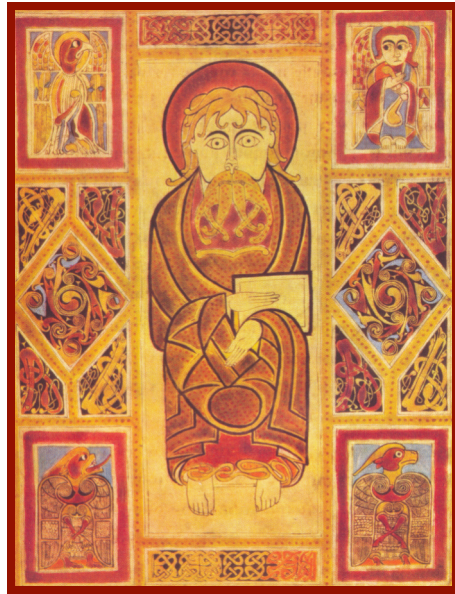


A Reader in Christian Theology



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Sacred Doctrine

Saint Thomas Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas (1225-74), a giant among the medieval Scholastics, is considered by the Roman Catholic Church to be the greatest Christian theologian in history. This selection comes from his monumental *Summa Theologica*, Part One, Question I, Articles 1-10.

To place our purpose within definite limits, we must first investigate the nature and domain of sacred doctrine. Concerning this there are ten points of inquiry: (1) Whether sacred doctrine is necessary? (2) Whether it is a science? (3) Whether it is one or many? (4) Whether it is speculative or practical? (5) How it is compared with other sciences? (6) Whether it is a form of wisdom? (7) Whether God is its subject-matter? (8) Whether it is argumentative? (9) Whether it rightly employs metaphors and similes? (10) Whether the Sacred Scripture of this doctrine may be expounded in different senses?

First Article

WHETHER, BESIDES THE PHILOSOPHICAL SCIENCES, ANY FURTHER DOCTRINE IS REQUIRED?

We proceed thus to the First Article:—

Objection 1. It seems that, besides the philosophical sciences, we have no need of any further knowledge. For man should not seek to know what is above reason: *Seek not the things that are too high for thee* (Ecclus. 3:22). But whatever is not above reason is sufficiently considered in the philosophical sciences. Therefore any other knowledge besides the philosophical sciences is superfluous.

Obj. 2. Further, knowledge can be concerned only with being, for nothing can be known, save the true, which is convertible with being. But everything that is, is considered in the philosophical sciences—even God Himself; so that there is a part of philosophy called theology, or the divine science, as is clear from Aristotle. Therefore, besides the philosophical sciences, there is no need of any further knowledge.

On the contrary, It is written (2 Tim. 3:16): *All Scripture inspired of God is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice*. Now Scripture, inspired of God, is not a part of the philosophical sciences discovered by human reason. Therefore it is useful that besides the philosophical sciences there should be another science—*i.e.*, one inspired of God.

I answer that, It was necessary for man's salvation that there should be a knowledge revealed by God, besides the philosophical sciences investigated by human reason. First, because man is directed to God as to an end that surpasses the grasp of his reason: *The eye hath not seen, O God, besides Thee, what things Thou hast prepared for them that wait for Thee* (Isa. 64:4). But the end must first be known by men who are to direct their thoughts and actions to the end. Hence it was necessary for the salvation of man that certain truths which exceed human reason should be made known to him by divine revelation. Even as regards those truths about God which human reason can investigate, it was necessary that man be taught by a divine revelation. For the truth about God, such as reason can know it, would only be known by a few, and only after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors; whereas man's whole salvation, which is in God, depends upon the knowledge of this truth. Therefore, in order that the salvation of men might be brought about more fitly and more surely, it was necessary that they be taught divine truths by divine revelation. It was therefore necessary that, besides the philosophical sciences investigated by reason, there should be a sacred science by way of revelation.

Reply Obj. 1. Although those things which are beyond man's knowledge may not be sought for by man through his reason, nevertheless, what is revealed by God must be accepted through faith. Hence the sacred text continues, *For many things are shown to thee above the understanding of man* (Ecclus. 3:25). And in such things sacred science consists.

Reply Obj. 2. Sciences are diversified according to the diverse nature of their knowable objects. For the astronomer and the physicist both prove the same conclusion—that the earth, for instance, is round: the astronomer by means of mathematics (*i.e.*, abstracting from matter), but the physicist by means of matter itself. Hence there is no reason why those things which are treated by the philosophical sciences, so far as they

can be known by the light of natural reason, may not also be treated by another science so far as they are known by the light of the divine revelation. Hence the theology included in sacred doctrine differs in genus from that theology which is part of philosophy.

Second Article

WHETHER SACRED DOCTRINE IS A SCIENCE?

We proceed thus to the Second Article:—

Objection 1. It seems that sacred doctrine is not a science, for every science proceeds from self-evident principles. But sacred doctrine proceeds from articles of faith, which are not self-evident, since their truth is not admitted by all: *For all men have not faith* (2 Thess. 3:2). Therefore sacred doctrine is not a science.

Obj. 2. Further, science is not of individuals. But sacred doctrine treats of individual facts, such as the deeds of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the like. Therefore sacred doctrine is not a science.

On the contrary, Augustine says that *to this science alone belongs that whereby saving faith is begotten, nourished, protected, and strengthened.* But this can be said of no science except sacred doctrine. Therefore sacred doctrine is a science.

I answer that, Sacred doctrine is a science. We must bear in mind that there are two kinds of sciences. There are some which proceed from principles known by the natural light of the intellect, such as arithmetic and geometry and the like. There are also some which proceed from principles known by the light of a higher science: thus the science of optics proceeds from principles established by geometry, and music from principles established by arithmetic. So it is that sacred doctrine is a science because it proceeds from principles made known by the light of a higher science, namely, the science of God and the blessed. Hence, just as music accepts on authority the principles taught by the arithmetician, so sacred science accepts the principles revealed by God.

Reply Obj. 1. The principles of any science are either in themselves self-evident, or reducible to the knowledge of a higher science; and such, as we have said, are the principles of sacred doctrine.

Reply Obj. 2. Individual facts are not treated in sacred doctrine because it is concerned with them principally; they are rather introduced as examples to be followed in our lives (as in the moral sciences), as well as to establish the authority of those men through whom the divine revelation, on which this sacred scripture or doctrine is based, has come down to us.

Third Article

WHETHER SACRED DOCTRINE IS ONE SCIENCE?

We proceed thus to the Third Article:—

Objection 1. It seems that sacred doctrine is not one science, for according to the Philosopher *that science is one which treats only of one class of subjects*. But the creator and the creature, both of whom are treated in sacred doctrine, cannot be grouped together under one class of subjects. Therefore sacred doctrine is not one science.

Obj. 2. Further, in sacred doctrine we treat of angels, corporeal creatures, and human morality. But these belong to separate philosophical sciences. Therefore sacred doctrine cannot be one science.

On the contrary, Holy Scripture speaks of it as one science: *Wisdom gave him the knowledge [scientiam] of holy things* (Wisd. 10:10),

I answer that, Sacred doctrine is one science. The unity of a power or habit is to be gauged by its object, not indeed, in its material aspect, but as regards the formality under which it is an object. For example, man, ass, and stone agree in the one formality of being colored; and color is the formal object of sight. Therefore, because Sacred Scripture (as we have said) considers some things under the formality of being divinely revealed, all things which have been divinely revealed have in common the formality of the object of this science. Hence, they are included under sacred doctrine as under one science.

Reply Obj. 1. Sacred doctrine does not treat of God and creatures equally, but of God primarily, and of creatures only so far as they are referable to God as their beginning or end. Hence the unity of this science is not impaired.

Reply Obj. 2. Nothing prevents inferior powers or habits from being diversified by objects which yet agree with one another in coming together under a higher power or habit; because the higher power or habit regards its own object under a more universal formality. Thus, the object of the *common sense* is the sensible, including, therefore, whatever is visible or audible. Hence the *common sense*, although one power, extends to all the objects of the five senses. Similarly, objects which are the subject-matter of different philosophical sciences can yet be treated by this one single sacred science under one aspect, namely, insofar as they can be included in revelation. So that in this way sacred doctrine bears, as it were, the stamp of the divine science, which is one and simple, yet extends to everything.

Fourth Article

WHETHER SACRED DOCTRINE IS A PRACTICAL SCIENCE?

We proceed thus to the Fourth Article:—

Objection 1. It seems that sacred doctrine is a practical science, for a practical science is that which ends in action, according to the Philosopher. But sacred doctrine is ordained to action: *Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only* (James 1:22). Therefore sacred doctrine is a practical science.

Obj. 2. Further, sacred doctrine is divided into the Old and the New Law. But law belongs to moral science, which is a practical science. Therefore sacred doctrine is a practical science.

On the contrary, Every practical science is concerned with the things man can do; as moral science is concerned with human acts, and architecture with buildings. But sacred doctrine is chiefly concerned with God, Who is rather the Maker of man. Therefore it is not a practical but a speculative science.

I answer that, Sacred doctrine, being one, extends to things which belong to the different philosophical sciences, because it considers in each the same formal aspect, namely, so far as they can be known through the divine light. Hence, although among the philosophical sciences some are speculative and others practical, nevertheless, sacred

doctrine includes both; as God, by one and the same science, knows both Himself and His works.

Still, it is more speculative than practical, because it is more concerned with divine things than with human acts; though even of these acts it treats inasmuch as man is ordained by them to the perfect knowledge of God, in which consists eternal beatitude.

This is a sufficient answer to the Objections.

Fifth Article
WHETHER SACRED DOCTRINE IS NOBLER THAN
OTHER SCIENCES?

We proceed thus to the Fifth Article:—

Objection 1. It seems that sacred doctrine is not nobler than other sciences, for the nobility of a science depends on its certitude. But other sciences, the principles of which cannot be doubted, seem to be more certain than sacred doctrine; for its principles—namely, articles of faith—can be doubted. Therefore other sciences seem to be nobler.

Obj. 2. Further, it is the part of a lower science to draw upon a higher; as music draws upon arithmetic. But sacred doctrine does draw upon the philosophical sciences; for Jerome observes, in his Epistle to Magnus, that *the ancient doctors so enriched their books with the doctrines and thoughts of the philosophers, that thou knowest not what more to admire in them, their profane erudition or their scriptural learning.* Therefore sacred doctrine is inferior to other sciences.

On the contrary, Other sciences are called the handmaidens of this one: *Wisdom sent her maids to invite to the tower* (Prov. 9:3).

I answer that, Since this science is partly speculative and partly practical, it transcends all other sciences, speculative and practical. Now one speculative science is said to be nobler than another either by reason of its greater certitude, or by reason of the higher dignity of its subject-matter. In both these respects this science surpasses other speculative sciences: in point of greater certitude, because other sciences derive their certitude from the natural light of human reason, which can err, whereas this derives its certitude from the light of the divine knowledge, which cannot err; in point of the higher

dignity of its subject-matter, because this science treats chiefly of those things which by their sublimity transcend human reason, while other sciences consider only those things which are within reason's grasp. Of the practical sciences, that one is nobler which is ordained to a more final end, as political science is nobler than military science; for the good of the army is directed to the good of the state. But the purpose of this science, in so far as it is practical, is eternal beatitude, to which as to an ultimate end the ends of all the practical sciences are directed. Hence it is clear that from every standpoint it is nobler than other sciences.

Reply Obj. 1. It may well happen that what is in itself the more certain may seem to us the less certain because of the weakness of our intellect, *which is dazzled by the clearest objects of nature; as the owl is dazzled by the light of the sun* [Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 993b]. Hence the fact that some happen to have doubts about the articles of faith is not due to the uncertain nature of the truths, but to the weakness of the human intellect; yet the slenderest knowledge that may be obtained of the highest things is more desirable than the most certain knowledge obtained of the lowest things, as is said in *De Animalibus* 9 [Aristotle, *On the Parts of Animals*, 644b).

Reply Obj. 2. This science can draw upon the philosophical sciences, not as though it stood in need of them, but only in order to make its teaching clearer. For it accepts its principles, not from the other sciences, but immediately from God, by revelation. Therefore it does not draw upon the other sciences as upon its superiors, but uses them as its inferiors and handmaidens: even so the master sciences make use of subordinate sciences, as political science of military science. That it thus uses them is not due to its own defect or insufficiency, but to the defect of our intellect, which is more easily led by what is known through natural reason (from which proceed the other sciences), to that which is above reason, such as are the teachings of this science.

Sixth Article

WHETHER THIS DOCTRINE IS A FORM OF WISDOM?

We proceed thus to the Sixth Article:—

Objection 1. It seems that this doctrine is not a form of wisdom. For no doctrine which borrows its principles is worthy of the name of wisdom, seeing that the wise man directs, and is not directed. But this doctrine borrows its principles. Therefore it is not a form of wisdom.

Obj. 2. Further, it is a part of wisdom to prove the principles of other sciences. Hence it is called the chief of sciences, as is clear in *Ethics 9* [Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1141a]. But this doctrine does not prove the principles of other sciences. Therefore it is not a form of wisdom.

Obj. 3. Further, this doctrine is acquired by study, whereas wisdom is acquired by God's inspiration, and is accordingly numbered among the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Isa. 11:2). Therefore this doctrine is not a form of wisdom.

On the contrary, It is written (Deut. 4:6): *This is your wisdom and understanding in the sight of nations.*

I answer that, This doctrine is wisdom above all human wisdoms not merely in any one order, but absolutely. For since it is the part of a wise man to order and to judge, and since lesser matters can be judged in the light of some higher cause, he is said to be wise in any genus who considers the highest cause in that genus. Thus in the realm of building, he who plans the form of the house is called wise and architect, in relation to the subordinate laborers who trim the wood and make ready the stones: thus it is said, *As a wise architect I have laid the foundation* (1 Cor. 3:10). Again, in the order of all human life, the prudent man is called wise, inasmuch as he directs his acts to a fitting end: thus it is said, *Wisdom is prudence to a man* (Prov. 10:23). Therefore, he who considers absolutely the highest cause of the whole universe, namely God, is most of all called wise. Hence wisdom is said to be the knowledge of divine things, as Augustine says [*On the Trinity*, 12.14]. But sacred doctrine essentially treats of God viewed as the highest cause, for it treats of Him not only so far as He can be known through creatures just as philosophers knew Him—*That which is known of God is manifest in them* (Rom. 1:19)—but also so far as He is known to Himself alone and revealed to others. Hence sacred doctrine is especially called a form of wisdom.

Reply Obj. 1. Sacred doctrine derives its principles, not from any human knowledge, but from the divine knowledge, by which, as by the highest wisdom, all our knowledge is ordered.

Reply Obj. 2. The principles of the other sciences either are evident and cannot be proved, or they are proved by natural reason in some other science. But the knowledge proper to this science comes through revelation, and not through natural reason. Therefore it is not its business to prove the principles of the other sciences, but only to judge them. For whatsoever is found in the other sciences contrary to the truth of this science must be condemned as false. Hence, it is said: *Destroying counsels and every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God* (2 Cor. 10:4, 5).

Reply Obj. 3. Since judgment pertains to wisdom, in accord with a twofold manner of judging there is a twofold wisdom. A man may judge in one way by inclination, as whoever has the habit of a virtue judges rightly of what is virtuous by his very inclination toward it. Hence it is the virtuous man, as we read, who is the measure and rule of human acts. In another way, a man may judge by knowledge, just as a man learned in moral science might be able to judge rightly about virtuous acts, though he had not virtue. The first manner of judging divine things belongs to that wisdom which is numbered as a gift of the Holy Ghost: *The spiritual man judgeth all things* (1 Cor. 2:15). And Dionysius the Areopagite says: *Hierotheus is taught not only as one learning, but also as experiencing divine things* [*On the Divine Names*, 2.9]. The second manner of judging belongs to this doctrine, inasmuch as it is acquired by study, though its principles are obtained by revelation.

Seventh Article

WHETHER GOD IS THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF THIS SCIENCE?

We proceed thus to the Seventh Article:—

Objection 1. It seems that God is not the subject-matter of this science. For, according to the Philosopher, in every science the essence of its subject is presupposed. But this science cannot presuppose the essence of God, for John Damascene says: *It is*

impossible to express the essence of God [*On the Orthodox Faith*, 1.4]. Therefore God is not the subject-matter of this science.

Obj. 2. Further, whatever conclusions are reached in any science must be comprehended under the subject-matter of that science. But in Holy Scripture we reach conclusions not only concerning God, but concerning many other things, such as creatures and human morality. Therefore God is not the subject-matter of this science.

On the contrary, The subject-matter of a science is that of which it principally treats. But in this science the treatment is mainly about God; for it is called theology, as treating of God. Therefore God is the subject-matter of this science.

I answer that, God is the subject-matter of this science. The relation between a science and its subject-matter is the same as that between a habit or a power and its object. Now properly speaking the object of a power or habit is that under whose formality all things are referred to that power or habit, as man and stone are referred to sight in that they are colored. Hence colored things are the proper object of sight. But in sacred doctrine all things are treated under the aspect of God, either because they are God Himself, or because they refer to God as to their beginning and end. Hence it follows that God is in very truth the subject-matter of this science. This is made clear also from the principles of this science, namely, the articles of faith, for faith is about God. The subject-matter of the principles and of the whole science must be the same, since the whole science is contained virtually in its principles.

Some, however, looking to what is treated in this science, and not to the aspect under which it is treated, have asserted the subject-matter of this science to be something other than God—that is, either things and signs, or the works of salvation, or the whole Christ, that is, the head and members. Of all these things, in truth, we treat in this science, but so far as they are ordered to God.

Reply Obj. 1. Although we cannot know in what consists the essence of God, nevertheless in this doctrine we make use of His effects, either of nature or of grace, in the place of a definition, in regard to whatever is treated in this doctrine concerning God; even as in some philosophical sciences we demonstrate something about a cause from its effect, by taking the effect in the place of a definition of the cause.

Reply Obj. 2. Whatever other conclusions are reached in this sacred science are comprehended under God, not as parts or species or accidents, but as in some way ordained to Him.

Eighth Article

WHETHER SACRED DOCTRINE IS ARGUMENTATIVE?

We proceed thus to the Eighth Article:—

Objection 1. It seems this doctrine is not argumentative. For Ambrose says: *Put arguments aside where faith is sought* [*On Faith*, 1.13]. But in this doctrine faith especially is sought: *But these things are written that you may believe* (John 20:31). Therefore sacred doctrine is not argumentative.

Obj. 2. Further, if it is argumentative, the argument is either from authority or from reason. If it is from authority, it seems unbefitting its dignity, for the proof from authority is the weakest form of proof according to Boethius. But if from reason, this is unbefitting its end, because, according to Gregory the Theologian, *faith has no merit in those things of which human reason brings its own experience* [*On the Gospel*, 2, Homily 26]. Therefore sacred doctrine is not argumentative.

On the contrary, The Scripture says that a bishop should *embrace that faithful word which is according to doctrine, that he may be able to exhort in sound doctrine and to convince the gainsayers* (Titus 1:9).

I answer that, As the other sciences do not argue in proof of their principles, but argue from their principles to demonstrate other truths in these sciences, so this doctrine does not argue in proof of its principles, which are the articles of faith, but from them it goes on to prove something else; as the Apostle argues from the resurrection of Christ in proof of the general resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12). However, it is to be borne in mind, in regard to the philosophical sciences, that the inferior sciences neither prove their principles nor dispute with those who deny them, but leave this to a higher science; whereas the highest of them, namely, metaphysics, can dispute with one who denies its principles, if only the opponent will make some concession; but if he concedes nothing, it can have no dispute with him, though it can answer his arguments. Hence sacred

doctrine, since it has no science above itself, disputes argumentatively with one who denies its principles only if the opponent admits some at least of the truths obtained through divine revelation. Thus, we can argue with heretics from texts in Holy Scripture, and against those who deny one article of faith we can argue from another. If our opponent believes nothing of divine revelation, there is no longer any means of proving the articles of faith by argument, but only of answering his objections—if he has any—against faith. Since faith rests upon infallible truth, and since the contrary of a truth can never be demonstrated, it is clear that the proofs brought against faith are not demonstrations, but arguments that can be answered.

Reply Obj. 1. Although arguments from human reason cannot avail to prove what belongs to faith, nevertheless, this doctrine argues from articles of faith to other truths.

Reply Obj. 2. It is especially proper to this doctrine to argue from authority, inasmuch as its principles are obtained by revelation; and hence we must believe the authority of those to whom the revelation has been made. Nor does this take away from the dignity of this doctrine, for although the argument from authority based on human reason is the weakest, yet the argument from authority based on divine revelation is the strongest. But sacred doctrine also makes use of human reason, not, indeed, to prove faith (for thereby the merit of faith would come to an end), but to make clear other things that are set forth in this doctrine. Since therefore grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it, natural reason should minister to faith as the natural inclination of the will ministers to charity. Hence the Apostle says: *Bringing into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ* (2 Cor. 10:5). Hence it is that sacred doctrine makes use also of the authority of philosophers in those questions in which they were able to know the truth by natural reason, as Paul quotes a saying of Aratus: *As some also of your own poets said: For we are also His offspring* (Acts 17:28). Nevertheless, sacred doctrine makes use of these authorities as extrinsic and probable arguments, but properly uses the authority of the canonical Scriptures as a necessary demonstration, and the authority of the doctors of the Church as one that may properly be used, yet merely as probable. For our faith rests upon the revelation made to the apostles and prophets, who wrote the canonical books, and not on the revelations (if any such there are) made to other doctors.

Ninth Article

WHETHER HOLY SCRIPTURE SHOULD USE METAPHORS?

We proceed thus to the Ninth Article:—

Objection 1. It seems that Holy Scripture should not use metaphors. For that which is proper to the lowest science seems not to befit this science, which holds the highest place of all. But to proceed by the aid of various similitudes and figures is proper to poetics, the least of all the sciences. Therefore it is not fitting that this science should make use of such similitudes.

Obj. 2. Further, this doctrine seems to be intended to make truth clear. Hence a reward is held out to those who manifest it: *They that explain me shall have life everlasting* (Ecclus. 24:31). But by such similitudes truth is obscured. Therefore to put forward divine truths under the likeness of corporeal things does not befit this doctrine.

Obj. 3. Further, the higher creatures are, the nearer they approach to the divine likeness. If therefore any creature be taken to represent God, this representation ought chiefly to be taken from the higher creatures, and not from the lower; yet this is often found in the Scriptures.

On the contrary, It is written (Hosea 12:10): *I have multiplied visions, and I have used similitudes by the ministry of the prophets.* But to put forward anything by means of similitudes is to use metaphors. Therefore sacred doctrine may use metaphors.

I answer that, It is befitting Holy Scripture to put forward divine and spiritual truths by means of comparisons with material things. For God provides for everything according to the capacity of its nature. Now it is natural to man to attain to intellectual truths through sensible things, because all our knowledge originates from sense. Hence in Holy Scripture spiritual truths are fittingly taught under the likeness of material things. This is what Dionysius says: *We cannot be enlightened by the divine rays except they be hidden within the covering of many sacred veils* [*The Celestial Hierarchies*, 1.2]. It is also befitting Holy Scripture, which is proposed to all without distinction of persons—*To the wise and to the unwise I am a debtor* (Rom. 1:14)—that spiritual truths be expounded by means of figures taken from corporeal things, in order that thereby even the simple who are unable by themselves to grasp intellectual things may be able to understand it.

Reply Obj. 1. Poetry makes use of metaphors to produce a representation, for it is natural to man to be pleased with representations. But sacred doctrine makes use of metaphors as both necessary and useful.

Reply Obj. 2. The ray of divine revelation is not extinguished by the sensible imagery wherewith it is veiled, as Dionysius says; and its truth so far remains that it does not allow the minds of those to whom the revelation has been made to rest in the likenesses, but raises them to the knowledge of intelligible truths; and through those to whom the revelation has been made others also may receive instruction in these matters. Hence those things that are taught metaphorically in one part of Scripture are taught more openly in other parts. The very hiding of truth in figures is useful for the exercise of thoughtful minds, and as a defense against the ridicule of the unbelievers, according to the words, *Give not that which is holy to dogs* (Matt. 7:6).

Reply Obj. 3. As Dionysius says, it is more fitting that divine truths should be expounded under the figure of less noble than of nobler bodies; and this for three reasons. First, because thereby men's minds are the better freed from error. For then it is clear that these things are not literal descriptions of divine truths, which might have been open to doubt had they been expressed under the figure of nobler bodies, especially in the case of those who could think of nothing nobler than bodies. Second, because this is more befitting the knowledge of God that we have in this life. For what He is not is clearer to us than what He is. Therefore similitudes drawn from things farthest away from God form within us a truer estimate that God is above whatsoever we may say or think of Him. Third, because thereby divine truths are the better hidden from the unworthy.

Tenth Article

WHETHER IN HOLY SCRIPTURE A WORD MAY HAVE SEVERAL SENSES?

We proceed thus to the Tenth Article:—

Objection 1. It seems that in Holy Scripture a word cannot have several senses, historical or literal, allegorical, tropological or moral, and anagogical. For many different senses in one text produce confusion and deception and destroy all force of argument.

Hence no argument, but only fallacies, can be deduced from a multiplicity of propositions. But Holy Scripture ought to be able to state the truth without any fallacy. Therefore in it there cannot be several senses to a word.

Obj. 2. Further, Augustine says that *the Old Testament has a fourfold division: according to history, etiology, analogy, and allegory* [*On the Usefulness of Believing*, 3]. Now these four seem altogether different from the four divisions mentioned in the first objection. Therefore it does not seem fitting to explain the same word of Holy Scripture according to the four different senses mentioned above.

Obj. 3. Further, besides these senses, there is the parabolical, which is not one of these four.

On the contrary, Gregory the Great says: *Holy Scripture by the manner of its speech transcends every science, because in one and the same sentence, while it describes a fact, it reveals a mystery* [*Morals in the Book of Job*, 20.1].

I answer that, The author of Holy Scripture is God, in Whose power it is to signify His meaning, not by words only (as man also can do), but also by things themselves. So, whereas in every other science things are signified by words, this science has the property that the things signified by the words have themselves also a signification. Therefore that first signification whereby words signify things belongs to the first sense, the historical or literal. That signification whereby things signified by words have themselves also a signification is called the spiritual sense, which is based on the literal, and presupposes it. Now this spiritual sense has a threefold division. For as the Apostle says (Heb. 10:1) the Old Law is a figure of the New Law, and Dionysius says *the New Law itself is a figure of future glory* [*The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, 5.2]. Again, in the New Law, whatever our Head has done is a type of what we ought to do. Therefore, so far as the things of the Old Law signify the things of the New Law, there is the allegorical sense; so far as the things done in Christ, or so far as the things which signify Christ, are signs of what we ought to do, there is the moral sense. But so far as they signify what relates to eternal glory, there is the anagogical sense. Since the literal sense is that which the author intends, and since the author of Holy Scripture is God, Who by one act comprehends all things by His intellect, it is not unfitting, as Augustine says

[*Confessions*, 12.31], if, even according to the literal sense, one word in Holy Scripture should have several senses.

Reply Obj. 1. The multiplicity of these senses does not produce equivocation or any other kind of multiplicity, seeing that these senses are not multiplied because one word signifies several things, but because the things signified by the words can be themselves signs of other things. Thus in Holy Scripture no confusion results, for all the senses are founded on one—the literal—from which alone can any argument be drawn, and not from those intended allegorically, as Augustine says [*Letters*, 93.8]. Nevertheless, nothing of Holy Scripture perishes because of this, since nothing necessary to faith is contained under the spiritual sense which is not elsewhere put forward clearly by the Scripture in its literal sense.

Reply Obj. 2. These three—history, etiology, analogy—are grouped under the literal sense. For it is called history, as Augustine expounds, whenever anything is simply related; it is called etiology when its cause is assigned, as when Our Lord gave the reason why Moses allowed the putting away of wives—namely, because of the hardness of men’s hearts (Matt. 19:8); it is called analogy whenever the truth of one text of Scripture is shown not to contradict the truth of another. Of these four, allegory alone stands for the three spiritual senses. Thus Hugh of St. Victor includes the anagogical under the allegorical sense, laying down three senses only—the historical, the allegorical, and the tropological [*On the Sacraments*, 1.4].

Reply Obj. 3. The parabolical sense is contained in the literal, for by words things are signified properly and figuratively. Nor is the figure itself, but that which is figured, the literal sense. When Scripture speaks of God’s arm, the literal sense is not that God has such a member, but only what is signified by this member, namely, operative power. Hence it is plain that nothing false can ever underlie the literal sense of Holy Scripture.

Scripture

C. S. Lewis

C. S. Lewis (1898-1963), a professor of English literature at Oxford and Cambridge Universities, was the most widely read, and arguably the most influential, Christian writer of the twentieth century. What follows is Chapter XI of his *Reflections on the Psalms*.

If even pagan utterances can carry a second meaning, not quite accidentally but because they have a sort of right to it, we shall expect the Scriptures to do this more momentously and more often. We have two grounds for doing so if we are Christians.

1. For us these writings are “holy”, or “inspired”, or, as St. Paul says, “the Oracles of God”. But this has been understood in more than one way, and I must try to explain how I understand it, at least so far as the Old Testament is concerned. I have been suspected of being what is called a Fundamentalist. That is because I never regard any narrative as unhistorical simply on the ground that it includes the miraculous. Some people find the miraculous so hard to believe that they cannot imagine any reason for my acceptance of it other than a prior belief that every sentence of the Old Testament has historical or scientific truth. But this I do not hold, any more than St. Jerome did when he said that Moses described Creation “after the manner of a popular poet” (as we should say, mythically) or than Calvin did when he doubted whether the story of Job were history or fiction. The real reason why I can accept as historical a story in which a miracle occurs is that I have never found any philosophical grounds for the universal negative proposition that miracles do not happen. I have to decide on quite other grounds (if I decide at all) whether a given narrative is historical or not. The Book of Job appears to me unhistorical because it begins with a man quite unconnected with all history or even legend, with no genealogy, living in a country of which the Bible elsewhere has hardly anything to say; because, in fact, the author quite obviously writes as a story-teller not as a chronicler.

I have therefore no difficulty in accepting, say, the view of those scholars who tell us that the account of Creation in Genesis is derived from earlier Semitic stories which

were Pagan and mythical. We must of course be quite clear what “derived from” means. Stories do not reproduce their species like mice. They are told by men. Each re-teller either repeats exactly what his predecessor had told him or else changes it. He may change it unknowingly or deliberately. If he changes it deliberately, his invention, his sense of form, his ethics, his ideas of what is fit, or edifying, or merely interesting, all come in. If unknowingly, then his unconscious (which is so largely responsible for our forgettings) has been at work. Thus at every step in what is called—a little misleadingly—the “evolution” of a story, a man, all he is and all his attitudes, are involved. And no good work is done anywhere without aid from the Father of Lights. When a series of such re-tellings turns a creation story which at first had almost no religious or metaphysical significance into a story which achieves the idea of true Creation and of a transcendent Creator (as Genesis does), then nothing will make me believe that some of the re-tellers, or some one of them, has not been guided by God.

Thus something originally merely natural—the kind of myth that is found among most nations—will have been raised by God above itself, qualified by Him and compelled by Him to serve purposes which of itself it would not have served. Generalizing this, I take it that the whole Old Testament consists of the same sort of material as any other literature—chronicle (some of it obviously pretty accurate), poems, moral and political diatribes, romances, and what not; but all taken into the service of God’s word. Not all, I suppose, in the same way. There are prophets who write with the clearest awareness that Divine compulsion is upon them. There are chroniclers whose intention may have been merely to record. There are poets like those in the Song of Songs who probably never dreamed of any but a secular and natural purpose in what they composed. There is (and it is no less important) the work first of the Jewish and then of the Christian Church in preserving and canonizing just these books. There is the work of redactors and editors in modifying them. On all of these I suppose a Divine pressure; of which not by any means all need have been conscious.

