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THE CHRISTOLOGY OF CLIVE STAPLES LEWIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

# THE CHRISTOLOGY OF CLIVE STAPLES LEWIS

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. The Subject

##### 1. The Subject Presented

"No Christian apologist in the English-speaking world is today as much talked about and argued about as C. S. Lewis."<sup>1</sup> What makes this statement highly significant is that C. S. Lewis is not some renowned Christian clergyman defending the Faith from pagan attacks. Rather, surprisingly enough, he is a layman of the Church of England, an Oxford don, who feels a need for Christianity to present a common front to the world. His books, which number a little over a dozen, on Christian subjects have been on best-seller lists in England and here in America as well. So acclaimed has he been in England that he gave a series of talks over the British Broadcasting Company's networks, which reached thousands of people.

To examine closely all of the Christian Doctrines presented in the books by Lewis would require a work of

. . . . .

1. Walsh, Chad. C. S. Lewis: Apostle to the Skeptics, p. ix.

importance of the work of C. S. Lewis. He says:

If Christianity revives in England and America it will not be the work of one man---and perhaps not really the work of man at all. But the odds are that it will bear strong traces of the Gospel according to C. S. Lewis. 4

It is, therefore, important to see clearly what Mr. Lewis believes about the Person and Work of Christ and how those beliefs affect the major trends in Christian thinking.

#### B. THE METHOD OF PROCEDURE

In understanding the Christology of C. S. Lewis, it is of major significance to realize that he has not been a Christian all his life. On the contrary, he took great pride in asserting his beliefs in Atheism. For the purpose of this study, it is important first to trace and understand the influences that led Mr. Lewis to abandon the traditional Christian view, to embrace the Atheistic philosophy, and finally to accept once again the Christian position as the realistic one. These influences that directed his steps in this "religious pilgrimage", if you will, are the Home, Education, his Literary Pursuits, and Religion.

From the influences that pulled and shaped his life, there emerges his Christian Thought. This Thought ex-

. . . . .

4. Walsh, op. cit., p. 172.

pressed in his books contains a Doctrine of Christ. Never in one place does he set forth, "This is my Doctrine of Christ", but reference to the Person of Jesus is made in practically every book he has written. Those doctrines of greatest importance will then be examined. Such doctrines will be considered as: the Incarnation; the Atonement; Pre-existence; Christ and Sin; and the Indwelling Presence of Christ.

Finally, an evaluation will be attempted. How does Lewis's thought fit in with current thinking today? He will be compared with the Liberal, the Fundamentalist, and the Neo-Orthodox. A consideration of Lewis as a Christian apologist of first rank will be given some attention. In conclusion, some succinct statements of his Christology and its importance will be made.

### C. THE SOURCES FOR THE STUDY

#### 1. Primary

The major source material for this study is the various works of the author himself. This includes his non-fiction Christian writings as well as his autobiography and his three fiction novels. Also, in comparison with modern thinking, the major theological work of the representative of that position is a source examined for this paper.

2. Secondary

The secondary material examined is articles appearing in various magazines about C. S. Lewis or his writings, and, also, book reviews that have appeared in various periodicals.



CHAPTER II

IMPORTANT INFLUENCES ON THE THINKING OF C. S. LEWIS

## CHAPTER II.

### IMPORTANT INFLUENCES ON THE THINKING OF C. S. LEWIS

#### A. Home

"Happy, but for so happy ill secured."<sup>5</sup> This quotation from Milton C. S. Lewis used as a caption for the first chapter, "The First Years", of his autobiography. It sets the tone of the early experiences in the life of Lewis; a tone of insecurity that led him into solitude, then the seeking of expression through writing.

His family, until about 1907, consisted of his father, mother, and brother. In 1907 his mother died of cancer. That this affected his life then and in the subsequent years is plainly seen in his comment:

With my mother's death all settled happiness, all that was tranquil and reliable, disappeared from my life. There was to be much fun, many pleasures, many stabs of Joy; but no more of the old security. It was sea and island now; the great continent had sunk like Atlantis.<sup>6</sup>

Not only did he lose his mother and the needed security of childhood, but he recalls that he lost his father as well. He became alienated from him due to the father's incalculable temper and unjust actions. So much did

. . . . .

5. Lewis, C. S. Surprised By Joy, p. 3.

6. Ibid., p. 21.

Lewis consider his father a threat to him that he took to lying to him.<sup>7</sup> His relationship to his father afterward was always a strained one. Never was there a close, intimate fellowship, never the exchange of ideas, nor the unburdening of the heart. The father spoke and the boy, Lewis, jumped and did as he was commanded. As the years pass, he writes:

At home the real separation and apparent cordiality between my father and myself continued. Every holidays I came back from Kirk with my thoughts and my speech a little clearer, and this made it progressively less possible to have any real conversation with my father.<sup>8</sup>

This cordial air, without genuine fellowship, drove father and son further apart. It caused Lewis to find companionship in his brother, his school-mates, his books and his imagination. It caused him to commit acts that he would not ordinarily have done. Between 1914-1916, when he had advanced (according to his thinking) away from the Christian faith, his relationship with his father helps to explain one of the worst acts in his life: "I allowed myself to be prepared for confirmation, and confirmed, and to make my first Communion, in total disbelief, acting a part, eating and drinking my own condemnation."<sup>9</sup> Hence, the loss of his mother and this estrange-

. . . . .

7. Ibid., p. 19.

8. Ibid., p. 160. "Kirk" is W. T. Kirkpatrick, Lewis's teacher at Bookham. Greater reference is made to him in the section on Education.

9. Ibid., p. 161.

ment from his father leads him to solitude and the world of books. The latter becomes one of the most influential aspects of his life.

The influence that the authors had upon Lewis will be discussed under the section of Literary Influences. However, it is important to note that he was opened to a world literally "crammed full" of books. In his own words he says:

There were books in the study, books in the drawing room, books in the cloakroom, books (two deep) in the great bookcase on the landing, books in a bedroom, books piled as high as my shoulder in the cistern attic, books of all kinds reflecting every transient stage of my parents' interest, books readable and unreadable, books suitable for a child and books most emphatically not. Nothing was forbidden me. In the seemingly endless rainy afternoons I took volume after volume from the shelves. I had always the same certainty of finding a book that was new to me as a man who walks into a field has of finding a new blade of grass. 10

These books did much to shape his thinking; begin his questionings of life, Nature, God; stir his imagination; move him to creative writing. His avid interest in mythology and fancy sets the background for his later allegorical Christian writings.

Over against his solitude, over against his enchantment with the land of myth and fancy, over against his loss of mother and father, stands the close bond of love and companionship with his brother. These two are drawn

. . . . .

10. Ibid., p. 10.

together to seek each other's understanding, comfort, and support. His attachment to and companionship with his brother continue throughout their lives, even though they are separated by school interests and finally by war. If there was any security for Lewis in his early years, that security was found in his brother.

## B. Education

### 1. Christian

The Christian influence on Lewis in his boyhood, at home, was not great nor very effective in leading him to wholesome religious experiences. He states in his autobiography, "If aesthetic experiences were rare, religious experiences did not occur at all." His entire feeling about his religious training in the home is best expressed in his own words:

I was taught the usual things and made to say my prayers and in due time taken to church [the Church of Ireland] . I naturally accepted what I was told but I cannot remember feeling much interest in it. 11

It was, therefore, at the various schools he attended that his religious experiences and thinking developed.

To simplify his educational training it can best be separated into three distinct periods, each connected with a particular school. The first educational adventure

. . . . .

11. Ibid., p. 7.

was in what he calls "Belsen" in Hertfordshire. Here he, along with eight or nine other boys, comes under the tutelage of a headmaster nick-named "Oldie". This school experience was, indeed, harsh on the young men that attended. It was strict in discipline, often giving physical beatings for inconsequential mistakes, and short on intellectual training. The results on Lewis were varied. He was again drawn to the other boys rather than to an adult, so much so that there developed in his thinking the concept of "we two" or "we few" standing together against something stronger and larger.<sup>12</sup> However, "Oldie's" is not without its beneficent effect. By far the most important thing that happened to him was:

There first I became an effective believer. As far as I know, the instrument was the church to which we were taken twice every Sunday. This was high 'Anglo-Catholic'. On the conscious level I reacted strongly against its peculiarities---was I not an Ulster Protestant, and were not these unfamiliar rituals an essential part of the hated English atmosphere? . . . What really mattered was that I here heard the doctrines of Christianity (as distinct from general 'uplift') taught by men who obviously believed them. As I had no skepticism, the effect was to bring to life what I would already have said that I believed.<sup>13</sup>

This was the extent of Christian teaching for C. S.

