the next three years, events pushed Lewis closer and closer to outright theism. G.K. Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man* left him with the impression that Christianity, whether or not true, was at least sensible. He found himself impressed with the evidence for the historicity of the Gospels. And his own self-evaluation led to self-loathing, as he realized how far he fell short of the virtues he professed to embrace. As time went by, he felt that his Spirit was demanding unconditional surrender. Finally, in 1929, Lewis capitulated and became a theist:

In the Trinity Term⁵⁵ of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England, I did not then see what is now the most shining and obvious thing; the Divine humility which will accept a convert even on such terms.⁵⁶

This was not yet a conversion to Christianity—it involved no promise of immortality, or even of Joy. This was simply submission. However, it did prompt Lewis to begin attending church again. And it led him to continue to search for religious Truth.

⁵⁴ Lewis uses the term, "Romanticism" in *Pilgrim's Regress*. In the Preface to the Third Edition of *Pilgrim's Regress*, he calls it "Desire," and he refers to it as "Joy" in *Surprised by Joy*.

⁵⁵ The Trinity Term begins in mid-April and runs until near the end of June.

⁵⁶ *Surprised by Joy*, pp. 228-229

Amidst this search, Lewis was surprised by the news that his brother, Warnie, had become a Christian in May, 1931.

Lewis eventually concluded that only two of the world's religions were credible: Hinduism and Christianity. "Whatever you could find elsewhere you could find better in one of these."⁵⁷ And of the two, Christianity held several advantages: (1) it lacked Hinduism's pagan aspects; (2) it made historical claims that could be investigated; and (3) it presented a portrait of Jesus in the Gospels that seemed very real and very human, and yet at the same time much more.

Many times Lewis talked about Christianity with Tolkien, who was by now a close friend. One particularly critical discussion occurred in late September 1931, at which Henry Victor "Hugo" Dyson was also present. Lewis pointed out his difficulty in understanding the Christian doctrine of atonement through Christ's crucifixion. Tolkien responded that he need not understand it, because Christ's crucifixion and resurrection were historical facts. The three of them talked until 3:00 a.m., and Lewis and Dyson continued until 4:00 a.m. A short time later, Lewis became a Christian. His final conversion on September 28, 1931, was almost anti-climactic:

I know very well when, but hardly how, the final step was taken. I was driven to Whipsnade⁵⁸ one sunny morning. When we set out I did not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and when we reached the zoo I did. Yet I had not exactly spent the journey in thought. Nor in great emotion. . . . It was more like when a man, after a long sleep, still lying motionless in bed, becomes aware that he is now awake.⁵⁹

The Kilns. Four years earlier, in the spring of 1927, Jack had begun an annual tradition that would last most of his life—the "walking tour." This was a lengthy, brisk walk through the English countryside, usually of several days duration, for the purpose of enjoying nature and the company of several male friends. Lewis and his companions spent each day joking and arguing, and each evening at a comfortable inn enjoying a good meal and several drinks. The first such tour journeyed through Wiltshire and Berkshire Downs,⁶⁰ with Barfield, Cecil Harwood, and "Wof" Field.

In mid-August, 1929, Lewis returned to Ireland for a visit, and found his father, Albert, suffering from cancer of the bowel. Albert's courage, faith, and humor in the face of his disease melted away any lingering resentments Jack had toward his father. Albert underwent an operation in early September, but the cancer had

⁵⁷ *Surprised by Joy*, p. 235

⁵⁸ Whipsnade Zoo is located in Dunstable, Bedfordshire, north of London and east of Oxford.

⁵⁹ *Surprised by Joy*, p. 237

⁶⁰ This area is located southwest of Oxford.

progressed too far to be completely removed. Nevertheless, the doctors assured Jack that Albert would probably live for several more years. So Jack returned to Oxford. Albert died later that month. His death only compounded the guilt Jack felt over how he had treated his father for many years.

Jack's brother, Warnie, was still in the Army at this time, stationed in Shanghai, and could not get home on leave until the following April. His father's death so depressed him that he began to drink heavily. This apparently began what would become a serious drinking problem. When Warnie finally made it to Ireland, he and Jack made arrangements to sell Little Lea, their childhood home.