The human qualities of the raw materials show through. Naïvety, error, contradiction, even (as in the cursing Psalms) wickedness are not removed. The total result is not “the Word of God” in the sense that every passage, in itself, gives impeccable science or history. It carries the Word of God; and we (under grace, with

attention to tradition and to interpreters wiser than ourselves, and with the use of such intelligence and learning as we may have) receive that word from it not by using it as an encyclopedia or an encyclical but by steeping ourselves in its tone or temper and so learning its overall message.

To a human mind this working-up (in a sense imperfectly), this sublimation (incomplete) of human material, seems, no doubt, an untidy and leaky vehicle. We might have expected, we may think we should have preferred, an unrefracted light giving us ultimate truth in systematic form—something we could have tabulated and memorized and relied on like the multiplication table. One can respect, and at moments envy, both the Fundamentalist's view of the Bible and the Roman Catholic's view of the Church. But there is one argument which we should beware of using for either position: God must have done what is best, this is best, therefore God has done this. For we are mortals and do not know what is best for us, and it is dangerous to prescribe what God must have done—especially when we cannot, for the life of us, see that He has after all done it.

We may observe that the teaching of Our Lord Himself, in which there is no imperfection, is not given us in that cut-and-dried, fool-proof, systematic fashion we might have expected or desired. He wrote no book. We have only reported sayings, most of them uttered in answer to questions, shaped in some degree by their context. And when we have collected them all we cannot reduce them to a system. He preaches but He does not lecture. He uses paradox, proverb, exaggeration, parable, irony; even (I mean no irreverence) the "wisecrack". He utters maxims which, like popular proverbs, if rigorously taken, may seem to contradict one another. His teaching therefore cannot be grasped by the intellect alone, cannot be "got up" as if it were a "subject". If we try to do that with it, we shall find Him the most elusive of teachers. He hardly ever gave a straight answer to a straight question. He will not be, in the way we want, "pinned down". The attempt is (again, I mean no irreverence) like trying to bottle a sunbeam.

Descending lower, we find a somewhat similar difficulty with St. Paul. I cannot be the only reader who has wondered why God, having given him so many gifts, withheld from him (what would to us seem so necessary for the first Christian theologian) that of lucidity and orderly exposition.

Thus on three levels, in appropriate degrees, we meet the same refusal of what we might have thought best for us—in the Word Himself, in the Apostle of the Gentiles, in Scripture as a whole. Since this is what God has done, this, we must conclude, was best. It may be that what we should have liked would have been fatal to us if granted. It may be indispensable that Our Lord's teaching, by that elusiveness (to our systematizing intellect), should demand a response from the whole man, should make it so clear that there is no question of learning a subject but of steeping ourselves in a Personality, acquiring a new outlook and temper, breathing a new atmosphere, suffering Him, in His own way, to rebuild in us the defaced image of Himself. So in St. Paul. Perhaps the sort of works I should wish him to have written would have been useless. The crabbedness, the appearance of inconsequence and even of sophistry, the turbulent mixture of petty detail, personal complaint, practical advice, and lyrical rapture, finally let through what matters more than ideas—a whole Christian life in operation—better say, Christ Himself operating in a man's life. And in the same way, the value of the Old Testament may be dependent on what seems its imperfection. It may repel one use in order that we may be forced to use it in another way—to find the Word in it, not without repeated and leisurely reading nor without discriminations made by our conscience and our critical faculties, to re-live, while we read, the whole Jewish experience of God's gradual and graded self-revelation, to feel the very contentions between the Word and the human material through which it works. For here again, it is our total response that has to be elicited.

Certainly it seems to me that from having had to reach what is really the Voice of God in the cursing Psalms through all the horrible distortions of the human medium, I have gained something I might not have gained from a flawless, ethical exposition. The shadows have indicated (at least to my heart) something more about the light. Nor would I (now) willingly spare from my Bible something in itself so anti-religious as the nihilism of Ecclesiastes. We get there a clear, cold picture of man's life without God. That statement is itself part of God's word. We need to have heard it. Even to have assimilated Ecclesiastes and no other book in the Bible would be to have advanced further towards truth than some men do.

But of course these conjectures as to why God does what He does are probably of no more value than my dog's ideas of what I am up to when I sit and read. But though we

can only guess the reasons, we can at least observe the consistency, of His ways. We read in Genesis (2:7) that God formed man of the dust and breathed life into him. For all the first writer knew of it, this passage might merely illustrate the survival, even in a truly creational story, of the Pagan inability to conceive true Creation, the savage, pictorial tendency to imagine God making things “out of” something as the potter or the carpenter does. Nevertheless, whether by lucky accident or (as I think) by God’s guidance, it embodies a profound principle. For on any view man is in one sense clearly made “out of” something else. He is an animal; but an animal called to be, or raised to be, or (if you like) doomed to be, something more than an animal. On the ordinary biological view (what difficulties I have about evolution are not religious) one of the primates is changed so that he becomes man; but he remains still a primate and an animal. He is taken up into a new life without relinquishing the old. In the same way, all organic life takes up and uses processes merely chemical. But we can trace the principle higher as well as lower. For we are taught that the Incarnation itself proceeded “not by the conversion of the god-head into flesh, but by taking of [the] manhood into God”; in it human life becomes the vehicle of Divine life. If the Scriptures proceed not by conversion of God’s word into a literature but by taking up of a literature to be the vehicle of God’s word, this is not anomalous.

Of course, on almost all levels, that method seems to us precarious or, as I have said, leaky. None of these up-gradings is, as we should have wished, self-evident. Because the lower nature, in being taken up and loaded with a new burden and advanced to a new privilege, remains, and is not annihilated, it will always be possible to ignore the up-grading and see nothing but the lower. Thus men can read the life of Our Lord (because it is a human life) as nothing but a human life. Many, perhaps most, modern philosophies read human life merely as an animal life of unusual complexity. The Cartesians read animal life as mechanism. Just in the same way Scripture can be read as merely human literature. No new discovery, no new method, will ever give a final victory to either interpretation. For what is required, on all these levels alike, is not merely knowledge but a certain insight; getting the focus right. Those who can see in each of these instances only the lower will always be plausible. One who contended that a poem was nothing but black marks on white paper would be unanswerable if he addressed an

audience who couldn't read. Look at it through microscopes, analyze the printer's ink and the paper, study it (in that way) as long as you like; you will never find something over and above all the products of analysis whereof you can say "This is the poem". Those who can read, however, will continue to say the poem exists.

If the Old Testament is a literature thus "taken up", made the vehicle of what is more than human, we can of course set no limit to the weight or multiplicity of meanings which may have been laid upon it. If any writer may say more than he knows and mean more than he meant, then these writers will be especially likely to do so. And not by accident.

2. The second reason for accepting the Old Testament in this way can be put more simply and is of course far more compulsive. We are committed to it in principle by Our Lord Himself. On that famous journey to Emmaus He found fault with the two disciples for not believing what the prophets had said. They ought to have known from their Bibles that the Anointed One, when He came, would enter his glory through suffering. He then explained, from "Moses" (*i.e.*, the Pentateuch) down, all the places in the Old Testament "concerning Himself" (Luke 24:25-27). He clearly identified Himself with a figure often mentioned in the Scriptures; appropriated to Himself many passages where a modern scholar might see no such reference. In the predictions of His Own Passion which He had previously made to the disciples. He was obviously doing the same thing. He accepted—indeed He claimed to be—the second meaning of Scripture.

We do not know—or anyway I do not know—what all these passages were. We can be pretty sure about one of them. The Ethiopian eunuch who met Philip (Acts 8:27-38) was reading Isaiah 53. He did not know whether in that passage the prophet was talking about himself or about someone else. Philip, in answering his question, "preached unto him Jesus". The answer, in fact, was "Isaiah is speaking of Jesus". We need have no doubt that Philip's authority for this interpretation was Our Lord. (Our ancestors would have thought that Isaiah consciously foresaw the sufferings of Christ as people see the future in the sort of dreams recorded by Mr. Dunne. Modern scholars would say that, on the conscious level, he was referring to Israel itself, the whole nation personified. I do not see that it matters which view we take.) We can, again, be pretty sure, from the words on the cross (Mark 15:34), that Our Lord identified Himself with the sufferer in Psalm 22.

Or when He asked (Mark 12:35, 36) how Christ could be both David's son and David's lord, He clearly identified Christ, and therefore Himself, with the "my Lord" of Psalm 110—was in fact hinting at the mystery of the Incarnation by pointing out a difficulty which only it could solve. In Matthew 4:6, the words of Psalm 91:11, 12, "He shall give his angels charge over thee . . . that thou hurt not thy foot against a stone," are applied to Him, and we may be sure the application was His own since only He could be the source of the temptation-story. In Mark 12:10, He implicitly appropriates to Himself the words of Psalm 118:22 about the stone which the builders rejected. "Thou shalt not leave my soul in hell, neither shalt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption" (16:11) is treated as a prophecy of His Resurrection in Acts 2:27, and was doubtless so taken by Himself, since we find it so taken in the earliest Christian tradition—that is, by people likely to be closer both to the spirit and to the letter of His words than any scholarship (I do not say, "any sanctity") will bring a modern. Yet it is, perhaps, idle to speak here of spirit and letter. There is almost no "letter" in the words of Jesus. Taken by a literalist, He will always prove the most elusive of teachers. Systems cannot keep up with that darting illumination. No net less wide than a man's whole heart, nor less fine of mesh than love, will hold the sacred Fish.

The Supreme Godhead

Saint Dionysius the Areopagite

Dionysius the Areopagite, dated c. 500 by many scholars but traditionally held to have been a disciple of Saint Paul (see Acts 17:34), was the greatest of all Christian masters of apophatic, or “negative”, theology. This selection is taken from his work *On the Divine Names*, Chapter 1.

What is the purpose of the discourse, and what the tradition concerning the Divine Names.

1. Now, Blessed Timothy, the *Outlines of Divinity* being ended, I will proceed, so far as in me lies, to an Exposition of the Divine Names. And here also let us set before our minds the scriptural rule that in speaking about God we should declare the Truth, not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the power which the Spirit (2 Cor 2:4) stirred up in the Sacred Writers, whereby, in a manner surpassing speech and knowledge, we embrace those truths which, in like manner, surpass them, in that Union which exceeds our faculty, and exercise of discursive, and of intuitive reason. We must not then dare to speak, or indeed to form any conception, of the hidden super-essential Godhead, except those things that are revealed to us from the Holy Scriptures. For a super-essential understanding of It is proper to Unknowing, which lieth in the Super-Essence thereof surpassing Discourse, Intuition, and Being; acknowledging which truth let us lift up our eyes towards the steep height, so far as the effluent light of the Divine Scriptures grants its aid, and, as we strive to ascend unto those Supernal Rays, let us gird ourselves for the task with holiness and the reverent fear of God. For, if we may safely trust the wise and infallible Scriptures, Divine things are revealed unto each created spirit in proportion to its powers, and in this measure is perception granted through the workings of the Divine goodness, the which in just care for our preservation divinely tempereth unto finite measure the infinitude of things which pass man’s understanding. For even as things which are intellectually discerned cannot be comprehended or perceived by means of those things which belong to the senses, nor simple and imageless things by means of types and images, nor the formless and intangible essence of

unembodied things by means of those which have bodily form, by the same law of truth the boundless Super-Essence surpasses Essences, the Super-Intellectual Unity surpasses Intelligences, the One which is beyond thought surpasses the apprehension of thought, and the Good which is beyond utterance surpasses the reach of words. Yea, it is a Unity which is the unifying Source of all unity and a Super-Essential Essence, a Mind beyond the reach of minds and a Word beyond utterance, eluding Discourse, Intuition, Name, and every kind of being. It is the Universal Cause of existence while Itself existing not, for It is beyond all Being and such that It alone could give, with proper understanding thereof, a revelation of Itself.

2. Now concerning this hidden Super-Essential Godhead we must not dare, as I have said, to speak, or even to form any conception Thereof, except those things which are divinely revealed to us from the Holy Scriptures. For as It hath lovingly taught us in the Scriptures concerning Itself (Ps. 145:3; Matt. 11:27; Rom. 11:33; 1 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 3:8), the understanding and contemplation of Its actual nature is not accessible to any being; for such knowledge is super-essentially exalted above them all. And many of the Sacred Writers thou wilt find who have declared that It is not only invisible and incomprehensible, but also unsearchable and past finding out, since there is no trace of any that have penetrated the hidden depths of Its infinitude. Not that the Good is wholly incommunicable to anything; nay, rather, while dwelling alone by Itself, and having there firmly fixed Its super-essential Ray, It lovingly reveals Itself by illuminations corresponding to each separate creature's powers, and thus draws upwards holy minds into such contemplation, participation, and resemblance of Itself as they can attain—even them that holily and duly strive thereafter and do not seek with impotent presumption the Mystery beyond that heavenly revelation which is so granted as to fit their powers, nor yet through their lower propensity slip down the steep descent, but with unwavering constancy press onwards toward the ray that casts its light upon them and, through the love responsive to these gracious illuminations, speed their temperate and holy flight on the wings of a godly reverence.

3. In obedience to these divine behests which guide all the holy dispositions of the heavenly hosts, we worship with reverent silence the unutterable Truths and, with the unfathomable and holy veneration of our mind, approach that Mystery of Godhead which

exceeds all Mind and Being. And we press upwards to those beams which in the Holy Scripture shine upon us; wherefrom we gain the light which leads us unto the Divine praises, being supernaturally enlightened by them and conformed unto that sacred hymnody, even so as to behold the Divine enlightenments, the which through them are given in such wise as fits our powers, and so as to praise the bounteous Origin of all holy illumination in accordance with that Doctrine, as concerning Itself, wherewith It hath instructed us in the Holy Scriptures. Thus do we learn that It is the Cause and Origin and Being and Life of all creation (Gen. 1). And It is unto them that fall away from It a Voice that doth recall them and a Power by which they rise; and to them that have stumbled into a corruption of the Divine image within them, It is a Power of Renewal and Reform; and It is a sacred Grounding to them that feel the shock of unholy assault, and a Security to them that stand: an upward Guidance to them that are being drawn unto It, and a Principle of Illumination to them that are being enlightened: a Principle of Perfection to them that are being perfected; a principle of Deity to them that are being deified; and of Simplicity to them that are being brought unto simplicity; and of Unity to them that are being brought unto unity. Yea, in a super-essential manner, above the category of origin, It is the Origin of all origin, and the good and bounteous Communication (so far as such may be) of hidden mysteries; and, in a word, It is the life of all things that live and the Being of all that are, the Origin and Cause of all life and being through Its bounty which both brings them into existence and maintains them.

4. These mysteries we learn from the Divine Scriptures, and thou wilt find that in well-nigh all the utterances of the Sacred Writers the Divine Names refer in a Symbolical Revelation to Its beneficent Emanations. Wherefore, in almost all consideration of Divine things we see the Supreme Godhead celebrated with holy praises as One and a Unity, through the simplicity and unity of Its supernatural indivisibility, from whence (as from a unifying power) we attain to unity, and through the supernal conjunction of our diverse and separate qualities are knit together each into a Godlike Oneness, and all together into a mutual Godly union. And It is called the Trinity because Its supernatural fecundity is revealed in a Threefold Personality, wherefrom all Fatherhood in heaven and on earth exists and draws Its name. And It is called the Universal Cause since all things came into being through Its bounty, whence all being springs; and It is called Wise and Fair because

all things which keep their own nature uncorrupted are full of all Divine harmony and holy Beauty; and especially It is called Benevolent because, in one of Its Persons, It verily and wholly shared in our human lot, calling unto Itself and uplifting the low estate of man, wherefrom, in an ineffable manner, the simple Being of Jesus assumed a compound state, and the Eternal hath taken a temporal existence, and He who supernaturally transcends all the order of all the natural world was born in our Human Nature without any change or confusion of His ultimate properties. And in all the other Divine enlightenments which the occult Tradition of our inspired teachers hath, by mystic Interpretation, accordant with the Scriptures, bestowed upon us, we also have been initiated: apprehending these things in the present life (according to our powers), through the sacred veils of that loving kindness which in the Scriptures and the Hierarchical Traditions, enwrappeth spiritual truths in terms drawn from the world of sense, and super-essential truths in terms drawn from Being, clothing with shapes and forms things which are shapeless and formless, and by a variety of separable symbols, fashioning manifold attributes of the imageless and supernatural Simplicity. But hereafter, when we are incorruptible and immortal and attain the blessed lot of being like unto Christ, then (as the Scripture saith), we shall be for ever with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:16), fulfilled with His visible Theophany in holy contemplations, the which shall shine about us with radiant beams of glory (even as once of old it shone around the Disciples at the Divine Transfiguration); and so shall we, with our mind made passionless and spiritual, participate in a spiritual illumination from Him, and in a union transcending our mental faculties, and there, amidst the blindingly blissful impulsions of His dazzling rays, we shall, in a diviner manner than at present, be like unto the heavenly Intelligences. For, as the infallible Scripture saith, we shall be equal to the angels and shall be the Sons of God, being Sons of the Resurrection (Luke 20:36). But at present we employ (so far as in us lies) appropriate symbols for things Divine; and then from these we press on upwards according to our powers to behold in simple unity the Truth perceived by spiritual contemplations, and leaving behind us all human notions of godlike things, we still the activities of our minds, and reach (so far as this may be) into the Super-Essential Ray, wherein all kinds of knowledge so have their pre-existent limits (in a transcendently inexpressible manner) that we cannot conceive nor utter It, nor in any wise contemplate

the same, seeing that It surpasseth all things, and wholly exceeds our knowledge, and super-essentially contains beforehand (all conjoined within Itself) the bounds of all natural sciences and forces (while yet Its force is not circumscribed by any), and so possesses, beyond the celestial Intelligences, Its firmly fixed abode. For if all the branches of knowledge belong to things that have being, and if their limits have reference to the existing world, then that which is beyond all Being must also be transcendent above all knowledge.

5. But if It is greater than all Reason and all knowledge, and hath Its firm abode altogether beyond Mind and Being, and circumscribes, compacts, embraces, and anticipates all things while Itself is altogether beyond the grasp of them all, and cannot be reached by any perception, imagination, conjecture, name, discourse, apprehension, or understanding, how then is our Discourse concerning the Divine Names to be accomplished, since we see that the Super-Essential Godhead is unutterable and nameless? Now, as we said when setting forth our *Outlines of Divinity*, it is impossible to describe or to conceive in Its ultimate Nature the One, the Unknowable, the Super-Essential, the Absolute Good (I mean the Trinal Unity of Persons possessing the same Deity and Goodness); nay, even the angelical communions of the heavenly Powers therewith, which we describe as either Impulsions or Derivations from the Unknowable and blinding Goodness, are themselves beyond utterance and knowledge, and belong to none but those angels who, in a manner beyond angelic knowledge, have been counted worthy thereof. And godlike Minds, angelically entering (according to their powers) unto such states of union and being deified and united, through the ceasing of their natural activities, unto the Light which surpasseth Deity, can find no more fitting method to celebrate its praises than to deny It every manner of Attribute. For by a true and supernatural illumination from their blessed union therewith, they learn that It is the Cause of all things and yet Itself is nothing, because It super-essentially transcends them all. Thus, as for the Super-Essence of the Supreme Godhead (if we would define the Transcendence of its Transcendent Goodness) it is not lawful to any lover of that Truth which is above all truth to celebrate It as Reason or Power or Mind or Life or Being, but rather as most utterly surpassing all condition, movement, life, imagination, conjecture, name, discourse, thought, conception, being, rest, dwelling, union, limit, infinity,

everything that exists. And yet since, as the Subsistence of goodness, It, by the very fact of Its existence, is the Cause of all things, in celebrating the bountiful Providence of the Supreme Godhead we must draw upon the whole creation. For It is both the central Force of all things, and also their final Purpose, and is Itself before them all, and they all subsist in It; and through the fact of Its existence the world is brought into being and maintained; and It is that which all things desire—those which have intuitive or discursive Reason seeking It through knowledge, the next rank of beings through perception, and the rest through vital movement or the property of mere existence belonging to their state. Conscious of this, the Sacred Writers celebrate It by every Name while yet they call It Nameless.

6. For instance, they call It Nameless when they say that the Supreme Godhead Itself, in one of the mystical visions whereby It was symbolically manifested, rebuked him who said: “What is thy name?” (Judges 8:18) and, as though bidding him not seek by any means of any Name to acquire a knowledge of God, made the answer: “Why askest thou thus after My Name seeing it is secret?” Now is not the secret Name precisely that which is above all names (Phil. 2:9; Eph. 1:21) and nameless, and is fixed beyond every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come? On the other hand, they attribute many names to It when, for instance, they speak of It as declaring: “I am that I am,” (Exod. 3:14) or “I am the Life,” (John 14:6) or “the Light,” (John 8:12) or “God,” (Gen. 28:13) or “the Truth,” (John 14:6) and when the Inspired Writers themselves celebrate the Universal Cause with many titles drawn from the whole created universe, such as “Good,” (Matt. 19:17) and “Fair,” (Ps. 27:4) and “Wise,” (Rom. 16:27) as “Beloved,” (Isa. 5:1) as “God of Gods” and “Lord of Lords” (Ps. 136:2, 3) and “Holy of Holies,” (Isa. 6:3) as “Eternal,” (Deut. 33:27) as “Existent” (Exod. 13:14) and as “Creator of Ages,” (Gen. 1:1-8) as “Giver of Life,” (Gen. 1:20; 2:7; Job 10:12; John 10:10) as “Wisdom,” (Prov. 8) as “Mind,” (1 Cor. 2:16) as “Word,” (John 1:1) as “Knower,” (Ps. 44:21) as “possessing beforehand all the treasures of knowledge,” (Col. 2:3) as “Power,” (Rev. 19:1) as “Ruler,” (Rev. 1:5) as “King of kings,” (Rev. 17:4) as “Ancient of Days,” (Dan. 7) and as “Him that is the same and whose years shall not fail,” (Ps. 102:25) as “Salvation,” (Exod. 15:2) as “Righteousness,” (Jer. 23:6) as “Sanctification,” (1 Cor. 1:30) as “Redemption,” (1 Cor. 1:30) as “Surpassing all things

in greatness,” (Isa. 40:15) and yet as being in “the still small breeze” (1 Kings 19:12). Moreover, they say that He dwells within our minds, and in our souls (John 14:17) and bodies (1 Cor. 6:19), and in heaven and in earth (Isa. 66:1), and that, while remaining Himself, He is at one and the same time within the world around it and above it (yea, above the sky and above existence); and they call Him a Sun (Ps. 84:11), a Star (Rev. 22:16), and a Fire (Deut. 4:24), and Water (Ps. 84:6), a Wind or Spirit (John 4:24; Acts 2:2), a Dew (Hosea 14:5), a Cloud (Exod. 13:21), an Archetypal Stone (Ps. 118:22), and a Rock (Ps. 31:2, 3), and All Creation (1 Cor. 15:28), Who yet (they declare) is no created thing.

7. Thus, then, the Universal and Transcendent Cause must both be nameless and also possess the names of all things in order that It may truly be a universal Dominion, the Center of creation on which all things depend, as on their Cause and Origin and Goal; and that, according to the Scriptures, It may be all in all, and may be truly called the Creator of the world, originating and perfecting and maintaining all things; their Defence and Dwelling, and the Attractive Force that draws them: and all this in one single, ceaseless, and transcendent act. For the Nameless Goodness is not only the cause of cohesion or life or perfection in such wise as to derive Its Name from this or that providential activity alone; nay, rather does It contain all things beforehand within Itself, after a simple and uncircumscribed manner through the perfect excellence of Its one and all-creative Providence, and thus we draw from the whole creation Its appropriate praises and Its Names.

8. Moreover, the sacred writers proclaim not only such titles as these (titles drawn from universal or from particular providences or providential activities), but sometimes they have gained their images from certain heavenly visions (which in the holy precincts or elsewhere have illuminated the Initiates or the Prophets), and, ascribing to the super-luminous nameless Goodness titles drawn from all manner of acts and functions, have clothed It in human (fiery or amber) shapes (Ezek. 1:26, 27) or forms, and have spoken of Its Eyes (Ps. 10:5), and Ears (James 5:4), and Hair (Dan. 7:9), and Face (Ps. 33:17), and Hands (Job 10:8), and Wings (Ps. 91:4), and Feathers, and Arms (Deut. 33:27), and Back Parts (Exod. 33:23), and Feet (Exod. 24:10); and fashioned such mystical conceptions as its Crown (Rev. 14:14), and Throne (Ezek. 1:26, 27), and Cup (Ps. 75:8), and Mixing

Bowl (Prov. 9:5), etc., concerning which things we will attempt to speak when we treat of Symbolical Divinity. At present, collecting from the Scriptures what concerns the matter in hand, and employing as our canon the rule we have described, and guiding our search thereby, let us proceed to an exposition of God's Intelligible Names; and as the Hierarchical Law directs us in all study of Divinity, let us approach these godlike contemplations (for such indeed they are) with our hearts predisposed unto the vision of God, and let us bring holy ears to the exposition of God's holy Names, implanting holy Truths in holy instruments according to the Divine command, and withholding these things from the mockery and laughter of the uninitiated, or, rather, seeking to redeem those wicked men (if any such there be) from their enmity towards God. Thou, therefore, O good Timothy, must guard these truths according to the holy Ordinance, nor must thou utter or divulge the heavenly mysteries unto the uninitiated. And for myself I pray God grant me worthily to declare the beneficent and manifold Names of the Unutterable and Nameless Godhead, and that He do not take away the word of Truth out of my mouth.

The Descent of the Gods

C. S. Lewis

The following is taken from *That Hideous Strength* (Chapter 15), the third volume of Lewis's "space trilogy". It is quite impossible to summarize the whole story here. Suffice it to say that, like several of the early Church Fathers, Lewis takes the pagan "gods" to be on roughly the same level as Christian angels. Here he imagines what it might be like to encounter these beings firsthand: first Mercury, then Venus, then Mars, then Saturn, and finally Jupiter or Jove. The point of the selection is simple: if this is what small "g" gods (or angels) are like, how inconceivably great must be their Creator!

The whole house at St. Anne's was empty, but for two rooms. In the kitchen, drawn a little closer than usual about the fire and with the shutters closed, sat Dimble and MacPhee and Denniston and the women. Removed from them by many a long vacancy of stair and passage, the Pendragon and Merlin were together in the Blue Room.

If anyone had gone up the stairs and on to the lobby outside the Blue Room, he would have found something other than fear that barred his way—an almost physical resistance. If he had succeeded in forcing his way forward against it, he would have come into a region of tingling sounds that were clearly not voices though they had articulation; and if the passage were quite dark he would probably have seen a faint light, not like fire or moon, under the Director's door. I do not think he could have reached the door itself unbidden. Already the whole house would have seemed to him to be tilting and plunging like a ship in a Bay of Biscay gale. He would have been horribly compelled to feel this Earth not as the bottom of the universe but as a ball spinning, and rolling onwards, both at delirious speed, and not through emptiness but through some densely inhabited and intricately structured medium. He would have known sensuously, until his outraged senses forsook him, that the visitants in that room were in it, not because they were at rest but because they glanced and wheeled through the packed reality of Heaven (which men call empty space), to keep their beams upon this spot of the moving Earth's hide.

The druid and Ransom had begun to wait for these visitors soon after sundown. Ransom was on his sofa. Merlin sat beside him, his hands clasped, his body a little bent forward. Sometimes a drop of sweat trickled coldly down his grey cheek. He had at first

addressed himself to kneel but Ransom forbade him. "See thou do it not!" he had said. "Have you forgotten that they are our fellow servants?" The windows were uncurtained and all the light that there was in the room came thence: frosty red when they began their waiting, but later lit with stars.

Long before anything happened in the Blue Room the party in the kitchen had made their ten o'clock tea. It was while they sat drinking it that the change occurred. Up till now they had instinctively been talking in subdued voices, as children talk in a room where their elders are busied about some august incomprehensible matter, a funeral, or the reading of a will. Now of a sudden they all began talking loudly at once, each, not contentiously but delightedly, interrupting the others. A stranger coming into the kitchen would have thought they were drunk, not soddenly but gaily drunk: would have seen heads bent close together, eyes dancing, an excited wealth of gesture. What they said, none of the party could ever afterwards remember. Dimble maintained that they had been chiefly engaged in making puns. MacPhee denied that he had ever, even that night, made a pun, but all agreed that they had been extraordinarily witty. If not plays upon words, yet certainly, plays upon thoughts, paradoxes, fancies, anecdotes, theories laughingly advanced yet (on consideration) well worth taking seriously, had flowed from them and over them with dazzling prodigality. Even Ivy forgot her great sorrow. Mother Dimble always remembered Denniston and her husband as they had stood, one on each side of the fireplace, in a gay intellectual duel, each capping the other, each rising above the other, up and up, like birds or aeroplanes in combat. If only one could have remembered what they said! For never in her life had she heard such talk—such eloquence, such melody (song could have added nothing to it), such toppling structures of double meaning, such skyrocketts of metaphor and allusion.

A moment after that and they were all silent. Calm fell, as suddenly as when one goes out of the wind behind a wall. They sat staring upon one another, tired and a little self-conscious.

Upstairs this first change had a different operation. There came an instant at which both men braced themselves. Ransom gripped the side of his sofa; Merlin grasped his own knees and set his teeth. A rod of coloured light, whose colour no man can name or picture, darted between them: no more to see than that, but seeing was the least part of

their experience. Quick agitation seized them: a kind of boiling and bubbling in mind and heart which shook their bodies also. It went to a rhythm of such fierce speed that they feared their sanity must be shaken into a thousand fragments. And then it seemed that this had actually happened. But it did not matter: for all the fragments—needle-pointed desires, brisk merriments, lynx-eyed thoughts—went rolling to and fro like glittering drops and reunited themselves. It was well that both men had some knowledge of poetry. The doubling, splitting, and recombining of thoughts which now went on in them would have been unendurable for one whom that art had not already instructed in the counterpoint of the mind, the mastery of doubled and trebled vision. For Ransom, whose study had been for many years in the realm of words, it was heavenly pleasure. He found himself sitting within the very heart of language, in the white-hot furnace of essential speech. All fact was broken, splashed into cataracts, caught, turned inside out, kneaded, slain, and reborn as meaning. For the lord of Meaning himself, the herald, the messenger, the slayer of Argus, was with them: the angel that spins nearest the sun. Viritribia, whom men call Mercury and Thoth.

Down in the kitchen drowsiness stole over them after the orgy of speaking had come to an end. Jane, having nearly fallen asleep, was startled by her book falling from her hand, and looked about her. How warm it was . . . how comfortable and familiar. She had always liked wood fires but tonight the smell of the logs seemed more than ordinarily sweet. She began to think it was sweeter than it could possibly be, that a smell of burning cedar or of incense pervaded the room. It thickened. Fragrant names hovered in her mind—nard and cassia's balmy smells and all Arabia breathing from a box; even something more subtly sweet, perhaps maddening—why not forbidden?—but she knew it was commanded. She was too drowsy to think deeply how this could be. The Dimbles were talking together but in so low a voice that others could not hear. Their faces appeared to her transfigured. She could no longer see that they were old—only mature, like ripe fields in August, serene and golden with the tranquility of fulfilled desire. On her other side, Arthur said something in Camilla's ear. There too . . . but as the warmth and sweetness of that rich air now fully mastered her brain, she could hardly bear to look on them: not through envy (that thought was far away), but because a sort of brightness flowed from them that dazzled her, as if the god and goddess in them burned through their bodies and

through their clothes and shone before her in a young double-natured nakedness of rose-red spirit that overcame her. And all about them danced (as she half saw), not the gross and ridiculous dwarfs which she had seen that afternoon, but grave and ardent spirits, bright winged, their boyish shapes smooth and slender like ivory rods.