Lewis. It made, of course, a large impression, for it was here at "Oldie's" that Lewis began seriously to pray,

. . . . .

12. Ibid., p. 32.

13. Ibid., p. 33.

read the Bible and to obey the dictates of his conscience. His religious experiences here were not without great fear. It is here, he feels, that the basis for his future references to Hell and Judgement are to be found and not in his "supposed Puritanism" of his childhood. The other educational schools had a contrary effect on his thinking and may be termed as Atheistic.

## 2. Atheistic Tendencies

The other two periods in his intellectual training were the years he spent at Chartres, and at the foot of the great tutor, W. T. Kirkpatrick. All that "Oldie's" gave him in the sense of the numinous, in Christian understanding and genuine faith, these two schools promptly expelled. They did not do so deliberately, but the seeds of discontent and disbelief were present and only needed this added cultivation to blossom forth in a true atheistic philosophy.

The change took place during his years at Chartres. It was not a noticeable change, but one which, on later reflection, he described as: "I know for certain that it had not begun when I went there and that the process was complete very shortly after I left."<sup>14</sup> It was here that he ceased to be a Christian, a lad of only fourteen scant

. . . . .

14. Ibid., pp. 58-59.

years. The majority of this change he attributes to the Matron, a Miss C., who at the time was spiritually immature and considerably floundering in the whole Anglo-American Occultist tradition. "Nothing", writes Lewis, "was further from her intention than to destroy my faith; she could not tell that the room into which she brought this candle was full of gunpowder."<sup>15</sup> The result of her speaking with him over the years is described best by Lewis himself:

Little by little, unconsciously, unintentionally, she loosened the whole framework, blunted all the sharp edges, of my belief. The vagueness, the merely speculative character, of all this Occultism began to spread---yes, and to spread deliciously---to the stern truths of the creed.<sup>16</sup>

And so Lewis the Christian died, and Lewis the non-believer came to the fore. There was no misgiving for the young man, rather the feeling of relief accompanied the change. The Christian life had become tedious and difficult to practice, this new thought removed all such practices as prayer and all restraints.

Kirk's tutelage, the third period in his educational development, did much for Lewis the atheist as well as for the Christian Lewis was later to become. Kirk himself was an Atheist of the "Rationalistic" school of thought. Every-

. . . . .

15. Ibid., p. 59.

16. Ibid., p. 60.



thing stated needed logical, precise reason to substantiate the statement before it would be allowed into the conversation. Therefore, in Kirkpatrick, Lewis found a kindred soul. Lewis himself says, "...my own Atheism and Pessimism were fully formed before I went to Bookham. What I got there was merely fresh ammunition for the defense of a position already chosen."<sup>17</sup>

These influences on the life and thought of C. S. Lewis are not without their merit for the future Christian Lewis. Surely his appeal to the intellectual, and skeptical people of our day is because he talks with them on familiar ground. "The fiercely logical methods of reasoning that Lewis learned from the Ulsterman were many years later to be the principal road leading back to Christianity."<sup>18</sup>

### C. Literary

#### 1. George MacDonald

"There were, of course, the influences---personal and literary---along the way. Only a few years after his solemn acceptance of atheism he fell quite accidentally under the spell of George MacDonald..."<sup>19</sup> Truly, Walsh is right in calling it a spell that MacDonald cast over Lewis, for

. . . . .

17. Ibid., p. 139-140.

18. Walsh, op. cit., p. 4.

19. Ibid., p. 7.

never was he to shake the influence of this writer. First and foremost, is MacDonald's influence on C. S. Lewis on a purely literary level. The Christianity in MacDonald was discreetly disregarded by Lewis. In his autobiography, Lewis describes in detail the effect of buying and reading MacDonald's book, Phantastes, A Faerie Romance. He says:

The woodland journeyings in that story, the ghostly enemies, the ladies both good and evil, were close enough to my habitual imagery to lure me on without the perception of a change. It is as if I were carried sleeping across the frontier, or as if I had died in the old country and could never remember how I came alive in the new. For in one sense the new country was exactly like the old. I met there all that had already charmed me in Malory, Spenser, Morris, and Yeats. But in another sense all was changed. I did not yet know (and I was long in learning) the name of the new quality, the bright shadow, that rested on the travels of Anodos. I do now. It was Holiness..." 20

"That night my imagination was, in a certain sense, baptized; the rest of me, not unnaturally, took longer. I had not the faintest notion what I had let myself in for by buying Phantastes." 21 This confession speaks for itself. The importance of the writing of George MacDonald can hardly, if ever, be really measured in its effect on C. S. Lewis. The influence of the man, MacDonald on Lewis's Christian 22 thinking will be dealt with in the next section.

. . . . .

20. Lewis, op. cit., p. 179.  
21. Ibid., p. 181.  
22. Post, p. 17.

## 2. Others

As important as is MacDonald, he does not stand alone in influencing Lewis. Lewis is and was an avid reader of a prodigious number of books and authors. These writers took their toll on Lewis's thought and made inroads on his Atheism. He writes:

In reading Chesterton, as in reading MacDonald, I did not know what I was letting myself in for. A young man who wishes to remain a sound Atheist cannot be too careful of his reading...God is, if I may say it, very unscrupulous. <sup>23</sup>

The effect of these various writers began to accumulate and bring forth contrasts in his thinking between Christian writers and non-Christian writers. As their total effect increased, Lewis was disturbed by the threat they posed to his whole earlier outlook. He puts this contrast between the writers poignantly in his autobiography. He records:

George MacDonald had done more to me than any other writer; of course it was a pity he had that bee in his bonnet about Christianity. He was good in spite of it. Chesterton had more sense than all other moderns put together; bating of course, his Christianity. Johnson was one of the few authors whom I felt I could trust utterly; curiously enough, he had the same kink. Spenser and Milton by a strange coincidence had it, too. Even among ancient authors the same paradox was to be found. The most religious (Plato, Aeschylus, Virgil) were clearly those on whom I could really feed. On the other hand, those writers who did not suffer from religion and with whom in theory my sympathy ought to have been complete---Shaw and Wells and Mill and Gibbon and Voltaire---all seemed a little thin; what as boys we called 'tinny'. <sup>24</sup>

. . . . .

23. Lewis, op. cit., p. 191.

24. Ibid., pp. 213-214.

The intellect was now constantly being drawn to re-examine the basis of Christianity and Atheism. More and more Lewis was to feel the irresistible attraction of God, yet conscious at every moment that he was choosing of his own free will to follow after this attraction. It was only natural that a boy who grew up spending the majority of his time in books, would eventually have the entire course of his life changed by the truths he found in these books he continued to read.

#### D. Religious

##### 1. George MacDonald

Of major significance for this study are the influences on the life and thought of C. S. Lewis that have helped him in formulating his Christian thought, and more specifically, his Doctrine of Christ. In essence, Lewis points unashamedly to George MacDonald as his spiritual father.

<sup>25</sup> Previously it was stated that MacDonald baptized Lewis's imagination. This was not all he did for Lewis. In speaking of his "beginning" in the Christian life, he writes:

I found that I was still with MacDonald and that he had accompanied me all the way and that I was now at last ready to hear from him much that he could not have told me at that first meeting. <sup>26</sup>

. . . . .

25. Ante, p. 15.

26. Lewis, C. S. George MacDonald-An Anthology, p. 21.

Lewis sits at his feet and begins to learn the great concepts of the Christian Faith. So much is he dependent upon this Christian thinker that he says openly, "I have never concealed the fact that I regarded him [George MacDonald] as my master; indeed I fancy I have never written a book in which I did not quote from him."<sup>27</sup> For an understanding of the Christology of C. S. Lewis it is necessary to appreciate the Christology of George MacDonald. The one has greatly influenced the other. Even Chad Walsh admits that "...his [George MacDonald's] Christocentric theology are all echoed and developed in Lewis."<sup>28</sup> There is in MacDonald a strong emphasis on the relationship of the Father-to-the-Son and the Son-to-the-believer. This is carried over into Lewis's writings and developed fully in an "indwelling-relationship" between Christ and the believer. MacDonald, however, is not the only religious influence that has shaped the doctrines of Lewis's Christian thought; there is also the Book of Common Prayer.

## 2. The Book of Common Prayer

No one can find in Lewis's works a succinct, organized statement of belief about Jesus Christ. The reason for this is that mainly he is writing about what he calls

. . . . .