In October of that same year, 1930, Warnie helped Jack and Janie purchase a house east of Oxford in which they could all live after Warnie retired from the Army.⁶¹ The brick house was eight years old, had no hot water, and the only electricity came from a generator. But it sat on eight acres of beautiful English countryside at the foot of Shotover Hill, with a lovely pond on the grounds. The Lewises nicknamed it "The Kilns" after two brick kilns near the house. Janie and the Lewises put the title to the property in Janie's name, but her will gave the Lewises the right to live in the property for their lives, after which the property would pass to her daughter, Maureen. Warnie retired from the British Army in 1932. (He was reportedly forced to retire because of his drinking problem.) As planned, he came to live at the Kilns with Jack, Janie, and Maureen. The arrangement was not as pleasant as all had hoped, in part because of Warnie's drinking, but also because Janie and Warnie often did not get along. Jack continued to stay at Magdalen College during the school terms, but lived at the Kilns between terms and on weekends, and he usually came home for lunch, either by bus or car. Jack himself did not drive, even though he owned a car. He was driven by Maureen or by the gardener-handyman, Fred Paxford, who lived in a bungalow on the property.

Popular Success. Less than a year after Jack embraced Christianity, he began writing *Pilgrim's Regress*, an allegory about a man's search for his heart's desire. The book begins by satirizing the legalistic Christianity Lewis had come to hate while at Wynyard House. For example, the hero, John, talks with a Steward (representing a clergyman), who assures him "that the Landlord [that is, God] was quite extraordinarily kind and good to his tenants, and would certainly torture most of them to death the moment he had the slightest pretext."⁶² John soon sets off on a long journey, encountering characters along the way who represent various religious

⁶¹ The purchase price for The Kilns was 3,300 pounds. By comparison, the Lewises had sold Little Lea for 2,300 pounds, and an average middle class home at that time cost about 850 to 1,000 pounds. The 3,300-pound purchase price was split unevenly among the three parties: Janie, 1,500 pounds; Jack, 1,000 pounds; and Warnie, 800 pounds. Warnie paid 300 pounds in cash, and they financed the rest.

⁶² *Pilgrim's Regress*, p. 5

and philosophical viewpoints—such as the atheistic Mr. Enlightenment, the greedy Mr. Mammon, the worldly Mr. Sensible, the likeable but misguided Mr. Virtue, and the valiant lady Reason, who rescues John and sets him on the right road again. Naturally, John’s journey ultimately leads him to God. The story intentionally paralleled Lewis’ own intellectual and emotional journey to Christianity, although Lewis denied that it was autobiographical in every detail.

Pilgrim’s Regress was published in 1933. Three years later, Clarendon Press (a division of the Oxford University Press) published Lewis’ *Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*—a scholarly discussion of the history of Christian allegory from the early Middle Ages through the late 16th century. Neither book sold well, although critics and scholars liked *Allegory of Love*. That book also led to a lasting friendship between Lewis and Charles Williams, who edited the book for Oxford University Press and was captivated by it. Williams’ own book, *The Place of the Lion*, had a similar impact on Lewis at about this same time.

Williams would eventually join a group Jack began hosting in 1933 called the “Inklings,” which met to share, discuss, and critique each other’s writings. Initially, the group included Jack, Owen Barfield, Nevill Coghill, Hugo Dyson, and J.R.R. Tolkien. The Inklings met on Thursday evenings in Jack’s rooms in Magdalen College, and on Mondays or Fridays at a local pub called *The Eagle and the Child* (known to the locals as “The Bird and the Baby”). In addition to Williams, the group was later joined by Warnie,⁶³ Dr. Robert Havard (Jack’s physician), and others.

