

Inklings Forever: Published Colloquium Proceedings 1997-2016

Volume 6 *A Collection of Essays Presented at
the Sixth Frances White Ewbank Colloquium on
C.S. Lewis & Friends*

Article 8

5-29-2008

The Theme of Desire in the Writings of C.S. Lewis: Implications for Spiritual Formation

Connie Hintz
Loyola University

Follow this and additional works at: https://pillars.taylor.edu/inklings_forever



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#), [History Commons](#), [Philosophy Commons](#), and
the [Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hintz, Connie (2008) "The Theme of Desire in the Writings of C.S. Lewis: Implications for Spiritual Formation," *Inklings Forever: Published Colloquium Proceedings 1997-2016*: Vol. 6, Article 8.
Available at: https://pillars.taylor.edu/inklings_forever/vol6/iss1/8

This Essay is brought to you for free and open access by the British Author Collections at Pillars at Taylor University. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Inklings Forever: Published Colloquium Proceedings 1997-2016* by an authorized editor of Pillars at Taylor University. For more information, please contact pillars@taylor.edu.

INKLINGS FOREVER, Volume VI

A Collection of Essays Presented at the Sixth

FRANCES WHITE EW BANK COLLOQUIUM on C.S. LEWIS & FRIENDS

Taylor University 2008

Upland, Indiana

The Theme of Desire in the Writings of C. S. Lewis

Implications for Spiritual Formation

Connie Hintz

Abstract:

If we remain faithful to the path of desire, steadfastly refusing all that fails to satisfy, and holding fast to our deepest longing, we can trust it to lead us to life in all its fullness. Drawing on his own experience of following the path of desire to its ultimate destination in God, C. S. Lewis is a worthy guide to the role of joy in spiritual formation. He points out the many detours and hazards that could cause us to lose our way. Acknowledging that life holds much disappointment and tragedy, Lewis suggests that even our pain may become an effective tool for prying us free from our idolatrous affections and nudging us closer to real joy. Lewis views all our earthly joys as signposts pointing us to God, the Source of all joy.

The Theme of Desire in the Writings of C. S. Lewis: Implications for Spiritual Formation

For C. S. Lewis, the nature of human desire, which nothing in this world can satisfy, suggests that we were created to experience infinite joy in something beyond this world. Furthermore, he proposes that, if we remain faithful to the path of desire, steadfastly refusing all that fails to satisfy, and holding fast to our deepest longing, we can trust it to lead us to life in all its fullness:

It appeared to me ... that if a man diligently followed the desire, pursuing the false objects until their falsity appeared and then resolutely abandoning them, he must come out at last into the clear knowledge that the human soul was made to enjoy some object that is never fully given ... in our present mode ... I knew only too well how easily the longing accepts false objects and through what dark ways the pursuit of them leads us: but I also saw that the Desire itself contains the corrective of all these errors. The only fatal error was to pretend that you had passed from desire to fruition, when, in reality, you had found either nothing, or desire itself, or the satisfaction of some different desire. The dialectic of Desire, faithfully followed, would retrieve all mistakes, head you off from all false paths, and force you not to propound, but to live through, a sort of ontological proof (Lewis, The Pilgrim's Regress 10).

Drawing on his own experience of following the path of desire to its ultimate destination in God, Lewis is a wise and articulate guide to the role of joy in spiritual formation. In his autobiography, he recounts his experiences of recurring episodes of joy aroused sometimes by natural beauty and sometimes by literature, particularly Norse mythology. He uses the word “joy”, in a somewhat unique manner: for him, it is “an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction... It might almost equally well be called a particular kind of unhappiness or grief. But then it is a kind we want” (Lewis, Surprised by Joy 20). Sometimes he uses the German word “Sehnsucht” to refer to this particular experience of Joy (Surprised by Joy 12).