27. Ibid., p. 20.

28. Walsh, op. cit., p. 135.

"Mere Christianity" and any statement of Christ comes out only as it is related to the topic under consideration. To conclude that he has no clear, concise belief about the Second Person of the Trinity is to make a fallacious assumption. He very definitely embraces the theological positions of the Church of England<sup>29</sup> and thereby holds their doctrinal position as regards to Christ. He says, in referring to his own beliefs on theological matters, that, "They are written in the Common-Prayer Book."<sup>30</sup> The beliefs about Christ then that are held by Lewis must be one and the same as those found in the "Articles of Religion" in the Book of Common Prayer.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, because various aspects of the life of Christ are omitted from his writings, it cannot be assumed that he does not believe in them. On the contrary, he takes great pains to state that he often avoids certain controversial doctrines of the Christian Church because they tend to divide rather than unite.<sup>32</sup> He seeks to expound "mere" Christianity which will attract the unbeliever and cause him to follow the Christ.

. . . . .

29. Lewis, C. S., Mere Christianity, p. vi.

30. Ibid., p. vii.

31. The Book of Common Prayer, p. 603 ff.

32. Lewis, C. S., Mere Christianity, p. vii.

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTOLOGY OF C. S. LEWIS PRESENTED IN HIS BOOKS

### CHAPTER III

#### THE CHRISTOLOGY OF C. S. LEWIS PRESENTED IN HIS BOOKS

##### A. Introduction

In treating the Christological emphasis in the writings of Lewis, the author does not suffer under the delusion that the following sections exhaust the material available. However, the intention is to convey those facets of the Doctrine of Christ which are the most essential to a sound Christology, and predominate in Lewis's books. The Incarnation and the Atonement are basic to Christology. This is seen in the treatment given the Incarnation by D. M. Baillie in his book, God Was In Christ, and the Atonement by William J. Wolf in his book, No Cross, No Crown.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, the major emphasis in this chapter is given to Lewis's thoughts on the Incarnation and the Atonement. Other aspects of Christology will also be discussed, such as Pre-existence, Christ and Sin,<sup>34</sup> and Christ and the Believer. As stated previously<sup>34</sup> these ideas are nowhere developed fully by Lewis, for he

. . . . .

33. Baillie, D. M., God Was In Christ, An Essay on Incarnation and Atonement, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1948.

Wolf, William J., No Cross, No Crown, A Study of the Atonement, Doubleday & Company, Inc., New York, 1957.

34. Ante, p. 18-19.



is not writing a book on the Person and Work of Christ, but is mainly engaged in expounding and propagating what he calls "mere" Christianity. The following doctrines, or rather concepts, are the gleanings from his writings.

## B. The Incarnation

### 1. Virgin Birth

In the Christian story God descends to re-ascend. He comes down; down from the heights of absolute being into time and space, down into humanity; down further still, if embryologists are right, to recapitulate in the womb ancient and pre-human phases of life; down to the very roots and seabed of the Nature He had created. But He goes down to come up again and bring the whole ruined world up with Him. One has the picture of a strong man stooping lower and lower to get himself underneath some great complicated burden. He must stoop in order to lift, he must almost disappear under the load before he incredibly straightens his back and marches off with the whole mass swaying on his shoulders. <sup>35</sup>

Many theologians and Christians believe that this Incarnation came about in the miracle of the Virgin Birth. Mr. Lewis would number himself in this group, although he has been attacked for omitting this subject from his writings. <sup>36</sup> The reason for the omission is obvious. This subject is a controversial one and is the cause of many disputes within the Christian fold; Lewis's position is to present a common front to the unbeliever. Because the Doctrine is omitted, it does not follow that Lewis rejects it.

. . . . .

35. Lewis, C. S., Miracles, p. 135.

36. Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. vii. These attacks preceded his book Miracles.

On the contrary, he stands firmly in the tradition of the Church of England and affirms its doctrinal position, which is:

The Son. . .took Man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance; so that two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided,<sup>37</sup> whereof is one Christ, very God, and very Man; . .

In explaining this position, he does not deny that this calls for a miraculous occurrence. He is not afraid of miracles. Miracles to him, and especially this one,<sup>38</sup> become credible when they illuminate and integrate our whole mass of knowledge. Because it happened or is possible does not mean that it needs to be fully comprehensible. It is in the treatment of Miracles that Lewis interprets his belief in the Virgin Birth. To him a miracle is not the contradiction or suspension of Natural law, but is rather the injection of a supernatural power and the doing suddenly and locally of that which God is always doing.<sup>39</sup> This principle makes Lewis's concept of the Virgin Birth speak with power, for he says,

If God creates a miraculous spermatozoon in the body of a virgin, it does not proceed to break any laws. The laws at once take it over. Nature is ready. Pregnancy follows, according to all the normal laws, and nine months later a child is born.<sup>40</sup>

. . . . .

- 37. The Book of Common Prayer, p. 603.
- 38. Lewis, Miracles, p. 133.
- 39. Ibid., p. 162.
- 40. Ibid., p. 72.

This was not just a whim of God's, but had a unique, special, and Divine purpose. He was creating not simply another man, but the Man who was to be Himself---the uniting<sup>41</sup> of two natures into one personality. Lewis, however, would not stress this. If the Virgin Birth were a stumbling block to the reader, he would press his case on and have you look at the Incarnate life as seen in the man, Jesus.

## 2. Divine and Human

The Church down through the centuries has always maintained the position that, "in the person of Christ there are two natures, the divine and the human, united without confusion or change."<sup>42</sup> This position had to be defended against other views such as Arianism, Nestorianism, Docetism, Monophysitism, and many others. C. S. Lewis, who through his writings may be shaping the Christological thinking of the English layman,<sup>43</sup> must take his stand for or against this "orthodox" position.

Believing, as he does, in the Incarnation, he takes as his starting point one of the creeds which emphasizes "that the Incarnation worked not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the Manhood into

. . . . .

41. Ibid., p. 166.

42. Qualben, L. P., A History of the Christian Church, Fourth Edition, Thomas Nelson and Sons, New York, 1942, p. 123.

43. Ante, p. 3-4.

God.'"<sup>44</sup> Nowhere in the writings of Lewis are you allowed to think that Jesus is any other than God and Man. Even in his fiction novels there is reference to Maleldil, [Christ] who became man. Often you find this truth expressed through the lips of the "Devil", a source which is least expected (and a great technique of Lewis's). For instance in the book The Screwtape Letters, Screwtape (an important official in his Satanic Majesty's "Lowerarchy") writes to Wormwood (a junior devil on earth), "Remember, he is not, like you, a pure spirit. Never having been a human (Oh that abominable advantage of the Enemy's [Christ] !)<sup>45</sup> you don't realise how enslaved they are to the pressure of the ordinary." Mr. Lewis carries the reader further than the creed---no, not further, but rather he makes clearer the truth to the twentieth-century mind. He unwraps the old language and formalism of the creed and puts the truth in a new dress so that we read:

The Second Person in God, the Son, became human Himself; was born into the world as an actual man---a real man of a particular height, with hair of a particular colour, speaking a particular language, weighing so many stone. The Eternal Being, who knows everything and who created the whole universe, became not only a man but (before that) a baby and before that a foetus inside a Woman's body.<sup>46</sup>

This One who came to live in this world for a period of

. . . . .

44. Lewis, C. S., The Weight of Glory, p. 27.

45. Lewis, C. S., The Screwtape Letters, p. 12. The underlining is mine.

46. Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 142.

time, in Lewis's view, lives so, in every act of his life--- speaking, teaching, eating, working, healing, praying, dying, rising again---as both Man and God. These two natures are One Nature inseparable. That this is difficult to comprehend and put into logical thought patterns, Lewis readily admits. But he points out that even our own natures are beyond our comprehension, yet we accept them. He says:

We cannot conceive how the Divine Spirit dwelled within the created and human spirit of Jesus: but neither can we conceive how His human spirit, or that of any man, dwells within his natural organism. What we can understand, if the Christian doctrine is true, is that our own composite existence is not the sheer anomaly it might seem to be, but a faint image of the Divine Incarnation itself---the same theme in a very minor key. 47

To speak about the Incarnation as seen by Lewis and to leave out the historical element would be to deprive the reader of a great truth. Christianity is the story of an invasion. The rightful King has landed, in disguise perhaps, to claim His own and is busily engaged in enlist-<sup>48</sup> ing the aid of mankind. The supreme, startling fact is that this King is not simply "God", but the Christian claim is that the one, true, God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the great "I Am", it is He who has de-<sup>49</sup> scended.

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47. Lewis, Miracles, p. 134.

48. Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 37.