In 1937 Tolkien became the first member of the Inklings to achieve popular success with the publication of *The Hobbit*. As early as 1929, Tolkien had showed Jack an unfinished mythological poem about a world of elves, orcs, and other strange creatures. Lewis’ enthusiastic response and honest criticism encouraged Tolkien to keep writing. Tolkien eventually abandoned the poem, but the world he had created became the foundation for both *The Hobbit* and his later masterpiece, *The Lord of the Rings*.⁶⁴

In 1938, a small publishing company, The Bodley Head, published Jack’s first science fiction novel, *Out of the Silent Planet*, after other publishers rejected it. This was followed in 1939 by *Rehabilitations*, a collection of nine essays on a variety of topics. Neither achieved much success. In 1939, Jack began writing his first Christian apologetic, *The Problem of Pain*, which was his answer to the age-old question of why a good and powerful God allows so much pain and suffering in the world. Does He lack the power to stop it, or merely the desire to do so? Lewis rejected both options, arguing (among other things) that God allows pain because He loves us and

⁶³ Warnie Lewis was a skilled writer in his own right. He wrote a history of 17th century France and the reign of Louis XIV, entitled *The Splendid Century*, which was published in 1953.

⁶⁴ *The Lord of the Rings* was published in 1954.

wants what is best for us—and what is ultimately best for us is to be in relationship with our Creator, for that is what He made us for. Pain is God’s way of making us realize our need for Him: “The human spirit will not even begin to try to surrender self-will as long as all seems to be well with it. . . . God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”⁶⁵ *The Problem of Pain* was published in 1940, and was the first of Jack’s books to sell widely. The book went through multiple printings, and also spiked demand for Lewis’ other writings.

The following year, Jack began writing articles for *The Guardian*, a publication of the Church of England.⁶⁶ He was paid two pounds per article, which he donated to charity, as he would with the proceeds from all of his religious writings. The articles followed the fictitious career of an inexperienced and inept demon, Wormwood, as he unsuccessfully tried to undermine the faith of his Christian “patient,” as seen through the letters and advice of his uncle, Screwtape. The articles were published in weekly installments from May 2nd through November 28th, 1941, and then in book form in February 1942, as *The Screwtape Letters*. The book was a colossal success. It sold well in both England and the United States, generated even greater demand for Jack’s other books, and made C.S. Lewis famous.

World War II. On September 1, 1939, Adolf Hitler’s Germany invaded Poland, starting World War II. The British Army recalled Warnie to active duty and shipped him to France in October. He returned to England in mid-1940 after Germany overran France, and arrived back in Oxford just in time for the August wedding of Janie Moore’s daughter, Maureen, to Leonard Blake, the musical director at Worksop College. Paxford (the gardener-handyman) went to work in a factory, which was hard on Janie Moore, who at 66 was beginning to feel her age. Jack joined the Home Guard and also volunteered to be a religious lecturer for the Royal Air Force, speaking to pilots about basic Christianity before they embarked on their dangerous bombing runs over continental Europe. That experience quickly taught Jack that, like John Wesley before him, he must learn to speak in the language of the common man if he wished to be understood.

When German bombs forced the evacuation of children from London to the safety of less urban areas, several schoolgirls came to live at the Kilns—including 16-year-old June Flewett, whose favorite author was none other than C.S. Lewis. June arrived in mid-1943 and left in January 1945 to attend the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. Jack paid for her two years of training there, as well as an additional year beyond.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *The Problem of Pain*, in *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*, p. 406.

⁶⁶ *The Guardian* ceased publication in 1951.

⁶⁷ June is said to have inspired the character of Lucy Pevensie, the youngest of the four children

In August 1941, Lewis delivered a series of four weekly fifteen-minute talks about Christianity on BBC radio. These talks were entitled “Right and Wrong,” and were followed by five talks in early 1942 on “What Christians Believe.” The following autumn Lewis delivered eight more talks on the topic of “Christian Behavior,” and in early 1944 he recorded seven more radio broadcasts. These radio talks were subsequently published, in various groupings and under various titles, including *Broadcast Talks*, *The Case for Christianity*, *Christian Behavior*, *Beyond Personality*, and *Mere Christianity*.

While C.S. Lewis never professed to be a theologian, these books present the Christian point of view in persuasive, witty, and accessible language that makes difficult theological issues seem simple and straightforward. For example, regarding Jesus’ claims of divinity, Lewis wrote:

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.⁶⁸

And on the subject of salvation:

Is it not frightfully unfair that this new life should be confined to people who have heard of Christ and been able to believe in Him? But the truth is God has not told us what His arrangements about the other people are. We do know that no man can be saved except through Christ; we do not know that only those who know Him can be saved through Him. But in the meantime, if you are worried about the people

in C.S. Lewis’ *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*. As an actress, June took the stage name of Jill Raymond, and later married Clement Freud, who went on to become a Member of Parliament. Clement was a grandson of the famous Sigmund Freud.