During his youth, Lewis kept trying to recapture those moments of rapture by turning again and again to the landscapes and the books and the music that had originally impacted him, all too often finding that the joy eluded him. Later, under the influence of rationalist philosophy, he began to discount his longings as merely imaginary: “Nearly all that I loved I believed to be imaginary; nearly all that I believed to be real I thought grim and meaningless.” (Surprised by Joy 138). Eventually, however, he came to regard his experiences of joy as signposts pointing to God, the Source of all joy: “But what, in conclusion, of joy?... I now know that the experience, considered as a state of my own mind, had never the kind of importance I once gave it. It was valuable only as a pointer to something other and outer” (Surprised by Joy 190). And later, in Letters to Malcolm (90), Lewis wrote about his practice of turning every pleasure into “a channel of adoration” by shifting his attention from the gift to the Giver, likening the process to allowing “one’s mind to run back up the sunbeam to the sun.”

Lewis was a hearty man who lived his life with gusto. For him, the delights of the senses and the imagination are gifts from God that often awaken in us the deep desire which was so central to his own experience (The Pilgrim's Regress 171). This desire, according to him, is a significant and important clue to life’s meaning, and we should not just dismiss it as romantic nostalgia (Lewis, “The Weight of Glory” 12). We ought to honor it, not repress it. In fact, as he understands it, “it would seem that our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he

cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased” (“The Weight of Glory” 2).

In order to fully understand the significance that desire held for Lewis, it is important to understand the larger theological perspective from which he spoke. He positioned himself squarely within the framework of classical Trinitarian Christianity. For Lewis, the fact that God is “three in one” indicates to us that God is a communion of three, and that “the living, dynamic activity of love has been going on in God for ever and has created everything else” (Lewis, Mere Christianity 136). In other words, God is Love, and Love is at the center of the universe. He created human beings, in His image, in order that they might participate in this joyful communion of love (Mere Christianity 38). The human race, however, followed Adam in the original sin which consisted of “the idea that they could ‘be like gods’ – could set up on their own as if they had created themselves – be their own masters – invent some sort of happiness for themselves outside of God” (Mere Christianity 89). So from that time on, our ongoing problem is that we are continually tempted to put self at the center of our lives rather than God. The image of God within us has been damaged, although not utterly destroyed. In Lewis’ understanding, the experience of desire is a sort of memory of this lost communion with God, a kind of nostalgia for Eden (“The Weight of Glory” 3). This sense of alienation which we experience may actually be a very great blessing because it is a constant reminder of God’s original intention of drawing us into the divine fellowship. Lewis would agree with St. Augustine that God has designed us in such a way that “our heart cannot be stilled until it finds rest in [Him]” (qtd. in Water 864).

One of the reasons that Lewis’ literature has such a profound impact upon his readers is that he has enabled us to approach classical Christianity in a fresh, new way. Eventually, we learn that this “new way” is really a very old way. In Lewis’ opinion, the modern world of his day had fallen under the spell of Enlightenment thinking which viewed the universe in mechanistic terms and favored reason over the imagination, all of which resulted in the crippling of our ability to experience wonder and delight. For that reason, Lewis purposely took himself out of step with the modern world, immersing himself instead in the mediaeval world with its richer, more soulful way of seeing things. He found the mediaeval understanding to be a good corrective in opening our eyes to a reality beyond what is perceived by the senses (Jacobs 191-193). He understood that, technically speaking, the mediaeval thinkers were wrong about their model of the universe. What he valued, however, was their capacity for awe, reverence, wonder and delight, and their vision of the universe as “tingling with anthropomorphic life, a festival not a machine” (Lewis, English Literature in the Sixteenth Century 4).

Lewis believed that the reductionism that has crept into our theological understanding has had a dampening effect on our joy. He understood the necessity for abstractions in our effort to speak about God, but he also cautions us that the abstractions themselves could be misleading:

This talk of “meeting” [God] is, no doubt, anthropomorphic; as if God and I could be face to face, like two fellow-creatures, when in reality He is above me and within me and below me and all about me. That is why it must be balanced by all manner of metaphysical and theological abstractions. But never, here or anywhere else, let us think that while anthropomorphic images are a concession to our weakness, the abstractions are the literal truth. [They] will make the life of lives inanimate and the love of loves impersonal” (Letters to Malcolm 21-22).