In the Blue Room also Ransom and Merlin felt about this time that the temperature had risen. The windows, they did not see how or when, had swung open; at their opening the temperature did not drop, for it was from without that the warmth came. Through the bare branches, across the ground which was once more stiffening with frost, a summer breeze was blowing into the room, but the breeze of such a summer as England never has. Laden like heavy barges that glide nearly gunwale under, laden so heavily you would have thought it could not move, laden with ponderous fragrance of night-scented flowers, sticky gums, groves that drop odours, and with cool savour of midnight fruit, it stirred the curtains, it lifted a letter that lay on the table, it lifted the hair which had a moment before been plastered on Merlin's forehead. The room was rocking. They were afloat. A soft tingling and shivering as of foam and breaking bubbles ran over their flesh. Tears ran down Ransom's cheeks. He alone knew from what seas and what islands that breeze blew. Merlin did not; but in him also the inconsolable wound with which man is born waked and ached at this touching. Low syllables of prehistoric Celtic self-pity murmured from his lips. These yearnings and fondlings were however only the forerunners of the goddess. As the whole of her virtue seized, focused, and held that spot of the rolling Earth in her long beam, something harder, shriller, more perilously ecstatic, came out of the centre of all the softness. Both the humans trembled—Merlin because he did not know what was coming, Ransom because he knew. And now it came. It was fiery, sharp, bright and ruthless, ready to kill, ready to die, outspeeding light: it was Charity, not as mortals imagine it, not even as it has been humanized for them since the Incarnation of the Word, but the translunary virtue, fallen upon them direct from the Third Heaven, unmitigated. They were blinded, scorched, deafened. They thought it would burn their bones. They could not bear that it should continue. They could not bear that it should cease. So Perelandra, triumphant among planets, whom men call Venus, came and was with them in the room.

Down in the kitchen MacPhee sharply drew back his chair so that it grated on the tiled floor like a pencil squeaking on a slate. “Man!” he exclaimed, “it’s a shame for us to be sitting here looking at the fire. If the Director hadn’t got a game leg himself, I’ll bet you he’d have found some other way for us to go to work.” Camilla’s eyes flashed towards him. “Go on!” she said, “go on!” “What do you mean MacPhee?” said Dimble. “He means fighting,” said Camilla. “They’d be too many for us, I’m afraid,” said Arthur Denniston. “Maybe that!” said MacPhee. “But maybe they’ll be too many for us this way too. But it would be grand to have one go at them before the end. To tell you the truth I sometimes feel I don’t greatly care what happens. But I wouldn’t be easy in my grave if I knew they’d won and I’d never had my hands on them. I’d like to be able to say as an old sergeant said to me in the first war, about a bit of a raid we did near Monchy. Our fellows did it all with the butt end, you know. “Sir,” says he, “did ever you hear anything like the way their heads cracked.” “I think that’s disgusting,” said Mother Dimble. “That part is, I suppose,” said Camilla. “But ... oh if one could have a charge in the old style. I don’t mind anything once I’m on a horse.” “I don’t understand it,” said Dimble. “I’m not like you, MacPhee. I’m not brave. But I was just thinking as you spoke that I don’t feel afraid of being killed and hurt as I used to do. Not tonight.” “We may be, I suppose,” said Jane. “As long as we’re all together,” said Mother Dimble. “It might be ... no, I don’t mean anything heroic ... it might be a *nice* way to die.” And suddenly all their faces and voices were changed. They were laughing again, but it was a different kind of laughter. Their love for one another became intense. Each, looking on all the rest, thought, “I’m lucky to be here. I could die with these.” But MacPhee was humming to himself:

“King William said, Be not dismayed, for the loss of one commander.”

Upstairs it was, at first, much the same. Merlin saw in memory the wintry grass of Badon Hill, the long banner of the Virgin fluttering above the heavy British-Roman cataphracts, the yellow-haired barbarians. He heard the snap of the bows, the *click-click* of steel points in wooden shields, the cheers, the howling, and the ring of struck mail. He remembered also the evening, fires twinkling along the hill, frost making the gashes smart, starlight on a pool fouled with blood, eagles crowding together in the pale sky. And Ransom, it may be, remembered his long struggle in the caves of Perelandra. But all this passed. Something tonic and lusty and cheerily cold, like a sea breeze, was coming

over them. There was no fear anywhere: the blood inside them flowed as if to a marching-song. They felt themselves taking their places in the ordered rhythm of the universe, side by side with punctual seasons and patterned atoms and the obeying Seraphim. Under the immense weight of their obedience their wills stood up straight and untiring like caryatids. Eased of all fickleness and all protestings they stood: gay, light, nimble, and alert. They had outlived all anxieties; care was a word without meaning. To live meant to share in this processional pomp. Ransom knew, as a man knows when he touches iron, the clear, taut splendour of that celestial spirit which now flashed between them: vigilant Malacandra, captain of a cold orb, whom men call Mars and Mavors, and Tyr who put his hand in the wolf-mouth. Ransom greeted his guests in the tongue of Heaven. But he warned Merlin that now the time was coming when he must play the man. The three gods who had already met in the Blue Room were less unlike humanity than the two whom they still awaited. In Viritribia and Venus and Malacandra were represented those two of the Seven Genders which bear a certain analogy to the biological sexes and can therefore be in some measure understood by men. It would not be so with those who were now preparing to descend. These also doubtless had their genders, but we have no clue to them. These would be mightier energies: ancient eldils, steersman of giant worlds which have never from the beginning been subdued to the sweet humiliations of organic life.

“Stir the fire, Denniston, for any sake. That’s a cold night,” said MacPhee. “It must be cold outside,” said Dimble. All thought of that: of stiff grass, hen-roosts, dark places in the middle of woods, graves. Then of the sun’s dying, the Earth gripped, suffocated, in airless cold, the black sky lit only with stars. And then, not even stars: the heat-death of the universe, utter and final blackness of nonentity from which Nature knows no return. Another life? “Possibly,” thought MacPhee. “I believe,” thought Denniston. But the old life gone, all its times, all its hours and days, gone. Can even Omnipotence bring back? Where do years go, and why? Man never would understand it. The misgiving deepened. Perhaps there was nothing to be understood.

Saturn, whose name in the heavens is Lurga, stood in the Blue Room. His spirit lay upon the house, or even on the whole Earth, with a cold pressure such as might flatten the very orb of Tellus to a wafer. Matched against the lead-like burden of his antiquity

the other gods themselves perhaps felt young and ephemeral. It was a mountain of centuries sloping up from the highest antiquity we can conceive, up and up like a mountain whose summit never comes into sight, not to eternity where the thought can rest, but into more and still more time, into freezing wastes and silence of unnameable numbers. It was also strong like a mountain; its age was no mere morass of time where imagination can sink in reverie, but a living, self-remembering duration which repelled lighter intelligences from its structure as granite flings back waves, itself unwithered and undecayed but able to wither any who approach it unadvised. Ransom and Merlin suffered a sensation of unendurable cold; and all that was strength in Lurga became sorrow as it entered them. Yet Lurga in that room was overmatched. Suddenly a greater spirit came—one whose influence tempered and almost transformed to his own quality the skill of leaping Mercury, the clearness of Mars, the subtler vibration of Venus, and even the numbing weight of Saturn.

In the kitchen his coming was felt. No one afterwards knew how it happened but somehow the kettle was put on, the hot toddy was brewed. Arthur—the only musician among them—was bidden to get out his fiddle. The chairs were pushed back, the floor cleared. They danced. What they danced no one could remember. It was some round dance, no modern shuffling: it involved beating the floor, clapping of hands, leaping high. And no one while it lasted thought himself or his fellows ridiculous. It may, in fact, have been some village measure, not ill-suited to the tiled kitchen: the spirit in which they danced it was not so. It seemed to each that the room was filled with kings and queens, that the wildness of their dance expressed heroic energy and its quieter movements had seized the very spirit behind all noble ceremonies.

Upstairs his mighty beam turned the Blue Room into a blaze of lights. Before the other angels a man might sink: before this he might die, but if he lived at all, he would laugh. If you had caught one breath of the air that came from him, you would have felt yourself taller than before. Though you were a cripple, your walk would have become stately: though a beggar, you would have worn your rags magnanimously. Kingship and power and festal pomp and courtesy shot from him as sparks fly from an anvil. The pealing of bells, the blowing of trumpets, the spreading out of banners, are means used on earth to make a faint symbol of his quality. It was like a long sunlit wave, creamy-crested

and arched with emerald, that comes on nine feet tall, with roaring and with terror and unquenchable laughter. It was like the first beginning of music in the halls of some King so high and at some festival so solemn that a tremor akin to fear runs through young hearts when they hear it. For this was great Glund-Oyarsa, King of Kings, through whom the joy of creation principally blows across these fields of Arbol, known to men in old times as Jove and under that name, by fatal but not inexplicable misprision, confused with his Maker—so little did they dream by how many degrees the stair even of created being rises above him.

At his coming there was holiday in the Blue Room. The two mortals, momentarily caught up into the *Gloria* which those five excellent Natures perpetually sing, forgot for a time the lower and more immediate purpose of their meeting. Then they proceeded to operation. Merlin received the power into him.

The Trinity

Saint Augustine

Augustine (354-430), Bishop of the North African city of Hippo and author of such classic works as *The City of God* and *Confessions*, was the most prolific and influential of the Western Church Fathers. This selection comes from his *On the Trinity*, Book Nine.

Chapter 1

We are indeed seeking a trinity, but not just any trinity at all, but that Trinity which is God, and the true, the supreme, and the only God. Keep waiting, therefore, whoever you are, who hear these words. For we are still seeking, and no one rightly blames him for engaging in such a search, provided only that he remain firmly-rooted in the faith, while he seeks that which it is so difficult to know or to express.

But he who sees or teaches better, may quickly and justly find fault with him who speaks positively concerning it. 'Seek God,' he says, 'and your soul shall live' (see Ps. 68.33). And that no one might rashly rejoice, as though he had apprehended Him, he declared: 'Seek his face evermore' (Ps. 104.4). And the Apostle states: 'If anyone thinks that he knows anything, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, the same is known by him' (1 Cor. 8.2-3). He certainly did not express it in this way: 'He knew Him,' for that would be a dangerous presumption, but 'he is known by him.' In another place, too, when he had spoken as follows: 'But now you know God,' he immediately corrected himself: 'or rather you are known by God' (Gal. 4.9). And above all in that passage: 'Brethren,' he said, 'I do not consider that I myself have laid hold of this. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind, I strain forward to what is before. I press on in purpose towards the goal of God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus. Let us then, as many as are perfect, be of this mind' (see Phil. 3.13-15).

He says that perfection in this life is to forget what is behind, and to press forward in purpose towards the goal that lies before us. For the safest purpose for him who seeks is to continue seeking until he has laid hold of that towards which we tend and for which we are striving. But the right purpose is that which proceeds from faith. For a certain faith

is in some way the beginning of knowledge, but a certain knowledge will only be perfected after this life when we shall see face to face (1 Cor. 13.12). Let us then be of this mind: so as to know that the inclination to seek the truth is safer than the presumption which regards unknown things as known. Let us, therefore, so seek as if we were about to find, and so find as if we were about to seek. For 'when a man has done, then he begins' (Ecclus. 18.6).

Let us not doubt with unbelief about things to be believed, and let us affirm without rashness about things to be understood; in the former case, authority is to be upheld; in the latter, the truth is to be sought. With regard to the question at hand, therefore, let us believe that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one God, the Creator, and the ruler of the whole creature; that the Father is not the Son, nor is the Holy Spirit the Father or the Son, but that there is a trinity of inter-related persons, and the unity of an equal substance.

But let us seek to understand this, imploring the help of Him whom we wish to understand; and in the measure that He shall grant, desiring to explain what we understand, with such pious care and solicitude, that even if we should say one thing for another, we may yet say nothing that is unworthy of Him. For example, if we say something of the Father, which in the strict sense is not suitable to the Father, that it may at least be suitable to the Son, or to the Holy Spirit, or to the Trinity itself; and if we say anything of the Son, which does not properly belong to the Son, that it may at least belong to the Father, or to the Holy Spirit, or to the Trinity; and likewise if we say anything about the Holy Spirit, which may not be fittingly called a property of His, that it may, nevertheless, not be alien from the Father, or the Son, or from the one God, the Trinity itself.

We are now eager to see whether that most excellent love is proper to the Holy Spirit, and if it is not so, whether the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Trinity itself is love, since we cannot contradict the most certain faith and the most weighty authority of Scripture which says: 'God is love' (1 John 4.16). Nevertheless, we should not be guilty of the sacrilegious error of attributing to the Trinity that which does not belong to the Creator, but rather to the creature, or is imagined by mere empty thought.

Chapter 2

Since this is the case, let us fix our attention on these three things which we seem to have discovered. We are not yet speaking of heavenly things, not yet of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but of this imperfect image, which is an image nevertheless, that is, of man. For the weakness of our mind perhaps gazes upon the image more familiarly and more easily.

Behold, when I, who conduct this inquiry, love something, then three things are found: I, what I love, and the love itself. For I do not love love, except I love a lover, for there is no love where nothing is loved. There are, therefore, three: the lover, the beloved, and the love. But what if I love only myself? In that case will there be only two, what I love and the love? For the lover and the beloved are one and the same when one loves himself, as to love and to be loved are in like manner one and the same when anyone loves himself. For the same thing is said twice when it is said, he loves himself, and he is loved by himself. For here to love is not one thing, and to be loved another thing, just as the lover is not one person and the beloved another person. But yet even so, the love and the beloved are two. For there is no love when anyone loves himself, except when the love itself is loved. But it is one thing to love oneself and another thing to love one's love. For love is not loved unless as already loving something; for where nothing is loved, there is no love. Hence, when anyone loves himself there are two: the love and what is loved, for here the lover and the beloved are one.

It does not seem to follow, therefore, that wherever there is love, three things must be understood. For let us not consider in this inquiry the many other things of which man is composed; and that we may clearly discover what we are now seeking, insofar as we can discover anything at all in these questions, let us confine the discussion to the mind alone.

When the mind, then, loves itself it makes known two things: the mind and the love. But what does to love oneself mean, other than to desire to help oneself to enjoy oneself. And when anyone wishes himself to be just as much as he is, then the will is equal to the mind, and the love is equal to the lover. And if love is a substance, it is certainly not body but spirit; the mind is not body but spirit. Yet love and mind are not two spirits, but one spirit; not two essences, but one essence; and still the two are one, the

lover and the love, or, so to say, the beloved and the love. And these two are truly said to be mutually related. The lover is referred to the love and the love to the lover. For the lover loves with some love, and love is of someone who loves.

But mind and spirit are not spoken of relatively, but denote essence. For mind and spirit do not exist, therefore, because mind and spirit exist in some particular man. Even if we take away the body from that which is man, which he is called with the addition of the body, the mind and the spirit still remain; but if you take away the lover, there is no love; and if you take away the love, there is no lover. Insofar, therefore, as they are mutually related, they are two; but when they are spoken of in respect to themselves, each is spirit, and both together are one spirit; and each is mind and both together are one mind. Where, then, is the Trinity? Let us concentrate as much as we can, and call upon the everlasting light to enlighten our darkness, so that we may see the image of God in ourselves, insofar as we are permitted.

Chapter 3

The mind cannot love itself unless it also knows itself, for how can it love what it does not know? Or if anyone says that the mind by a general or special knowledge believes that it is such, as he knows from experience that others are, he is speaking in a very foolish manner. For whence does a mind know another mind if it does not know itself? For not as the eye of the body sees other eyes and does not see itself, so does the mind know other minds and does not know itself. For we see bodies through the eyes of the body, because we cannot refract the rays which shine through them and touch whatever we see, and reflect them back into the eyes themselves, except when we are looking into a mirror. But this is a subject that is discussed very subtly and very obscurely, until it can be clearly shown whether it is actually so, or whether it is not so.

But whatever may be the nature of the power by which we see through the eyes, we certainly do not see the power itself, whether it be rays or anything else, with the eyes, but we seek it in the mind; and if it is possible, we also comprehend it in the mind. As the mind itself, therefore, gathers the knowledge of corporeal things through the bodily senses, so it gains the knowledge of incorporeal things through itself, since it is incorporeal. For if it does not know itself, it does not love itself.

Chapter 4

But just as there are two things, the mind and its love, when it loves itself, so there are two things, the mind and its knowledge, when it knows itself. Therefore, the mind itself, its love, and its knowledge are a kind of trinity; these three are one, and when they are perfect they are equal. For if any one loves himself less than he is—if, for example, the mind of man loves itself as much as the body of man is to be loved, whereas the mind is more than the body—he is guilty of sin and his love is not perfect. Similarly, if he loves himself more than he is—if, for example, he loves himself as much as God is to be loved, whereas he is incomparably less than God—he also sins by excess and does not have a perfect love of himself. But he sins with greater perversity and malice when he loves the body as much as God is to be loved.

His knowledge, likewise, is not perfect if it is less than the object known, when this is fully knowable. But if it is greater, then the nature which knows is superior to that which is known, just as the knowledge of the body is greater than the body itself which is known by that knowledge. For knowledge is a kind of life in the understanding of one who knows; but the body is not life. And any life is greater than any body, not in bulk but in power. But when the mind knows itself, its knowledge does not surpass it, because itself knows and itself is known. When the mind, therefore, knows itself fully and nothing else with itself, then its knowledge is equal to it, because its knowledge is not from another nature when it knows itself. And when it perceives itself fully and nothing more, then its knowledge is neither less nor greater than itself. We have, therefore, rightly said that when these three are perfect, they are necessarily equal.

We are also reminded at the same time, if we can in any way visualize it, that these [knowledge and love] exist in the soul; they are, so to speak, so folded within it that, when unfolded, they are perceived to be numbered substantially, or, what is the same thing, essentially. They are not in the soul as in a subject, as color, or shape, or any other quality or quantity are in the body. For anything of this kind [i.e., an accident] does not extend beyond the subject in which it is. Thus the color or the shape of this body cannot be the color or the shape of another body. But the mind can also love something else besides itself by the same love by which it loves itself.

Similarly, the mind does not know itself alone, but also many other things. Therefore, love and knowledge are not in the mind as in a subject, but they are also there substantially as the mind itself is. For even though they are spoken of as mutually related, yet each is there in its own substance. Nor is the relationship that we predicate of them the same as that of color and a colored subject. For color is in a colored subject, but does not have its own proper substance in itself, for the colored body is the substance, but the color is in the substance; the relationship is rather that of two friends, who are also men, which are substances; since they are not said to be men relatively, but friends relatively.

Moreover, although the one who loves or knows is a substance, and love is a substance, and knowledge is a substance, but the lover and the love, or the knower and the knowledge, are spoken of in relation to each other as are friends; yet mind or spirit are not relative terms, as men are not; in spite of this, the lover and the love, and the knower and the knowledge, cannot be separated from each other as men can be who are friends. Although it seems that friends can also be separated from each other in body, but not in mind, inasmuch as they are friends; but it can happen that a friend begins to hate a friend, and thereby ceases to be a friend, while the other does not know this and still loves him.

But if the love by which the mind loves itself ceases to be, then the mind will also cease to love at the same time; likewise, if the knowledge by which the mind knows itself ceases to be, the mind will also cease to know at the same time. Just as the head of anything having a head is certainly a head, and they are spoken of in relation to each other, although they are also substances; for the head is a body, as well as that which has a head; and if there is no head, neither will there be that which has a head. But these can be separated from each other by a simple cutting off; those cannot.

Even if there are some bodies which cannot be separated or divided at all, yet unless they were composed of their own parts they would not be bodies. It is called a part, therefore, in relation to the whole, because every part is a part of some whole, and the whole is a whole by having all of its parts. But since the part as well as the whole is a body, they not only express a relationship, but also possess their own being as substances. Perhaps the mind, therefore, is a whole, and its parts are as it were the love by which it loves itself, and the knowledge by which it knows itself, and from these two parts that whole is composed. Or are there three equal parts which complete that one whole? But no

part embraces the whole of which it is a part; but when the mind knows itself as a whole, that is, knows itself perfectly, its knowledge extends through the whole of it; and when it loves itself perfectly, it loves itself as a whole, and its love diffuses itself through the whole of it. Or is it, therefore, that as one drink is made up of wine, water, and honey, each of which is found throughout the whole, and yet there are three (for there is no part of the drink which does not contain these three; they are not joined as if they were water and oil, but are mingled throughout and all are substances, and that whole liquid is one substance composed of three substances); so we are to consider these three, mind, love, and knowledge, as being together in some such way? But the water, the wine, and the honey are not of one substance, although the one substance of the drink is brought about by mixing them together.

But I do not see how these three are not of the same substance, since the mind loves itself and knows itself, and these three so exist that the mind is neither loved by nor known to any other thing. These three, therefore, must necessarily be of one and the same substance, and consequently, if they were mingled together as it were in a confused mass, then they would in no way be three, nor could they be mutually related. It is just as if you were to make three similar rings from one and the same gold; although they are connected with one another, yet they are related to one another in that they are similar, for everything similar is similar to something. In this case you have a trinity of rings and one gold. But if they are melted together, and the gold is spread throughout the whole of its own mass, then that trinity will perish and will cease altogether; and not only will it be called one gold, as it was called in the example of the three rings, but now it will not be called a golden trinity.

Chapter 5

But in these three, when the mind knows itself and loves itself, a trinity remains: the mind, love, and knowledge; and there is no confusion through any commingling, although each is a substance in itself, and all are found mutually in all, whether each one in each two, or each two in each one. Consequently, all are in all. For the mind is certainly in itself, since it is called a mind in respect to itself, although in relation to its knowledge it is spoken of as knowing, as being known, or as knowable; and when

referring to the love by which it loves itself, it is also spoken of as loving, as being loved, or as lovable. And knowledge, although it is referred to a mind that either knows or is known, yet in respect to itself it is also spoken of both as known and as knowing, for the knowledge by which the mind itself knows itself is not unknown to itself. And love, although it is referred to the mind that loves, of which it is the love, yet it is likewise love in respect to itself, so that it also exists in itself. For love is also loved, nor can it be loved with anything else except with love, that is, with itself. And so each exists in itself. But they are mutually in each other in such a way that the mind that loves is in the love, and love is in the knowledge of him that loves, and knowledge is in the mind that knows.

And so each one is in each two, because the mind that knows and loves itself is in its own love and knowledge; and the love of the mind that knows and loves itself is in the mind and in its knowledge; and the knowledge of the mind that knows and loves itself is in the mind and in its love; because it loves itself as knowing and knows itself as loving. And for this reason each two are also in each one, because the mind that knows and loves itself is in the love with its knowledge, and in the knowledge with its love, since the love itself and the knowledge are also together in the mind that loves and knows itself. But we have shown above, how all are in all, since the mind loves itself as a whole, and knows itself as a whole, and knows all its love, and loves all its knowledge, when these three are perfect in respect to themselves. These three, therefore, are in a marvelous manner inseparable from one another; and yet each of them is a substance, and all together are one substance or essence, while the terms themselves express a mutual relationship. . . .

Chapter 12

What is love? Will it not be an image? Will it not be a word? Will it not be begotten? For why should the mind beget its knowledge when it knows itself, and not beget its love when it loves itself? For if the cause of its knowing is, therefore, that it is knowable, then the cause of its loving is also that it is lovable. That being so, it is difficult to say why it has not begotten both. And this same question also arises in regard to the most exalted Trinity itself, the most omnipotent God the Creator, to whose image man has been made, and it is wont to disturb men, whom the truth of God invites to the faith through human

language. Why, they ask, is not the Holy Spirit also believed or understood to be begotten by God the Father, so that He Himself may likewise be called the Son?

We are now endeavoring in one way or another to investigate this question in the human mind; and after the inferior image has responded as it were to our interrogation in language, with which our human nature itself is more familiar, we may be able to direct a better-trained mental vision from the illuminated creature to the unchangeable light; we presuppose, however, that the truth itself has persuaded us that, as no Christian doubts, the Son is the Word of God, so the Holy Spirit is love. Let us return, therefore, to that image which the creature is, that is, to the rational soul for a more careful questioning and consideration of this matter. The knowledge of some things that exist in time which were not there previously, and the love of some things which were not loved previously, opens the way for us to explain more clearly what we have to say, because it is easier to explain the things which are comprehended in the order of time, to speech itself which must also be sent forth in time.

To begin with, it is, therefore, clear that something can be knowable, that is, it can be the object of knowledge, and yet it may not be known; but it is impossible for something to be known, that is not knowable. Therefore, we must obviously hold fast to this principle that everything which we know begets the knowledge of itself within us at the same time. For knowledge is born from both, from the one who knows and the object that is known. When the mind, therefore, knows itself, it alone is the parent of its own knowledge, for it is itself both the object known and the one that knows. It was, however, knowable to itself, even before it knew itself; but the knowledge of itself was not in it, since it had not yet known itself. Hence, when it knows itself, it begets a knowledge of itself, that is equal to itself. For it does not know itself as less than it is, nor is its knowledge that of another essence, not only because it is itself that which knows, but also because it knows itself, as we have said above.

What, then, are we to say about love? When the mind loves itself, does it not also seem to have begotten the love of itself? For it was lovable to itself even before it loved itself, because it could love itself, just as it was knowable to itself even before it knew itself, because it could know itself. For if it were not knowable to itself, it would never have been able to know itself; so, if it were not lovable to itself, it would never have been

able to love itself. Why do we not say, therefore, that it has begotten its own love, as we say that by knowing itself it has begotten its own knowledge? Is it, perhaps, to indicate clearly that this is the principle of love from which it proceeds—for it proceeds from the mind itself that is lovable to itself before it loves itself, and so is the principle of its own love by which it loves itself—but that it is, therefore, not rightly said to be begotten by the mind, as is the knowledge of itself by which it knows itself, because that has already been found through knowledge which is called born or discovered [*partum vel repertum*], and is usually preceded by a search which will come to rest in knowledge as its goal?

For inquiry is a desire to find, which is the same as saying, to discover. But things that are discovered are as it were brought forth. Hence, they are similar to an offspring; but how else are they born, except through knowledge itself? For they are as it were uttered there and formed. For even though the things already were which we find by seeking, yet the knowledge itself did not exist which we regard as an offspring that is born. Further, that desire, which is latent in seeking, proceeds from one who seeks, remains as it were in suspense, and only comes to rest in the goal towards which it is directed, when that which is sought has been found and is united with him who seeks. Although this desire, that is, this seeking does not seem to be love, by which that which is known is loved, for we are still striving to know, yet it is something of the same kind.

For it can already be called will, since everyone who seeks wishes to find; and if what he seeks belongs to the order of knowledge, then everyone who seeks wishes to know. And if he wishes it ardently and earnestly, he is said to study, a term we generally use for those who pursue and acquire any branch of learning. A kind of desire, therefore, precedes the birth in the mind, and by means of it, that is, by our seeking and finding what we wish to know, an offspring, namely, knowledge itself is born. Therefore, that desire by which knowledge is conceived and born cannot be rightly called a birth and offspring; and this same desire by which one yearns for the knowing of the thing becomes love of the thing when known, while it holds and embraces the beloved offspring, that is, knowledge, and unites it to its begetter.

And so there is a certain image of the Trinity: the mind itself, its knowledge, which is its offspring, and love as a third; these three are one and one substance. The

offspring is not less, while the mind knows itself as much as it is; nor is the love less, while the mind loves itself as much as it knows and as much as it is.

Living the Trinity

C. S. Lewis

The two chapters below come from Lewis's *Mere Christianity*, a collection based on his radio broadcasts during World War II. The chapters are taken from the fourth, and final, book of that collection, entitled "Beyond Personality: Or First Steps in the Doctrine of the Trinity".

I

MAKING AND BEGETTING

Everyone has warned me not to tell you what I am going to tell you in this last book. They all say, "The ordinary reader does not want Theology; give him plain practical religion." I have rejected their advice. I do not think the ordinary reader is such a fool. Theology means "the science of God," and I think any man who wants to think about God at all would like to have the clearest and most accurate ideas about Him which are available. You are not children: why should you be treated like children?

In a way I quite understand why some people are put off by Theology. I remember once when I had been giving a talk to the R.A.F. [Royal Air Force], an old, hard-bitten officer got up and said, "I've no use for all that stuff. But, mind you, I'm a religious man too. I *know* there's a God. I've *felt* Him: out alone in the desert at night: the tremendous mystery. And that's just why I don't believe all your neat little dogmas and formulas about Him. To anyone who's met the real thing they all seem so petty and pedantic and unreal!"

Now in a sense I quite agreed with that man. I think he had probably had a real experience of God in the desert. And when he turned from that experience to the Christian creeds, I think he really was turning from something real to something less real. In the same way, if a man has once looked at the Atlantic from the beach, and then goes and looks at a map of the Atlantic, he also will be turning from something real to something less real: turning from real waves to a bit of coloured paper. But here comes the point. The map is admittedly only coloured paper, but there are two things you have to remember about it. In the first place, it is based on what hundreds and thousands of

people have found out by sailing the real Atlantic. In that way it has behind it masses of experience just as real as the one you could have from the beach; only, while yours would be a single isolated glimpse, the map fits all those different experiences together. In the second place, if you want to go anywhere, the map is absolutely necessary. As long as you are content with walks on the beach, your own glimpses are far more fun than looking at a map. But the map is going to be more use than walks on the beach if you want to get to America.

Now, Theology is like the map. Merely learning and thinking about the Christian doctrines, if you stop there, is less real and less exciting than the sort of thing my friend got in the desert. Doctrines are not God: they are only a kind of map. But that map is based on the experience of hundreds of people who really were in touch with God—experiences compared with which any thrills or pious feelings you and I are likely to get on our own are very elementary and very confused. And secondly, if you want to get any further, you must use the map. You see, what happened to that man in the desert may have been real, and was certainly exciting, but nothing comes of it. It leads nowhere. There is nothing to do about it. In fact, that is just why a vague religion—all about feeling God in nature, and so on—is so attractive. It is all thrills and no work; like watching the waves from the beach. But you will not get to Newfoundland by studying the Atlantic that way, and you will not get eternal life by simply feeling the presence of God in flowers or music. Neither will you get anywhere by looking at maps without going to sea. Nor will you be very safe if you go to sea without a map.

In other words, Theology is practical: especially now. In the old days, when there was less education and discussion, perhaps it was possible to get on with a very few simple ideas about God. But it is not so now. Everyone reads, everyone hears things discussed. Consequently, if you do not listen to Theology, that will not mean that you have no ideas about God. It will mean that you have a lot of wrong ones—bad, muddled, out-of-date ideas. For a great many of the ideas about God which are trotted out as novelties today are simply the ones which real Theologians tried centuries ago and rejected. To believe in the popular religion of modern England is retrogression—like believing the earth is flat.

For when you get down to it, is not the popular idea of Christianity simply this: that Jesus Christ was a great moral teacher and that if only we took his advice we might be able to establish a better social order and avoid another war? Now, mind you, that is quite true. But it tells you much less than the whole truth about Christianity and it has no practical importance at all.