⁶⁸ *Mere Christianity*, in *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*, p. 36.

outside, the most unreasonable thing you can do is to remain outside yourself.⁶⁹

Regarding the topic of faith vs. works:

Christians have often disputed as to whether what leads the Christian home is good actions, or Faith in Christ. I have no right really to speak on such a difficult question, but it does seem to me like asking which blade in a pair of scissors is more necessary. (p. 81)⁷⁰

1942 was a busy year for Lewis. In addition to the radio broadcasts, his war-related duties, and his teaching responsibilities at Oxford, Lewis worked on several writing projects, including his second science fiction novel, *Perelandra*. He also became President of the Oxford University Socratic Club, which met each week to discuss and debate religion. The Club invited speakers to present their religious views, and many were non-Christians. Lewis usually represented the Christian viewpoint, and delighted in these vigorous and sometimes acerbic debates. He would retain the position of Club President until 1954 when he left Oxford.

Pelelandra was published in 1943, to moderate success. That same year, Lewis published his rebuttal to moral relativism,⁷¹ *The Abolition of Man*, which sold poorly. In contrast to many of his popular writings, *The Abolition of Man* was written in scholarly language, using a scholarly approach. The critics disliked its content and the public disliked its style. Two more works were published in 1945: (1) *That Hideous Strength*, the final book in Lewis' science fiction trilogy; and (2) *The Great Divorce*, a fictional journey to Heaven. In the latter Lewis contends—as Jesus implies in Matthew 7:13-14⁷²—that many people will **choose** a benign Hell over Heaven because they insist on hanging on to something that Heaven cannot allow them to keep, such as bitterness, pride, self-pity, hatred, envy, etc.

The War had one especially happy consequence for Lewis—Oxford University Press relocated from London to Oxford, bringing Charles Williams much closer. Through Lewis' efforts, Oxford University hired Williams as a lecturer in the

⁶⁹ *Mere Christianity*, in *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*, pp. 41-42

⁷⁰ *Mere Christianity*, in *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*, p. 81

⁷¹ Moral relativism rejects absolute moral standards, based on its contention that all moral judgments are inherently subjective and/or cultural. Thus, the moral relativist does not accept the moral authority of the Bible, the Koran, or any other absolute standard.

⁷² In Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus says:

“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

English faculty, and before long Williams joined the Inklings. Lewis practically idolized Williams, considering him one of the godliest men he had ever known. The friendship between the two men continued to grow until Williams' untimely death during minor surgery on May 15, 1945, only a week after Germany's surrender ended the War in Europe.

Meanwhile, Lewis' friendship with Tolkien became strained. The two men had strong disagreements over the clash between Communism and Fascism in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Tolkien, a Roman Catholic, supported Franco's Fascists because they, unlike the Communists, did not seek to abolish the Roman Catholic Church in Spain. Lewis regarded both sides with equal contempt. After Charles Williams came to Oxford, Lewis routinely brought him along to weekly meetings with Tolkien, which the latter resented. Another blow to their friendship came in 1945, when Tolkien received what Lewis had long coveted: an Oxford professorship.

Professors at Oxford did not have to tutor students, and Lewis was still performing tutoring duties despite many years of service. He hoped he might finally become a professor when David Nicholl Smith, the Merton Chair of English Literature, retired in 1947, but F.P. Wilson, not Lewis, received the position. The reasons are uncertain, but many at Oxford envied Lewis for his fame and success, and resented him for his overt Christianity and his sometimes brusque manners. This continuing failure to reward C.S. Lewis with a professorship would eventually convince him to leave Oxford in favor of rival Cambridge.

The Chronicles of Narnia. In December 1945, the Inklings celebrated the end of World War II and the life of Charles Williams with an outing to Fairford,⁷³ but the group would soon be in decline. Within three years, Tolkien and Lewis stopped sharing their work with the group after receiving savage criticism of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, respectively. On October 27, 1949, the group died quietly when no one showed up for the regular meeting.