In Mere Christianity (125), Lewis provides another example of reductionism, in this case affecting the way we view life after death:

Some people think that after this life, or perhaps after several lives, human souls will be “absorbed” into God. But when they try to explain what they mean, they seem to be thinking of our being absorbed into God as one material thing is absorbed into another. They say it is like a drop of water slipping into the sea. But of course that is the end of

the drop. If that is what happens to us, then being absorbed is the same as ceasing to exist.

The following passage demonstrates how differently Lewis portrays the afterlife:

It is not humanity in the abstract that is to be saved, but you – you, the individual reader ... Blessed and fortunate creature, your eyes shall behold Him. God will look to every soul like its first love because He is its first love. Your place in heaven will seem to be made for you and you alone, because you were made for it – made for it stitch by stitch as a glove is made for a hand” (Lewis, The Problem of Pain 148-149).

Lewis saw the universe as less like a well-oiled machine and more like a solemn, joyful, cosmic dance. His purpose was to remythologize the story of the universe. For him, things are always more than they seem. Take the wardrobe in the Narnia stories – to all outward appearances, it is just an ordinary wardrobe, and yet what wonders it holds for those who enter it! The physical world is the same way for him: “All is holy and ‘big with God’ ... all ground is holy ground and every bush (could we but perceive it) a Burning Bush” (Letters to Malcolm 75). All experience, then, takes on a numinous quality. What we need to do is develop the eyes to see it: “We may ignore, but we can nowhere evade, the presence of God. The world is crowded with Him. He walks everywhere *incognito*. And the *incognito* is not always hard to penetrate. The real labor is to remember, to attend. In fact, to come awake. Still more, to remain awake” (Letters to Malcolm 75). Nourishing our desire, then, is an important value for Lewis.

There are, says Lewis, three ways in which humans tend to respond to the experience of desire. In Mere Christianity (105-6), he describes these three responses: “the fool’s way”, “the way of the disillusioned ‘sensible man’” and “the way of the Christian”. The fool spends his life flitting from one earthly pleasure to another, always hoping that the new car, the new hobby or the new environment will bring him the satisfaction he seeks. The disillusioned “sensible” person simply represses his desire, dismissing the whole thing as “a bunch of moonshine” and training himself not to expect too much out of life. The Christian recognizes and honors his deep desire, realizing that no experience in this life can satisfy it, and actively keeping it alive within himself while pressing on in his quest to come to know the Ultimate Object of that desire.

Let us take a more detailed look at each of the three ways. The fool believes that the joy is located in the objects which give him pleasure and is therefore liable to the temptation to keep returning to those objects, or at the very least, to the memory of them, for satisfaction. In Lewis’ Perelandra (48), after Ransom’s experience of refreshment by the bubble fruits, his first thought was to plunge “through the whole lot of them and to feel, all at once, that magical refreshment multiplied tenfold.” But, fortunately, his second thought was: “This itch to have things over again, as if life were a film that could be unrolled twice or even made to work backwards ... was it possibly the root of all evil?” This impulse to repeat or grasp our pleasures, then, just leads us down the road to addiction.

The fool’s mistake, then, stems from misplaced desire. Honesty with oneself is crucial – the question one must ask oneself is: “Does this object or experience satisfy my deepest desire?” If the answer is “no”, further exploration is necessary. The only fatal error would be the delusion that one had arrived at ultimate satisfaction when that was not the case – that would be to remain on the way of the fool.

Peter Kreeft (252) provides helpful insights on the distinction between wholesome, appropriately placed desire and distorted, misplaced desire. He points out that the hrossa, the unfallen inhabitants of Mars who appear in Lewis’ Out of the Silent Planet, distinguished between the good version and the distorted version in that they had two words for desire: “wondelone” which has connotations of joy, hope and Sehnsucht; and “hluntheline” which has connotations of selfishness, lust and greed. In Abolition of Man (12), Lewis discusses his belief that all of our emotional responses (including desire) may be either in harmony with or out of

harmony with the true nature of reality. Wholesome desire (“wondelone”) would be in harmony with the true nature of reality while corrupted desire (“hluntheline”) would not be so.