49. Lewis, Miracles, p. 138.

In his book, Miracles, Lewis has the pivotal chapter on "The Grand Miracle", the Incarnation. This chapter concludes with an excellent summary on the importance of this doctrine of the Incarnation; one with which many ought to be familiar:

With this our sketch of the Grand Miracle may end. Its credibility does not lie in Obviousness. Pessimism, Optimism, Pantheism, Materialism, all have this 'obvious' attraction. Each is confirmed at the first glance by multitudes of facts; later on, each meets insuperable obstacles. The doctrine of the Incarnation works into our minds quite differently. It digs beneath the surface, works through the rest of our knowledge by unexpected channels, harmonises best with our deepest apprehensions and our 'second thoughts', and in union with these undermines our superficial opinions. It has little to say to the man who is still certain that everything is going to the dogs, or that everything is getting better and better, or that everything is God, or that everything is electricity. Its hour comes when these wholesale creeds have begun to fail us. Whether the thing really happened is a historical question. But when you turn to history, you will not demand for it that kind and degree of evidence which you would rightly demand for something intrinsically improbable; only that kind and degree which you demand for something which, if accepted, illuminates and orders all other phenomena, explains both our laughter and our logic, our fear of the dead and our knowledge that it is somehow good to die, and which at one stroke covers what multitudes of separate theories will hardly cover for us if this is rejected. 50

### C. The Atonement

#### 1. Suffering

A second significant doctrine of Christ which appears

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50. Ibid., p. 157-8.

throughout his novels, besides the emphasis on the divinity of Christ, is the Atonement. Great pains are taken to picture Christ's primary mission as one of Atonement.<sup>51</sup> This mission is found even portrayed in his fiction novels. In the novel Perelandra, Ransom is engaged in a fierce battle with the UnMan when he hears the voice of the unseen Malel-dil: "It is not for nothing that you are named Ransom . . . My name also is Ransom."<sup>52</sup> That the Atonement for Lewis, to be the Atonement, involved death and suffering is very clear. This suffering and death were real and in some way contribute to the life of the believer. Nowhere does he treat at length this particular aspect of the Atonement. Indeed, Lewis believes in the suffering-servant concept, and uses in his writings such expressions as: sufferings, suffer, die, death (meaning painful death), dies by torture, sweats drops of blood in Gethsemane, and others. This is not just a mere apparition of suffering and death, but the real thing. Lewis makes this more than clear by saying:

I have heard some people complain that if Jesus was God as well as man, then his sufferings and death lose all value in their eyes, 'because it must have been easy for Him'. Others may (very rightly) rebuke the ingratitude and ungraciousness of this objection; what staggers me is the misunderstanding it betrays. In one sense, of course, those who make it are right. They have even understated their own case. The perfect submission,

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51. Walsh, op. cit., p. 79.

52. Lewis, C. S., Perelandra, p. 153-154.

the perfect suffering, the perfect death were not only easier to Jesus because He was God, but were possible only because He was God. But surely that is a very odd reason for not accepting them? 53

It is to this point that the objector may travel with him, but from here on Lewis uses an illustration that points up the ridiculousness of the objection raised. He goes on to conclude:

. . . If I am drowning in a rapid river, a man who still has one foot on the bank may give me a hand which saves my life. Ought I to shout back (between my gasps), 'No, it's not fair! You have an advantage! You're keeping one foot on the bank?' That advantage---call it 'un-fair' if you like---is the only reason why he can be of any use to me. To what will you look for help if you will not look to that which is stronger than yourself? 54

The suffering of Christ was a real and an integral part of the Atonement; to minimize it because one feels that Christ was Divine is folly. The Atonement would be of no consequence and of no value without it. One cannot deny the human aspects of the Nature of Jesus. Lewis makes it plain in his thoughts on the Incarnation that the two natures are always present and always acting in Jesus. The suffering of Jesus has, for Lewis, a drawing power, possibly that which you find in Rudolph Otto's The Idea of the Holy, where he speaks of the element of fascination. Lewis would and does support George MacDonald's thought:

It is with the holiest fear that we should approach the terrible fact of the sufferings of Our Lord. Let no one

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53. Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 47.

54. Ibid.



think that these were less because He was more. The more delicate the nature, the more alive to all that is lovely and true, lawful and right, the more does it feel the antagonism of pain, the inroad of death upon life: the more dreadful is that breach of the harmony of things whose sound is torture. 55

Enough then of the suffering, what is its purpose, what does it accomplish, what is the result of the Atonement?

## 2. The Result

Who in this world has formulated a theory of the Atonement that does justice to the Act, fathoms the unfathomable mystery, and satisfies the minds and hearts of men? When all is said and done, all theories formulated, there are still mysteries remaining, still weak spots present, still areas of truth left untouched. C. S. Lewis, realizing this, does not even attempt to formulate a theory or to say in so many words what specifically was accomplished in Christ's Atoning work. He does not and will not endorse any one particular theory of the Atonement, but will go almost as far as to accept all of them as depicting some truth of this great act. For instance he says in Mere Christianity on this point:

You can say that Christ died for our sins. You may say that the Father has forgiven us because Christ has done for us what we ought to have done. You may say that we are washed in the blood of the Lamb. You may say that Christ has defeated death. They are all true . . . 56

. . . . .

55. Lewis, George MacDonald; An Anthology, p. 33.

56. Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 144.

His lack of proposing a theory or adhering to one of the accepted theories has caused many readers some consternation; the Roman Catholic priest who read the draft of The Case for Christianity was distressed at this point. Important. Very important is the truth, the Act is greater than any and every theory about it. The historical fact is greater than our creeds. All too often the emphasis in Christianity is placed on the theory or the creed, to the neglect of the experience which gave rise to the creed.

This is Lewis's own experience:

Now before I became a Christian I was under the impression that the first thing Christians had to believe was one particular theory as to what the point of this dying was. According to that theory God wanted to punish men for having deserted and joined the Great Rebel, but Christ volunteered to be punished instead, and so God let us off. Now I admit that even this theory does not seem to me quite so immoral and so silly as it used to; but that is not the point I want to make. What I came to see later on was that neither this theory nor any other is Christianity. The central Christian belief is that Christ's death somehow put us right with God and has given us a fresh start . . . I think they will all agree that the thing itself is infinitely more important than any explanations that theologians have produced. 57

The word "somehow" is, for Lewis, quite comprehensive, yet still not completely explainable. Here is where his term "mere" Christianity becomes predominate, for all theories resolve into a formula which is: "Christ was killed for us, His death has washed out our sins, and that

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57. Ibid., p. 43-44.

by dying He disabled death itself . . . That is Christian-  
ity."<sup>58</sup> However, one may summarize Lewis's writings on the

Atonement in eight points which may be overlapping, but  
which would be a true picture of his belief as presented  
in his various books . The order does not signify their

<sup>59</sup>  
importance: (1) Christ's death saves us from sin, not  
from the consequences of sin or punishment of sin; (2)  
Christ's death saves us from ourselves, not from suffering;  
(3) Christ's death saves us from being unjust; (4) Christ's  
death was to enable us to live as He lived; (5) Christ's  
death saves us from estrangement from God; (6) Christ's  
death put an end to the law of death and made a new begin-  
ning of life for us, by giving us the hope of resurrection;  
(7) Christ's death defeated death or redeemed it (which way  
you put it is unimportant); and (8) Christ's death assures  
us of forgiveness of sin and removes our guilt.

Therefore, for Lewis, the cross is real; something  
tangible, vital, and of universal application, transpired  
in those moments when Jesus of Nazareth hung on the cross.  
That something is more than that stated above, but it is at  
least that, and is the core and focal point of Christianity  
and the entire universe.

. . . . .

58. Ibid., p. 45.

59. Random selection from his various works.

#### D. Pre-existence

##### 1. His Relation To God

In the theology of C. S. Lewis not only is there a Jesus who is the Incarnate God and the suffering, dying Lord, but a Jesus who bears a unique relationship to the one, true God who is known as God the Father. This relationship is both in time and irrespective of time. It is a relationship which again plays havoc with the human mind, for words cannot explain nor the finite mind comprehend the infinite truth. Christianity, the kind that Lewis propounds, holds to the belief of a Trinity within the Godhead. This Trinity is commonly designated as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. What, it may be asked, is the relationship that here exists? Lewis would answer:

The First Person is called the Father and the Second the Son. We say that the First begets or produces the Second; we call it begetting, not making, because what He produces is of the same kind as Himself. In that way the word Father is the only word to use. But unfortunately it suggests that He is there first---just as a human father exists before his son. But that is not so. There is no before and after about it. And that is why I think it important to make clear how one thing can be the source or cause, or origin, of another without being there before it. The Son exists because the Father exists; but there never was a time before the Father produced the Son. 60

Hence a Pre-existent Christ who eternally bears the Son relationship to the Father, God, is presented in Lewis's

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60. Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 136-137.