The death of Charles Williams and the demise of the Inklings were only two of many difficulties Lewis experienced in the post-war years. Warnie's drinking caused him to disappear for days at a time, often when he was most needed, on what Mrs. Moore called "Warnie benders." Janie Moore herself was not aging gracefully. The onset of dementia changed her personality, making her irritable and argumentative. In April 1950, her doctor suggested placing her in a nursing home. Jack reluctantly moved her to Restholme, in Oxford, where he visited her almost every day until she died from influenza on January 12, 1951, at the age of 77. Warnie was too drunk to attend her funeral.

On February 2, 1948, an event occurred which may have changed the course

⁷³ Fairford is located about 29 miles west of Oxford.

of Lewis' subsequent writings. 1947 had seen the publication of a book Jack wrote in 1945 called *Miracles*. The book was a defense of the supernatural in the Bible, and it landed Lewis on the cover of *Time* magazine. In 1948 the Socratic Club brought Elizabeth Anscombe to debate the topic with Lewis. Anscombe, herself a Roman Catholic, was Lewis' equal in wit and personality—and she was a professional philosopher. (She would later become a Professor of Philosophy at Cambridge.) Opinions at the time differed on who won the debate, but Lewis had no doubt that he had lost decisively. From that point on he stopped writing Christian apologetics and began to focus on a series of books about a land called Narnia, beginning with *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. When *Miracles* was reprinted in 1960, Lewis revised the 3rd chapter because of Ms. Anscombe's arguments.⁷⁴

Lewis finished writing *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* in late December, 1949, but it wasn't published until the fall of 1950 because the publisher, Geoffrey Bles, had reservations about the book. While the publisher delayed, Jack wrote the next two books in the series, *Prince Caspian* and *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. He finished the remaining books of the series—*The Silver Chair*, *The Horse and His Boy*, *The Magician's Nephew*, and *The Last Battle* by March 1953. The books were published one per year, beginning in 1950,⁷⁵ and soon became a tremendous success.

Collectively, these books are known as the Chronicles of Narnia. They follow the adventures of several children in the magical land of Narnia, which is inhabited by witches, talking animals, centaurs, dwarves, gnomes, fauns, and a lordly lion named Aslan, a Christ-like figure. Along the way, the books address, in an entertaining and metaphorical way, such Christian topics as Creation and the presence of evil in the world; temptation, sin, and repentance; faith and prayer; God's sovereignty and providential care; the dangers of pride and the importance of humility; false gods, false prophets, and false religions; Heaven, and life after death.

⁷⁴ Chapter 3 of *Miracles* is entitled "The Cardinal Difficulty of Naturalism," in which Lewis argues that strict materialism undermines our ability to place any faith in Reason. After all, if how and what we think are merely the result of events beyond our control—our genetic structure, where we were born, how we were raised, etc.—then our reasoning is inherently suspect, in the same way that the statement, "You say that because you are a man," if accepted as true, discredits my opinion, because that opinion is the result of an irrational cause.

⁷⁵ The books were published in the following order:
1950 – *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*
1951 – *Prince Caspian*
1952 – *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*
1953 – *The Silver Chair*
1954 – *The Horse and His Boy*
1955 – *The Magician's Nephew*
1956 – *The Last Battle*

The books are simple enough for children, yet profound enough for adults. Today they stand as his most famous and most enduring works.

Joy. 1952 saw the publication of *Mere Christianity*, which was a rewrite of the previously published *Broadcast Talks*, *Christian Behavior*, and *Beyond Personality*. *Mere Christianity* became an instant best-seller. Two years later Jack's contribution to the *Oxford History of English Literature*—which he jokingly referred to as O-HEL, or “Oh Hell”—was published, entitled *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama*. That same year, 1954, he began writing *Surprised by Joy*, which would be published in 1955.