The fool feels compelled to grasp and cling to the objects of his pleasure, so he also craves god-like control over his environment. He craves the freedom to secure his own lasting comfort and maximum pleasure – on his own terms – and he rails against God’s interruption of his plans. In his autobiography, Lewis describes his own pre-conversion resistance to God whom he perceived as “the transcendental Interferer” (Surprised by Joy 139).

Often, says Lewis, the fool’s way leads to the way of the disillusioned person. Attempts to prolong or multiply or manufacture the thrills tend to result in ever diminishing satisfaction, ending in boredom and disappointment (Mere Christianity 86). And so the fool becomes the disillusioned person who learns to shrink his hopes and dreams and live with very small expectations. Among the disillusioned are also the debunkers of the world – those who would say that Christianity is nothing more than wish fulfillment. They are like the black dwarves of The Last Battle (147-149) who, although they were actually sitting before a delectable feast in a beautiful flowered meadow, all the while saw themselves in a dark, smelly stable eating nothing but stable litter – for them, there was no banquet. Their loss of hope was so complete that they were no longer able to receive joy.

Likewise, in The Silver Chair (151-159), the wicked Queen of Underland, reductionist par excellence, almost succeeded in drawing Jill and Eustace into the gray, hopeless world of the disillusioned. She had them practically convinced that there was no overworld, no Narnia, and no sun – and that, furthermore, Aslan was nothing but a big cat – all of it, just a pretty dream. It was Puddleglum, that noble Marsh Wiggle, who finally broke the spell by stomping out the evil queen’s enchanted fire and positioning himself back into the Christian way, pronouncing his loyalty to Narnia and Aslan because, even if they turned out to be dreams, they were much better than anything that Underland had to offer.

In contrast to the fool and the disillusioned person, the Christian is one who takes delight in earthly beauty but recognizes that the ultimate object of his longing is God, the source of all earthly beauty. To the disillusioned person, the Christian would pose the question: “Supposing one really can reach the rainbow’s end?” (Mere Christianity 106) Lewis’ hypothesis is that the very fact that we have those desires strongly suggests that satisfaction for those desires actually exists:

If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world... I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death; I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside; I must make it the main object of life to press on to that other country and to help others to do the same (Mere Christianity 106).

So the person who is on the Christian way is one who seeks God as the Ultimate Source of satisfaction.

Desire, says Lewis, is a good place to begin. Profound experiences of earthly beauty, goodness and love are important – they wake us up and draw us out of ourselves. They are the first step. However, we must learn to hold these earthly gifts loosely, fully delighting in them but then releasing them in favor of enjoyment of the Giver. The “dialectic of desire”, as Lewis calls it (Surprised by Joy 175), requires movement back and forth between enjoyment and renunciation. We learn to enjoy things without seeking our security in them. Lewis advises that we cultivate a “preliminary act of submission not only towards possible future afflictions but also towards possible future blessings” (Letters to Malcolm 26). Like Tinidril of Perelandra, we need to be ready to take pleasure in the gift received rather than hankering after the gift desired. For her, “the fruit you ate at any moment was, at that moment, the best” (Perelandra 103).

The theme of “first things and second things” runs through all of Lewis’ literature. He believed that “by valuing too highly a real, but subordinate good, we come near to losing that good itself” (Lewis, “First and Second Things” 280). For him, only God merits “first thing” status in our lives. And by our love for God, Lewis says, all other loves for second things are redeemed and perfected. There is a paradox here: “The only things we can keep are the things we freely give to God. What we try to keep for ourselves is just what we are sure to lose” (Mere Christianity 165). Certainly, the problem is not that our love for earthly things is too intense. It is, rather, that our love for God is too weak. It is all a matter of priorities.