It is quite true that if we took Christ's advice we should soon be living in a happier world. You need not even go as far as Christ. If we did all that Plato or Aristotle or Confucius told us, we should get on a great deal better than we do. And so what? We never have followed the advice of the great teachers. Why are we likely to begin now? Why are we more likely to follow Christ than any of the others? Because he is the best moral teacher? But that makes it even less likely that we shall follow him. If we cannot take the elementary lessons, is it likely we are going to take the most advanced one? If Christianity only means one more bit of good advice, then Christianity is of no importance. There has been no lack of good advice for the last four thousand years. A bit more makes no difference.

But as soon as you look at any real Christian writings, you find that they are talking about something quite different from this popular religion. They say that Christ is the Son of God (whatever that means). They say that those who give Him their confidence can also become Sons of God (whatever that means). They say that His death saved us from our sins (whatever that means).

There is no good complaining that these statements are difficult. Christianity claims to be telling us about another world, about something behind the world we can touch and hear and see. You may think the claim false; but if it were true, what it tells us would be bound to be difficult—at least as difficult as modern Physics, and for the same reason.

Now the point in Christianity which gives us the greatest shock is the statement that by attaching ourselves to Christ, we can “become Sons of God”. One asks, “Aren't we Sons of God already? Surely the fatherhood of God is one of the main Christian ideas?” Well, in a certain sense, no doubt we are sons of God already. I mean, God has brought us into existence and loves us and looks after us, and in that way is like a father.

But when the Bible talks of our “becoming” Sons of God, obviously it must mean something different. And that brings us up against the very centre of Theology.

One of the creeds says that Christ is the Son of God “begotten, not created”; and it adds “begotten by his Father before all worlds”. Will you please get it quite clear that this has nothing to do with the fact that when Christ was born on earth as a man, that man was the son of a virgin? We are not now thinking about the Virgin Birth. We are thinking about something that happened before Nature was created at all, before time began. “Before all worlds” Christ is begotten, not created. What does it mean?

We don’t use the words *begetting* or *begotten* much in modern English, but everyone still knows what they mean. To beget is to become the father of: to create is to make. And the difference is this. When you beget, you beget something of the same kind as yourself. A man begets human babies, a beaver begets little beavers, and a bird begets eggs, which turn into little birds. But when you make, you make something of a different kind from yourself. A bird makes a nest, a beaver builds a dam, a man makes a wireless set—or he may make something more like himself than a wireless set: say, a statue. If he is a clever enough carver he may make a statue which is very like a man indeed. But, of course, it is not a real man; it only looks like one. It cannot breathe or think. It is not alive.

Now that is the first thing to get clear. What God begets is God; just as what man begets is man. What God creates is not God; just as what man makes is not man. That is why men are not Sons of God in the sense that Christ is. They may be like God in certain ways, but they are not things of the same kind. They are more like statues or pictures of God.

A statue has the shape of a man but it is not alive. In the same way, man has (in a sense I am going to explain) the “shape” or likeness of God, but he has not got the kind of life God has. Let us take the first point (man’s resemblance to God) first. Everything God has made has some likeness to Himself. Space is like Him in its hugeness: not that the greatness of space is the same kind of greatness as God’s, but it is a sort of symbol of it, or a translation of it into non-spiritual terms. Matter is like God in having energy: though, again, of course, physical energy is a different kind of thing from the power of God. The vegetable world is like Him because it is alive, and He is the “living God”. But life, in

this biological sense, is not the same as the life there is in God: it is only a kind of symbol or shadow of it. When we come on to the animals, we find other kinds of resemblance in addition to biological life. The intense activity and fertility of the insects, for example, is a first dim resemblance to the unceasing activity and the creativeness of God. In the higher mammals we get the beginnings of instinctive affection. That is not the same thing as the love that exists in God: but it is like it—rather in the way that a picture drawn on a flat piece of paper can nevertheless be “like” a landscape. When we come to man, the highest of the animals, we get the completest resemblance to God which we know of. (There may be creatures in other worlds who are more like God than man is, but we do not know about them.) Man not only lives, but loves and reasons: biological life reaches its highest known level in him.

But what man, in his natural condition, has not got is Spiritual life—the higher and different sort of life that exists in God. We use the same word *life* for both: but if you thought that both must therefore be the same sort of thing, that would be like thinking that the “greatness” of space and the “greatness” of God were the same sort of greatness. In reality, the difference between Biological life and spiritual life is so important that I am going to give them two distinct names. The Biological sort, which comes to us through Nature, and which (like everything else in Nature) is always tending to run down and decay so that it can only be kept up by incessant subsidies from Nature in the form of air, water, food, etc., is *Bios*. The Spiritual life, which is in God from all eternity, and which made the whole natural universe, is *Zoe*. *Bios* has, to be sure, a certain shadowy or symbolic resemblance to *Zoe*: but only the sort of resemblance there is between a photo and a place, or a statue and a man. A man who changed from having *Bios* to having *Zoe* would have gone through as big a change as a statue which changed from being a carved stone to being a real man.

And that is precisely what Christianity is about. This world is a great sculptor’s shop. We are the statues, and there is a rumour going round the shop that some of us are some day going to come to life.

THE THREE-PERSONAL GOD

The last chapter was about the difference between begetting and making. A man begets a child, but he only makes a statue. God begets Christ but He only makes men. But by saying that, I have illustrated only one point about God, namely, that what God the Father begets is God, something of the same kind as Himself. In that way it is like a human father begetting a human son. But not quite like it. So I must try to explain a little more.

A good many people nowadays say, “I believe in a God, but not in a personal God.” They feel that the mysterious something which is behind all other things must be more than a person. Now the Christians quite agree. But the Christians are the only people who offer any idea of what a being that is beyond personality could be like. All the other people, though they say that God is beyond personality, really think of Him as something impersonal: that is, as something less than personal. If you are looking for something super-personal, something more than a person, then it is not a question of choosing between the Christian idea and the other ideas. The Christian idea is the only one on the market.

Again, 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. It is only the Christians who have any idea of how human souls can be taken into the life of God and yet remain themselves—in fact, be very much more themselves than they were before.

I warned you that Theology is practical. The whole purpose for which we exist is to be thus taken into the life of God. Wrong ideas about what that life is will make it harder. And now, for a few minutes, I must ask you to follow rather carefully.

You know that in space you can move in three ways—to left or right, backwards or forwards, up or down. Every direction is either one of these three or a compromise between them. They are called the three Dimensions. Now notice this. If you are using only one dimension, you could draw only a straight line. If you are using two, you could

draw a figure: say, a square. And a square is made up of four straight lines. Now a step further. If you have three dimensions, you can then build what we call a solid body, say, a cube—a thing like a dice or a lump of sugar. And a cube is made up of six squares.

Do you see the point? A world of one dimension would be a straight line. In a two-dimensional world, you still get straight lines, but many lines make one figure. In a three-dimensional world, you still get figures but many figures make one solid body. In other words, as you advance to more real and more complicated levels, you do not leave behind you the things you found on the simpler levels: you still have them, but combined in new ways—in ways you could not imagine if you knew only the simpler levels.

Now the Christian account of God involves just the same principle. The human level is a simple and rather empty level. On the human level one person is one being, and any two persons are two separate beings—just as, in two dimensions (say on a flat sheet of paper) one square is one figure, and any two squares are two separate figures. On the Divine level you still find personalities; but up there you find them combined in new ways which we, who do not live on that level, cannot imagine. In God's dimension, so to speak, you find a being who is three Persons while remaining one Being, just as a cube is six squares while remaining one cube. Of course we cannot fully conceive a Being like that: just as, if we were so made that we perceived only two dimensions in space, we could never properly imagine a cube. But we can get a sort of faint notion of it. And when we do, we are then, for the first time in our lives, getting some positive idea, however faint, of something super-personal—something more than a person. It is something we could never have guessed, and yet, once we have been told, one almost feels one ought to have been able to guess it because it fits in so well with all the things we know already.

You may ask, "If we cannot imagine a three-personal Being, what is the good of talking about Him?" Well, there isn't any good talking about Him. The thing that matters is being actually drawn into that three-personal life, and that may begin any time—tonight, if you like.

What I mean is this. An ordinary simple Christian kneels down to say his prayers. He is trying to get into touch with God. But if he is a Christian he knows that what is prompting him to pray is also God: God, so to speak, inside him. But he also knows that

all his real knowledge of God comes through Christ, the Man who was God—that Christ is standing beside him, helping him to pray, praying for him. You see what is happening. God is the thing to which he is praying—the goal he is trying to reach. God is also the thing inside him which is pushing him on—the motive power. God is also the road or bridge along which he is being pushed to that goal. So that the whole threefold life of the three-personal Being is actually going on in that ordinary little bedroom where an ordinary man is saying his prayers. The man is being caught up into the higher kind of life—what I called *Zoe* or spiritual life: he is being pulled into God, by God, while still remaining himself.

And that is how Theology started. People already knew about God in a vague way. Then came a man who claimed to be God; and yet he was not the sort of man you could dismiss as a lunatic. He made them believe Him. They met Him again after they had seen Him killed. And then, after they had been formed into a little society or community, they found God somehow inside them as well: directing them, making them able to do things they could not do before. And when they worked it all out they found they had arrived at the Christian definition of the three-personal God.

This definition is not something we have made up; Theology is, in a sense, experimental knowledge. It is the simple religions that are the made-up ones. When I say it is an experimental science “in a sense” I mean that it is like the other experimental sciences in some ways, but not in all. If you are a geologist studying rocks, you have to go and find the rocks. They will not come to you, and if you go to them they cannot run away. The initiative lies all on your side. They cannot either help or hinder. But suppose you are a zoologist and want to take photos of wild animals in their native haunts. That is a bit different from studying rocks. The wild animals will not come to you: but they can run away from you. Unless you keep very quiet, they will. There is beginning to be a tiny little trace of initiative on their side.

Now a stage higher; suppose you want to get to know a human person. If he is determined not to let you, you will not get to know him. You have to win his confidence. In this case the initiative is equally divided—it takes two to make a friendship.

When you come to knowing God, the initiative lies on His side. If He does not show Himself, nothing you can do will enable you to find Him. And, in fact, He shows

much more of Himself to some people than to others—not because He has favourites, but because it is impossible for Him to show Himself to a man whose whole mind and character are in the wrong condition. Just as sunlight, though it has no favourites, cannot be reflected in a dusty mirror as clearly as a clean one.

You can put this another way by saying that while in other sciences the instruments you use are things external to yourself (things like microscopes and telescopes), the instrument through which you see God is your whole self. And if a man's self is not kept clean and bright, his glimpse of God will be blurred—like the Moon seen through a dirty telescope. That is why horrible nations have horrible religions: they have been looking at God through a dirty lens.

God can show Himself as He really is only to real men. And that means not simply to men who are individually good, but to men who are united together in a body, loving one another, helping one another, showing Him to one another. For that is what God meant humanity to be like; like players in one band, or organs in one body.

Consequently, the one really adequate instrument for learning about God is the whole Christian community, waiting for Him together. Christian brotherhood is, so to speak, the technical equipment for this science—the laboratory outfit. That is why all these people who turn up every few years with some patent simplified religion of their own as a substitute for the Christian tradition are really wasting time. Like a man who has no instrument but an old pair of field glasses setting out to put all the real astronomers right. He may be a clever chap—he may be cleverer than some of the real astronomers, but he is not giving himself a chance. And two years later everyone has forgotten all about him, but the real science is still going on.

If Christianity were something we were making up, of course we could make it easier. But it is not. We cannot compete, in simplicity, with people who are inventing religions. How could we? We are dealing with Fact. Of course anyone can be simple if he has no facts to bother about.

In the Beginning

Meister Eckhart

Meister Eckhart (c. 1260-1327) was a medieval German theologian and Dominican friar. What follows is his commentary on the first verse of the first chapter of the first book of the Bible: “In the beginning God created heaven and earth.” It is important to understand that in the Latin (Vulgate) text of this verse, which is what Eckhart was using, the word for “beginning”, *principium*, can also mean “principle” or “reason for being”.

“In the beginning God created heaven and earth.”

Four preliminary points about this text must be discussed. First, what this “beginning” is in which God is said to have created heaven and earth. Second, how he is said to have created heaven in the beginning when it says in the Psalm and in Hebrews, “In the beginning, Lord, you founded the earth” (Ps. 101:26; Heb. 1:10), and Ecclesiasticus says, “He who lives forever created all things at the same time” (Si. 18:1). Third, since what is born one always has the power to produce only what is one, how can God, who is simply one and always possesses himself in the same way, have produced or created such different things as heaven and earth, in the beginning and all at the same time? Fourth, the conclusion from this is that everything except God possesses existence from somewhere else and from someone else, and nevertheless nothing is so intimate, so primary, and so proper to anything as its own existence.

On the first point you must recognize that the “principle” [Latin *principium* = “beginning, principle, reason for being”] in which “God created heaven and earth” is the ideal reason. This is what the first chapter in John says, “In the principle was the Word” (the Greek has *Logos*, that is, “reason”), and, later, “All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made.” The universal principle and root of each thing whatever is its reason. This is why Plato held that the ideas or the reasons of things were the principles of the existence and knowledge of everything. And thus Averroes in his commentary on the seventh book of [Aristotle’s] *Metaphysics* says that the “what-it-is” of a sensible thing was always what the ancient philosophers wanted to know because knowing it they would know the First Cause of everything. Averroes does not say that

God himself is the First Cause (as many erroneously think), but he calls the “what-it-is” of things (their reason, which the definition signifies) the First Cause. This reason is the “what” of a thing, and is the “why” of all its properties.

Further, the reason of things is a principle in such a way that it does not have or look to an exterior cause, but looks within to the essence alone. Therefore, the metaphysician who considers the entity of things proves nothing through exterior causes, that is, efficient and final causes. This is the principle, namely the ideal reason, in which God created all things without looking to anything outside himself. Boethius puts it very clearly in the third book of the *Consolation of Philosophy*:

Creator of Heaven and earth...

No external causes compelled you.

...You lead all things forth from

The Supreme Exemplar; Most Beautiful Yourself,

You bear the beautiful world in your Mind and form it to be like that image.

This is the reason why the saints commonly explain that God created heaven and earth in the “Principle”, that is, in the Son, who is the Image and Ideal Reason of all things. So Augustine says, “He who denies the ideas denies the Son of God.” Hence “God created all things in the principle,” that is, in reason and according to the ideal reason—man according to one reason, lion according to another, and so on with each creature. Again, he also created all things in reason because he did so reasonably and wisely—“You have made all things in wisdom” (Ps. 102:24). In the third book of *On Free Choice* Augustine says: “Whatever suggests itself to you as the better course by means of a true reason, be assured that it has been made by God as the creator of all good things.”

In the second place, note that the “principle” in which “God created heaven and earth” is the nature of the intellect. “He made the heavens in the intellect” (Ps. 135:5). Intellect is the principle of the whole of nature, as it says in the comment on the ninth proposition of the *Book of Causes* with the words “Understanding rules nature through divine power”. Below it says, “Understanding grasps the things that are generated, nature

and the soul that borders on nature”; thus concluding, “therefore, understanding contains all things”. So, “He created heaven and earth in the principle,” that is, in the intellect. This is against those who say that God created and produced things from necessity of nature.

In the third place, the “beginning” in which “God created heaven and earth” is the first simple now of eternity. I say that it is the very same now in which God exists from eternity, in which also the emanation of the divine Persons eternally is, was, and will be. Moses said that God created heaven and earth in the very first beginning in which he himself exists, without any medium or time interval. So when someone once asked me why God had not created the world earlier, I answered that he could not because he did not exist. He did not exist before the world did. Furthermore, how could he have created earlier when he had already created the world in the very now in which he was God? It is false to picture God as if he were waiting around for some future moment in which to create the world. In the one and the same time in which he was God and in which he begot his coeternal Son as God equal to himself in all things, he also created the world. “God speaks once and for all” (Job 22:14). He speaks in begetting the Son because the Son is the Word; he speaks in creating creatures: “He spoke, and they were made, he commanded, and they were created” (Ps. 32:9). This is why it says in another Psalm, “God has spoken once and for all, and I have heard two things” (Ps. 61:12). The “two things” are heaven and earth, or rather “these two”, that is, the emanation of the Persons and the creation of the world, but “he speaks” them both “once and for all”; “he has spoken once and for all.” So much for the first of the premises.

What the first chapter of Hebrews says in agreement with the Psalm but in reverse order (“In the beginning, Lord, you founded the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands” [Heb. 1:10]) presents no difficulty. First, because sentences in which the subject and predicate are reversed still mean the same. Second, just as things that we make not at one time and once and for all, such as the foundation, wall, and roof of a house, can be expressed at one time by a single noun (e.g., “house”), so in reverse manner the things that God makes at the same time cannot be expressed by us at one time. This is because unlike us God’s speaking is his making, and also unlike us his speaking is the cause of the entire work and of all its parts. Note that if a house’s matter

came completely from the architect and totally obeyed his least command, then by just thinking of really building a house he would at the same time bring the house and all its parts into existence. Our activity, like our knowledge, arises from things, and so depends on them and is changed when they are. In opposite fashion, things themselves take their origin from and depend upon God's knowledge, so that God's knowledge does not change when they do, because they are posterior. This is why the Psalmist and Paul later make the important addition in speaking of the heavens: "You will change them, and they will be changed; but you are the same" (Ps. 101:27; Heb. 1:12).

It should be noted that because in creatures nothing is perfect in every way, frequently the last beings in certain ways surpass those that are first. Therefore, [Aristotle's] *Topics* say that when one of two things is more like something that is better, it itself is not better than the other unless it is like the better thing in its superior properties. Thus, in relation to stability and immobility the earth surpasses even the heavens. For this reason Averroes and his followers locate the heaven through the earth or center. So the text is appropriate, "You, Lord, founded the earth in the beginning" (Heb. 1:10), according to the Psalm passage, "You have founded the earth upon its own stability" (Ps. 103:5). This is the reason why with us motion is naturally and properly ascribed more to the right side, while being fixed is ascribed to the left. A person who begins to walk puts his right foot forward while he holds himself fixed on his left, and a worker works with his right hand and holds what he is working on with his left. Concerning the passage in Ecclesiasticus, "He who lives forever created all things at the same time" (Si. 18:1), you will find sufficient exegesis in other authors. So much for the second main question of the four.

In the third place, we have to see the way in which many distinct and different things, such as heaven and earth and the like, can immediately exist, or be produced from one simple thing, namely God. For it says, "In the beginning God created heaven and earth." A good response to this is that an agent who works from necessity of nature is different from an agent who works through will and intellect, such as God is, as Thomas [Aquinas] says in the *Summa* Ia. 47. 1. What was said above—that is, "In the principle," namely the intellect, "he created heaven and earth"—is relevant to this point.

I used to give a different and threefold response to this. First, even given that God acts from necessity of nature, then I say: God acts and produces things through his divine nature. But God's nature is intellect, and for him existence is understanding. Therefore, he produces things in existence through intellect. Consequently, just as there is no contradiction between his simplicity and his understanding many things, so too there is none in the case of his producing many things immediately. Second, fire generates fire and gives warmth through its form and the property of heat. But if it possessed in equal fashion the form of water and the property of cleansing and cooling, at the same time and equally it would generate fire and water, and would warm, cleanse, and cool. But God naturally has prior possession of all forms and of the forms of all. Therefore, in his natural manner of producing he can immediately produce different things and everything.

Third and better, I say that it is true that only one thing always proceeds immediately from a single thing that is uniform in relation to itself. But this one thing is the whole universe itself, which proceeds from God as one whole thing, though in many parts, just as God himself the producer is one or the simple One in existence, life, understanding, and activity, although he is quite diverse according to the ideal reasons. It is universally true that a nature first and necessarily looks to and intends the whole in immediate fashion.

In this case you should note first that the more perfect and simpler a thing is in existence the richer it is in reasons and powers. For example, the rational soul is the most perfect among all the forms of matter, and therefore is the simplest in existence and substance, but the richest in powers, as the diversity and distinction of the human body's organs show and testify. Second, the more perfect the universe or world is, the simpler its existence and the greater the number and distinction of its parts.

This is the answer to the ignorant question and difficulty of those who asked whether God produced an angel or some other kind of creature before the rest. He did not immediately produce this or that part of the universe, but immediately produced the whole universe, because, as I say, he would not produce the universe, nor would it be a universe, if any essential part of it were lacking. If stone or wood or the nature of the angelic spirit were lacking, it is equally true that it would not be the universe. So much for the third principle point of the four cited above.

The fourth main point, namely that everything except God possesses existence from something else and from somewhere else, follows from what has been said in the following way. We said that “God created heaven and earth,” that is, the highest things, the lowest things, and therefore everything. Creation is the conferring of existence. This is what Proclus says in the eleventh proposition: “All beings proceed from one First Cause.” Augustine in the first book of the *Confessions* puts it this way: “Existence and life flow into us from no other source, Lord, than from the fact that you create us.”

Let these points suffice for the present regarding the literal exposition of the text under discussion, “In the beginning God created heaven and earth.”

For the moral meaning, note that it says God created “heaven and earth”, with heaven put first and earth last. This strikes out first against those who prefer earthly to heavenly things, contrary to Matthew’s text, “Seek first the kingdom of God” (Matt. 6:33). They are like the dog who in snapping at the shadow of the meat lost the meat itself. Second, it censures those who do good out of fear rather than love. Such people first look to the “earth”, that is, the penalty, not “heaven”, or love of good. In chapter thirty-eight of *On True Religion* Augustine says against such people that they reverse the pen to write with the blunt end and erase with the point. They have their heads on the bottom and their feet on the top so that heaven is below them. “I saw men as though they were trees walking about” (Mark 8:24). So no wonder they have great labor and suffer much pain, for they are working against nature’s order, against the force of natural inclination, against the order of the God who “In the beginning created heaven”. “You have set me opposite to you, and I am become burdensome to myself” (Job. 7:20).

Further, it says that God created “heaven and earth in the principle”, that is, rationally, as interpreted above, because the godly man sets in good order both favorable and unfavorable, both good and bad, and uses them well, as Romans says: “For those who love God all things work together unto good” (Rom. 8:28). “In the principle God created heaven and earth”—“In the principle”, that is, rationally.

Note two points from Maimonides about these words. First:

There is a difference between a principle and what is first. A principle is something that is in or with that of which it is the principle even though it

does not precede it temporally. Thus the heart is the principle of the life of animals.... The first is predicated of something that is older temporally even though it is not the cause of that which comes after it, as if we were to say, "Peter was the first to live in that house, and after him came John." The word that begins the book of Genesis in Hebrew means "principle" and is taken from "head", that which is the principle of the body of any animal whatever.

Second, note that "God created heaven and earth" and everything in them "in their state of being and their beauty ... in perfect species and form and with the choice of the proper accidents" at the same time, even though they do not appear at the same time. The example given is of the farmer who sows different kinds of seeds in the earth at the same time. Some come up after one day, some after two days or three days, but all the seeds were scattered in the one hour.

A third remark. Summarizing what "In the principle God created heaven and earth" means, we can say that "God created heaven and earth in the principle," that is, in existence, or to existence, or for the sake of existence, namely, he created them that they might be. "He created all things that they might be" (Wisd. 1:14). Existence is what is first, and it is the principle of all intentions and perfections, as I have remarked in detail in my commentary on the first chapter of Wisdom. Second, "He created in the principle," that is, he created in such a way that things do not exist outside him. The case is different with every artificer lower than God. The architect makes the house outside himself. In the fourth book of the *Confessions* Augustine says, "He did not create and depart, but the things that are from him are in him."

"He created in the principle," that is, he created in such a way that he always creates. "My Father works even until now" (John 5:17). "In the principle", that is, in the Son. "I am the principle" (John 8:25). Here note that just as no one becomes just apart from the activity of the Justice that gives birth and is as such Unbegotten, as well as through the activity of the justice that is brought forth, or Begotten Justice, so too nothing is created that is not from Unbegotten Existence and in the Begotten

Existence that is the Son. “He created in the principle,” that is, in reason, for reason; the *Logos* or Word is the principle and cause of all things.

“He created heaven and earth in the principle” because inferior beings have the same primary and equal relation to and in existence that superior beings do. This accords with the text: “If I ascend into heaven you are there, if I descend into hell you are present” (Ps. 138:8). This is against the view of Avicenna and others who say that “In the principle God created” the Intelligence and then by its means created other things. All things possess existence immediately and equally from God alone. An example can be found in the powers of the soul and the organs of the body, because they all immediately and equally have existence from the soul, and in this case there is no order in relation to levels of existence, life, and rationality. “He created heaven and earth,” that is, good and evil. “Creating evil and making peace” (Is. 45:7). The existence of evil is required by the perfection of the universe, and evil itself exists in what is good and is ordered to the good of the universe, which is what creation primarily and necessarily regards.

He creates “heaven and earth in the principle,” that is, in the Son, because God gives heavenly and earthly gifts to the just and perfect man, one who is God’s son, as it says in John, “He gave them the power to become sons of God” (John 1:12). This agrees with the texts, “He will set him [the Son] over all his goods” (Matt. 24:47), and “All power in heaven and hearth is given to me” (Matt. 28:18).

Still in the moral sense, God creates “heaven” and hence at the same time with time the “earth”, because the godlike man does everything that he does out of love of the heavenly good. This is the natural order. Darkness can only be dispelled by light, and cold by the heat that first conies into something and inheres in it. The imperfect man, in that he is unlike God, does the reverse, first creating the earth (because he acts for the sake of the evil he fears) and later the heavenly good.

“In the principle he created heaven and earth”, that is, what is active and what is passive. Although what is active is prior in dignity to what is passive (just as heaven is to earth), nevertheless they exist together at the same time, which is what creation means. Again, form and matter, like heaven and earth, not only exist together at the same time, but also, just as matter does not have existence without form and has the essential characteristic of being subject to form and “informed” without any mediating power, so

too, though in reverse order, through its essence and without any intermediary, form receives existence in matter and in the act of informing. Informing is its very existence. Form and matter, active and passive, heaven and earth, are produced at the same time “in the principle”, that is, in the act of existence.

God created heaven and earth “in the principle”, because the ideas of things in God look to a double kind of existence, namely intellectual existence in the soul, which is understood by heaven (“He made the heavens in intellect” [Ps. 135:5]), and also the material existence outside the soul that is signified through earth. This is why Plato held that the ideas are the principles of knowledge and of generation. This is what John means, “You call me master and lord” (John 13:13)—master signifies knowledge, lord external activity. And so “heaven” is what is superior, “earth” what is inferior. What is inferior is always empty and imperfect, what is superior is never so.

Finally, it must be observed that it says “God” created “heaven and earth in the principle”, two things, not more, such as three or four and so forth. It does not say that he created one thing. The reason is because by the fact that anything is or has been created it falls away from unity and simplicity. Unity and simplicity are proper to God and are his property, as I have written at length on the text “God is one” (Deut. 6:4; Gal. 3:20). Again, everything that falls away from the One, the First of all things, immediately falls into two and into the other numbers by means of duality.

The first equal number, namely two, is the root of all division, plurality, and number, just as the unequal or the One is the root and reason of lack of division. So everything that is unequal insofar as it is unequal is indivisible. The proof of this is that the division of such a thing cannot be equivalent or equal, but is always unequal, incorrect, and faulty, because it is a division into unequal parts.

Creator and Creature

C. S. Lewis

In the passages below, taken from his book *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (Chapters XIII and XIV), Lewis distinguishes the Christian view of God from pantheism and the Christian understanding of creation from emanation.

XIII

I've just found in an old note-book a poem, with no author's name attached, which is rather relevant to something we were talking about a few weeks ago—I mean, the haunting fear that there is no one listening, and that what we call prayer is soliloquy: someone talking to himself. This writer takes the bull by the horns and says in effect: “Very well, suppose it is,” and gets a surprising result. Here is the poem:

They tell me, Lord, that when I seem
 To be in speech with you,
 Since but one voice is heard, it's all a dream,
 One talker aping two.

Sometimes it is, yet not as they
 Conceive it. Rather, I
 Seek in myself the things I hoped to say,
 But lo!, my wells are dry.

Then, seeing me empty, you forsake
 The listener's role and through
 My dumb lips breathe and into utterance wake
 The thoughts I never knew.

And thus you neither need reply
 Nor can; thus, while we seem
 Two talkers, thou art One forever, and I
 No dreamer, but thy dream.

Dream makes it too like Pantheism and was perhaps dragged in for the rhyme. But is he not right in thinking that prayer in its most perfect state is a soliloquy? If the Holy Spirit speaks in the man, then in prayer God speaks to God. But the human

petitioner does not therefore become a “dream”. As you said the other day, God and man cannot exclude one another, as man excludes man, at the point of junction, so to call it, between Creator and creature, the point where the mystery of creation—timeless for God, and incessant in time for us—is actually taking place. “God did (or said) it” and “I did (or said) it” can both be true.

You remember the two maxims Owen [Barfield] lays down in *Saving the Appearances*? On the one hand, the man who does not regard God as other than himself cannot be said to have a religion at all. On the other hand, if I think God other than myself in the same way in which my fellowmen, and objects in general, are other than myself, I am beginning to make Him an idol. I am daring to treat His existence as somehow *parallel* to my own. But He is the ground of our being. He is always both within us and over against us. Our reality is so much from His reality as He, moment by moment, projects into us. The deeper the level within ourselves from which our prayer, or any other act, wells up, the more it is His, but not at all the less ours. Rather, most ours when most His. [Matthew] Arnold speaks of us as “enised” from one another in “the sea of life”. But we can’t be similarly “enised” from God. To be discontinuous from God as I am discontinuous from you would be annihilation.

A question at once arises. Is it still God speaking when a liar or a blasphemer speaks? In one sense, almost Yes. Apart from God he could not speak at all; there are no words not derived from the Word; no acts not derived from Him who is *Actus purus*. And indeed the only way in which I can make real to myself what theology teaches about the heinousness of sin is to remember that every sin is the distortion of an energy breathed into us—an energy which, if not thus distorted, would have blossomed into one of those holy acts whereof “God did it” and “I did it” are both true descriptions. We poison the wine as He decants it into us; murder a melody He would play with us as the instrument. We caricature the self-portrait He would paint. Hence all sin, whatever else it is, is sacrilege.

We must, no doubt, distinguish this ontological continuity between Creator and creature which is, so to speak, “given” by the relation between them, from the union of wills which, under grace, is reached by a life of sanctity. The ontological continuity is, I take it, unchangeable, and exists between God and a reprobate (or a devil) no less than

between God and a saint. “Whither shall I go then from thy presence? If I go down to hell, thou art there also.”

Where there is prayer at all we may suppose that there is some effort, however feeble, towards the second condition, the union of wills. What God labours to do or say through the man comes back to God with a distortion which at any rate is not total.

Do you object to the apparent “roundaboutness”—it could easily be made comic—of the whole picture? Why should God speak to Himself through man? I ask, in reply, why should He do anything through His creatures? Why should He achieve, the long way round, through the labours of angels, men (always imperfectly obedient and efficient), and the activity of irrational and inanimate beings, ends which, presumably, the mere *fiat* of omnipotence would achieve with instantaneous perfection?

Creation seems to be delegation through and through. He will do nothing simply of Himself which can be done by creatures. I suppose this is because He is a giver. And He has nothing to give but Himself. And to give Himself is to do His deeds—in a sense, and on varying levels, to be Himself—through the things He has made.

In Pantheism God is all. But the whole point of creation surely is that He was not content to be all. He intends to be “all *in* all”.