As a result of his popularity, Lewis received many letters, some of which shared personal problems and sought his advice. Despite his many duties, he answered each letter. In January, 1950, he received a letter from a lady in Westchester, New York who would lead him to heights of joy and sorrow that he had never known. Joy Davidman Gresham had been born on April 18, 1915, so she was more than 16 years Lewis' junior. She married William “Bill” Gresham in 1942, at the age of 27. They had two children together—David, in 1944, and Douglas, in 1945. Joy was an aspiring writer and a new Christian—having been converted in 1946—and she wrote Jack seeking help with both.⁷⁶

In September 1952, Joy came to Oxford for a visit. Initially, Jack did not permit himself to be alone with her—perhaps for fear of the rumors it might encourage—and as a result she met many of his friends. Most of them disapproved of her language, which they considered crude and even profane, and they resented her extroverted, uninhibited personality. But she said what she thought, and usually in a very witty manner, which Jack and Warnie found refreshing. She was in many ways like Jack's best male friends. Jack and Warnie encouraged her to remain in England through the Christmas holidays, and even invited her to stay at the Kilns for two weeks.

During this time Bill wrote to her, asking for a divorce. Joy was only too happy to grant his request, for he drank heavily, had a violent temper, and was unfaithful to her throughout their marriage. She returned to America by boat in early 1953, in part to facilitate the necessary arrangements. Upon her return to England in April, she and her two boys settled in London. By Christmas, she and Jack were seeing each other regularly, both in London and in Oxford.

The Greshams finalized their divorce on August 5, 1954. C.S. Lewis and Oxford would part ways that same year. For many years, Jack had felt slighted at

⁷⁶ Joy Gresham wrote several published books, including *Smoke on the Mountains: An Interpretation of the Ten Commandments*, which was published in the United States in November 1954 and in England in early 1955. Joy dedicated the book to C. S. Lewis, and he wrote the preface to the English edition.

being repeatedly passed over for the professorship he felt he deserved. Cambridge University⁷⁷ learned of this discontent and offered to create a special position in the English Department for him: Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature, in Magdalene College. The plan worked. Lewis left Oxford in December 1954 and became a Cambridge professor in January 1955. Although he lived at Magdalene College, he returned to Oxford for weekends and vacations, commuting by train. This allowed him to see Joy and to keep an eye on Warnie and his drinking problem.

Ecstasy and Despair. 1955 was a happy year for Jack. He enjoyed everything about Cambridge—the town, the faculty, and especially being a professor. In August, Joy and her two boys moved to Headington, only a mile from the Kilns, which allowed her to see Jack whenever he was in town. *Surprised by Joy* was published that same year and sold well. As 1956 dawned, Jack's happiness was briefly threatened by the British government, which declined to renew Joy's work permit. To allow her to remain in the country, Jack and Joy were married on April 23, 1956 in a civil ceremony. Although the marriage was kept secret from most of Jack's friends, and Joy continued to live in Headington, their relationship did not remain Platonic. Jack's personal life now became as pleasurable and fulfilling as his work. Unfortunately, the interlude would be brief.

Jack's novel, *Till We Have Faces*, was published in 1956, retelling the mythological story of Cupid and Psyche. He dedicated it to Joy, but the book did not sell well. In October of that same year, Joy fell and broke her left thigh bone. While treating her, doctors discovered malignant cancer in her breasts, ovaries, and bones. Even after surgery, her doctors predicted she would live only a few more months. Yet she refused to give in to depression or self-pity, and her attitude lifted the spirits of all around her, especially Jack. She made only one concession to her disease—she and the boys moved to the Kilns, where Jack and Warnie could better care for her.

In March, 1957, Joy's doctors advised Jack to take her home to die, for they could do nothing more for her. The news crushed Jack, who by now had come to love Joy as a wife as well as a friend. His deep love for her is apparent in the journal he kept after her death, which was eventually published as *A Grief Observed*.⁷⁸ The book is heart-breaking in its naked honesty. The thought of losing her frightened him tremendously:

She once said to me, "Even if we both died at exactly the same moment, as we lie here side by side, it would be just as much a separation as the

⁷⁷ Cambridge University is located about 45 miles north of London.