Not only does true joy necessitate surrender of all that we love to the supremacy of God – it necessitates the surrender of our very selves (Mere Christianity 153). No wonder we count the cost, as Lewis himself did as a new Christian, calling himself “the most reluctant convert in all England” (Surprised by Joy 182). Surrender did not seem all that attractive. Christianity looked very different from the outside looking in than it turned out to be from the inside. At first glance, Christianity had little appeal for him. God proved to be an acquired taste:

It may be asked whether my terror was at all relieved by the thought that I was now approaching the source from which those arrows of Joy had been shot at me ever since childhood. Not in the least. No slightest hint was vouchsafed me that there ever had been or ever would be any connection between God and Joy. If anything, it was the reverse (Surprised by Joy 184).

He acknowledges that, for fallen creatures, the process of self-surrender is unavoidably painful. To turn for our fulfillment from the creation to the Creator and from self to God feels like death to us but it is the only thing that brings life to us: “The natural life in each of us is something self-centered, something that wants to be petted and admired, to take advantage of other lives, to exploit the whole universe. And especially it wants to be left to itself: to keep well away from anything better or stronger or higher than it, anything that might make it feel small” (Mere Christianity 139).

The more we have gotten into the habit of giving in to our distorted desires, the more difficult surrender will be. As Edmund discovered, “there’s nothing that spoils the taste of good ordinary food half so much as the memory of bad magic food” (Lewis, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe 84). Often, says Lewis, pain plays an important role in our recovery in that it becomes an effective tool for prying us free from our idolatrous affections and nudging us closer to real joy: “While what we call ‘our own life’ remains agreeable we will not surrender it to Him. What then can God do in our interest but make “our own life” less agreeable to us, and take away the plausible sources of false happiness?” (The Problem of Pain 96)

When it comes right down to it, says Lewis, there is only one place we can find real joy, and that is in God. There is no other stream, as the desperately thirsty Jill discovered upon her arrival in Narnia, when she found a large lion blocking her way to a refreshing drink. She would have gone somewhere else – anywhere else, to relieve her thirst. When, at last, with great trepidation, she approached the stream and drank she found, to her great joy, that “it was the coldest, most refreshing water she had ever tasted” (The Silver Chair 16-17). If we want joy, says Lewis, we must get close to the Source of all joy – there is no other way: “If you want to get warm you must stand by the fire. If you want to be wet, you must get into the water. If you want joy ... you must get close to, or even into the thing that has [it]” (Mere Christianity 137).

For Lewis, there is a sweetness, an ecstasy, about the surrender of the self to God, as depicted by the experience of the horse Hwin when she finally encountered Aslan, telling him that he is so beautiful that he might eat her if he wished (The Horse and his Boy 193). We no longer desire to possess, but to be possessed. What we end up discovering is that it is only in losing ourselves in God that we finally end up finding our true selves. Alan Jacobs (131) points out how this bears out in Lewis’ own life. It seems that it is only after his conversion that he found his authentic

voice as a writer: “it is as though the key to his own hidden and locked-away personality was given to him. What appears almost immediately is a kind of gusto (sheer, bold enthusiasm for what he loves) that is characteristic of him ever after.”

Lewis would say that it is futile to seek one’s identity introspectively. True personality comes as we give ourselves away in the service of Christ and others: “We shall then first be true persons when we have suffered ourselves to be fitted into our places. We are marble waiting to be shaped, metal waiting to be run into a mould” (Lewis, “Membership” 40). As creatures, Lewis says, our identity is derivative or reflective – “our whole destiny seems to lie ... in acquiring a fragrance that is not our own but borrowed, in becoming clean mirrors filled with the image of a face that is not ours” (Lewis, “Christianity and Literature” 7). The key to the purification of our desires, then, is to “consciously enact [our] creaturely role, reverse the act by which we fell, [and] tread Adam’s dance backward” (The Problem of Pain 101).

By virtue of the original sin, the human tendency is to place self at the center; ongoing conversion, therefore, would involve resisting that pull and placing God in the center instead. We must not minimize the power of the downward pull, Lewis says: “All day long, and all the days of our life, we are sliding, slipping, falling away – as if God were, to our present consciousness, a smooth inclined plane on which there is no resting” (The Problem of Pain 76). And the only solution for our dilemma is to continually return – over and over and over again -- to our center in God, taking the God-life deeper and deeper into our being. Aslan summed up the whole trajectory of spiritual growth when he said these words to Lucy: “Every year you grow, you will find me bigger” (Prince Caspian 136). The natural outgrowth of our devotion to God will be that we will gradually grow into beings that will look and act more and more like Him who is Love.