One must be careful not to put this in a way which would blur the distinction between the creation of a man and the Incarnation of God. Could one, as a mere model, put it thus? In creation God makes—invents—a person and “utters”—injects—him into the realm of Nature. In the Incarnation, God the Son takes the body and human soul of Jesus, and, through that, the whole environment of Nature, all the creaturely predicament, into His own being. So that “He came down from Heaven” can almost be transposed into “Heaven drew earth up into it,” and locality, limitation, sleep, sweat, footsore weariness, frustration, pain, doubt, and death, are, from before all worlds, known by God from within. The pure light walks the earth; the darkness, received into the heart of Deity, is there swallowed up. Where, except in uncreated light, can the darkness be drowned?

XIV

I won’t admit without a struggle that when I speak of God “uttering” or “inventing” the creatures I am “watering down the concept of creation”. I am trying to give it, by remote

analogies, some sort of content. I know that to create is defined as “to make out of nothing”, *ex nihilo*. But I take that to mean “*not* out of any pre-existing material”. It can’t mean that God makes what God has not thought of, or that He gives His creatures any powers or beauties which He Himself does not possess. Why, we think that even human work comes nearest to creation when the maker has “got it all out of his own head”.

Nor am I suggesting a theory of “emanations”. The differentia of an “emanation”—literally an overflowing, a trickling out—would be that it suggests something involuntary. But my words—“uttering” and “inventing”—are meant to suggest an act.

This act, as it is for God, must always remain totally inconceivable to man. For we—even our poets and musicians and inventors—never, in the ultimate sense, *make*. We only build. We always have materials to build from. All we can know about the act of creation must be derived from what we can gather about the relation of the creatures to their Creator.

Now the very Pagans knew that any beggar at your door might be a god in disguise: and the parable of the sheep and the goats is Our Lord’s comment. What you do, or don’t do, to the beggar, you do, or don’t do, to Him. Taken at the Pantheist extreme, this could mean that men are only appearances of God—dramatic representations, as it were. Taken at the Legalist extreme, it could mean that God, by a sort of Legal fiction, will “deem” your kindness to the beggar a kindness done to Himself. Or again, as Our Lord’s own words suggest, that since the least of men are His “brethren”, the whole action is, so to speak, “within the family”. And in what sense brethren? Biologically, because Jesus is Man? Ontologically, because the light lightens them all? Or simply “loved like brethren”. (It cannot refer only to the regenerate.) I would ask first whether any one of these formulations is “right” in a sense which makes the others simply wrong? It seems to me improbable. If I ever see more clearly I will speak more surely.

Meanwhile, I stick to Owen’s view. All creatures, from the angel to the atom, are other than God; with an otherness to which there is no parallel: incommensurable. The very words “to be” cannot be applied to Him and to them in exactly the same sense. But also, no creature is other than He in the same way in which it is other than all the rest. He

is in it as they can never be in one another. In each of them as the ground and root and continual supply of its reality. And also in good rational creatures as light; in bad ones as fire, as at first the smouldering unease, and later the flaming anguish, of an unwelcome and vainly resisted presence.

Therefore of each creature we can say, “This also is Thou: neither is this Thou.”

Simple faith leaps to this with astonishing ease. I once talked to a continental pastor who had seen Hitler, and had, by all human standards, good cause to hate him. “What did he look like?” I asked. “Like all men,” he replied. “That is, like Christ.”

One is always fighting on at least two fronts. When one is among Pantheists one must emphasize the distinctness, and relative independence, of the creatures. Among Deists—or perhaps in Woolwich, if the laity there really think God is to be sought in the sky—one must emphasize the divine presence in my neighbour, my dog, my cabbage-patch.

It is much wiser, I believe, to think of that presence in particular objects than just of “omnipresence”. The latter gives very *naïf* people (Woolwich again, perhaps?) the idea of something spatially extended, like a gas. It also blurs the distinctions, the truth that God is present in each thing but not necessarily in the same mode; not in a man as in the consecrated bread and wine, nor in a bad man as in a good one, nor in a beast as in a man, nor in a tree as in a beast, nor in inanimate matter as in a tree. I take it there is a paradox here. The higher the creature, the more, and also the less, God is in it; the more present by grace, and the less present (by a sort of abdication) as mere power. By grace He gives the higher creatures power to will His will (“and wield their little tridents”): the lower ones simply execute it automatically.

It is well to have specifically holy places, and things, and days, for, without these focal points or reminders, the belief that all is holy and “big with God” will soon dwindle into a mere sentiment. But if these holy places, things, and days cease to remind us, if they obliterate our awareness that all ground is holy and every bush (could we but perceive it) a Burning Bush, then the hallows begin to do harm. Hence both the necessity, and the perennial danger, of “religion”.

Boehme advises us once an hour “to fling ourselves beyond every creature”. But in order to find God it is perhaps not always necessary to leave the creatures behind. 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 labour is to remember, to attend. In fact, to come awake. Still more, to remain awake.

Oddly enough, what corroborates me in this faith is the fact, otherwise so infinitely deplorable, that the awareness of this presence has so often been unwelcome. I call upon Him in prayer. Often He might reply—I think He does reply—“But you have been evading me for hours.” For He comes not only to raise up but to cast down; to deny, to rebuke, to interrupt. The prayer “prevent us in all our doings” is often answered as if the word *prevent* had its modern meaning. The presence which we voluntarily evade is often, and we know it, His presence in wrath.

And out of this evil comes a good. If I never fled from His presence, then I should suspect those moments when I seemed to delight in it of being wish-fulfillment dreams. That, by the way, explains the feebleness of all those watered versions of Christianity which leave out all the darker elements and try to establish a religion of pure consolation. No real belief in the watered versions can last. Bemused and besotted as we are, we still dimly know at heart that nothing which is at all times and in every way agreeable to us can have objective reality. It is of the very nature of the real that it should have sharp corners and rough edges, that it should be resistant, should be itself. Dream-furniture is the only kind on which you never stub your toes or bang your knee. You and I have both known happy marriage. But how different our wives were from the imaginary mistresses of our adolescent dreams! So much less exquisitely adapted to all our wishes; and for that very reason (among others) so incomparably better.

Servile fear is, to be sure, the lowest form of religion. But a god such that there could never be occasion for even servile fear, a *safe* god, a tame god, soon proclaims himself to any sound mind as a fantasy. I have met no people who fully disbelieved in Hell and also had a living and life-giving belief in Heaven.

The Word Became Flesh

Saint Athanasius

Athanasius (c. 296-373) was a bishop of Alexandria and a key figure in the development of orthodox Christology. This passage comes from Book III of his *Orations Against the Arians*.

What is the basic meaning and purport of Holy Scripture? It contains, as we have often said, a double account of the Savior. It says that he has always been God and is the Son, because he is the *Logos* and radiance and Wisdom of the Father. Furthermore, it says that in the end he became a human being; he took flesh for our sakes from the Virgin Mary, the *Theotokos*.

One can find this teaching indicated throughout Holy Scripture, as the Lord himself has said, "Search the Scriptures, for it is they which bear witness concerning me" [John 5:39]. Lest I write too much, however, by pulling together all the relevant texts, let me content myself with mention of John as representative. He says, "In the beginning was the *Logos*, and the *Logos* was with God, and the *Logos* was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and apart from him not one thing came to be" [John 1:1-3]. He goes on, "And the *Logos* became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory—glory as of one uniquely born from the Father" [John 1:14]. Then there are Paul's words: "Who, being in the form of God, did not judge equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, coming to be in the likeness of human beings; and being found in the form of a human being, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" [Phil. 2:6-8].

Anyone who makes his way through the whole of Scripture with the meaning of these texts in mind will, on the basis of what they say, see how it is that the Father said to the Son in the beginning, "Let there be light" [Gen. 1:3] and "Let there be a firmament" [Gen. 1:6] and "Let us make humanity" [Gen. 1:26]. But at the consummation of the ages the Father sent the Son into the cosmos, "not in order to judge the cosmos, but in order that through him the cosmos might be saved" [John 3:17]. And it stands written: "Behold,

a virgin shall conceive, and shall bear a son; and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which in translation means 'God with us'" [Matt. 1:23].

So if someone wants to study Holy Scripture, let him learn from the ancient writers what it says, but from the Gospels let him perceive the Lord made a human being. For "the Word," John says, "was made flesh and dwelt among us" [John 1:14].

He became human. He did not enter into a human being. It is, moreover, crucial to recognize this. Otherwise, people might fall into error and suppose that just as in earlier times the *Logos* "came to be" in each of the saints, so even now he came into residence in a human being, sanctifying this one also and being revealed just as he was in the others. If this were the way of it, and all he did was to appear in a human being, there would have been nothing extraordinary, nor would those who saw him have been astonished and said, "Where does this man come from?" [Mark 4:41] and "Why do you, who are a human being, make yourself God?" [John 10:33], for since they heard the expression "and the word of the Lord came to" each of the prophets, they had some acquaintance with the idea.

Now, however, the Word of God, through whom everything came to be, has taken it on himself to become Son of man as well, and has "humbled himself, taking the form of a servant" [Phil. 2:7]. In consequence, the cross of Christ is "a scandal to the Jews," but to us Christ is "the power of God" and "the Wisdom of God" [1 Cor. 1:23-24], for as John said, "the Word became flesh"—Scripture being in the habit of calling the human being "flesh." (As it says by Joel the prophet, "I will pour my spirit out on all flesh" [Joel 2:28]. Similarly, Daniel said to Astyages: "I do not worship idols made with hands, but the living God who created the heaven and the earth and has dominion over all flesh" [Bel and the Dragon 5]. For both he and Joel call humankind "flesh.")

Therefore in former times he came to be with each of the saints and sanctified those who truly received him. When they were born, however, it was not said, "He has become a human being"; nor, when they were suffering, was it said, "He has suffered." But when out of Mary he came amongst us "once for all at the summing up of the ages for the putting away of sin" [Heb. 9:26]—for since he pleased to do so, the Father "sent his own Son, born of a woman, born under the law" [Gal. 4:4]—on that occasion it is said that he took on flesh and became a human being and suffered on our account in that

flesh—even as Peter said, "Christ therefore suffered on our account in the flesh" [1 Pet. 4:1]. The purpose of this was to demonstrate and to bring all to believe that although he is always God, and sanctifies those for whom he has become present, and orders everything in accordance with the Father's will, in the end and on our account he became human, and "the Godhead dwelt bodily" [Col. 2:9], as the apostle says, in the flesh. This amounts to saying, "Being God, he had his own body, and using this as an instrument, he became human on our account."

For this reason the things proper to this flesh are said to belong to him because he was in it—such things as being hungry, being thirsty, suffering, getting tired, and the like, to which the flesh is susceptible. But the proper works of the *Logos* himself, such as raising the dead and making the blind see and healing the woman with a hemorrhage, he accomplished through the instrumentality of his own body. Furthermore, the *Logos* bore the weaknesses of the flesh as his own, since the flesh belonged to him, while the flesh renders assistance in the works of the Godhead, since the Godhead came to be within it, for it was God's body.

It is well that the prophet said "He *bore*" and did not say "He *cured* our infirmities" [Matt. 8:17], lest, as one outside the body, he merely cured it as he has always done, and once again left human beings under the power of death. In fact, however, he bore our weaknesses and "he himself bore our sins" [Isa. 53:4], in order to show that he became a human being on our account and that the body which bore them in him is his very own. And he himself was in no way harmed as he "bore our sins in his body on the tree" [1 Pet. 2:24], to use Peter's words. We human beings, however, were set free from the passions which belonged to us and were filled with the righteousness of the *Logos*.

Consequently, when the flesh was suffering, the *Logos* was not apart from it. That is why the suffering also is said to belong to him. When he was doing the works of the Father in a divine way, the flesh was not external to him. On the contrary, the Lord did these things in the body itself. This explains why, when he had become human, he said, "If I do not do the works of my Father, do not believe me. But if I do them, even if you do not believe me, believe the works themselves, so that you may know that the Father is in me and I in him" [John 10:37-38]. Thus, when it was necessary to raise up Peter's

mother-in-law, who was suffering from a fever, it was a human act when he extended his hand but a divine act when he caused the disease to cease. Likewise, in the case of "the man blind from birth" [John 9:6] it was human spittle which he spat, but it was a divine act when he opened the man's eyes by means of clay. And where Lazarus is concerned, he uttered human speech in his capacity as a human being, but it was a divine act when, in his capacity as God, he raised Lazarus from the dead. It was in this fashion that these things were done, and they showed that he possessed a body in reality and not as a matter of mere seeming.

It was appropriate for the Lord, when he was clothed in human flesh, to put it on in its totality, together with all the passions proper to it, so that just as we say the body was properly his, so also the passions of the body might be said to belong to him alone, even though they did not touch him in his deity. So if the body had belonged to someone else, its passions too would be predicated of that subject. If, however, the flesh belongs to the *Logos* (for "the *Logos* became flesh"), it is necessary to predicate the fleshly passions of him whose flesh it is. And the one of whom the passions are predicated—condemnation, for example, scourging, and crucifixion and death and the other weaknesses of the body—is also the one to whom the triumph and the grace are attributed. So it is logical and fitting that passions of this sort be predicated not of another but of the Lord, in order that grace also may derive from him and we may become not worshipers of someone else but truly servants of God. We appeal not to something which has come into existence or to some ordinary human being but to the true Son, who is by nature derived from God, and to this Son as he has become human and yet remains nothing other than our Lord and God and Savior.

Who will not marvel at this? Who will not agree that it is truly something divine? If the works of the *Logos'* Godhead had not been done by means of the body, humanity would not have been divinized. Furthermore, if the properties of the flesh had not been reckoned to the *Logos*, humanity would not have been completely liberated from them. On the contrary, as I said above, they might have ceased for a brief space, but sin and corruption would have remained within humanity, just as they did in the case of human beings before Christ. What is more, this is apparent.

Many people, after all, have become holy and clean from all sin. Jeremiah was made holy even from the womb, and John, while still unborn, "leapt for joy" at the voice of Mary the mother of God. Nevertheless, "death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression" [Rom. 5:14], and in this way, human beings continued to be mortal and corruptible nonetheless, subject to the passions that belong to their nature.

Now that the *Logos* has become human and made the flesh his very own, these passions no longer affect the body because the *Logos* has come to dwell within it. In fact, the opposite is the case. The passions have been destroyed by him, and from now on human beings no longer continue as sinners and dead persons in accordance with the passions that are proper to them. Rather, they have risen from the dead in accordance with the power of the *Logos*, and they remain forever immortal and incorruptible.

This explains why he who supplies others with the origin of their being is himself said to have been born; his flesh was born of Mary the mother of God. The purpose of this is that we may have our origin relocated in him and that we may no longer return to earth because mere earth is what we are, but may be carried by him into the heavens because we are joined to the *Logos* who comes from heaven. In the same way, therefore, he has appropriately taken upon himself the other passions of the body too, in order that we may grasp eternal life no longer as human beings but as creatures belonging to the *Logos*, for we no longer die "in Adam" in accordance with our first origin. From now on, since our origin and all our fleshly weakness has been transferred to the *Logos*, we are being raised up from earth; the curse which sin occasioned has been removed through the agency of him who is in us and who "for our sakes became a curse" [Gal. 3:13]. Just as we die in Adam because we are all from the earth, so "we are all made alive in Christ" because we are "reborn" from above "by water and the Spirit" [1 Cor. 15:22; John 3:5]; the flesh is no longer earthly, but now it has been "logified" by the work of the divine *Logos* who on our account became flesh.

In order that we may have a more exact understanding of the impassibility of the *Logos'* nature and of the weaknesses that are reckoned to him on account of his flesh, it is well to listen to the blessed Peter, for he will turn out to be a trustworthy witness where the Savior is concerned.

Peter writes in his letter, "Christ therefore suffered in the flesh for our sakes" [1 Pet. 4:1]. So when it is said that he hungered and thirsted and toiled and was ignorant and slept and cried out and made requests and fled and was born and turned away from the cup—in general, did all the things which belong to the flesh—let it in each case be said, as is fitting: "Christ hungered and thirsted 'for our sakes in the flesh'"; "Christ said he did not know and was beaten and toiled 'for our sakes in the flesh'"; and "Christ was lifted up and was born and grew up 'in the flesh'"; and "Christ was afraid and hid himself 'in the flesh'"; and Christ said, 'If it is possible, let this cup pass from me,'" and "Christ was struck," and "Christ was receptive," "for our sakes in the flesh," In general, let all things of this sort be asserted as "for our sakes in the flesh," for this is precisely the reason the apostle himself said, "Christ therefore suffered" not in the Godhead but "for our sakes in the flesh," in order that the passions might be recognized to be natural properties not of the *Logos* but of the flesh.

So, then, let no one be scandalized by the human characteristics [of Christ]. Rather, let people see that the *Logos* himself is impassible by nature and that he nevertheless has these passions predicated of him in virtue of the flesh he took on, since they are proper to the flesh and the body itself is proper to the Savior. Furthermore, he himself remains as he is—impassible in nature. He takes no hurt from these passions, but on the contrary destroys them and brings them to nothing. And human beings, because their own passions have been transferred to the impassible and abolished, are henceforth becoming impassible and free of them to all eternity. That is what John teaches when he says, "And know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him there is no sin" [1 John 3:5].

Since this is the case, no heretic will bring the following objection and ask, "What explains the fact that the flesh was raised when it is by nature mortal? And if it is raised, what explains the fact that it does not still hunger and thirst and suffer and remain mortal? For it came to be out of the earth, and how can it cease to be that which it is by nature?" Now the flesh can give an answer to the disputatious heretic: "I am indeed mortal by nature, taken from the earth. In the latter days, however, I have become the flesh of the *Logos*, and he himself has borne my passions, impassible though he is. So I am free of them. I am no longer enslaved to them, for the Lord has set me free from them. If you

object because I have been released from the corruption which is mine by nature, see to it that you raise no objection to the fact that the divine *Logos* took to himself my state of slavery. Just as the Lord became a human being when he put on a body, so we human beings, once we have been connected to him by way of his flesh, are divinized by the *Logos*, and from that point on we are the heirs of eternal life."

Complete in What is His, Complete in What is Ours

Saint Leo I

Leo I ("the Great") was Pope from 440 until his death in 461. The following—traditionally known as the "Tome of Leo"—is a letter he wrote in 449 to Flavian, the Patriarch of Constantinople, in repudiation of the teachings of Eutyches. It was a decisive text during the deliberations at the Council of Chalcedon (451).

I have read Your Grace's letter, with some amazement at the delay in its arrival. After reviewing the record of the bishops' actions, I can now grasp the nature of the outrage which had arisen in your midst against the integrity of the faith, and whatever had seemed obscure is revealed.

Your letter shows that Eutyches, who seemed, from his title of presbyter, to be worthy of esteem, is an extremely foolish and altogether ignorant man. What the prophet said is true in his case also: "He did not wish to learn in order that he might act for the best; in his bed he pondered iniquity" [Ps. 35:4 LXX]. What could be more iniquitous than to dabble in irreverence and to refuse deference to people who are wiser and better instructed than ourselves? This, however, is just the kind of folly people fall into when, in the face of some obscurity which prevents their grasping the truth, they turn to themselves and not to the voices of the prophets, the letters of the apostles, or the authority of the evangelists. The result is that since they have not been students of the truth, they are teachers of error, for what can a person have learned from the sacred pages of the Old and New Testaments when he does not even understand the opening phrases of the creed? What is declared all the world over by the voice of every single candidate for rebirth, this elderly man does not even yet understand in his heart.

Even if, therefore, he did not know what to think about the incarnation of God's Word, and even if he was not willing to work through the whole breadth of the Holy Scriptures in order to gain the light of understanding, he might at any rate have paid careful attention to that shared and indivisible confession [the Nicene Creed] in which the universal body of believers professes belief in "God the omnipotent Father" and in "Jesus Christ his unique Son, our Lord, who was born of the Holy Spirit and Mary the Virgin."

By these three assertions, almost all the devices of the heretics are cast down, for when it is believed that God is both omnipotent and Father, it is shown that the Son is coeternal with him, as one who differs from the Father in no respect. After all, he is "God from God," omnipotent from omnipotent. He was begotten as coeternal from the eternal—not later in time or inferior in power or dissimilar in splendor or different in essence. And in truth it is this very same being, this only and eternal Child of the eternal Begetter, who was born "of the Holy Spirit and Mary the Virgin."

This birth in time in no way detracted from that divine and eternal birth and in no way added anything to it. Its entire meaning was worked out in the restoration of humanity, which had been led astray. It came about so that death might be conquered and that the devil, who once exercised death's sovereignty, might by its power be destroyed, for we would not be able to overcome the author of sin and of death unless he whom sin could not stain nor death hold took on our nature and made it his own. So he was conceived by the Holy Spirit within the womb of his virgin mother, and she was as much a virgin when she gave him birth as she was at his conception.

But if Eutyches could not, from this purest source of Christian faith, derive a sound understanding of it—because a blindness peculiar to himself obscured the brightness of evident truth—he might have submitted himself to the teaching of the Gospels. In the face of Matthew's words, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" [Matt. 1:1], he might have sought further instruction from the proclamation of the apostle. And when he read in Romans, "Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he had promised earlier through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who in the order of the flesh came to be for him from the seed of David" [Rom. 1:1-3], he might have applied his reverent attention to the pages of the prophets. And when he had come across God's promise to Abraham "In your seed all nations shall be blessed" [Gen. 12:3], lest he have doubts about the meaning of that word "seed," he might have paid attention to the apostle's words "The promises were given to Abraham and to his 'seed.' He does not say 'seeds,' as if referring to more than one. Rather, as if referring to a single 'seed,' he says 'and to your seed'—and that means Christ" [Gal. 3:16]. He might also have listened to Isaiah with interior understanding when the prophet says, "Behold, a virgin shall

conceive in her womb and shall give birth to a Son, and they shall call his name 'Emmanuel,' which means 'God with us'" [Matt. 1:23; cf. Isa. 7:14]. And he might have read with faithful heart the words of the same prophet: "A child is born to us, a son is given to us, whose power is upon his shoulder; and they shall call his name 'Angel of Great Counsel,' 'Wonderful Counselor,' 'Strong God,' 'Prince of Peace,' 'Father of the Coming Age'" [Isa. 9:6].

Furthermore, Eutyches might have refrained from speaking deceptively and asserting that "the Word was made flesh" in the sense that Christ, after his birth of the Virgin, possessed the form of a human being but not the reality of his mother's body. Is it possible that the reason he thought our Lord Jesus Christ was not of our nature is that the angel which was sent to the blessed, ever-virgin Mary said, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, and therefore what will be born of you will be called holy, the Son of God" [Luke 1:35]—as if because virginal conception is something God effects, the flesh of the child conceived was not taken from the nature of the woman who conceived it?

That singularly wonderful and wonderfully singular birth must not be understood in such a way as to suggest that the novelty of the method by which the child was produced entailed destruction of the characteristics of the human race. It was the Holy Spirit who made the Virgin fertile, but the substantive reality of the body was derived from her body; so, "since Wisdom was building herself a house" [Prov. 9:1], "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" [John 1:14].

Since, therefore, the characteristic properties of both natures and substances are kept intact and come together in one person, lowliness is taken on by majesty, weakness by power, mortality by eternity, and the nature which cannot be harmed is united to the nature which suffers, in order that the debt which our condition involves may be discharged. In this way, as our salvation requires, one and the same mediator between God and human beings, the human being who is Jesus Christ, can at one and the same time die in virtue of the one nature and, in virtue of the other, be incapable of death. That is why true God was born in the integral and complete nature of a true human being, entire in what belongs to him and entire in what belongs to us.

By the expression "what belongs to us" we mean the things which the Creator established in us from the beginning and which he took on himself for the sake of restoring them. Of those things which the Deceiver introduced [into human existence], and which a deceived humanity accepted, there was no trace in the Savior. No more does the fact that he shared human weaknesses signify that he had a part in our evil actions. He took on the form of a servant without any spot of sin. What he did was to enhance humanity not diminish deity. That self-emptying of his, by which the invisible revealed himself visible and the Creator and Lord of all things elected to be reckoned among mortals, was a drawing-near in mercy not a failure in power.

Consequently, he who made humanity while remaining in the form of God is the same one who in the form of a slave became human. Each nature retained its characteristics without defect, and just as the "form of God" does not remove the "form of a slave," so the "form of a slave" does not diminish the "form of God."

Here was the devil, boasting—that humankind, deceived by his lie, had lost God's gifts and undergone the hard sentence of death after being stripped of its endowment of immortality; that he himself, in the midst of his troubles, had derived some comfort from the fact that he had a partner in his transgression; and, what is more, that God, by reason of the claim of justice, had altered his judgment of humanity even though he had created it in such honor. In the face of all this, there had to be, in God's secret purpose, a way of dealing with this problem, in order that the immutable God, whose will cannot be deprived of the beneficence proper to it, might by a more hidden gift of grace fulfill his original gracious intention with regard to humanity, and also in order that humanity, which had been led into guilt by the devil's craft, might not perish in contradiction to God's purpose.

So it is that God's Son enters this lower world. He descends from his heavenly throne and is born with a new kind of birth in a novel order of existence, yet without departing from the glory of his Father.

The mode of existence is novel because one who is invisible in his own way of being has become visible in ours, and because the incomprehensible has willed to be understood. While continuing to be beyond time, he begins to exist from a point in time. Veiling his measureless majesty, the Lord of the universe assumes the "form of a slave."

The impassible God does not disdain existence as a passible human being, and the immortal does not disdain to submit himself to the laws of death.

He is born with a new kind of birth, because an inviolate virginity, unacquainted with desire, supplied the matter of his flesh. What the Lord took from his mother was nature, not guilt. The fact that his birth was extraordinary does not mean that our Lord Jesus Christ, in his birth of a virgin, has a nature different from ours. The same one who is a genuine human being is also genuinely God, and in this unity there is no deception as long as both lowliness and divine loftiness have their reciprocal spheres. Just as God is not altered by his compassion, so humanity is not destroyed by its elevation in honor.

Each "form" carries on its proper activities in communion with the other. The Word does what belongs to it, and the flesh carries out what belongs to it. The one shimmers with wondrous deeds, the other succumbs to injury and insult. Just as the Word does not withdraw from the glory which it shares equally with the Father, neither does the flesh surrender the nature of humankind, for there is one and the same—as we must say over and over again—who is genuinely Son of God and genuinely Son of man. He is God by reason of the fact that "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" [John 1:1]. He is human by reason of the fact that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" [John 1:14]. He is God by reason of the fact that "all things have been made through him, and without him nothing was made" [John 1:3]. He is human by reason of the fact that "he was made out of a woman, made under the law" [Gal. 4:4].

The fact that it was flesh which was born reveals his human nature, while the fact that he was born of a virgin gives evidence of the divine power. The state of infancy proper to a child is exhibited by the meanness of his cradle; the greatness of the Most High is declared by the voices of the angels. The one whom Herod sets out to kill is like an ungrown human being, but the one whom the Magi worship with humble joy is the Lord of all. Lest the fact that his flesh was the veil of deity go unrecognized, the voice of God thundered from heaven as early as the time at which he came to the baptism ministered by his forerunner John: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" [Matt. 3:17]. So the one whom the devil's cunning tempted as a human being is the same one to whom the angel's services were rendered as God. Plainly it is a human thing to

hunger and thirst and get tired and sleep. But to satisfy five thousand men with bread and to bestow on a Samaritan woman living water whose consumption enables its drinker to thirst no more, to walk on the surface of the sea without sinking and to moderate "the swellings of the waves" when a storm has come up—that is a divine thing without question. But let us pass over much of the evidence and sum the matter up. It is not an act of one and the same nature to weep over a friend's death in an access of pity and to summon that very friend back to life with the power of a word after opening the grave in which he had been buried for four days; or to hang from the cross and to cause the stars to tremble in their courses after turning day into night; or to be pierced with nails and to open the gates of paradise to the faith of a thief. By the same token, it is not an act of one and the same nature to say, "I and the Father are one" [John 10:30], and to say "The Father is greater than I" [John 14:28]. Even though there is, in our Lord Jesus Christ, one person of God and of a human being, nevertheless the principle in virtue of which both share in indignity is one thing, and the principle in virtue of which both share in glory is another. A humanity inferior to the Father comes to him from us, and a divinity equal to the Father's comes to him from the Father.

Because of this unity of person, which must be understood to subsist in a twofold nature, we read that the Son of man came down from heaven (since the Son of God took on flesh from the Virgin of whom he was born), and conversely we say that the Son of God was crucified and buried (even though he endured these things not in that divine nature in virtue of which, as Only Begotten, he is coeternal and consubstantial with the Father, but in the weakness of his human nature). Consequently we all also confess in the creed that the only-begotten Son was crucified and buried, in accordance with the words of the apostle: "For if they had known, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory" [1 Cor. 2:8]. What is more, when our Lord and Savior himself was informing the faith of his disciples by the questions he asked them, he said, "Who do people say that I, the Son of man, am?" And when they had repeated the various opinions of others to him, he went on, "But who do you say that I am?"—I who am Son of man and whom you perceive in "the form of a slave" and in the reality of my flesh—"who do you say that I am?" [Matt. 16:13-18]. At this point the blessed Peter, divinely inspired and about to help the nations by his confession, said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And

it was not undeserved that the Lord called him blessed and that Peter took the firmness both of his power and of his name from the original Rock—this man who, through revelation of the Father, confessed that the same person was both Son of God and Christ; for if one of these affirmations is received without the other, it does not profit for salvation. It was equally perilous for people to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is simply God and not a human being, or a mere human being and not God.

Consider the time after the Lord's resurrection (which was the resurrection of a real body, for none other was revived than the one who was crucified and done to death). For what other reason was there a waiting period of forty days than that the wholeness of our faith might be cleansed from all obscurity? He spoke with his disciples and lived and ate together with them, and permitted himself to be handled by the eager, searching touch of those who were troubled by doubts. This is the reason he entered into his disciples' company through closed doors and conferred the Holy Spirit by the breath of his mouth and, when he had given the light of understanding, opened the hidden things of the Holy Scriptures. On the other hand, the same person exhibited all the evidences of his recent suffering—the wound in his side and the prints of the nails—and said, "See by my hands and my feet that it is I. Touch and see; for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have" [Luke 24:39].

Why was all this? In order that the characteristic properties of the divine and human natures might be acknowledged to persist in him without separation, and in order that we might grasp the difference between *Logos* and flesh in such a way as to confess that the Son and *Logos* of God, on the one hand, and the flesh, on the other, are one reality.

Our Eutyches must be judged entirely innocent of this mystery of faith. In God's Only Begotten he does not acknowledge the presence of our nature, whether in the humility of the mortal state or in the glory of the resurrection life. Nor has Eutyches trembled before the judgment of the blessed apostle and evangelist John: "Every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ came in the flesh is of God, and any spirit which dissolves Jesus is not of God, and this is Antichrist" [1 John 4:2, 3]. But what is meant by "dissolving" Jesus if not to separate his human nature from him and so, by shameless fiction, to render the mystery by which alone we are saved null and void? Surely if he

obscures the nature of Christ's body he must also, by reason of the same blindness, play the fool where Christ's suffering is concerned. If he does not think that the Lord's cross is a sham, and if he does not doubt that the punishment borne by Christ for the world's salvation was real, let him acknowledge the flesh of the one whose death he affirms. And let him not deny that one whom he knows to have been capable of suffering was a human being with our sort of body, for if you reject real flesh, you reject corporeal suffering. If, then, he accepts the Christian faith and is not deaf to the preaching of the Gospel, let him ask himself which nature was pierced by nails and hung on the wood of the cross, and let him understand from what source the "blood and water" flowed, when the soldier's lance pierced the side of the crucified one so that the church might be moistened both by washing and by the cup. What is more, let him hear the blessed apostle Peter proclaiming that "sanctification of the Spirit" comes through "the sprinkling of the blood of Christ" [1 Pet. 1:2], And let him read—and attentively, too—the words of the same apostle when he says, "Knowing that it is not by corruptible gold and silver that you have been redeemed from the vain way of life practiced by your fathers, but by the precious blood of a pure and spotless lamb, Jesus Christ" [1 Pet. 1:18-19]. Nor let him stand against the testimony of the blessed apostle John, who says, "And may the blood of Jesus the Son of God cleanse you from all sin" [1 John 1:7]. And again, "This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith" [1 John 5:5]. Furthermore, "Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? This is the one who came by water and by blood, even Jesus Christ—not by water only, but by water and by blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth, for there are three which bear witness—the Spirit, the water, and the blood—and the three are one" [1 John 5:6-8]. This means the Spirit of sanctification and the blood of redemption and the water of baptism. These three are one, they remain undivided, and none of them exists in separation from the others. The catholic church lives and grows by the faith that in Christ Jesus there is neither humanity apart from real divinity nor divinity apart from real humanity.