⁷⁸ The book was initially published under a pseudonym, N.W. Clark, and did not sell well. Published again after C.S. Lewis' death, this time crediting Lewis as the author, the book became a best-seller.

one you're so afraid of.”⁷⁹

On March 21st, they were again married, this time in a religious ceremony in her hospital room. Jack then hired a full-time nurse and took Joy back to the Kilns. He also wrote to Bill Gresham, urging him not to try to seek custody of David and Douglas after Joy's death—and threatening to oppose him in court if he tried.⁸⁰

Jack now began to pray that God would transfer Joy's pain to him. In the following days and weeks, Joy's pain subsided while Jack began to suffer terribly. Tests revealed that Jack was suffering from osteoporosis—and Joy's bones were regenerating! Joy slowly improved, and the cancer in her bones disappeared. By the end of 1957 she was able to walk with a cane. Jack also improved once he began to receive medical treatment for his condition.

Joy put her newfound health to good use by giving the Kilns a makeover. On the inside, a central heating system and gas stove were installed, needed repairs were made, and the place was decorated and spruced up. On the outside, the landscaping was improved and the pond was cleared of the trespassing teenagers who had been using it for drinking and partying. She also tried to help Warnie, whose drinking binges had grown more frequent, but he refused her overtures. Perhaps he resented Joy, now that Jack's life revolved around her.

With Joy's cancer in full remission and both of them in relatively good health, 1958 was another happy year. In July they flew to Ireland—Jack's first flight on an airplane—and Joy met Arthur Greeves. In August, Jack taped a series of radio broadcasts on the topic of “love,” discussing the four types of love in the Greek: *eros*, *philia*, *storge*, and *agape*. Later that year Jack's book, *Reflections on the Psalms*, was published and sold well.

In the summer of 1959, Jack and Joy again visited Ireland and began to plan a trip to Greece. But routine X-rays in October of that year brought bad news—Joy's cancer had returned. She grew weaker as the months passed, yet she and Jack nevertheless spent two weeks in Greece in April. Upon their return, Joy underwent additional surgery. Unfortunately, she continued to decline. Both Jack and Joy knew the end was near, and Jack made a touching request of her:

Once very near the end I said, “If you can—if it is allowed—come to me when I too am on my death bed.” “Allowed!” she said. “Heaven would have a job to hold me; and as for Hell, I'd break it into bits.”⁸¹

⁷⁹ *A Grief Observed*, in *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*, p. 446

⁸⁰ Bill Gresham never tried to assert his parental rights, even after Joy's death. The danger was removed in late 1962, when he committed suicide after being diagnosed with cancer of the tongue.

⁸¹ *A Grief Observed*, in *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*, p. 462

On July 13, 1960, she was hospitalized with intense pain. Joy Gresham passed away that night, at the age of 45.

Decline and Death. After Joy's death, Jack experienced grief that far exceeded the losses of his mother and Janie Moore. Memories of Joy often reduced him to tears. In his own mind, he questioned his faith, which now seemed so weak, as well as his motives, which now seemed so self-centered. He even questioned God's goodness—though not His existence—and for a time viewed Joy's miraculous recovery not as a blessing, but a curse, for it made her loss even harder to bear. In time, of course, his grief subsided and he learned to accept the loss. Needless to say, he also became reconciled to God.

Meanwhile, Jack's own health deteriorated, and before long he took a leave of absence from Cambridge University. His doctor placed him on antibiotics for infected kidneys, and a low-protein diet for an irregular heartbeat (which may have resulted from his long history of smoking and drinking). Nevertheless, he had three books published at about this time: *Four Loves*, based on the 1958 radio broadcasts, which the public received enthusiastically; *Studies in Words*, which the critics received enthusiastically; and *An Experiment in Criticism*, which no one received enthusiastically.

On June 15, 1963, Lewis suffered a heart attack and temporarily lapsed into a coma. When he regained full consciousness, he resigned his position at Cambridge, to allow the promotion of someone else into the position. Soon Jack returned to the Kilns, where a summer school student at Oxford, Walter Hooper, volunteered to be his secretary during the rest of the summer. Walter had to return to the United States in September, but would later devote many years of his life to reviewing, editing, and publishing Lewis' unpublished writings.

Meanwhile, Warnie—recovered from his latest binge—returned to the Kilns not long after Jack did. Together they answered Jack's correspondence when he was not too tired. Life seemed good again. Even J.R.R. Tolkien visited, and the long-estranged friends resolved their differences. But Jack's health did not improve. He was tired most of the time and slept a lot. He died quietly on November 22, 1963, his death passing almost unnoticed at the time because Lee Harvey Oswald assassinated President John F. Kennedy on the same day.