We catch this God-life, Lewis says, by way of a “good infection”, by way of participating in the life of the Trinity (Mere Christianity 134-138). The best way to begin is to learn the give and take of being part of a church or Christian community. “The New Testament Church knows nothing of solitary religion”, says Lewis (“Membership” 30). Throughout the Narnia stories, we see Lewis’ vision of a beloved community, with children and all manner of talking beasts, dwarves, fauns and others, all united in their devotion to Aslan, all participating together in Aslan’s mission of restoration, and all contributing to each other’s growth. Transformation for each individual comes in the process of sharing in the work of the community. When they first entered Narnia, the Pevensie children were just ordinary children, but, in their loving service to Aslan for the sake of Narnia, they eventually evolved into Peter the Magnificent, Susan the Gentle, Edmund the Just, and Lucy the Valiant.

Friendship is a strong theme throughout Lewis’ writings – it not only delights us, but it also draws us out of ourselves and challenges us toward growth. In his book, The Four Loves (55), he deplores the fact that, in our modern world, friendship has lost the centrality that was given to it in the ancient world. The Narnia stories are a good corrective for this deficiency, because, in them, Lewis explores extensively the nature and value of friendship. Not only did friendship bring delight to the inhabitants of Narnia, it was often the catalyst for growth. Through her friendship with Tumnus, the faun, Lucy learned to care deeply for the welfare of another who was quite different from herself (The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe 56). Caspian learned the practice of loyalty when his dear friend, Dr. Cornelius, was being criticized for his mixed race background (Prince Caspian 82). Eustace learned respect, gratitude and humility through his friendship with Reepicheep, the mouse, whom he originally despised because of his smallness of stature (The Voyage of the Dawn Treader 85). These are only a few of the many examples of Narnian friendships that bore fruit in terms of increased happiness and virtue.

It looks as though what began with the theme of joy is now ending with good works. But, in Lewis’ view, that is entirely appropriate, because he believed that it is self-giving that keeps our

joy alive: “In self-giving, if anywhere, we touch a rhythm not only of all creation but of all being... From the highest to the lowest, self exists to be abdicated and, by that abdication, becomes the more truly self, to be thereupon yet the more abdicated, and so forever” (The Problem of Pain 152).

This is a highly idealistic vision, but Lewis also had a realistic side, and understood that, as vulnerable human beings, we may also experience periods of spiritual depletion. And when that happens, he says, “we must lay before [God] what is in us, not what ought to be in us” (Letters to Malcolm 22). After the death of his wife, for example, he was wrenchingly honest about the depth of his grief, which shook him to the core. For him there was no rising above it, only the long, hard process of working his way through it. Lewis fully understood that process skipping is not a helpful way to restore joy.

Given the fact that pain is a very real part of our earthly existence, Lewis warns us that fulfillment of desire will be only partial this side of Heaven: “Our Father refreshes us on the journey with some pleasant inns, but will never encourage us to mistake them for home” (The Problem of Pain 115). Some people’s experience may tend more toward fulfillment of longing and other people’s experience may tend more toward unfulfillment of longing, and that may differ according to season of life as well. Certainly, we ought not to make any judgment on our own or anyone else’s spirituality based on one’s position on the longing/fulfillment spectrum. In fact, Lewis believed that our driest periods may actually produce the most spiritual growth. As the Demon Screwtape observed:

Sooner or later He [God] withdraws, if not in fact, at least from their conscious experience, all those supports and incentives. He leaves the creature to stand up on its own legs – to carry out from the will alone duties which have lost all relish. It is during such trough periods, much more than during the peak periods that it is growing into the sort of creature He wants it to be (The Screwtape Letters 41).