When Eutyches responded to your questions by saying, "I confess that before the union our Lord was of two natures, but after the union I confess one nature," I am astounded that this quite absurd and quite perverse profession of his went uncensured by

any rebuke from his judges and that an utterly foolish and blasphemous expression was passed over as if nothing offensive had been heard. It is just as irreverent to say that the Son of God was of two natures before the incarnation as it is execrable to say that after "the *Logos* was made flesh" the nature which is in him is one in number. In case Eutyches thinks that since you said nothing to repudiate it this statement of his asserted something correct and tolerable, I admonish your earnest sense of duty, dear brother, that if, through the inspiration of God's mercy, this case is brought to a satisfactory conclusion, the imprudence of an inexperienced person may be purged of this intellectual virus too. As the minutes reveal, he did in fact begin to depart from his ideas. Compelled by your judgment, he professed himself an assertor of what he had not said earlier and a believer in that faith from which he had previously departed. Since, however, he declined to agree to the necessity of anathematizing the irreverent teaching, Your Fraternity understood that he remained in his faithlessness and that he was worthy of condemnation. So if he is genuinely and fruitfully sorry, and comes to a tardy recognition of how rightly episcopal authority was moved to take action, or at any rate, to make full satisfaction, condemns with his own voice and his accompanying signature all the ideas which he wrongly conceived, no degree of mercy will be blamable in the case of one who has mended his ways. Our Lord, the true and good shepherd, who "laid down his life for his sheep" [John 10:15] and who "came to save people's souls, not to lose" them [Luke 9:56], wants us to be imitators of his faithfulness, so that justice may indeed compel those who are sinning, but mercy may not turn the repentant away. Our faith will finally be defended to good purpose when the false opinion is condemned even by its adherents. I have, however, given directions to my brothers Julius the bishop and Renatus the presbyter, as well as to my son Hilary the deacon, to act in my stead, so that the case may be settled reverently and faithfully. With them I have associated my notary Dulcitus, whose reliability has been established. I am confident that God's help will be available, so that this man who had sinned may be saved when he has condemned his depraved idea.

The Grand Miracle

C. S. Lewis

In this very rich, rewarding, and demanding chapter—Chapter XIV of his book *Miracles: A Preliminary Study*—Lewis defends his claim that the “central miracle” of Christianity, the Incarnation, makes sense in light of what we know about nature as a whole and in turn gives sense to every other miracle.

A light that shone from behind the sun; the sun was not so fierce as to pierce where that light could.

Charles Williams

The central miracle asserted by Christians is the Incarnation. They say that God became Man. Every other miracle prepares for this, or exhibits this, or results from this. Just as every natural event is the manifestation at a particular place and moment of Nature's total character, so every particular Christian miracle manifests at a particular place and moment the character and significance of the Incarnation. There is no question in Christianity of arbitrary interferences just scattered about: It relates not a series of disconnected raids on Nature but the various steps of a strategically coherent invasion—an invasion which intends complete conquest and 'occupation'. The fitness, and therefore credibility, of the particular miracles depends on their relation to the Grand Miracle; all discussion of them in isolation from it is futile.

The fitness or credibility of the Grand Miracle itself cannot, obviously, be judged by the same standard. And let us admit at once that it is very difficult to find a standard by which it can be judged. If the thing happened, it was the central event in the history of the Earth—the very thing that the whole story has been about. Since it happened only once, it is by [David] Hume's standards infinitely improbable. But then the whole history of the Earth has also happened only once; is it therefore incredible? Hence the difficulty, which weighs upon Christian and atheist alike, of estimating the probability of the Incarnation. It is like asking whether the existence of Nature herself is intrinsically probable. That is why it is easier to argue, on historical grounds, that the Incarnation actually occurred than to show, on philosophical grounds, the probability of its

occurrence. The historical difficulty of giving for the life, sayings, and influence of Jesus any explanation that is not harder than the Christian explanation is very great. The discrepancy between the depth and sanity and (let me add) shrewdness of His moral teaching and the rampant megalomania which must lie behind His theological teaching unless He is indeed God, has never been satisfactorily got over. Hence the non-Christian hypotheses succeed one another with the restless fertility of bewilderment. Today we are asked to regard all the theological elements as later accretions to the story of a 'historical' and merely human Jesus: yesterday we were asked to believe that the whole thing began with vegetation myths and mystery religions and that the pseudo-historical Man was only fadged up at a later date. But this historical enquiry is outside the scope of my book.

Since the Incarnation, if it is a fact, holds this central position, and since we are assuming that we do not yet know it to have happened on historical grounds, we are in a position which may be illustrated by the following analogy. Let us suppose we possess parts of a novel or a symphony. Someone now brings us a newly discovered piece of manuscript and says, 'This is the missing part of the work. This is the chapter on which the whole plot of the novel really turned. This is the main theme of the symphony.' Our business would be to see whether the new passage, if admitted to the central place which the discoverer claimed for it, did actually illuminate all the parts we had already seen and 'pull them together'. Nor should we be likely to go very far wrong. The new passage, if spurious, however attractive it looked at the first glance, would become harder and harder to reconcile with the rest of the work the longer we considered the matter. But if it were genuine, then at every fresh hearing of the music or every fresh reading of the book, we should find it settling down, making itself more at home, and eliciting significance from all sorts of details in the whole work which we had hitherto neglected. Even though the new central chapter or main theme contained great difficulties in itself, we should still think it genuine provided that it continually removed difficulties elsewhere. Something like this we must do with the doctrine of the Incarnation. Here, instead of a symphony or a novel, we have the whole mass of our knowledge. The credibility will depend on the extent to which the doctrine, if accepted, can illuminate and integrate that whole mass. It is much less important that the doctrine itself should be fully comprehensible. We believe

that the sun is in the sky at midday in summer not because we can clearly see the sun (in fact, we cannot) but because we can see everything else.

The first difficulty that occurs to any critic of the doctrine lies in the very centre of it. What can be meant by 'God becoming Man'? In what sense is it conceivable that eternal self-existent Spirit, basic Fact-hood, should be so combined with a natural human organism as to make one person? And this would be a fatal stumbling-block if we had not already discovered that in every human being a wholly supernatural entity is thus united with a part of Nature: so united that the composite creature calls itself 'I' and 'Me'. I am not, of course, suggesting that what happened when God became Man was simply another instance of this process. In other men a supernatural *creature* thus becomes, in union with the natural creature, one human being. In Jesus, it is held, the Supernatural Creator Himself did so. I do not think anything we can do will enable us to imagine the mode of consciousness of the incarnate God. That is where the doctrine is not fully comprehensible. But the difficulty which we felt in the mere idea of the Supernatural descending into the Natural is apparently non-existent, or is at least overcome in the person of every man. If we did not know by experience what it feels like to be a rational animal—how all these natural facts, all this bio-chemistry and instinctive affection or repulsion and sensuous perception, can become the medium of rational thought and moral will which understand necessary relations and acknowledge modes of behaviour as universally binding, we could not conceive, much less imagine, the thing happening. The discrepancy between a movement of atoms in an astronomer's cortex and his understanding that there must be a still unobserved planet beyond Uranus is already so immense that the Incarnation of God Himself is, in one sense, scarcely more startling. 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. We can understand that if God so descends into a human spirit, and human spirit so descends into Nature, and our thoughts into our senses and passions, and if adult minds (but only the best of them) can descend into sympathy with children, and men into sympathy with

beasts, then everything hangs together and the total reality, both Natural and Supernatural, in which we are living is more multifariously and subtly harmonious than we had suspected. We catch sight of a new key principle—the power of the Higher, just in so far as it is truly Higher, to come down, the power of the greater to include the less. Thus solid bodies exemplify many truths of plane geometry, but plane figures no truths of solid geometry: many inorganic propositions are true of organisms but no organic propositions are true of minerals; Montaigne became kittenish with his kitten but she never talked philosophy to him. Everywhere the great enters the little—its power to do so is almost the test of its greatness.

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. Or one may think of a diver, first reducing himself to nakedness, then glancing in mid-air, then gone with a splash, vanished, rushing down through green and warm water into black and cold water, down through increasing pressure into the death-like region of ooze and slime and old decay; then up again, back to colour and light, his lungs almost bursting, till suddenly he breaks surface again, holding in his hand the dripping, precious thing that he went down to recover. He and it are both coloured now that they have come up into the light: down below, where it lay colourless in the dark, he lost his colour too.

In this descent and re-ascent everyone will recognize a familiar pattern: a thing written all over the world. It is the pattern of all vegetable life. It must belittle itself into something hard, small and deathlike, it must fall into the ground: thence the new life re-ascends. It is the pattern of all animal generation too. There is descent from the full and perfect organisms into the spermatozoon and ovum, and in the dark womb a life at first inferior in kind to that of the species which is being reproduced: then the slow ascent to

the perfect embryo, to the living, conscious baby, and finally to the adult. So it is also in our moral and emotional life. The first innocent and spontaneous desires have to submit to the deathlike process of control or total denial: but from that there is a re-ascent to fully formed character in which the strength of the original material all operates but in a new way. Death and Re-birth—go down to go up—it is a key principle. Through this bottleneck, this belittlement, the highroad nearly always lies.

The doctrine of the Incarnation, if accepted, puts this principle even more emphatically at the centre. The pattern is there in Nature because it was first there in God. All the instances of it which I have mentioned turn out to be but transpositions of the Divine theme into a minor key. I am not now referring simply to the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ. The total pattern, of which they are only the turning point, is the real Death and Re-birth: for certainly no seed ever fell from so fair a tree into so dark and cold a soil as would furnish more than a faint analogy to this huge descent and re-ascension in which God dredged the salt and oozy bottom of Creation.

From this point of view the Christian doctrine makes itself so quickly at home amid the deepest apprehensions of reality which we have from other sources that doubt may spring up in a new direction. Is it not fitting in too well? So well that it must have come into men's minds from seeing this pattern elsewhere, particularly in the annual death and resurrection of the corn? For there have, of course, been many religions in which that annual drama (so important for the life of the tribe) was almost admittedly the central theme, and the deity—Adonis, Osiris, or another—almost undisguisedly a personification of the corn, a 'corn-king' who died and rose again each year. Is not Christ simply another corn-king?

Now this brings us to the oddest thing about Christianity. In a sense the view which I have just described is actually true. From a certain point of view Christ is 'the same sort of thing' as Adonis or Osiris (always, of course, waiving the fact that they lived nobody knows where or when, while He was executed by a Roman magistrate we know in a year which can be roughly dated). And that is just the puzzle. If Christianity is a religion of that kind why is the analogy of the seed falling into the ground so seldom mentioned (twice only if I mistake not) in the New Testament? Corn-religions are popular and respectable: if that is what the first Christian teachers were putting across,

what motive could they have for concealing the fact? The impression they make is that of men who simply don't know how close they are to the corn-religions: men who simply overlook the rich sources of relevant imagery and association which they must have been on the verge of tapping at every moment. If you say they suppressed it because they were Jews, that only raises the puzzle in a new form. Why should the only religion of a 'dying God' which has actually survived and risen to unexampled spiritual heights occur precisely among those people to whom, and to whom almost alone, the whole circle of ideas that belong to the 'dying god' was foreign? I myself, who first seriously read the New Testament when I was, imaginatively and poetically, all agog for the Death and Re-birth pattern and anxious to meet a corn-king, was chilled and puzzled by the almost total absence of such ideas in the Christian documents. One moment particularly stood out. A 'dying God'—the only dying god who might possibly be historical—holds bread, that is, corn, in His hand and says, 'This is my body.' Surely here, even if nowhere else—or surely if not here, at least in the earliest comments on this passage and through all later devotional usage in ever swelling volume—the truth must come out; the connection between this and the annual drama of the crops must be made. But it is not. It is there for me. There is no sign that it was there for the disciples or (humanly speaking) for Christ Himself. It is almost as if He didn't realize what He had said.

The records, in fact, show us a Person who *enacts* the part of the Dying God, but whose thoughts and words remain quite outside the circle of religious ideas to which the Dying God belongs. The very thing which the Nature-religions are all about seems to have really happened once: but it happened in a circle where no trace of Nature-religion was present. It is as if you met the sea-serpent and found that it disbelieved in sea-serpents: as if history recorded a man who had done all the things attributed to Sir Launcelot but who had himself never apparently heard of chivalry.

There is, however, one hypothesis which, if accepted, makes everything easy and coherent. The Christians are not claiming that simply 'God' was incarnate in Jesus. They are claiming that the one true God is He whom the Jews worshipped as Jahweh, and that it is He who has descended. Now the double character of Jahweh is this. On the one hand He is the God of Nature, her glad Creator. It is He who sends rain into the furrows till the valleys stand so thick with corn that they laugh and sing. The trees of the wood rejoice

before Him and His voice causes the wild deer to bring forth their young. He is the God of wheat and wine and oil. In that respect He is constantly doing all the things that Nature-Gods do: He is Bacchus, Venus, Ceres all rolled into one. There is no trace in Judaism of the idea found in some pessimistic and Pantheistic religions that Nature is some kind of illusion or disaster, that finite existence is in itself an evil and that the cure lies in the relapse of all things into God. Compared with such anti-natural conceptions Jahweh might almost be mistaken for a Nature-God.

On the other hand, Jahweh is clearly *not* a Nature-God. He does not die and come to life each year as a true Corn-king should. He may give wine and fertility, but must not be worshipped with Bacchanalian or aphrodisiac rites. He is not the soul of Nature nor of any part of Nature. He inhabits eternity: He dwells in the high and holy place: heaven is His throne, not His vehicle, earth is His footstool, not His vesture. One day He will dismantle both and make a new heaven and earth. He is not to be identified even with the 'divine spark' in man. He is 'God and not man': His thoughts are not our thoughts: all our righteousness is filthy rags. His appearance to Ezekiel is attended with imagery that does not borrow from Nature, but (it is a mystery too seldom noticed) from those machines which men were to make centuries after Ezekiel's death. The prophet saw something suspiciously like a *dynamo*.

Jahweh is neither the soul of Nature nor her enemy. She is neither His body nor a declension and falling away from Him. She is His creature. He is not a nature-God, but the God of Nature—her inventor, maker, owner, and controller. To everyone who reads this book the conception has been familiar from childhood; we therefore easily think it is the most ordinary conception in the world. 'If people are going to believe in a God at all,' we ask, 'what other kind would they believe in?' But the answer of history is, 'Almost any other kind.' We mistake our privileges for our instincts: just as one meets ladies who believe their own refined manners to be natural to them. They don't remember being taught.

Now if there is such a God and if He descends to rise again, then we can understand why Christ is at once so like the Corn-King and so silent about him. He is like the Corn-King because the Corn-King is a portrait of Him. The similarity is not in the least unreal or accidental. For the Corn-king is derived (through human imagination)

from the facts of Nature, and the facts of Nature from her Creator; the Death and Re-birth pattern is in her because it was first in Him. On the other hand, elements of Nature-religion are strikingly absent from the teaching of Jesus and from the Judaic preparation which led up to it precisely because in them Nature's Original is manifesting Itself. In them you have from the very outset got in behind Nature-religion and behind Nature herself. Where the real God is present the shadows of that God do not appear; that which the shadows resembled does. The Hebrews throughout their history were being constantly headed off from the worship of Nature-gods; not because the Nature-gods were in all respects unlike the God of Nature but because, at best, they were merely like, and it was the destiny of that nation to be turned away from likenesses to the thing itself.

The mention of that nation turns our attention to one of those features in the Christian story which is repulsive to the modern mind. To be quite frank, we do not at all like the idea of a 'chosen people'. Democrats by birth and education, we should prefer to think that all nations and individuals start level in the search for God, or even that all religions are equally true. It must be admitted at once that Christianity makes no concessions to this point of view. It does not tell of a human search for God at all, but of something done by God for, to, and about, Man. And the way in which it is done is selective, undemocratic, to the highest degree. After the knowledge of God had been universally lost or obscured, one man from the whole earth (Abraham) is picked out. He is separated (miserably enough, we may suppose) from his natural surroundings, sent into a strange country, and made the ancestor of a nation who are to carry the knowledge of the true God. Within this nation there is further selection: some die in the desert, some remain behind in Babylon. There is further selection still. The process grows narrower and narrower, sharpens at last into one small bright point like the head of a spear. It is a Jewish girl at her prayers. All humanity (so far as concerns its redemption) has narrowed to that.

Such a process is very unlike what modern feeling demands: but it is startlingly like what Nature habitually does. Selectiveness, and with it (we must allow) enormous wastage, is her method. Out of enormous space a very small portion is occupied by matter at all. Of all the stars, perhaps very few, perhaps only one, have planets. Of the planets in our own system probably only one supports organic life. In the transmission of

organic life, countless seeds and spermatozoa are emitted: some few are selected for the distinction of fertility. Among the species only one is rational. Within that species only a few attain excellence of beauty, strength, or intelligence.

At this point we come perilously near the argument of [Joseph] Butler's famous *Analogy*. I say 'perilously' because the argument of that book very nearly admits parodying in the form 'You say that the behaviour attributed to the Christian God is both wicked and foolish: but it is no less likely to be true on that account for I can show that Nature (which He created) behaves just as badly.' To which the atheist will answer—and the nearer he is to Christ in his heart, the more certainly he will do so—'If there is a God like that I despise and defy Him.' But I am not saying that Nature, as we now know her, is good; that is a point we must return to in a moment. Nor am I saying that a God whose actions were no better than Nature's would be a proper object of worship for any honest man. The point is a little finer than that. This selective or undemocratic quality in Nature, at least in so far as it affects human life, is neither good nor evil. According as spirit exploits or fails to exploit this Natural situation, it gives rise to one or the other. It permits, on the one hand, ruthless competition, arrogance, and envy: it permits on the other, modesty and (one of our greatest pleasures) admiration. A world in which I was *really* (and not merely by a useful legal fiction) 'as good as everyone else', in which I never looked up to anyone wiser or cleverer or braver or more learned than I, would be insufferable. The very 'fans' of the cinema stars and the famous footballers know better than to desire that! What the Christian story does is not to instate on the Divine level a cruelty and wastefulness which have already disgusted us on the Natural, but to show us in God's act, working neither cruelly nor wastefully, the same principle which is in Nature also, though down there it works sometimes in one way and sometimes in the other. It illuminates the Natural scene by suggesting that a principle which at first looked meaningless may yet be derived from a principle which is good and fair, may indeed be a depraved and blurred copy of it—the pathological form which it would take in a *spoiled* Nature.

For when we look into the Selectiveness which the Christians attribute to God we find in it none of that 'favouritism' which we were afraid of. The 'chosen' people are chosen not for their own sake (certainly not for their own honour or pleasure) but for the

sake of the unchosen. Abraham is told that 'in his seed' (the chosen nation) 'all nations shall be blest'. That nation has been chosen to bear a heavy burden. Their sufferings are great: but, as Isaiah recognized, their sufferings heal others. On the finally selected Woman falls the utmost depth of maternal anguish. Her Son, the incarnate God, is a 'man of sorrows'; the one Man into whom Deity descended, the one Man who can be lawfully adored, is pre-eminent for suffering.

But, you will ask, does this much mend matters? Is not this still injustice, though now the other way round? Where, at the first glance, we accused God of undue favour to His 'chosen', we are now tempted to accuse Him of undue disfavour. (The attempt to keep up both charges at the same time had better be dropped.) And certainly we have here come to a principle very deep-rooted in Christianity: what may be called the principle of *Vicariousness*. The Sinless Man suffers for the sinful, and, in their degree, all good men for all bad men. And this Vicariousness—no less than Death and Rebirth or Selectiveness—is also a characteristic of Nature. Self-sufficiency, living on one's own resources, is a thing impossible in her realm. Everything is indebted to everything else, sacrificed to everything else, dependent on everything else. And here too we must recognize that the principle is in itself neither good nor bad. The cat lives on the mouse in a way I think bad: the bees and the flowers live on one another in a more pleasing manner. The parasite lives on its 'host': but so also the unborn child on its mother. In social life without Vicariousness there would be no exploitation or oppression; but also no kindness or gratitude. It is a fountain both of love and hatred, both of misery and happiness. When we have understood this we shall no longer think that the depraved examples of Vicariousness in Nature forbid us to suppose that the principle itself is of divine origin.

At this point it may be well to take a backward glance and notice how the doctrine of the Incarnation is already acting on the rest of our knowledge. We have already brought it into contact with four other principles: the composite nature of man, the pattern of descent and re-ascension, Selectiveness, and Vicariousness. The first may be called a fact about the frontier between Nature and Supernature; the other three are characteristics of Nature herself. Now most religions, when brought face to face with the facts of Nature either simply re-affirm them, give them (just as they stand) a transcendent prestige, or

else simply negate them, promise us release from such facts and from Nature altogether. The Nature Religions take the first line. They sanctify our agricultural concerns and indeed our whole biological life. We get really drunk in the worship of Dionysus and lie with real women in the temple of the fertility goddess. In Life-force worship, which is the modern and western type of Nature-religion, we take over the existing trend towards 'development' or increasing complexity in organic, social, and industrial life, and make it a god. The anti-Natural or pessimistic religions, which are more civilized and sensitive, such as Buddhism or higher Hinduism, tell us that Nature is evil and illusory, that there is an escape from this incessant change, this furnace of striving and desire. Neither the one nor the other sets the facts of Nature in a new light. The Nature religions merely reinforce that view of Nature which we spontaneously adopt in our moments of rude health and cheerful brutality; the anti-natural religions do the same for the view we take in moments of compassion, fastidiousness, or lassitude. The Christian doctrine does neither of these things. If any man approaches it with the idea that because Jahweh is the God of fertility our lasciviousness is going to be authorized or that the Selectiveness and Vicariousness of God's method will excuse us for imitating (as 'Heroes', 'Supermen', or social parasites) the lower Selectiveness and Vicariousness of Nature, he will be stunned and repelled by the inflexible Christian demand for chastity, humility, mercy, and justice. On the other hand if we come to it regarding the death which precedes every re-birth, or the fact of inequality, or our dependence on others and their dependence on us, as the mere odious necessities of an evil cosmos, and hoping to be delivered into transparent and 'enlightened' spirituality where all these things just vanish, we shall be equally disappointed. We shall be told that, in one sense, and despite enormous differences, it is 'the same all the way up'; that hierarchical inequality, the need for self surrender, the willing sacrifice of self to others, and the thankful and loving (but unashamed) acceptance of others' sacrifice to us, hold sway in the realm beyond Nature. It is indeed only love that makes the difference: all those very same principles which are evil in the world of selfishness and necessity are good in the world of love and understanding. Thus, as we accept this doctrine of the higher world we make new discoveries about the lower world. It is from that hill that we first really understand the landscape of this valley. Here, at last, we find (as we do not find either in the Nature religions or in the religions that

deny Nature) a real illumination: Nature is being lit up by a light from beyond Nature. Someone is speaking who knows more about her than can be known from inside her.

Throughout this doctrine it is, of course, implied that Nature is infected with evil. Those great key-principles which exist as modes of goodness in the Divine Life, take on, in her operations, not merely a less perfect form (that we should, on any view, expect) but forms which I have been driven to describe as morbid or depraved. And this depravity could not be totally removed without the drastic re-making of Nature. Complete human virtue could indeed banish from human life all the evils that now arise in it from Vicariousness and Selectiveness and retain only the good: but the wastefulness and painfulness of non-human Nature would remain—and would, of course, continue to infect human life in the form of Disease. And the destiny which Christianity promises to man clearly involves a 'redemption' or 'remaking' of Nature which could not stop at Man, or even at this planet. We are told that 'the whole creation' is in travail, and that Man's re-birth will be the signal for hers. This gives rise to several problems, the discussion of which puts the whole doctrine of the Incarnation in a clearer light.

In the first place, we ask how the Nature created by a good God comes to be in this condition? By which question we may mean either how she comes to be imperfect—to leave 'room for improvement' as the schoolmasters say in their reports—or else, how she comes to be positively depraved. If we ask the question in the first sense, the Christian answer (I think) is that God, from the first, created her such as to reach her perfection by a process in time. He made an Earth at first 'without form and void' and brought it by degrees to its perfection. In this, as elsewhere, we see the familiar pattern—descent from God to the formless Earth and re-ascent from the formless to the finished. In that sense a certain degree of 'evolutionism' or 'developmentalism' is inherent in Christianity. So much for Nature's imperfection; her positive depravity calls for a very different explanation. According to the Christians this is all due to sin: the sin both of men and of powerful, non-human beings, supernatural but created. The unpopularity of this doctrine arises from the widespread Naturalism of our age—the belief that nothing but Nature exists and that if anything else did she is protected from it by a Maginot Line—and will disappear as this error is corrected. To be sure, the morbid inquisitiveness about such beings which led our ancestors to a pseudo-science of Demonology is to be

sternly discouraged: our attitude should be that of the sensible citizen in wartime who believes that there are enemy spies in our midst but disbelieves nearly every particular spy story. We must limit ourselves to the general statement that beings in a different, and higher, 'Nature' which is *partially* interlocked with ours have, like men, fallen and have tampered with things inside our frontier. The doctrine, besides proving itself fruitful of good in each man's spiritual life, helps to protect us from shallowly optimistic or pessimistic views of Nature. To call her either 'good' or 'evil' is boys' philosophy. We find ourselves in a world of transporting pleasures, ravishing beauties, and tantalizing possibilities, but all constantly being destroyed, all coming to nothing. Nature has all the air of a good thing spoiled.

The sin, both of men and of angels, was rendered possible by the fact that God gave them free will: thus surrendering a portion of His omnipotence (it is again a deathlike or descending movement) because He saw that from a world of free creatures, even though they fell, He could work out (and this is the re-ascent) a deeper happiness and a fuller splendour than any world of automata would admit.

Another question that arises is this. If the redemption of Man is the beginning of Nature's redemption as a whole, must we then conclude after all that Man is the most important thing in Nature? If I had to answer 'Yes' to this question I should not be embarrassed. Supposing Man to be the only rational animal in the universe, then (as has been shown) his small size and the small size of the globe he inhabits would not make it ridiculous to regard him as the hero of the cosmic drama: Jack after all is the smallest character in *Jack the Giant-Killer*. Nor do I think it in the least improbable that Man is in fact the only rational creature in this spatiotemporal Nature. That is just the sort of lonely pre-eminence—just the disproportion between picture and frame—which all that I know of Nature's 'selectiveness' would lead me to anticipate. But I do not need to assume that it actually exists. Let Man be only one among a myriad of rational species, and let him be the only one that has fallen. Because he has fallen, for him God does the great deed; just as in the parable it is the one lost sheep for whom the shepherd hunts. Let Man's pre-eminence or solitude be one not of superiority but of misery and evil: then, all the more, Man will be the very species into which Mercy will descend. For this prodigal the fatted calf, or, to speak more suitably, the eternal Lamb, is killed. But once the Son of God,

drawn hither not by our merits but by our unworthiness, has put on human nature, then our species (whatever it may have been before) does become in one sense the central fact in all Nature: our species, rising after its long descent, will drag all Nature up with it because in our species the Lord of Nature is now included. And it would be all of a piece with what we already know of ninety and nine righteous races inhabiting distant planets that circle distant suns, and needing no redemption on their own account, were re-made and glorified by the glory which had descended into our race. For God is not merely mending, not simply restoring a *status quo*. Redeemed humanity is to be something more glorious than unfallen humanity would have been, more glorious than any unfallen race now is (if at this moment the night sky conceals any such). The greater the sin, the greater the mercy: the deeper the death the brighter the re-birth. And this super-added glory will, with true vicariousness, exalt all creatures and those who have never fallen will thus bless Adam's fall.

I write so far on the assumption that the Incarnation was occasioned only by the Fall. Another view has, of course, been sometimes held by Christians. According to it the descent of God into Nature was not in itself occasioned by sin. It would have occurred for Glorification and Perfection even if it had not been required for Redemption. Its attendant circumstances would have been very different: the divine humility would not have been a divine humiliation, the sorrows, the gall and vinegar, the crown of thorns and the cross, would have been absent. If this view is taken, then clearly the Incarnation, wherever and however it occurred, would always have been the beginning of Nature's re-birth. The fact that it has occurred in the human species, summoned thither by that strong incantation of misery and abjection which Love has made Himself unable to resist, would not deprive it of its universal significance.

This doctrine of a universal redemption spreading outwards from the redemption of Man, mythological as it will seem to modern minds, is in reality far more philosophical than any theory which holds that God, having once entered Nature, should leave her, and leave her substantially unchanged, or that the glorification of one creature could be realized without the glorification of the whole system. God never undoes anything but evil, never does good to undo it again. The union between God and Nature in the Person of Christ admits no divorce. He will not *go out of* Nature again and she

must be glorified in all ways which this miraculous union demands. When spring comes it 'leaves no corner of the land untouched'; even a pebble dropped in a pond sends circles to the margin. The question we want to ask about Man's 'central' position in this drama is really on a level with the disciples' question, 'Which of them was the greatest?'. It is the sort of question which God does not answer. If from Man's point of view the re-creation of non-human and even inanimate Nature appears a mere by-product of his own redemption, then equally from some remote, non-human point of view man's redemption may seem merely the preliminary to this more widely diffused springtime, and the very permission of Man's fall may be supposed to have had that larger end in view. Both attitudes will be right if they will consent to drop the words *mere* and *merely*. Where a God who is totally purposive and totally foreseeing acts upon a Nature which is totally interlocked, there can be no accidents or loose ends, nothing whatever of which we can safely use the word *merely*. Nothing is 'merely a by-product' of anything else. All results are intended from the first. What is subservient from one point of view is the main purpose from another. No thing or event is first or highest in a sense which forbids it to be also last and lowest. The partner who bows to Man in one movement of the dance receives Man's reverences in another. To be high or central means to abdicate continually: to be low means to be raised: all good masters are servants: God washes the feet of men. The concepts we usually bring to the consideration of such matters are miserably political and prosaic. We think of flat repetitive equality and arbitrary privilege as the only two alternatives—thus missing all the overtones, the counterpoint, the vibrant sensitiveness, the inter-inanimations of reality.

For this reason I do not think it at all likely that there have been (as Alice Meynell suggested in an interesting poem) many Incarnations to redeem many different kinds of creature. One's sense of *style*—of the divine idiom—rejects it. The suggestion of mass-production and of waiting queues comes from a level of thought which is here hopelessly inadequate. If other natural creatures than Man have sinned we must believe that they are redeemed: but God's Incarnation as Man will be one unique act in the drama of total redemption and other species will have witnessed wholly different acts, each equally unique, equally necessary and differently necessary to the whole process, and each (from a certain point of view) justifiably regarded as 'the great scene' of the play. To those who

live in Act II, Act III looks like an epilogue: to those who live in Act III, Act II looks like a prologue. And both are right until they add the fatal word *merely*, or else try to avoid it by the dullard's supposition that both acts are the same.