At Warnie's request, the funeral, held on November 26th, was kept private, attended by only a few close friends: J.R.R. Tolkien and son Christopher, George Sayer (a former pupil of Jack's, who would later write a biography of him), Douglas Gresham, Maureen Moore Blake and husband Leonard Blake, and Fred Paxford. Warnie spent the day drinking whisky and missed the funeral.

Several books of Lewis' writings were published after his death, including *Letters to Malcolm*, which is a book about prayer, and *God in the Dock*, a collection

of Lewis' essays edited by Walter Hooper. At Wheaton College, Illinois, the Marion E. Wade Center has a collection of manuscripts and memorabilia related to C.S. Lewis, including Warnie's papers and letters, which he bequeathed to Wheaton College upon his death. This includes the *Lewis Papers*, an eleven-volume family history which Warnie compiled, as well as Jack's correspondence with Warnie and Arthur Greeves. However, most of Lewis' own manuscripts and letters are at the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

Warnie died on April 9, 1973, ten years after Jack's passing. He and Jack are both buried at Holy Trinity Church in Headington Quarry, Oxford, under a single headstone which reads: "Men must endure their going hence." According to Warnie's memoirs, this was the passage that was on a Shakespearean calendar the day their mother, Flora Lewis, died.

Conclusion. Some contend that a Christian intellectual is an oxymoron, but C.S. Lewis certainly was one. Unlike Kant and Kierkegaard, C.S. Lewis refused to cede the intellectual high ground to the non-believers. He defended Christianity using arguments based in Reason, and did so with considerable skill and wit. He insisted that Christianity was not merely worthwhile or desirable, but that it was also **true**. He added to his legacy with the Narnia books, which children and adults still enjoy today, some 60 years after they were written.

Like all of us, Lewis had his faults and idiosyncrasies. He was a very private person—even some of his closest friends were unaware of many details of his personal history. He smoked heavily (cigarettes and a pipe), drank freely, and was sometimes brusque and intimidating. Many perceived him as coarse, and his occasional disparaging remarks about women led some to view him as a misogynist. On the other hand, he was also "a kind and patient teacher, a loyal friend, a magnificently astute and intelligent conversationalist who had read much and who had the capacity to fire his hearers with a longing to read his favourite authors for themselves."⁸²

He was also a giant of the faith. Lewis' writings reveal a deep understanding of the essence of Christianity and a unique ability to communicate that essence on a level all can understand. And he truly believed what he wrote. So perhaps in the end the highest compliment we can pay him is that, amidst a world of unbelievers, C.S. Lewis was a sincere, faithful Christian who taught the rest of us how to be sincere, faithful Christians.

⁸² Quoted from the Preface to *C.S. Lewis, A Biography*, by A.N. Wilson, at page xii.

Sources:

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- (4) *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life*, by C. S. Lewis (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York and London, 1955).
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- (6) *The Screwtape Letters*, by C.S. Lewis (MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., New York, 25th Printing 1977; copyright 1961, “reprinted with some alterations by kind permission of *The Guardian*).
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- (20) *Great Inventions Through History*, by Gerald Messadié (W & R Chambers, Ltd., Edinburgh 1991; first published in France, Bordas, Paris, 1988)
- (21) The following articles from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*:
 - (a) “Soren Kierkegaard,” found at:
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kierkegaard/#Reli>
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- (24) The article about June Flewett Freud, entitled, “I was sure that children would not want to be told that this old lady was Lucy,” from the web site of *The Telegraph*, found at:
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- (26) Articles about Richard Wagner at the following sites:
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<http://www.classicalarchives.com/composer/3530.html#tvf=tracks&tv=about>
Lucid Café:
<http://www.lucidcafe.com/library/96may/wagner.html>
Richard Wagner Web Site:
<http://www.trell.org/wagner/>

- (27) In addition, the following web site was useful regarding the geography of some of the locations mentioned in this article:
Drive Alive! - <http://www.drive-alive.co.uk/>