As a case in point, we have learned from the recent publication of her book, Come be my Light, that Mother Teresa of Calcutta suffered extensive periods of devastating darkness and doubt. Surely, if anyone should be rewarded with the joy of the Lord’s presence, it would be this beloved saint who poured out her life in a most sacrificial way to relieve the suffering of others. But that was not the case. And yet, in the midst of her darkness, she remained faithful in her intense desire for God, continuing to love and serve Him even after all sense of His presence had departed from her. Both Screwtape’s insight and Mother Teresa’s experience would suggest that there is no simple, clear-cut co-relation between an individual’s degree of maturity and degree of joy experienced.

Lewis, then, would agree with the Apostle Paul’s statement that, in this world, “we see through a glass darkly” (1 Cor. 13:12); and for some people the glass is much darker than for others. The important thing is that, whether or not we are experiencing the consolation of His perceived presence or the grief of His perceived absence, our eyes are “fixed on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2).

Regardless of the degree of fulfillment we may or may not experience in this life, Lewis would remind us that it is the hope of Heaven that sustains us. For him, Heaven will be a state of total union with God. It may not have even occurred to us, he says, that we actually desire Heaven, but, whether or not we are conscious of it, that desire is woven into the very fabric of our being:

There have been times when I think we do not desire heaven but more often I find myself wondering whether, in our heart of hearts, we have ever desired anything else... You have never *had* it. All the things that have ever deeply possessed your soul have been but hints of it – tantalizing glimpses, promises never quite fulfilled, echoes that died away just as they caught your ear. But if it should really become manifest – if there ever came

an echo that did not die away but swelled into the sound itself – you would know it. Beyond all possibility of doubt you would say “Here at last is the thing I was made for.” We cannot tell each other about it. It is the secret signature of each soul, the incommunicable and unappeasable want ... (The Problem of Pain 146-147)).

“At present”, says Lewis, “we are ... on the wrong side of the door. We discern the freshness and purity of the morning, but they do not make us fresh and pure. We cannot mingle with the splendors we see. But all the leaves of the New Testament are rustling with the rumor that it will not always be so. Some day, God willing, we shall get *in*” (“The Weight of Glory” 13). And, when that happens, says Lewis, the joy will never end. As it was for the children when they entered into the New Narnia at the end of The Last Battle (184), so shall it be for us: “at last [we will begin] Chapter One of the Great Story, which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.”

Works Cited

Primary Sources

- Lewis, C. S. The Abolition of Man. New York: Macmillan, 1962.
- . "Christianity and Literature." Christian Reflections. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967.
- . The Collected Letters. Ed. Walter Hooper. 3 vols. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004-07
- . English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, excluding Drama. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954.
- . "First and Second Things." God in the Dock. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970.
- . The Four Loves. London: Geoffrey Bles, 1960.
- . The Great Divorce. New York: Macmillan, 1946.
- . A Grief Observed. New York: Seabury Press, 1963.
- . The Horse and his Boy. New York: Macmillan, 1954.
- . The Last Battle. New York: Macmillan, 1956.
- . Letters to an American Lady. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967.
- . The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. New York: Macmillan, 1950.
- . Mere Christianity. New York: Macmillan, 1952.
- . "Membership." The Weight of Glory and other Addresses. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949.
- . Out of the Silent Planet. New York: Macmillan, 1965.
- . Perelandra. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996.
- . The Pilgrim's Regress. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1943.
- . Prince Caspian. New York: Macmillan, 1951.
- . The Problem of Pain. New York: Macmillan, 1962.
- . The Screwtape Letters. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996.
- . The Silver Chair. New York: Macmillan, 1953.
- . Surprised by Joy. London: Collins, 1955.
- . Till we have Faces. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956.
- . The Voyage of the Dawn Treader. New York: Macmillan, 1952.
- . "The Weight of Glory." The Weight of Glory and other Addresses. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949.

Secondary Sources

- Holy Bible. Authorized King James version. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1976.
- Jacobs, Alan. The Narnian: the Life and Imagination of C. S. Lewis. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2005.
- Kreeft, Peter. Heaven: the Heart's Deepest Longings. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005.
- Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Mother Teresa: Come, be my Light. New York: Doubleday, 2007
- Water, Mark, comp. The New Encyclopedia of Christian Quotations. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000.