It ought to be noticed at this stage that the Christian doctrine, if accepted, involves a particular view of Death. There are two attitudes towards Death which the human mind naturally adopts. One is the lofty view, which reached its greatest intensity among the Stoics, that Death 'doesn't matter', that it is 'kind nature's signal for retreat', and that we ought to regard it with indifference. The other is the 'natural' point of view, implicit in nearly all private conversations on the subject, and in much modern thought about the survival of the human species, that Death is the greatest of all evils; Hobbes is perhaps the only philosopher who erected a system on this basis. The first idea simply negates, the second simply affirms, our instinct for self-preservation; neither throws any new light on Nature, and Christianity countenances neither. Its doctrine is subtler. On the one hand Death is the triumph of Satan, the punishment of the Fall, and the last enemy. Christ shed tears at the grave of Lazarus and sweated blood in Gethsemane: the Life of Lives that was in Him detested this penal obscenity not less than we do, but more. On the other hand, only he who loses his life will save it. We are baptized into the *death* of Christ, and it is the remedy for the Fall. Death is, in fact, what some modern people call 'ambivalent'. It is Satan's great weapon and also God's great weapon: it is holy and unholy; our supreme disgrace and our only hope; the thing Christ came to conquer and the means by which He conquered.

To penetrate the whole of this mystery is, of course, far beyond my intention. If the pattern of Descent and Re-ascent is (as looks not unlikely) the very formula of reality, then in the mystery of Death the secret of secrets lies hid. But something must be said in order to put the Grand Miracle in its proper light. We need not discuss Death on the highest level of all: the mystical slaying of the Lamb 'before the foundation of the world' is above our speculations. Nor need we consider Death on the lowest level. The death of organisms which are nothing more than organisms, which have developed no personality, does not concern us. Of it we may truly say, as some spiritually minded people would have us say of human Death, that it 'doesn't matter'. But the startling Christian doctrine of human Death cannot be passed over.

Human Death, according to the Christians, is a result of human sin; Man, as originally created, was immune from it: Man, when redeemed, and recalled to a new life (which will, in some undefined sense, be a bodily life) in the midst of a more organic and more fully obedient Nature, will be immune from it again. This doctrine is of course simply nonsense if a man is nothing but a Natural organism. But if he were, then, as we have seen, all thoughts would be equally nonsensical, for all would have irrational causes. Man must therefore be a composite being—a natural organism tenanted by, or in a state of *symbiosis* with, a supernatural spirit. The Christian doctrine, startling as it must seem to those who have not fully cleared their minds of Naturalism, states that the relations which we now observe between that spirit and that organism are abnormal or pathological ones. At present spirit can retain its foothold against the incessant counter-attacks of Nature (both physiological and psychological) only by perpetual vigilance, and physiological Nature always defeats it in the end. Sooner or later it becomes unable to resist the disintegrating processes at work in the body and death ensues. A little later the Natural organism (for it does not long enjoy its triumph) is similarly conquered by merely physical Nature and returns to the inorganic. But, on the Christian view, this was not always so. The spirit was once not a garrison, maintaining its post with difficulty in a hostile Nature, but was fully 'at home' with its organism, like a king in his own country or a rider on his own horse—or better still, as the human part of a Centaur was 'at home' with the equine part. Where spirit's power over the organism was complete and unresisted, death would never occur. No doubt, spirit's permanent triumph over natural forces which, if left to themselves, would kill the organism, would involve a continued miracle: but only the same sort of miracle which occurs every day—for whenever we think rationally we are, by direct spiritual power, forcing certain atoms in our brain and certain psychological tendencies in our natural soul to do what they would never have done if left to Nature. The Christian doctrine would be fantastic only if the present frontier-situation between spirit and Nature in each human being were so intelligible and self explanatory that we just 'saw' it to be the only one that could ever have existed. But is it?

In reality the frontier situation is so odd that nothing but custom could make it seem natural, and nothing but the Christian doctrine can make it fully intelligible. There

is certainly a state of war. But not a war of mutual destruction. Nature by dominating spirit wrecks all spiritual activities: Spirit by dominating Nature confirms and improves natural activities. The brain does not become less a brain by being used for rational thought. The emotions do not become weak or jaded by being organized in the service of a moral will—indeed they grow richer and stronger as a beard is strengthened by being shaved or a river is deepened by being banked. The body of the reasonable and virtuous man, other things being equal, is a better body than that of the fool or the debauchee, and his sensuous pleasures better simply as sensuous pleasures: for the slaves of the senses, after the first bait, are starved by their masters. Everything happens as if what we saw was not war, but rebellion: that rebellion of the lower against the higher by which the lower destroys both the higher and itself. And if the present situation is one of rebellion, then reason cannot reject but will rather demand the belief that there was a time before the rebellion broke out and may be a time after it has been settled. And if we thus see grounds for believing that the supernatural spirit and the natural organism in Man have quarrelled, we shall immediately find it confirmed from two quite unexpected quarters.

Almost the whole of Christian theology could perhaps be deduced from the two facts (*a*) That men make coarse jokes, and (*b*) That they feel the dead to be uncanny. The coarse joke proclaims that we have here an animal which finds its own animality either objectionable or funny. Unless there had been a quarrel between the spirit and the organism I do not see how this could be: it is the very mark of the two not being 'at home' together. But it is very difficult to imagine such a state of affairs as original—to suppose a creature which from the very first was half shocked and half tickled to death at the mere fact of being the creature it is. I do not perceive that dogs see anything funny about being dogs: I suspect that angels see nothing funny about being angels. Our feeling about the dead is equally odd. It is idle to say that we dislike corpses because we are afraid of ghosts. You might say with equal truth that we fear ghosts because we dislike corpses—for the ghost owes much of its horror to the associated ideas of pallor, decay, coffins, shrouds, and worms. In reality we hate the division which makes possible the conception of either corpse or ghost. Because the thing ought not to be divided, each of the halves into which it falls by division is detestable. The explanations which Naturalism gives both of bodily shame and of our feeling about the dead are not satisfactory. It refers us to

primitive taboos and superstitions—as if these themselves were not obviously results of the thing to be explained. But once accept the Christian doctrine that man was originally a unity and that the present division is unnatural, and all the phenomena fall into place. It would be fantastic to suggest that the doctrine was devised to explain our enjoyment of a chapter in Rabelais, a good ghost story, or the *Tales* of Edgar Allen Poe. It does so nonetheless.

I ought, perhaps, to point out that the argument is not in the least affected by the value-judgments we make about ghost stories or coarse humour. You may hold that both are bad. You may hold that both, though they result (like clothes) from the Fall, are (like clothes) the proper way to deal with the Fall once it has occurred: that while perfected and recreated Man will no longer experience that kind of laughter or that kind of shudder, yet here and now not to feel the horror and not to see the joke is to be less than human. But either way the facts bear witness to our present maladjustment.

So much for the sense in which human Death is the result of sin and the triumph of Satan. But it is also the means of redemption from sin, God's medicine for Man and His weapon against Satan. In a general way it is not difficult to understand how the same thing can be a masterstroke on the part of one combatant and also the very means whereby the superior combatant defeats him. Every good general, every good chess-player, takes what is precisely the strong point of his opponent's plan and makes it the pivot of his own plan. Take that castle of mine if you insist. It was not my original intention that you should—indeed, I thought you would have had more sense. But take it by all means. For now I move thus . . . and thus . . . and it is mate in three moves. Something like this must be supposed to have happened about Death. Do not say that such metaphors are too trivial to illustrate so high a matter: the unnoticed mechanical and mineral metaphors which, in this age, will dominate our whole minds (without being recognized as metaphors at all) the moment we relax our vigilance against them must be incomparably less adequate.

And one can see how it might have happened. The Enemy persuades Man to rebel against God: Man, by doing so, loses power to control that other rebellion which the Enemy now raises in Man's organism (both psychological and physical) against Man's spirit: just as that organism, in its turn, loses power to maintain itself against the rebellion of the

inorganic. In that way, Satan produced human Death. But when God created Man he gave him such a constitution that, if the highest part of it rebelled against Himself, it would be bound to lose control over the lower parts: i.e. in the long run to suffer Death. This provision may be regarded equally as a punitive sentence ('In the day ye eat of that fruit ye shall die'), as a mercy, and as a safety device. It is punishment because Death—that Death of which Martha says to Christ, 'But. . . Sir . . . it'll *smell*'—is horror and ignominy. ('I am not so much afraid of death as ashamed of it', said Sir Thomas Browne). It is mercy because by willing and humble surrender to it Man undoes his act of rebellion and makes even this depraved and monstrous mode of Death an instance of that higher and mystical Death which is eternally good and a necessary ingredient in the highest life. 'The readiness is all'—not, of course, the merely heroic readiness but that of humility and self-renunciation. Our enemy, so welcomed, becomes our servant: bodily Death, the monster, becomes blessed spiritual Death to self, if the spirit so wills—or rather if it allows the Spirit of the willingly dying God so to will in it. It is a safety-device because, once Man has fallen, natural immortality would be the one utterly hopeless destiny for him. Aided to the surrender that he must make by no external necessity of Death, free (if you call it freedom) to rivet faster and faster about himself through unending centuries the chains of his own pride and lust and of the nightmare civilizations which these build up in ever-increasing power and complication, he would progress from being merely a fallen man to being a fiend, possibly beyond all modes of redemption. This danger was averted. The sentence that those who ate of the forbidden fruit would be driven away from the Tree of Life was implicit in the composite nature with which Man was created. But to convert this penal death into the means of eternal life—to add to its negative and preventive function a positive and saving function—it was further necessary that death should be *accepted*. Humanity must embrace death freely, submit to it with total humility, drink it to the dregs, and so convert it into that mystical death which is the secret of life. But only a Man who did not need to have been a Man at all unless He had chosen, only one who served in our sad regiment as a volunteer, yet also only one who was perfectly a Man, could perform this perfect dying; and thus (which way you put it is unimportant) either defeat Death or redeem it. He tasted death on behalf of all others. He is the representative 'Die-er' of the universe: and for that very reason the Resurrection and the Life. Or

conversely, because He truly lives, He truly dies, for that is the very pattern of reality. Because the higher can descend into the lower He who from all eternity has been incessantly plunging Himself in the blessed death of self-surrender to the Father can also most fully descend into the horrible and (for us) involuntary death of the body. Because Vicariousness is the very idiom of the reality He has created, His death can become ours. The whole Miracle, far from denying what we already know of reality, writes the comment which makes that crabbed text plain: or rather, proves itself to be the text on which Nature was only the commentary. In science we have been reading only the notes to a poem; in Christianity we find the poem itself.

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, harmonizes 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.

The Life of Saint Francis

Saint Bonaventure

Bonaventure (c. 1217-74) was Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor (the Franciscans) and among the most important of medieval theologians and spiritual writers. He wrote two Lives of Saint Francis of Assisi (1181/2-1226); what follows is the shorter, the *Minor Life*.

CHAPTER I

The Beginning of St. Francis' Religious Life

1 *First lesson:* The grace of God our Savior has dawned in our times in his servant Francis; our merciful Father, the source of all that gives light, came to meet him on his way with a plentiful share of his choicest blessings. We see in the course of Francis' life that God was not content merely to lead him from the obscurity of the world into the light, bringing him renown by his gifts of exalted virtue and merit; he did more — he proved Francis' claim to fame by the mysteries of the Cross which he accomplished in him so strikingly.

Francis came from the town of Assisi in the valley of Spoleto; he was called John by his mother, but his father changed his name to Francis. He retained the name his father gave him without forfeiting the privilege indicated by the one his mother chose. As a boy he was brought up among worldly companions and in a worldly atmosphere; when he had some idea how to read and write, he was given a job in a profitable trading business. However, with the help of God's grace, he never indulged his passions, like his loose-living companions, or put his trust in his store of riches, like his greedy business friends.

2 *Second lesson:* Even as a young man, Francis' spirit was one of gentle kindness and generous compassion for the poor. This seemed to have been implanted in the depths of his being by God and it remained with him all his life, so that his heart overflowed with goodness. He would not turn a deaf ear to the Gospel and he made a resolution never to refuse anyone who asked him for an alms, especially if it was for love of God. When he was at the very peak of his youthful career, he solemnly promised God that he would never turn away from anyone who begged an alms from him for love of God, as long as

he had anything to give. He kept this generous resolution all his life and it led him to an ever higher degree of grace and love for God. This fire of divine love was never extinguished in his heart, but as a young man he was taken up with the cares of this world and could not grasp the hidden message contained in God's words. Then the hand of God came upon him; he suffered a prolonged and distressing illness, while his heart was enlightened by the infusion of the Holy Spirit.

3 *Third lesson:* After he had recovered his strength to a certain extent and undergone a change of heart, he happened to meet a knight who was of noble birth, but completely destitute. He was reminded of Christ, the generous King who became so poor, and he felt such pity for the man that he took off the new clothes he had just got for himself and clothed him with them, keeping nothing for himself.

The following night, as he slept, Christ for love of whom he had come to the aid of the poor knight showed him a vision in his goodness; he saw a beautiful palace, full of armor, all emblazoned with the Cross. And he promised him that everything he saw would belong to him and to his knights, if he took up the standard of the Cross and bore it faithfully. After that, Francis began to withdraw from the rush of business; instead, he sought out lonely places where he could mourn for his sins. There he gave himself over unceasingly to groans beyond all utterance, imploring God to show him the way to perfection, and after prolonged and insistent prayer, he was found worthy to have his request granted.

4 *Fourth lesson:* One day as he was praying in solitude, Jesus Christ appeared to him, hanging on his Cross. He made Francis realize so vividly the force of the Gospel words, "If any man has a mind to come my way, let him renounce self, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mt 16, 24) that his heart was filled with compassion and burned within him with the fire of love. His soul melted at the sight of the vision, and the memory of Christ's passion was impressed so intimately on the depths of his heart that the wounds of his crucified Lord seemed to be always before his mind's eye, and he could scarcely restrain his sighs and tears. Now that he no longer had any regard for all that he owned in the world, and thought nothing of it for love of Jesus Christ, Francis felt that he had found the hidden treasure, the brilliant pearl of great price, mentioned in the Gospel. He was eager to make it his own and he decided to give up everything he had; in a

business deal worthy of a saint, he would renounce his position as an earthly trader and become like the trader in the Gospel.

5 *Fifth lesson:* He left the town one day to meditate out of doors and, as he was passing by the church of San Damiano, which was threatening to collapse with age, he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to go in and pray. He knelt there before an image of our Lord on his Cross and he felt great pleasure and consolation in his prayers, so that his eyes were full of tears as he gazed at the Cross. Then, with his own ears, he heard a miraculous voice coming to him from the Cross, saying three times, "Francis, go and repair my house. You see, it is all falling down." At first he was terrified at the divine command expressed in these extraordinary words; but then he was filled with joy and wonder, and he stood up immediately, prepared to put his whole heart into obeying the command and repairing the material building. However, the message really referred to the universal Church which Christ bought with the price of his Precious Blood, as the Holy Spirit afterwards made him realize, and he himself explained to his close companions.

6 *Sixth lesson:* For love of Christ Francis disposed of everything he had there and then, to the best of his ability, and offered the money to the poor priest who was attached to the church, that he might use it to repair the building and give alms to the poor. He also entreated him earnestly to let him stay with him for a while. The priest agreed to let him stay, but for fear of his parents, he refused to take the money; in his sincere disregard for worldly wealth, Francis threw the crude metal on a window-sill, and had no more regard for it than if it were dust.

When he heard that his father's rage had been aroused against him by what he had done, he tried to avoid his anger, and he hid in an obscure cave for a number of days, where he fasted with prayers and tears. Eventually, however, he was clothed with power from on high and his heart overflowed with spiritual joy; he came out bravely into the open and went into the town, without the slightest fear. When the children saw his haggard looks, they thought that he was out of his mind and had gone mad. They threw mud from the streets at him, as if he were a half-wit, and shouted after him insultingly; but no insults could break or change him, and he passed through it all as if he could not hear a thing.

7 *Seventh lesson:* His father was beside himself with rage and he behaved as if he had become a stranger to all human pity. He dragged his son home and beat him, putting him in chains, in the hope that by wearing him down with physical punishment, he could turn his heart to the attractions of the world. However, the only result of his efforts was to make it clear beyond all doubt that Francis was more than willing to endure any torture for Christ. When he realized that he could not change his mind, he insisted vehemently that Francis should go before the bishop of the diocese with him and renounce into his hands his right of succession to the family property. Francis was only too glad to obey and as soon as he reached the bishop's presence, he made no delay, he never hesitated for a moment, or said or listened to a word from anyone; instead, he tore off all his clothes, including even his trousers, and stood there naked before them all. He seemed to be beside himself in his fervor, and he was not ashamed to be stripped naked for love of Christ who hung naked for us on the Cross.

8 *Eighth lesson:* Now that he was free from the bonds of all earthly desires in his disregard for the world, Francis left the town; he was free and without a care in the world and he made the forest resound, as he sang God's praises in French. As the herald of the great King, he refused to be terrified when he met a band of thieves, and he continued to praise God. He was a pilgrim, half-naked and penniless, and he was glad to suffer tribulation, like the apostles.

In his love of utter humility, he now dedicated himself to the service of the lepers; by devoting himself to the care of such pitiful outcasts, he would learn to disregard the world and his own self, before attempting to teach such self-contempt to others. He had always had a horror of lepers, above any other class of human beings; but now grace was infused into him in greater measure, and he devoted himself to waiting on their needs with such humility of heart that he washed their feet and bound their sores, drawing out the pus and wiping away the corrupt matter. In the excess of his indescribable fervor, he did not even hesitate to kiss their ulcerous sores, kissing the dust with his mouth (cf. Lam 3, 29). He would expose himself to every kind of indignity, that he might bring his rebellious lower nature into subjection to the rule of the spirit; so he would gain complete control of himself and be at peace, once he had subdued the enemy that was part of his own nature.

9 *Ninth lesson:* Now that he was firmly established in the lowliness of Christ and had become rich in his poverty, Francis set about repairing the church in obedience to the command he had received from the Cross. He had absolutely nothing to start with, but he devoted himself to the task wholeheartedly, loading his own back with stones, although he was worn out with fasting. He begged help in the form of alms from those among whom he had lived as a wealthy young man, and he was not ashamed. People eventually came to help him in their devotion to him, because they could see already that his was no ordinary holiness. With their cooperation he repaired the church of San Damiano and another dedicated to the Prince of the Apostles, followed by a third dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, all of which were abandoned and in ruins. In this way the work which God afterwards planned to accomplish through him on a spiritual plane was mysteriously foreshadowed in a visible, material fashion. Like the three churches he repaired, the universal Church of Christ was to be renewed in three different ways under his guidance and according to his directions, his rule and teaching. The voice which he heard from the Cross, which repeated the command to repair God's house three times, was a prophetic sign which we now see fulfilled in the three Orders which he founded.

CHAPTER II

The Foundation of the Order — the Power of Francis' Preaching

1 *First lesson:* When he had finished the work on the three churches, Francis went to live at the one dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. There by the merits and intercession of the Mother of God who gave birth to the Price of our redemption, he was found worthy to be taught the way to perfection, by the spirit of Gospel truth which was infused into him from above. One day at Mass the passage of the Gospel was read which recounts how our Lord sent his disciples out to preach and laid down the form of the Gospel life for them, telling them that they were not to have gold or silver or money to fill their purses, nor a wallet for their journey, no second coat, no spare shoes or staff (cf. Mt 10, 9). The moment Francis heard these words, the Spirit of Christ came upon him and clothed him with such power that he adopted the way of life described, not only in mind and heart, but also in his daily life and dress. He took off his shoes there and then, threw away his staff, and discarded the purse with his money. He kept only one tunic to wear, and exchanged

his leather belt for a rope. His only anxiety of mind now was to discover how he might practice what he had heard and conform perfectly to the rule given to the apostles for their guidance.

2 *Second lesson:* Like a second Elias, Francis now began to take up the defense of truth, all inflamed as he was with the fiery ardor of the Spirit of Christ. He invited others to join him in the pursuit of perfect holiness, urging them to lead a life of penance. His words were full of the power of the Holy Spirit, never empty or ridiculous, and they went straight to the depths of the heart, so that his hearers were astonished beyond measure and hardened sinners were moved by their penetrating power. As his high and holy ideals became more widely known by the force of his sincerity and his straightforward teaching, together with his personal life, a number of others were encouraged to follow his example and lead a life of penance. They left all behind and came to join him, sharing his way of life and dress. In his humility, Francis decided that they should be known as Friars Minor.

3 *Third lesson:* By God's calling the number of friars soon grew to six and, like a devoted father and shepherd, Francis sought out a lonely place where he could weep over the misspent years of his youth, which had not been free from sin, in the bitterness of his heart. There he implored mercy and grace for himself and his sons the friars, whose father he had become in Christ. Then his whole being was bathed in an excess of joy and he was given the assurance that all his sins were completely forgiven to the last farthing. He was rapt in ecstasy and completely absorbed in a sort of light which seemed to give life, so that he could see clearly what the future held in store for himself and his friars, as he afterwards told them confidentially, in order to encourage his little flock. Then he foretold the future growth of the Order and how it would expand, by God's providence.

After a brief delay, they were joined by a number of newcomers, so that their number grew to twelve, and Francis decided to present his inexperienced band of followers to the Apostolic See. He had set down briefly in writing the way of life which God had shown him in all humility, and he was anxious to have it approved by the Holy See with the fulness of the Apostolic authority.

4 *Fourth lesson:* As Francis was on his way with his companions, determined to carry out his plan and gain an audience with the Supreme Pontiff, Innocent III, Christ, the

power of God, Christ the wisdom of God, in his merciful condescension, came to meet him on his way. By means of a vision he instructed his Vicar on earth to give a peaceful hearing to this poor beggarman and grant his petition with good grace. In his vision the pope saw the Lateran basilica threatening to collapse and being held up by a poor, wretched-looking individual of slight stature who put his back to it, to prevent it from falling. When Francis appeared before him, the learned pontiff was struck by the purity of his heart and his disregard for the world, and he was deeply impressed by his love for poverty and his determination to be perfect, as well as his zeal for souls and the burning fervor of his will. "Beyond doubt," he exclaimed, "this is the man who will uphold Christ's Church by his work and teaching." From that moment, he became completely devoted to the saint and he bowed graciously to his request. He approved the rule and gave the saint and his companions a mission to preach repentance, granting all their petitions there and then and promising generously to make even further concessions in the future.

5 *Fifth lesson:* With God's grace and the authority of the Supreme Pontiff to support him, Francis now felt completely confident and he took the road towards the valley of Spoleto. He had conceived true Gospel perfection in his heart and professed it solemnly by his vows, and now he was eager to practice it in his own life and teach it to others by his preaching. Together with his companions, he discussed the question whether they should go out among the people or live in solitude, and he begged God in persevering prayer to make known his will in this matter. Then he was enlightened by a revelation and he realized that he had been sent by God to win for Christ the souls which the Devil was trying to snatch away. And so he concluded that he should choose to live for others, rather than for himself alone. Thereupon, he went to live in an abandoned hut near Assisi, where he could share a life of poverty and strict religious discipline with his friars, and preach the word of God to the people, whenever he had the opportunity. He became a herald of the Gospel and he went about the towns and villages, preaching the kingdom of God "not in such words as human wisdom teaches, but in words taught him by the Spirit" (1 Cor 2, 13). And God guided him in his speech by his revelations, and "attested his words by the miracles that went with them" (Mk 16, 20).

6 *Sixth lesson:* Francis was spending the night in prayer on one occasion, as was his custom, and he withdrew from the company of the friars. Then about midnight, as some of the friars slept and others prayed, a brilliant chariot of fire came through the door of the hut. It was surmounted by a ball of light which shone like the sun, and it turned here and there three times about the room. The friars who were awake were dumbfounded at the sight of the miraculous splendor, while those who were asleep woke up terrified. The shining light seemed to illuminate their hearts, just as it lit up their surroundings, and their consciences were laid bare to one another by its extraordinary powers of penetration. As they looked into one another's hearts, they all realized at once that it was their father Francis whom they had seen under the appearance of this vision. God had revealed him to them as one who came "in the spirit and power of an Elias" (Lk 1, 17), and had been made a leader of his spiritual army, "a chariot and a charioteer" (cf. 4 Kgs 2, 12) for his chosen people. When the saint rejoined the friars, he took occasion from the vision they had been shown from heaven to encourage them. He probed the depths of their consciences and foretold the future; his miracles brought him such renown that it was clear that the twofold spirit of Elias rested upon him in abundance. There could be no doubt that it was perfectly safe for anyone to follow his life and teaching.

7 *Seventh lesson:* At this time a religious of the Order of the *Crucigeri* who was called Moricus was lying ill in a hospital near Assisi. It was a long drawn-out illness and he was faring so badly that they thought he was at the point of death. Then he recommended himself to St. Francis by means of an intermediary and begged him to be so good as to pray to God for him. In his compassion the saint agreed willingly; he gave himself to prayer and then he took some bread-crumbs and mixed them with oil from the lamp which burned before our Lady's altar, making a sort of pill out of them. This he sent by the friars to the sick man saying, "Take this medicine to our brother Moricus. In his power, Christ will restore him to perfect health by means of it, and when he is ready for the fray, he will bring him into our company for the rest of his life." The moment the sick man took the prescription which had been made up under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he stood up, completely cured. God gave him such strength of body and soul that he joined St. Francis' Order a short time afterwards. For years he wore a hair-shirt next to

his skin and never ate cooked food, refusing to drink wine or touch anything that had been boiled.

8 *Eighth lesson:* At this time, too, a priest from Assisi, Father Silvester, a man of good life and dove-like simplicity, had a vision. He saw the whole countryside being swallowed up in the embrace of a huge serpent which seemed to threaten the various regions of the world with destruction, it looked so horrible and disgusting. Then he saw a shining cross of gold coming from St. Francis' mouth. The top of it reached up to heaven and its arms stretched far and wide and seemed to reach to the ends of the earth, and the mere sight of it in all its glory was enough to put the terrible serpent to flight. Father Silvester was a religious-minded man and after he had seen this vision for the third time, he realized that St. Francis had been chosen by God to take up the standard of the Cross and crush the wicked serpent's power. This he would do by enlightening the hearts of the faithful by the glorious witness of his life and teaching. He told the saint and his friars what he had seen and a short time afterwards he left the world; after Francis' example, he followed in Christ's footsteps with such perseverance that his life in the Order only served to confirm the vision he had seen while he was still in the world.

9 *Ninth lesson:* Another friar called Pacificus, when he was still a layman, met St. Francis at San Severino, where he was giving a sermon in a monastery. There the power of God came upon him and he saw the saint signed with the sign of the Cross in the form of two swords of fire, one of which reached from his head to his feet, while the other crossed his chest from hand to hand. He did not know St. Francis by sight, but he realized that the person pointed out to him by such a miracle could be no other. He was overcome with amazement; the power of the saint's words moved him to sorrow for his sins and left him terrified, as if he had been transfixed with a spiritual sword coming from his mouth. He said goodbye to worldly popularity and joined the saint by professing his rule.

He afterwards made great progress in religious perfection and became provincial in France, where he was the first to hold that office. Before he left to take up his post, he was found worthy to have a vision of a great Cross which appeared in different colors on St. Francis' forehead and lit up his whole face with a beautiful radiance. Francis always had great reverence and affection for this particular sign and he often spoke in its praise; he made it before starting to do anything and the letters charity demanded he should write

he signed with it in his own hand. His only desire seemed to be to mark the brows of those who weep and wail and are truly converted to Jesus Christ with this sign of the Cross, as we read in the prophet Ezechiel (Ez 9,4).

CHAPTER III

St. Francis' Outstanding Virtues

1 *First lesson:* As a loyal follower of Jesus crucified, St. Francis crucified his lower nature with all its passions, from the very beginning of his religious life, by practicing strict self-discipline; he restrained the impulses of sensuality with such rigid self-control that he scarcely took enough food or drink to keep himself alive. As long as he was in good health, he scarcely ever ate cooked food; when he did, he occasionally mixed ashes with it, so that he got no pleasure out of eating it. As a rule, however, he was content to destroy the taste by adding water. He was particularly strict when it was a question of having anything to drink; he refused to let his fallen nature enjoy the use of wine, so that his spirit might be occupied with the light of wisdom. It should help us to realize this all the more clearly when we remember that he would scarcely drink enough ordinary water, even when he was almost dying with thirst. More often than not, the bare earth was the only bed his tired body had to lie on, and his pillow was a stone or a piece of wood. His clothes were simplicity itself — nothing more than a coarse, rough covering to protect him. He knew for certain from his own experience that poor, uncouth dress put his wicked enemies to flight, while soft or expensive clothes only gave them courage to attack all the more fiercely.

2 *Second lesson:* While keeping watchful guard over himself with rigid self-discipline, St. Francis was especially careful in his efforts to protect the inestimable treasure of chastity, which we carry in a shell of perishable earthenware. By practicing the most perfect interior and exterior purity, he did everything he could to preserve it as something holy and held in honor. In the early years of his religious life, in the courage and fervor of his spirit he often threw himself into a ditch full of ice or snow in the depths of winter. He did this to gain complete control over the enemy which was part of his own nature and to preserve the white robe of purity from the heat of passion. As a result of such strenuous efforts his lower nature was completely subject to him and his attractive

purity was so evident in his use of all his bodily senses that he seemed like "a man that had bound his eyes over by covenant" (Jb 31, 1). He was not content merely to avoid looking about him in a way which would pander to his lower nature; he studiously renounced the slightest glance which could only satisfy idle curiosity.

3 *Third lesson:* St. Francis had attained perfect purity of heart and soul, and the height of sanctity was within his grasp. However, in his great longing for the unstained brilliance of heavenly light, he never ceased trying to sharpen his spiritual vision with floods of tears, and he made no account of the fact that it was costing him his eyesight. As a result of his continual weeping, he developed serious eye-trouble, but when the doctor advised him to restrain his tears, if he wanted to avoid losing his sight, he refused to obey. He would prefer, he asserted, to lose the sight of his eyes than to restrain his devotion and stop the tears which cleansed his spiritual vision and enabled him to see God.

Francis was at peace in his utter loyalty to God and he felt a heavenly joy in his heart which showed in his face, even in the midst of his tears. In the purity of his blameless conscience, he experienced such an infusion of happiness, that his spirit was continually lost in God, and he rejoiced without interruption in the works of his hands.

4 *Fourth lesson:* St. Francis was completely imbued with profound humility, the guardian and the crowning glory of all virtue. By the range of virtues which shone forth in his life, he stood head and shoulders above all others, but humility seems to have reached the highest degree of all in him, and he was the least of all. In his own opinion, he was the greatest of sinners, and he believed that he was nothing more than a frail and worthless creature; yet, in reality, he was an example of holiness, chosen by God and shining by his manifold gifts of grace and virtue, and consecrated by the sanctity of his life. He did everything he possibly could to appear worthless in his own eyes and before others; he would confess his secret faults publicly and hide God's gifts in the depths of his heart; he refused to expose himself to human praise, for fear it might be an occasion of falling. In his eagerness to practice humility perfectly, not only was he submissive to his superiors — he even obeyed his inferiors as well; he used to bind himself to obey his companion in his travels, no matter how ordinary a friar he was. St. Francis had no desire

to wield authority like a superior; in his humility he preferred to obey those who were subject to him, as their minister and servant.