Christology. Lewis lays great stress on the fact that it is not enough for the Word to be God, it must also be with God. Such statements are the foundation for saying that God must be and is a social being. Lewis reasons:

It is against an environment, and preferably a social environment, an environment of other selves that the awareness of Myself stands out. This would raise a difficulty about the consciousness of God if we were mere theists: being Christians, we learn from the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity that something analogous to 'society' exists within the Divine being from all eternity---that God is Love, not merely in the sense of being the Platonic form of love, but because within Him, the concrete reciprocities of love exist before all worlds and are thence derived to the creatures. 61

It is unmistakably within Lewis's thought that Christ was before all worlds, together with the Father an integral part of the Godhead and participating in a close, vital, real and reciprocal fellowship. With these ideas in mind, it is easy to move forward to the concept of Jesus, the Christ, as the Creator.

## 2. As The Creator

The thought that Christ is the agent or medium of creation is never doubted by Lewis, but is accepted as a known truth. He does not defend the doctrine, he believes it and writes in that belief. It is with shock and surprise that the people of Malacandra ask Ransom, "Did people in Thulcandra not know that Maleldil the Young had made and

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61. Lewis, C. S., The Problem of Pain, p. 17.

still ruled the world . . . ?"<sup>62</sup> Lewis would have us see, through the medium of fiction, that what the world questions the rest of the universe knows to be true and lives in that knowledge. This again is brought home vividly to the reader by hearing it proclaimed by the official in the Satanic kingdom. Screwtape is out actively to sabotage the concept of the Enemy [Jesus] . In his advice to Wormwood, he suggests:

For the real presence of the Enemy, otherwise experienced by men in prayer and sacrament, we substitute a merely probable, remote, shadowy, and uncouth figure, one who spoke a strange language and died a long time ago. Such an object cannot in fact be worshipped. Instead of the Creator adored by its creature, you soon have merely a leader acclaimed by a partisan, and finally a distinguished character approved by a judicious historian.<sup>63</sup>

For Lewis, Christ is the Creator, all things were made<sup>64</sup> through Him and without Him there could be no universe.

#### E. Christ and Sin

The title to this section may well be misleading in that Christ is generally thought of as sinless. Hence these two would have no relationship. But even a superficial understanding of the Christian religion would reveal that Christ and Sin are intricately bound up with one another. Christ and Sin cannot exist side by side, they are dia-

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- 62. Lewis, C. S., Out of the Silent Planet, p. 70.
- 63. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters, p. 118.
- 64. Lewis, George MacDonald: An Anthology, p. 77.

metrically opposed to each other. Often it is one's concept of Sin that may determine the type of Christ one accepts or believes in. C. S. Lewis has a remarkably short statement in his book, The Problem of Pain, which speaks a great truth: "Christ takes it for granted that men are bad."<sup>65</sup> Now this is not the entire truth of Christianity nor would Lewis want the reader to be misinformed. Certainly as we shall see in the next section Christ values the life of man highly in that He seeks to raise man to be sons of God, but this does not focus attention on the fact that man has a sinful nature. Man's sin is no environmental conditioning, or error due to lack of knowledge, for Lewis. Man's sin is far greater and deeper than that. He would counsel with George MacDonald: "Think not about thy sin so as to make it either less or greater in thine own eyes. Bring it to Jesus and let Him show thee how vile a thing it is."<sup>66</sup> The force and insidiousness of sin is keenly sensed in his book, The Screwtape Letters. You may well characterize the book as a study of the operation of sin in a human being. Here Lewis uses all his literary skill to portray the forces of evil working to woo a human from finding "life" in Jesus Christ. Or in Perelandra the reader catches the terrific battle and struggle between evil and good. Lewis cautions the reader that the characters are not

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65. Lewis, The Problem of Pain, p. 45.

66. Lewis, George MacDonald: An Anthology, p. 113.

allegorical, but the physical and spiritual battle between Ransom and the UnMan is highly suggestive of the death-like struggle that must have taken place between Christ and Sin. Lewis believes that man is sinful by nature and it is this that keeps man from God.

This sin, being rooted deep in man, takes something of value to uproot it. "It costs God nothing, so far as we know, to create nice things; but to convert rebellious wills cost Him crucifixion."<sup>67</sup> The suffering<sup>68</sup> aspect of the Atonement is of great consequence in Lewis's thinking on the uprootage of sin in the human heart. He affirms:

Christ is our righteousness, not that we should escape punishment, still less escape being righteous, but as the live potent Creator of righteousness in us, so that we, with our wills receiving His spirit, shall like Him resist unto blood, striving against sin.<sup>69</sup>

The Atonement, with all its mystery, is the answer, God's answer to sin.

Lewis makes no apology about sin against other human beings being actually sin against Christ. He feels the reader of the New Testament cannot fail to see that the one man who himself was unrobbed and untrodden on forgave men for treading on other men's toes and stealing other men's money.<sup>70</sup>

Asinine fatuity is the kindest description we give his

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67. Lewis, The Case for Christianity, p. 167.

68. Ante, p. 26 ff.

69. Lewis, George MacDonald, An Anthology, p. 58.

70. Ibid.



conduct. Yet this is what Jesus did. He told people that their sins were forgiven, and never waited to consult all the other people whom their sins had undoubtedly injured. He unhesitatingly behaved as if He was the party chiefly concerned, the person chiefly offended in all offense. This makes sense only if He really was the God whose laws are broken and whose love is wounded in every sin. <sup>71</sup>

Sin is ever with us, but where sin increased, grace abounded <sup>72</sup> all the more. Unaided man could not live through the next twenty-four hours as "decent" people; if Christ does not keep them and sustain them, not one of them is safe from gross sin. Grace did abound all the more, for Christ is at work in men to produce holiness and perfection. The complete job may not be in this life, but His purpose is to bring us along as far as possible. <sup>73</sup> To do this Christ lives within the believer.

#### F. Christ and the Believer

The essence of Lewis's position in regards to the relationship between Christ and the Believer is found in the following:

Christ says 'Give me All. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want You. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half-measures are any good. I don't want to cut off a branch here and a branch there, I want to have the whole tree down. I don't want to drill the tooth, or crown it, or stop it, but to have it out.

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- 71. Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 41.
- 72. Romans 5:20.
- 73. Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 161.

Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think innocent as well as the ones you think wicked--- the whole outfit. I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you Myself; my own will shall become yours.' 74

The two-fold purpose is declared: (1) cleanse the wicked portions, root out these parts of the life; (2) infill and enhance the life of the believer. This is Lewis's position and he maintains it throughout all his writings, and maintains it admirably.

This relationship between Christ and the believer is brought about because of Christ's love for the individual. It is this that astonishes Screwtape. His advice to his nephew is that "We must never forget what is the most repellent and inexplicable trait in our Enemy; He really loves the hairless bipeds He has created . ." <sup>75</sup> As has been stated elsewhere in this thesis often the depth of Lewis's thinking can be ascertained by seeing the contrasting purposes of Christ and Satan. Screwtape reveals the "Lowerarchy" thinking and allows the reader to have glimpses into the true reality. To Wormwood he writes:

He [Christ] really does want to fill the universe with a lot of loathsome little replicas of Himself---creatures whose life, on its miniature scale, will be qualitatively like His own, not because He has absorbed them but because their wills freely conform to His. We want cattle who can finally become food; He wants servants who can finally become sons. We want to suck in, He wants to

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74. Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 161.

75. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters, p. 74. The underlining is mine.

give out. We are empty and would be filled; He is full and flows over. Our war aim is a world in which Our Father Below has drawn all other beings into himself; the Enemy wants a world full of beings united to Him but still distinct. <sup>76</sup>

It is this love of Christ for men that is the basis for Lewis's thinking on the life of Christ in the believer. The believer's eternal welfare is the concern of Jesus; He has an eye to the completed product and is not contented to keep just the raw material. The Holy Scriptures speaks about being "in" Christ and says a great deal on this subject. Much Christology is given over to the idea of Christ in the believer and the believer in Christ. Andrew Murray has an excellent book entitled Abide In Christ which is completely devoted to this theme, and is an exposition of John 15---the Vine and the branches. Lewis, too, has an "in Christ" Christology. Here takes place another of those mysteries of Christianity which is beyond satisfactory explanation. But Lewis contends that the terms such as: "being born again", "putting on Christ", "Christ being formed in us" and our coming to "have the mind of Christ", are not just fancy ways of saying Christians need to read the life of Christ and follow His teachings. Rather their meaning is to be found in something more profound than this. "They mean that a real Person, Christ, here and now, in that very room where you are saying your prayers is doing things to

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76. Lewis, The Screwtape Letters, p. 45-46.

you."<sup>77</sup>

This putting on of Christ is not just one of many jobs, or just for the "saints", but, Lewis declares, is "the whole of Christianity. Christianity offers nothing else at all."<sup>78</sup> Says Lewis, explaining the "in Christ" doctrine:

Let me make it quite clear that when Christians say the Christ-life is in them, they do not mean simply something mental or moral. When they speak of being 'in Christ' or of Christ being 'in them', this is not simply a way of saying that they are thinking about Christ or copying Him. They mean that Christ is actually operating through them; that the whole mass of Christians are the physical organisms through which Christ acts---that we are His fingers and muscles, the cells of His body. <sup>79</sup>

The Apostle Paul, speaking to the Corinthian Christians about their inner spiritual life, refers to the true be-  
liever as God's field, God's building.<sup>80</sup> Lewis, who is a master in the use of imagery, imagination, and common, daily experiences to convey divine truth, does so here. He uses Paul's idea of God's building and puts the reader into the exact situation as it might be:

Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently he starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one

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- 77. Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 151.
- 78. Ibid., p. 154.
- 79. Ibid., p. 50-51.
- 80. I Corinthians 3:9.

you thought of---throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage; but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself. <sup>81</sup>

This of course carries us back again to Lewis's motif that the God invades mankind, He descends to re-ascend. He becomes Man to suffer and die and rise again and in so doing raise mankind to new heights; raise mankind to sonship and in a mystical way to a unity with Himself, the Triune God. Where Christ goes, human nature goes with Him. It will be made like Him, for He will be in it and it will be in Him. <sup>82</sup>

#### G. Summary

The preceding sections of this paper give us not the entirety of C. S. Lewis's thinking about Jesus Christ, His Work and Person, His relationship to God and man, but it attempts to portray that which is the heart of his message; you may say the Gospel of Jesus Christ by C. S. Lewis.

It has been shown that Lewis's books give the greatest emphasis to the Doctrines of the Incarnation and the Atonement. This is the kernel from which all of Christology comes and which is responsible for the Christian Church. Developed in the preceding sections is Lewis's firm conviction that the Incarnation is not a fancy theory or a

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81. Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. 162.

82. Lewis, Miracles, p. 162.

speculative philosophy, but an historical fact that occurred in the history of a people, the Jewish nation. It is the Yahweh who comes down to live among His people.

This Incarnation was examined in two aspects. The Virgin Birth and the Nature of Christ as Divine and Human were considered. Lewis finds nothing contrary to the laws of Nature in the Virgin Birth and holds firmly to this belief, that God acted upon the girl, Mary, without the agency of a human male. Lewis also holds to the belief that Jesus was God and Man. The two natures, for Lewis, are joined together in one person and are present in every act of Jesus. The human nature and body are not mere illusions, but actual and real. Also, it is necessary to believe that they are real if the Atonement is to have meaning. The Divine nature is necessary to reveal God in the flesh and to reveal the extent and fulness of God's love for man. This may well be a mystery, but for Lewis, full comprehension is not necessary for belief. Mystery and lack of complete intellectual understanding does not eliminate the probability of the actual event.

In looking at Lewis's position in regards to the Atonement, we considered the suffering of the Lord and the result of the Atonement. Lewis endorses the view that the suffering of Christ was real and significant in His death and for the Church. The suffering was deep and willingly accepted by Jesus. That the Atonement accomplished cer-

tain results is Lewis's definite belief. When it comes to actually what was accomplished Lewis refuses to be dogmatic. No theory will satisfy him, nor is useless to him. His emphasis is that something was done for the believer and somehow we are saved from our sin and brought into a new relationship with God.

Lewis accepts quite naturally many things about which theologians philosophize. Christ, in Lewis's theology, always was, to be more exact, Christ always is. This eternal Christ is integrally related to God and they maintain a Father-Son relationship, but one does not precede the other. It is this same Christ, God-the-Son, who, for Lewis, is the Creator of this universe. He says, "without Christ there would be no universe."<sup>83</sup>

The Doctrine of Sin is important and finds its way into Lewis's writings. Sin is held to be the thing that keeps man from being God's son. To remove this sin is the thing that cost God something, that cost was crucifixion. The Atonement is the Work of Christ which saves us from sin, and removes sin's power over us.

Lewis believes firmly the "in Christ" concepts found in the letters of Paul. He looks upon the believer, much as does Paul, as the building of God. Christ is "in the believer" and the believer "in Christ". This indwelling

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83. Ante, p. 34.

Presence of Christ is God making the believer into a spiritual son, or into the person he intends him to be, or, as far as is possible in this life, into a perfect being.



CHAPTER IV

AN EVALUATION

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### AN EVALUATION

#### A. Introduction

When thought is given to the Christological problem, it is not enough to stop with the thinking of one man. It is important to find out how this man's views "square" with other common and predominate thinking of his day. The attempt is made in this chapter to compare the Christology of Lewis with three streams of Christianity; the Liberal; the Fundamental; and the Neo-Orthodox. To do this, a representative of each of these fields has been studied and the attempt has been made to understand the Christology of each man. Two difficulties immediately arise: (1) Which man shall represent the field? and (2) Can the man's Christology be ascertained from just one book he has written? The reader of this thesis sees immediately, therefore, the limit of this chapter.

Nevertheless, a choice has been made. One of the reasons C. S. Lewis was chosen for this study was the influence he has had on much of the English-speaking world, and the popular following among the people of Christendom. Therefore, men in this regard were chosen for study for a more equal basis of comparison. Men were chosen who have been influential on many and who have a large following in

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84. Ante, p. 2.

Christendom. All have also been speakers and writers of many books.

As the representative for the Liberal position, Harry Emerson Fosdick was the choice. That he is a liberal cannot really be questioned for this he avows himself. During the Fundamentalist-Liberal controversy of the 1920's, he "was being attacked as a representative of liberal Christianity---'modernism's Moses'."<sup>85</sup> His stand as a liberal Christian has been continuous even today. As a liberal he has had a tremendous following, which is not new to any reader of this thesis. He occupied the pulpits of Old First Presbyterian Church in New York City for five<sup>86</sup> and one-half years and then for twenty years<sup>87</sup> preached in the Riverside Church of New York City. Both of these churches were, generally speaking, filled to capacity. His sermons, books, and radio messages have reached many thousands of people.

Billy Graham was the representative picked to uphold the Fundamentalist's position. Of course, there is danger in picking such a controversial figure, but in the main, Dr. Graham would associate himself with this school of theology. He comes out of this Southern Baptist tradition which is a Fundamentalistic denomination. There is no

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85. Fosdick, Harry Emerson, The Living of These Days, p. 149.

86. Ibid., p. 175.

87. Ibid., p. 228.

question at all about the popularity and the following of Billy Graham: "At the age of thirty-six, he has preached to crowds perhaps as large as any in the history of Christianity . . . His influence among the leaders of America's political, social and religious life is considerable.." <sup>88</sup> This influence shows no sign of diminishing, but may instead increase with his coming Evangelistic Campaign in New York City in May, 1957.

Neo-Orthodoxy is represented in this thesis by Karl Barth. Many of the world's theologians have sat under his teaching, one of the most widely-known of these being Emil Brunner. His influence through his books and his students was a major factor in the revolt against Liberalism after the second World War. Barth himself said that his experience was like that of a man who, climbing in a church steeple, reaches out for support and to his dismay discovers that he has seized the bell rope and has awakened the whole town.

These three men, be they good or poor choices, will be compared in their Christological thinking with C. S. Lewis.

Also, some attention is given to C. S. Lewis as a Christian Apologist. Does he have something to defend and propagate? How well does he defend it and set it forth?

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88. Graham, Billy, Peace With God, Inside page.

With what effect is it being received? These questions and their ramifications will be considered.

#### B. C. S. Lewis and Liberalism

In considering the position of C. S. Lewis and Harry Emerson Fosdick, it is best to do so by comparing them on the points of Christology covered in Chapter III of this paper (this same procedure will apply to the other sections, to follow, as well). First then is the Doctrine of the Incarnation with its two points of consideration, the Virgin Birth, and the Divine and Human Nature of Jesus.

A great point of disagreement between Lewis and Fosdick would most certainly be on the subject of the Virgin Birth. To Lewis, there is no intellectual difficulty in believing this miracle. Fosdick, however, has rejected this belief from his theological thinking. As early as his undergraduate days at Colgate, he doubted the probability and plausibility of the Virgin Birth. In speaking to a professor he said: "I could believe that Jesus was spiritually but not that he was physically<sup>89</sup> divine." This was not just a period of doubt in his early formative years; this belief he has continued to hold

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89. Fosdick, op. cit., p. 56.

throughout his adult life. This denial of the Virgin Birth was one of the reasons for the large controversy against him which arose in the Presbyterian Church. A report to the Presbytery of New York may best present in simplified forms the various doctrines rejected by Fosdick. The five doctrines were: ". . .the inerrant Bible; the virgin birth; the substitutionary atonement, Jesus' death 'a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice'; the physical resurrection of Christ 'with the same body in which he suffered'; and Christ's supernatural miracles." The Virgin Birth, then, is one concept in which Lewis and Fosdick disagree.

It should be mentioned, however, that in practice they could get along together fine for Lewis leaves the Virgin Birth out of most of his writings exactly because of this reason, because it is one of the most controversial issues in all Christendom.<sup>90</sup>

This is not the whole of the Incarnation. In regards to the Divine and Human Natures in Jesus, Lewis is perfectly clear. The two natures reside in the historical figure of Jesus simultaneously, continuously, and without confusion. Fosdick believes in a spiritually Divine Jesus.<sup>91</sup> One needs to make a deeper study of Fosdick's Christology, but the impression is given that he distinguishes between

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90. Ante, p. 23.

91. Ante, p. 48.

"Jesus" and "the Christ". Yet it is Fosdick who attacks Emil Brunner on belittling "the historic ministry of Jesus in order to exalt the Christ of dogma".<sup>92</sup> Certainly Fosdick speaks and believes that Christ is the revelation of God and, in fact, is God in human personality.

The Atonement for both men is the recognition that something took place, and that that which took place somehow alters man's relationship with God. To be sure, Fosdick was criticized for his rejection of the substitutionary theory of atonement, but even Lewis has grave doubts as to its validity. Fosdick does believe in the atonement: "Theories of the atonement have followed one another in a long succession, but far from undermining the significance of vicarious sacrifice, that fact bears witness to its inescapable momentousness."<sup>93</sup> This, indeed, sounds much like the Lewis found earlier in this thesis. Lewis himself championed the idea that the Act was of much more significance than all the theories of it.

It is amazing to find in Fosdick's writing the reality of sin. Sin is no environmental conditioning, no misguided intelligence. Sin is the cause of the world's trouble:

All the progress this world will know waits upon the

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92. Fosdick, op. cit., p. 264.

93. Ibid., p. 231.

conquest of sin. Strange as it may sound to the ears of this modern age, long tickled by the amiable idiocies of evolution popularly misinterpreted, this generation's deepest need is not these dithyrambic songs about inevitable progress, but a fresh sense of social and personal sin. . . 94

This, by Fosdick, certainly points up the seriousness with which he views sin and its effect upon the individual and the world society. In 1936 he said:

Sin is 'no respecter of persons'. Its demonic, corrupting power runs through all classes, and no realistic mind can suppose virtue to be preponderant in any special group, even the downtrodden. 95

Holding to this view, once again he is in accord with Lewis who also understands the heinousness of sin and its effect on mankind. The way out of this sinful condition for both is through Jesus Christ. Admittedly, this may be weaker in Fosdick than in Lewis, but he says:

We do confront Jesus Christ---disturbed, provoked, challenged, fascinated by him and, if we will, ushered by him into new life. 96

Or again, Fosdick warns, "Take a long look at Christ! The world desperately needs him. He is the way and the truth and the life." 97 To be sure, one may well raise the question, "What does Fosdick mean by 'usher into new life' and 'He is the way'?" If he means other than what has always been implied in the Scriptures, then, for sure,

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94. Ibid., p. 239.

95. Ibid., p. 272.

96. Ibid., p. 236.

97. Fosdick, Harry Emerson, "The Importance of Doubting Our Doubts", a sermon in Great Preaching Today, Edited by Alton M. Motter, p. 59.



he is a long way from Lewis. But taking his writing on face value, sin becomes real and devilish so that the only answer for it lies in Jesus Christ. This may be verified in the fact that he believes in the vicarious sacrifice of Christ.

Lewis, we noted, had a great amount to say about the believer's relationship to Christ. The Indwelling Presence of Christ in the life of the believer appears in his writing to be more than a theory formulated; it appears as a personal experience to which he is giving testimony. This aspect of Christology, however, seems to be missing in Fosdick's writing. He talks about faith, trust, and following the Christ, but an actual indwelling is missing. To be fair to Fosdick, the reader must remember the limitation of this thesis. There is a reference which would lead to the belief that the "in-Christ" doctrine does have a greater significance to him. He speaks about God's immanence and says it:

. . . meant to us especially what the New Testament proclaims: 'If we love one another, God abides in us'; 'We are the temple of the living God; as God said, I will live in them'; '. . . that Christ may dwell in your hearts, through faith; . . . that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.' This seemed to us---and still does seem---the very essence of vital religion. <sup>98</sup>

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98. Fosdick, *The Living of These Days*, p. 253.

The areas studied show Lewis and Fosdick very close in thought and in practice. However, if other areas of religious thinking, which are outside the scope of this paper, were examined, these two men would be at opposite poles from each other. They would not agree on such things as miracles, demonology, or mythology.

### C. C. S. Lewis and Fundamentalism

When comparing Lewis with the Fundamentalists, or in this case with Billy Graham, along the line of Christology, it is readily seen that basically they are in agreement. The major difference lies in the fact that the Fundamentalists would hold one particular interpretation and exclude all others, while Lewis will admit many differing interpretations. It need not take our time to decide that Billy Graham believes in the Virgin Birth of Jesus. Believing, as he does, in the inspired Word of God, all that it contains becomes an accepted part of his theology. He says of the Bible:

It is the work of more than thirty authors, each of whom acted as a scribe to God. These men, many of whom lived generations apart, did not set down merely what they thought or hoped. They acted as channels for God's dictation; they wrote as He directed them; . . . 99

Therefore, Dr. Graham holds to the Incarnation, that is,

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99. Graham, op. cit., p. 17.

the Virgin Birth and the Divine and Human Nature of Jesus. There is no conflict between Lewis and Graham here; they both believe firmly in these Scriptural truths.

Graham and Lewis are together in their concepts of the Pre-existence of Christ as well as these other points. Dr. Graham, in speaking on the Trinity, says:

The Second Person of this Trinity is God's Son, Jesus Christ. He is co-equal with God the Father. He was not a Son of God but the Son of God. He is the Eternal Son of God---the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, God manifested in the flesh, the living Saviour. . . Jesus had no beginning. He was never created. The Bible teaches that the heavens were created by Him. 100

Lewis would agree.

Sin comes forth again as a common denominator. Lewis and Fosdick had a "healthy" respect for this corrupter of man and society. Graham's view of sin and its consequences is no less vehement; in fact it is even more inclusive than the other two. Sin is the arch enemy. Listen to Graham as he describes life as sin affects it:

Because of sin every stream with human crime is stained, every breeze is morally corrupted, every day's light is blackened, every life's cup tainted with the bitter, every life's roadway made dangerous with pitfalls, every life's voyage made perilous with treacherous shoals. 101

Sin, of course, must have its remedy and that remedy, for Graham, as well as for Lewis, is found in Jesus. Jesus

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100. Ibid., p. 90. Word underlined is in italics in the text.

101. Ibid., p. 85-86.

said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh<sup>102</sup> unto the Father but by Me." How, one may ask, is this deliverance from sin accomplished?

For Graham the answer lies in the suffering death of Jesus Christ, and in a particular theory of this Atonement. The suffering of Jesus was a real experience according to the theology of Graham. Jesus suffered physically at the hands of those who crucified, but Graham would have us realize that this was nothing compared to the depth and agony of His spiritual suffering. It was on the cross that Christ experienced the "final issue of sin", and "fathomed the deepest sorrow" of God's forsaking Jesus. Graham takes Christ's words on the cross to mean that Jesus<sup>103</sup> was entirely alone. This may be going too far for C. S. Lewis. We have no indication in any of Lewis's writings that he felt that God had forsaken Jesus. If he does not depart from Graham here, he certainly does when Graham affirms that ". . . God began to teach His people that man could only be saved by substitution."<sup>104</sup> Lewis does not completely reject the substitutionary theory of the Atonement, but certainly he would consider it folly to dogmatically proclaim it as the only means of salvation. He finds truth in most all the theories. To him, of course,

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102. John 14:6.

103. Graham, op. cit., p. 97.

104. Ibid., p. 88.

the Act is supreme over the theories.

If we were to get away from Christology and discuss other phases of the Christian religion, we would observe much wider gaps between these two thinkers. Briefly, the Bible to Lewis is not infallible and, therefore, he accepts, within limitation, Biblical criticism. This, of course, would be offensive to the Fundamentalist and probably to Graham as well. Lewis is a great lover of mythology, pagan and Christian. He would hold to the stories of Adam and Eve and the Creation as being Christian mythology. This would not be acceptable in Fundamental circles and they would part company with him on these issues.

#### D. C. S. Lewis and Neo-Orthodoxy

The centrality of the Incarnation is becoming more and more clear as these comparisons are continued. Of all the men considered, by far the title of theologian goes to Karl Barth. Being a theologian probably gives him a right to put things in a more philosophical way, but in essence he comes out with affirmations that find their counterparts in Lewis's theology. The Incarnation for Barth is a fact of History. His thinking on the Incarnation includes a vital belief in the Virgin Birth. He subscribes to the Apostle's Creed with its statement, "I believe in . . . Jesus Christ. . . who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary . . ." In exegeting the Creed and

in particular the latter phrase just quoted, he writes:

Now the fact is underlined that we are on earth. There is a human child, the Virgin Mary; and as well as coming from God, Jesus also comes from this human being. God gives Himself an earthly human origin, that is the meaning of 'born of Mary the Virgin'. 105

Now this may indeed be subject to interpretation by the theologians a little differently than the words themselves convey, but again it must be taken at its face value. Barth speaks about the Incarnation in two aspects: (1) the act of Incarnation itself and (2) the sign of the Incarnation.<sup>106</sup> The sign of the Incarnation is the Virgin Birth. It is a divine invasion of humanity; this descent of God from above downwards is the miracle of Jesus Christ's existence.<sup>107</sup> Lewis, of course, would have no objection to all this just so long as Barth means exactly what he says and implies. However, at this point, Barth may not be truly representative of the field, for his own student, Emil Brunner, draws a very definite distinction<sup>108</sup> between Jesus and the Christ. If this be the true spirit of Neo-Orthodoxy, then there is a sharp difference drawn between Lewis and this school. Lewis cannot, no, will not, divorce the historical Jesus from the Eternal Christ. Such a divorce would be, for him, untrue to the

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105. Barth, Karl, Dogmatics In Outline, p. 97.  
106. Ibid., p. 96.  
107. Ibid., p. 96.  
108. Ante, p. 50.

facts involved in the Scriptures.

Suffering, according to Barth's Christology, is an essential matter in the Atonement, and hence this school of thinking comes into agreement with Lewis and Christianity at this point, as well as at others. Barth sees more than the suffering in the Cross. To him, the life of Jesus spells out suffering in large letters:

There is no doubt that for the Evangelists Luke and Matthew the Childhood of Jesus, His Birth in the stable of Bethlehem, were already under the sign of suffering. This man is persecuted all His life, a stranger in His own family---what shocking statements He can make!---and in His nation; . . . In what utter loneliness and temptation He stands among men, the leaders of His nation, even over against the masses of the people and in the very circle of His disciples! In this narrowest circle He is to find His betrayer; and in the man to whom He says, 'Thou art the Rock . . .', the man who denies Him thrice . . . The son of man must go up unto Jerusalem, must there be condemned, scourged and crucified---to rise again the third day. But first it is this dominant 'must' which leads Him to the gallows. 109

Lewis would not disagree with thinking like this, in fact, this is the position of Christianity. This very life was seen by the prophet Isaiah who said of the Servant of God, "He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: . . . What then is the result of this suffering, this Atonement?" 110

Barth is much more dogmatic at this point than Lewis. Jesus is thought of as taking the place of sinful man and

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109. Barth, op. cit., p. 102-103.

110. Isaiah 53:3.

thereby becoming a rebel. In doing this he Himself becomes<sup>111</sup> the entire guilt and the entire reconciliation. There is, also, the result of forgiveness of sin and the removal of man's rebelliousness. Throughout all of this, it is Barth's position that it is God and Jesus Christ operating in man; there is left very little room for man's free response. To this latter, Lewis would object because he believes quite strongly about the need for man to respond to God, to choose to follow and serve Jesus Christ. The followers of Barth, however, have altered, added to, subtracted from his line of theological approach. Mainly Lewis is accepted, and accepts the Neo-Orthodox position in the Christological area, although there are exceptions and radical views which most definitely differ from his presentation as we have observed it. Again, it is as you move to other areas of theology that dissension arises most strongly.

#### E. C. S. Lewis as a Christian Apologist

"C. S. Lewis as a Christian Apologist" is an excellent subject for a thesis and the skill of Mr. Lewis to silence critical voices could well be demonstrated, and his positive approach revealed as something desperately needed in the Church today. The subject of Lewis as an Apologist has been dealt with to a small degree by Chad Walsh in his book, C. S. Lewis: Apostle to the Skeptics, and McCulley's

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111. Barth, op. cit., p. 107.



article, "C. S. Lewis - An Unorthodox Champion of Ortho-  
doxy"<sup>112</sup> and other magazine articles. However, there is  
left much which has been untouched.

That Lewis's intention is to be a Christian Apologist  
is quite clear from his purpose in writing the book,  
Mere Christianity:

In this book I am not trying to convert anyone to my  
own position. Ever since I became a Christian I have  
thought that the best, perhaps the only, service I  
could do for my unbelieving neighbours was to explain  
and defend the belief that has been common to nearly  
all Christians at all times. 113

This common core of belief, called by Baxter "mere"  
Christianity, becomes the truth which he vividly portrays  
and wittingly defends. The controversial issues that are  
in Christianity are not his concern nor does he feel they  
are profitable for the unbeliever. Division on theological  
issues does not win the unbeliever to Jesus Christ, but  
rather repels him from ever realizing the real truth in  
Christianity. The task of the Apologist as Lewis sees it  
is to present the central truth of Christianity in its most  
attractive dress that men may see Jesus Christ, the Son  
of God and believe on Him, thus receiving eternal life.  
He would, as well, defend this faith against all attacks.

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112. Christian Herald, (November, 1947) p. 69-71.  
113. Lewis, Mere Christianity, p. vi.

One of his major weapons is his ability to see directly into the heart of the problem and then to remove any possible half-way ground for a person to hide on. This is seen most beautifully in his portrayal of Jesus as the Divine Son of God:

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 patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. 114

So the middle ground is eliminated, you must stand with the Christ or with His crucifiers.

At the risk of oversimplification one may say that Lewis's "mere" Christianity is the proclamation of the Divine Incarnation and Atonement with all their ramifications. That Lewis's judgement is right, to call this the indispensable kernel of the Faith, is borne up under the comparison in the previous sections. From Liberal to Fundamentalist there was and is basic agreement as to the meaning and results of the doctrines of the Incarnation and Atonement. Jesus Christ and His Cross are central

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in Christianity. Without them there is no Christianity.

Further, it should be said that a great deal of Lewis's success and influence in the English-speaking world is due to his excellent ability to use concrete illustrations, and to use what Peter Marshall termed a "baptized imagination". Anyone who had read The Screwtape Letters, The Great Divorce, and his three novels, is caught in the world of images and imagination, but it is a fantasy that captures, enlightens and startles you with its amount of sound intellectual thinking. Lewis is gifted and combines a keen intellect, a literary skill, and a Christian conviction to become one of the strongest and most widely read proponents of Christianity we have ever known.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

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### CONCLUSION

The conclusion that is reached by reading C. S. Lewis's books is that the man truly has a Christology. It is a Christology that includes such great doctrines of the Church as the Incarnation and the Atonement. And it is a Christology that is not afraid of Philosophy. It sets forth a Pre-existent Christ who was begotten of the Father and yet always existed with the Father. Two of the greatest problems of mankind, "What can I do with my sin?" and "How may I be a better person?" are confronted directly with Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Christ in His suffering death and triumphant resurrection removes the sin of all who believe with faith and He becomes our righteousness "working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight."

In regards to the Incarnation, Lewis believes that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary. He defends this position on highly intellectual ground, discussing fully the possibility and probability of miracles. The other great doctrine---the Atonement---he affirms the Act of vicarious suffering. To him the power of God lay in telling the story of Jesus not in theorizing about the fact. He would say with Karl Barth: "Our concepts are not adequate to grasp this treasure."<sup>115</sup>

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115. Fosdick, The Living of These Days, p. 236.

In concluding, a word must be spoken on the fourth chapter of this paper. To this author that chapter was inadequate. No one can do justice to a man's Christology by reading only one fraction of his work. It was inadequate, also, in the fact that no one man can represent a large body of Christian believers. May the men chosen forgive this writer if his representation was incorrect, as it may well be. If, on the other hand, in the main the views presented are correct, then Lewis has proven that there is such a thing as "mere" Christianity and that Christianity revolves on the Incarnation and Atonement. It will also prove that Lewis, who is its great representative, is expounding that which is common and essential to all Christians. And the Christianity that results from those who will follow Lewis's teachings will in the main be Orthodox Christianity, and these people will be grasping that which is necessary for salvation.

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