5 *Fifth lesson:* Sublime poverty is the companion of humility and so, as a perfect follower of Christ, St. Francis espoused it in undying love. For poverty's sake he left his father and mother and abandoned everything he had. No one was so greedy for gold as he was for poverty; no one ever guarded a treasure more carefully than he guarded this Gospel pearl. From the first moment of his religious life until his death, his sole wealth consisted in a habit, a cord, and a pair of trousers. Destitution seemed to be the only thing in which he took any pride, penury his only source of joy.

If he saw anyone who seemed to be more poorly dressed than he, he immediately fell to reproaching himself and roused himself to imitate him. He was jealous of his poverty and it seemed as if his noble spirit was afraid of being surpassed in his efforts to practice it. He had chosen poverty as the pledge of his eternal inheritance and preferred it to every temporal thing; he thought nothing of the deceitful riches of this world which are only loaned to us for a brief interval, and he loved poverty above any form of wealth. He was anxious to outdo everyone in the practice of poverty; and it was poverty that had taught him to regard himself as the last of all.

6 *Sixth lesson:* St. Francis' love of absolute poverty won for him a share in the wealth to which true, spiritual simplicity is the key. In the whole world he had nothing he could call his own; yet everything in the world seemed to belong to him in God, the Creator of the world. His attitude towards creation was simple and direct, as simple as the gaze of a dove; as he considered the universe, in his pure, spiritual, vision, he referred every created thing to the Creator of all. He saw God in everything, and loved and praised him in all creation. By God's generosity and goodness, he possessed God in everything, and everything in God. The realization that everything comes from the same source made him call all created things — no matter how insignificant — his brothers and sisters, because they had the same origin as he. However, he reserved his most tender compassion for those which are a natural reflection of Christ's gentleness and are used as figures of him in Sacred Scripture. So it was that by God's divine power the brute beasts felt drawn towards him and inanimate creation obeyed his will. It seemed as if he had returned to the state of primeval innocence, he was so good, so holy.

7 *Seventh lesson:* St. Francis was filled with such a spirit of gentle compassion, which came to him from the Source of Mercy itself, that he seemed to have a mother's tenderness in caring for the sufferings of those in misery. He was kind by nature and the love of Christ merely intensified this. His whole soul went out to the sick and the poor, and where he could not offer material assistance he lavished his affection; the poverty or deprivation he saw in anyone he immediately referred to Christ in his heartfelt compassion. In every poor person he met, he saw the image of Christ and he insisted on giving them anything which had been given to him, even if he had urgent need of it; indeed, he believed that he was bound to give it to them, just as if it belonged to them. He spared nothing — cloaks, habits, books, or altarcloths — as long as he was in a position to do so, he gave them all to the poor. He wanted nothing more than to spend and be spent himself, in order to fulfill the duty of being compassionate towards others.

8 *Eighth lesson:* Like a sharp sword all on fire, zeal for the salvation of others pierced the depths of Francis' heart in his burning love; wounded by the grief of his compassion, he seemed to be on fire with eagerness, and it penetrated his whole being. If he saw a soul redeemed with the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ being stained with sin, he would be overcome with sorrow, and weep so compassionately that he seemed to be in travail over them continually, like a mother in Christ. This was the reason why he was so energetic in prayer, so active in preaching; this was why he went beyond all limits in giving good example — he would not think himself Christ's lover if he did not compassionate the souls whom he redeemed. His innocent body which had voluntarily become subject to the spirit needed no punishment for sin; yet, for the sake of good example, he inflicted frequent penances and burdens on it. It was for the sake of others that "he kept to the paths that are hard to follow" (Ps 16, 4). Christ gave himself up to death for the salvation of others, and Francis desired to follow in his footsteps to the last.

9 *Ninth lesson:* We can appreciate the fiery strength of the perfect love by which Francis was borne towards God, in his love for Christ his Bridegroom, when we remember that he longed to offer himself to God as a living sacrifice by the sword of martyrdom. Three times he took the road towards pagan lands with this end in view, but on two occasions Divine Providence stood in his way. The third time, with God's help, he succeeded in gaining an audience with the sultan of Babylon, but only after he had been

insulted, beaten, put in chains, and had endured severe ill-treatment. There he preached Jesus Christ with such convincing proof of spiritual power that the sultan was lost in admiration; by God's will he became gentle and gave the saint a kind hearing. When he saw his spiritual fervor and his courage, together with his disregard for this earthly life, and the power of his divine words, he became completely devoted to him. He treated him with great honor and offered him valuable presents, begging him to stay with him a little while. However, in his genuine self-contempt and disregard for the world, Francis scorned the gifts as if they were so much dust. When he saw that he could not achieve his goal, despite the fact that he had done everything he possibly could, he made his way back to Christian territory, after receiving a warning from God. So it was that Christ's lover longed to die for him with all his heart, but never succeeded. In this way, his life was preserved, so that he might later be decorated with a unique privilege, without losing the merit of the martyr's death for which he longed.

CHAPTER IV

Francis' Devotion to Prayer — His Spirit of Prophecy

1 *First lesson:* St. Francis felt like an exile, as long as he remained in this earthly life separated from God and, at the same time, his love of Christ had left him insensible to all earthly desires. Therefore, he tried to keep his spirit in the presence of God, by praying to him without intermission, so that he might not be without some comfort from his Beloved. Whether he was walking or sitting, at home or abroad, whether he was working or resting, he was so wholeheartedly intent on prayer that he seemed to have dedicated to it not only his heart and his soul, but all his efforts and all his time. He was often taken right out of himself in such an excess of devotion that he was lost in ecstasy. Then he experienced things which were beyond all human understanding, and he would be completely oblivious of all that went on about him.

2 *Second lesson:* In order to prepare for the infusion of spiritual comfort in greater peace, he would seek out some lonely spot or an abandoned church where he could go to pray at night. There he often had to endure frightful attacks from the devils who fought with him hand-to-hand and tried to withdraw him from prayer. However, he always succeeded in putting them to flight by the unfailing power of his fervent prayers; that he

would be left alone and at peace, and he would make the groves re-echo with his sighs and bedew the ground with his tears, as he beat his breast in sorrow. Here, in hidden secrecy, he defended himself before his Judge; here he pleaded with his Father; here he enjoyed the company of his divine Bridegroom; here he spoke with his Lover. Here, too, he was seen raised up from the ground and surrounded with a shining cloud, as he prayed at night with his arms stretched out in the form of a cross. The raising of his body from the ground, with the miraculous light which accompanied it, was a sign of the marvelous elevation and enlightenment which took place in his soul.

3 *Third lesson:* By the supernatural power of his striving after God, the secrets of divine wisdom were made known to him; there is clear proof of this, although he never revealed it unless the salvation of others demanded it, or he was commanded to do so by divine revelation. He had never studied Sacred Scripture under any human teacher, but unwearied application to prayer and the continual practice of virtue had purified his spiritual vision, so that his intellect was bathed in the radiance of eternal light and could penetrate its depths with its pure gaze. The spirit of the prophets rested upon him, in all its different forms, with an overflowing abundance of grace. By its miraculous power the saint often appeared to those who were far away and knew what went on at a distance; he could read the secrets of men's hearts and foretell what the future was to bring. There are many examples which prove this beyond doubt and I shall now describe a few of them.

4 *Fourth lesson:* In a provincial chapter at Arles St. Anthony, who was then a famous preacher and is now one of Christ's saints, preached an eloquent sermon to the friars on the proclamation Pilate wrote on the Cross, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." There St. Francis, who was then living far away, appeared at the door of the chapter hall; he was standing in mid-air with his arms stretched out in the form of a cross, blessing the friars. He brought them all such spiritual comfort that their own interior witness was enough to convince them that his miraculous appearance was endowed with heavenly power. The saint himself was not unaware of this, so that it is clear that his spirit was penetrated with the light of that eternal Wisdom of which we read, "Nothing is so agile that it can match wisdom for agility; nothing can penetrate this way and that, ethereal as she; she finds her way into holy men's hearts, turning them into friends and spokesmen of God" (Wis 7, 24, 27).

5 *Fifth lesson:* When the friars were assembled in chapter as usual one day at St. Mary of the Portiuncula, one of them, under some pretext or other, refused to submit to obedience. St. Francis was praying in his cell at the time, interceding before God for the friars, and he became aware in spirit of what was happening. He had one of the friars summoned to him and told him, "Brother, I saw the Devil on that disobedient friar's back, holding him tightly by the neck. With a wicked spirit like that in control, he refused to be guided by obedience and gave rein to the Devil's suggestions. Go and tell that friar to submit to obedience immediately. The person who sends him this message is the person whose prayers made the Devil take flight in confusion." When he heard the message, the friar was seized with remorse; he was enlightened by the light of truth and he cast himself on the ground before the saint's vicar. He acknowledged his guilt and begged forgiveness, accepting the penance which was imposed upon him and performing it willingly, so that he always obeyed humbly after that.

6 *Sixth lesson:* When St. Francis was living in his cell on Mount La Verna, one of his companions had a great desire to have some short phrases of the Bible in the saint's own hand-writing. He was being assailed by a violent temptation of the spirit and he was sure the writing would put an end to it, or at least make it easier to bear. He was worn out with longing and he was all on edge; but he was so humble, so self-effacing and unassuming, that he was overcome with shyness and did not dare to tell St. Francis about it. However, Francis learned from the Holy Spirit what his companion was afraid to tell him. He told the friar to bring him a pen and paper and then he wrote out some verses in praise of God with his own hand, as the friar wished, and added his blessing at the end. He gave the friar what he had written and immediately his temptation vanished. The sheet of paper was afterwards preserved and it restored innumerable people to health, showing the whole world how high a place the saint who wrote it held in God's eyes, that he should be able to give such efficacious power to a written message.

7 *Seventh lesson:* Another time a noble lady who was a very religious person came to St. Francis, confidently asking his help. Her husband treated her cruelly and tried to prevent her from serving Christ, and she begged the saint to pray to God for him, that he would soften his hard heart by his grace. When Francis heard what she wanted, he spoke to her and encouraged her in her good desires. He promised her that she would soon

enjoy the consolation she longer for, and he told her to tell her husband from him and from God that this was the time of mercy, afterwards of justice. The woman put her trust in the words which the saint spoke to her and when she had received his blessing, she returned home without delay. There she met her husband and told him what the saint had said, expecting her wish to be granted without hesitation, as she had been promised. The moment her husband heard the words, the spirit of grace came upon him; his heart was touched, so that he allowed his wife to serve God freely and offered to serve him with her. At his wife's suggestion, they lived a life of continence for many years, and they died the same day, she in the morning, "a morning sacrifice," he in the evening, "an evening offering" (cf. Nm 28, 8, 23).

8 *Eighth lesson:* When the saint was lying sick at Rieti, a looseliving and worldly cleric named Gedeon became seriously ill. He was brought to St. Francis, lying on a stretcher, and together with those who were present he begged him tearfully to bless him with the sign of the cross. But the saint replied, "You have lived a life of sinful indulgence, without a thought for God's judgment. I shall make the sign of the cross over you, not for your own sake, but because of the sincere petition of those who are pleading for you. But I tell you here and now that if you go back to your old ways, after you have been cured, you will infallibly have worse to suffer." Then he made the sign of the cross over him from his head to his feet and they all heard his bones cracking like dry wood being broken. The sick man stood up there and then, completely cured, and he gave praise to God saying, "I have been saved." After a short time, however, he forgot God once more and gave his body over to impurity. Then one evening he had supper at the house of one of the canons and spent the night there. That night the roof of the house collapsed on them all without warning; the others escaped death, but he was killed. So it was that this one event revealed the severity of God's justice for those who are ungrateful, and the accuracy and truth of the spirit of prophecy which filled St. Francis.

9 *Ninth lesson:* When St. Francis went to preach at Celano after his return from overseas, a knight begged him insistently to come to dinner. Francis was reluctant, but his host almost forced him to come, in his devotion to him. Before they sat down to eat, the saint offered praise and prayers to God as usual, like the truly spiritual man he was. There he learned in spirit that his host must die in the very near future, and he remained

standing with his mind fixed on God and his eyes raised up to heaven. When he had finished praying, he drew his host aside and told him that he was going to die soon, advising him to go to confession and encouraging him to do what good he could. The knight took his advice and confessed all his sins to the saint's companion. He put his affairs in order and entrusted himself to God's mercy, doing everything he could to prepare for death. They were all beginning their meal when the knight, who seemed quite strong and well, suddenly passed away, as the saint had foretold. He was carried off by a sudden death, but he was clad in the armor of repentance, thanks to St. Francis' spirit of prophecy. So he escaped eternal damnation and entered the dwelling-places of heaven, as our Lord promised in the Gospel.

CHAPTER V

Creatures Obey St. Francis — God's Condescension towards Him

1 *First lesson:* The Spirit of God who had anointed him, together with "Christ the power of God, Christ the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1, 24), was always with St. Francis. By his grace and power, hidden secrets were revealed to the saint and the elements were made subject to him. On one occasion, he was advised by his doctors to allow a cauterization in the hope of curing his eye-trouble. The friars begged him to agree and the saint humbly gave his consent. He knew that it would be an opportunity to practice virtue, as well as a remedy for his bodily ills. However, he recoiled instinctively at the sight of the searing-iron which was red hot; then he addressed the burning fire, calling it his brother, and commanded it in the name of God the Creator and by his power to temper its heat and burn gently, so that he could bear it. The sizzling iron was plunged into the soft flesh and drawn from his ear to his eyebrow. Full of God as he was, Francis was overjoyed in spirit, "Give praise to the Most High!" he told the friars. "I can truthfully say that the heat of the fire did not harm me and I felt no pain."

2 *Second lesson:* St. Francis was seriously ill one time at the hermitage of Sant' Urbano and he felt the need of something to build up his strength. He asked for a glass of wine, but they told him there was none to give him. Then he told them to bring some water, and when it was brought, he made the sign of the cross over it and blessed it. Immediately, what had been ordinary water became excellent wine; Francis' holiness

procured what the poverty of a lonely friary had not been able to provide. At the taste of the wine, he improved rapidly and it was clear beyond all doubt that God, the generous Giver, had enabled him to enjoy the drink he longed for, not because the taste appealed to him, but because it would restore him to health.

3 *Third lesson:* Another time, while traveling to a hermitage where he planned to devote himself to prayer, St. Francis rode an ass belonging to a poor laborer, because he was weak. It was summertime and, as the owner of the animal followed the saint into the mountains, he was exhausted by the long and grueling journey. Fainting with thirst, he began to cry out insistently, saying that he would die immediately, if he did not get something to drink. Francis dismounted there and then knelt on the ground with his hands stretched out to heaven, and there he prayed until he knew that he had been heard. When he had finished, he said to his benefactor, "Go to that rock and there you will find running water. In his goodness Christ has made it flow from the solid stone just now for you to drink." The man ran to the spot Francis pointed out and he had his fill of water which had been produced from a rock by the power of one man's prayer, a drink which God offered him from solid stone.

4 *Fourth lesson:* When St. Francis was preaching on the seashore at Gaeta on one occasion, the multitude crowded about him in their eagerness. He was anxious to avoid their demonstrations of enthusiasm and he stepped into a small boat which was close by the shore. While the crowd looked on in amazement, the boat moved out from the land without the aid of oars, as if it were being guided by some intelligent power. When it had gone a short distance out to sea, the boat stopped and remained there in the same position, despite the waves, while the saint preached to the people standing on the beach. When he was finished, he gave his blessing to the crowd who had seen the miracle, and pleaded with them to disperse. Then the boat moved in to land once more under the impulse of a divine command. Creation, which obeys its Author so well, was completely submissive to Francis who worshipped the Creator perfectly, and obeyed him without hesitation.

5 *Fifth lesson:* When St. Francis was staying in the hermitage at Greccio one time, the local people were in a very bad way because of a series of disasters which had struck them. Every year the corn and the vineyards were laid waste by hailstorms and ravenous

packs of wolves had been known to attack human beings as well as livestock. St. Francis had pity on them in their misfortune, and he promised them in a sermon that all their troubles would be at an end, if they went to confession and were genuinely sorry for their sins, adding that he would guarantee it himself. They repented as a result of his exhortation and the moment they did so, the danger passed and they suffered no more calamities; neither the wolves nor the hailstorms did any further damage. In fact, hailstorms which swept over neighboring areas and were approaching their territory either died away or changed course.

6 *Sixth lesson:* On another occasion, St. Francis was journeying about the valley of Spoleto preaching, when he came to a place near Bevagna in which a huge flock of birds of various kinds had gathered. The moment he saw them, the Spirit of God came upon him and he hurried to them. He greeted them cheerfully and told them to be quiet and listen to the word of God attentively. He spoke to them at length about the benefits God bestows on his creatures and the praise which they owe him. The birds showed their pleasure in a wonderful manner; they stretched out their necks and flapped their wings, opening their beaks and looking at him closely. They seemed to be trying to feel the marvelous power of his words. It was only right that St. Francis, who was so full of God, should have felt such tender affection for these irrational creatures; in their turn, they were so attracted towards him that they listened as he taught them and obeyed when he commanded them. They flocked about him quite tamely, when he came to them, and they stayed with him without any encouragement when he wanted them to listen to him.

7 *Seventh lesson:* When St. Francis tried to go overseas in search of the prize of martyrdom, he was prevented from achieving his goal by bad weather at sea. There the Ruler of all came to his aid and provided for him in his goodness; he worked a miracle for him when he was at sea, so that he was saved from the danger of death, together with a number of others. Francis was trying to make his way back from Dalmatia to Italy and he boarded a ship without any provisions whatsoever. Even as he stepped on the vessel, a man was sent by God bringing the food which Christ's beggar would need. He called a member of the crew who was a religious man and gave it to him, telling him to give it to the friars who had nothing, when the time came. The ship was unable to make any

headway because of the gale-force winds and they ran out of supplies, so that only a small portion of the alms St. Francis received from heaven was left. By his merits and prayers this small supply increased so much with God's help that it provided for all their needs, as the storm continued for several days before they reached Ancona, the port which was their destination.

8 *Eighth lesson:* On another occasion St. Francis was on a missionary journey with a companion and, as they were travelling from Lombardy to the Marches of Treviso, they were overtaken by night. It was a dangerous journey in the dark because of the river and the marshes, and his companion implored him to ask God to help them in their necessity. Francis replied with complete confidence, "God has power to banish the darkness and grant us the gift of his light, if it pleases him in his goodness." The words were scarcely out of his mouth when they were surrounded with such a brilliant light that, by God's power, they could see their way clearly; they could even see a large part of the country on the other side of the river, although it was dark everywhere else.

9 *Ninth lesson:* It was only right that a brilliant light from heaven should go before Francis in the darkness; this of itself would be enough to prove that those who follow in the footsteps of the light of life can never be engulfed in the darkness of death. Although they still had a long way to go, the light guided their steps miraculously with its brightness and gave them spiritual comfort, so that they arrived safely at the place where they were to stay, singing hymns of praise to God.

What a wonderful, what an outstanding person St. Francis was! Fire lost its burn, and water its taste, at his command; a rock produced water in abundance and inanimate creatures waited upon him; savage animals became tame and brute beasts listened to him eagerly. God himself, the Lord of all, bowed to his wish in his goodness; he supplied him generously with food and guided his steps with his light. Francis was a man of indescribable holiness and so all creation was subject to him, and the Creator of all condescended to him.

CHAPTER VI

The Stigmata of St. Francis

1 *First lesson:* St. Francis was a faithful and devoted servant of Christ and two years before he died he observed a forty-day fast in honor of St. Michael the Archangel on a mountain called La Verna, where he lived in complete solitude. There he experienced an extraordinary infusion of divine contemplation; he was all on fire with heavenly desires and he realized that the gifts of divine grace were being poured out over him in greater abundance than ever. The fervor of his seraphic longing raised him up to God and, in its compassionate tenderness, made him like Christ who chose to hang upon the Cross in the excess of his love. Then one morning about the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, as he was praying on the mountainside, Francis saw a Seraph with six fiery wings coming down from the highest point in heaven. The vision descended swiftly and came to rest in mid-air quite near him; then he saw that the Seraph was nailed to a cross although he had wings. His hands and feet were stretched out and nailed to the Cross, while the wings were arranged about him wonderfully; two of them were raised above his head and two were stretched out in flight, while the remaining two were joined to his body and covered it.

2 *Second lesson:* Francis was dumbfounded at the sight and his heart was flooded with a mixture of joy and sorrow. He was overjoyed to see how graciously Christ regarded him, as he appeared to him so intimately in this miraculous vision. But the sight of the cruel way he was nailed to the Cross pierced his soul with a sword of compassionate sorrow. Then Christ who appeared to him visibly, granted him spiritual enlightenment and Francis realized that, although the agony of the passion was not in keeping with the state of a seraphic spirit which is immortal, his vision had a deep meaning for him. It was set before his eyes that, as Christ's lover, he might know he was to resemble Christ crucified perfectly, not by physical martyrdom, but by the fervor of his spirit. As the vision disappeared, after they had conversed mysteriously in great intimacy, it left his heart ablaze with seraphic eagerness and marked his body with the visible likeness of the Crucified. It was as if the fire of love had first penetrated his whole being, so that the likeness of Christ might be impressed upon it like a seal.

3 *Third lesson:* There and then the marks of nails began to appear in his hands and feet, the heads of which were in the palms of his hands and on the instep of each foot, while the points protruded on the opposite side. The heads appeared black and round in

his hands and feet, but the points were long and bent back; they rose above the surrounding flesh and jutted out above it. The curved portion of the nails on the soles of his feet was so big and stood out so far that he could not put his foot firmly on the ground; a man could put his finger through the loop without difficulty, as I have been told by people who saw the stigmata with their own eyes. His right side was marked with a livid scar which often bled, and it looked as if it had been pierced with a lance. His habit and trousers used to be soaked with blood, so that the friars who washed them knew at once that Christ's servant bore the likeness of the Crucified in his side, just as he bore it in his hands and feet.

4 *Fourth lesson:* Full of God as he was, Francis realized that he could not possibly conceal from his intimate companions, the stigmata which had been imprinted so plainly on his body. At the same time, he was afraid to make God's secret publicly known and he was thrown into an agony of doubt — should he reveal what he had seen, or keep silent about it. His conscience was pricking him and he eventually gave a full account of the vision, although very hesitantly, to the friars who were closest to him. He told them, too, that Christ had revealed a number of secrets to him, at the time of the apparition, which he would never communicate to any human being, as long as he lived. True love of Christ had now transformed his lover into his image, and when the forty days which he had intended spending in solitude on the mountain were over and the feast of St. Michael the Archangel had come, St. Francis came down from the mountain. With him he bore a representation of Christ crucified which was not the work of an artist in wood or stone; it had been inscribed on the members of his body by the hand of the living God.

5 *Fifth lesson:* In his humility and genuine sanctity, Francis did his best and took the greatest care to hide the sacred marks, but it was God's good pleasure to work a number of public miracles by means of them, for his own glory. This he did in order that Francis might shine like a brilliant star in the midst of the thick darkness, as the hidden power of the stigmata became publicly known through these miracles. Before St. Francis went to stay on La Verna, it often happened that dark clouds would form over the mountain and violent hailstorms would devastate the crops. After his vision, with its happy consequences, the hail stopped, much to the joy and amazement of the local

people. The unusually clear skies were to proclaim the extraordinary nature of his vision and the power of the stigmata which he received there.

6 *Sixth lesson:* Another time there was a serious outbreak of disease in the province of Rieti which affected sheep and cattle to such an extent that there seemed to be no remedy. Then a devout man was told in a vision at night to go immediately to the friars' hermitage where St. Francis was staying; there he was to obtain some of the water with which the saint washed his hands and feet and sprinkle the sick animals with it, which would put an end to the disease. The man did exactly as he was told and God granted miraculous power to the water which had touched the sacred wounds. The moment the affected animals felt even the slightest drop of it, their deadly illness was completely cured and they recovered their usual strength, so that they trotted off to pasture, as if there had never been anything wrong with them.

7 *Seventh lesson:* After he had received the stigmata, St. Francis' hands enjoyed such extraordinary power that their saving touch restored the sick to perfect health, and gave back life to limbs which had been paralyzed and withered. What is more, they even restored to life people who had been fatally injured. By way of anticipation, I shall mention two of the many miracles he worked and describe them briefly. At Lerida a man named John, who had great devotion to St. Francis, was wounded so badly one night that no one could believe he would survive the night. Then St. Francis appeared to him in a vision and touched his wounds with his sacred hands. There and then he restored him to perfect health, so that the whole countryside was loud in its praise of the standard-bearer of the Cross, saying that he was worthy of everyone's veneration. Who would not be surprised to see an acquaintance of his cruelly injured and then enjoying perfect health, at almost one and the same time? Who could remember that, without being moved to give thanks? Certainly, no one could recall such a miracle of power and goodness in a spirit of faith, without feeling some increase of devotion.

8 *Eighth lesson:* At Potenza in Apulia there was a cleric named Roger who entertained frivolous thoughts about St. Francis' stigmata. Then without warning, he suffered a wound in his left hand, beneath his glove, as if he had been hit by an arrow from a crossbow; the glove itself, however, was completely untouched. For three days he was tormented by agonizing pain, so that he was heartily sorry for what he had done, and

he appealed to St. Francis, pleading with him to help him by his glorious stigmata. He was cured so completely that all his pain disappeared and no trace of the injury remained. This is a clear indication that the stigmata were impressed on Francis by the power of Christ and shared his virtue, because it is he who punishes by inflicting injury, and cures by applying remedies, crushing the rebellious and restoring the brokenhearted (Lk 4, 18).

9 *Ninth lesson:* It was only right that St. Francis should be decorated with this extraordinary privilege; all his efforts, whether they were known to others or made in secret, were directed towards our Lord's Cross. What was his extreme gentleness, his austerity, his deep humility, his ready obedience, his absolute poverty, his perfect chastity; what were his bitter contrition, his gift of tears, his heartfelt compassion, his ardent zeal, his longing for martyrdom, his unlimited charity; what were all the outstanding virtues which made him so like Christ, if not the signs of an ever-increasing likeness to him and a preparation for the reception of his stigmata? The whole course of his life from the very beginning was marked with the glorious mysteries of Christ's Cross. Eventually, at the sight of the majestic Seraph and of the abjection of Christ crucified, he was completely changed into the likeness of what he saw by a transforming fire of divine origin. For this we have the testimony of those who saw the stigmata and felt and kissed them; they took an oath that this was true, asserting that they had seen them with their own eyes and so made their testimony more certain.

CHAPTER VII

St. Francis' Death

1 *First lesson:* Francis now hung body and soul upon the Cross with Christ; the fervor of his seraphic love raised him up to God and he was consumed with zeal for souls, so that he shared his Lord's thirst for their salvation. He could no longer walk because of the nails protruding from his feet, and so he had himself carried, half-dead as he was, about the towns and villages. Like "the second angel coming up from the east" (Ap 7, 2) of whom St. John speaks in the Apocalypse, he enkindled the hearts of God's servants with a divine fire, and set their feet on the way of peace, marking their brows with the seal of the living God. He longed with all his heart to return to the humble beginning he had made at first, and to nurse the lepers once more, as he had done before,

making his body which was already worn out with toil, serve him once again, as it had served him before.

2 *Second lesson:* With Christ for his leader, he proposed to achieve great victories, and even as his limbs bordered on collapse, he hoped to triumph over his enemy the Devil once again, because he was fervent and courageous in spirit. Merit, as we know, is crowned by patient endurance, and so, as Christ's poor, worthless servant, Francis began to suffer from a variety of illnesses, that his treasure of glory might be increased. His suffering was so great that there was not a single part of him which did not have its share of agony; he had no flesh left and his skin seemed to cling to his bones. He was hemmed in with agonizing pain, but he called his cruel sufferings his sisters, not his pains. He bore them joyfully and praised God, thanking him for everything; the humble and happy way he could rejoice in his sufferings reminded the friars who were looking after him of St. Paul, while the courage of his steadfast spirit made him seem like a second Job.

3 *Third lesson:* St. Francis knew the day of his death a long time beforehand and, as it approached, he told the friars that he must soon fold his tent (cf. 2 Pt 1, 14), as Christ had revealed to him. Two years after the reception of the sacred stigmata — that is twenty years after the beginning of his religious life — he asked to be brought to St. Mary of the Portiuncula; it was there that he had first received the spirit of holiness and grace, through the Virgin Mother of God, and it was there that he would pay the price of his mortality and so win the prize, an eternal reward. When he arrived there, he was anxious to show that he had no longer anything in common with the world, after the example of Eternal Truth. In his last serious illness, which was destined to put an end to all his suffering, he had himself laid naked on the bare earth; he wished to struggle naked with his naked enemy, in that last hour which is given him to vent his wrath. As he lay there in the dust on the ground, like an athlete stripped for the arena, he covered the wound in his right side with his left hand, to prevent it being seen, and fixed his clear gaze on heaven. He was lost in the contemplation of its glory and he praised God for enabling him to go to him freely, stripped of everything in this world.

4 *Fourth lesson:* As the moment of his death drew near, the saint had all the friars who were there called to his side; he spoke to them gently with fatherly affection, consoling them for his death and exhorting them to love God. He bequeathed to them

poverty and peace, a possession which was theirs by right of inheritance, entreating them earnestly to aim at an eternal goal and be on their guard against the dangers arising from the world. And with all the eloquence he could command, he implored them to follow in the footsteps of Jesus crucified. He was the father of the poor, and the friars sat grouped about him, as he lay there, his eyes already dim from weeping, not from old age. He was half blind and at the point of death, and he stretched out his arms over them in the form of the Cross, the sign he loved so well, and blessed all the friars both present and absent, in the power and in the name of Christ crucified.

5 *Fifth lesson:* Then he asked them to read the passage of St. John's Gospel which begins, "Before the paschal feast began" (Jn 13, 1); only a partition of flesh now separated him from his Beloved and he would listen to the beat of his voice in the Gospel phrases. All God's mysteries had been finally accomplished in him and he died quietly, praying and singing a psalm. His holy soul was freed from his body and absorbed in the abyss of eternal glory.

That very moment one of the friars, a disciple of the saint who was well known for his sanctity, saw his soul being borne on a white cloud over many waters straight to heaven, under the appearance of a radiant star. It shone with the beauty of a pure conscience, clad in the glory of his outstanding merits; the abundance of grace he had received and the Christ-like virtues he had practiced bore it aloft so surely that nothing could delay its entry into the vision of eternal light and glory.

6 *Sixth lesson:* The provincial minister of the friars in the Terra id Lavoro, Brother Augustine, a man who was very close to God, was at death's door at that time. He had been unable to speak for a long time, but now those who were with him suddenly heard him cry out, "Wait for me, father. Wait! I am coming with you." The friars were amazed and asked him to whom he was speaking. He told them he could see St. Francis going to heaven, and the moment he said it, he died peacefully.

The bishop of Assisi was on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Michael on Monte Gargano at the time, and St. Francis appeared to him at the moment of his death. He seemed happy and told the bishop that he was overjoyed to be leaving the world and going to heaven. When he got up in the morning, the bishop told his fellow pilgrims what had happened. On his return to Assisi, he investigated the matter carefully and discovered

beyond all shadow of doubt that St. Francis had left the world the very moment he appeared to him in his vision.

7 *Seventh lesson:* In his infinite goodness God showed what St. Francis had been when he lived on earth by the prodigies and miracles which took place after his death. By his merits and intercession, God restored sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb; he made the lame walk and enabled the paralyzed to feel and move about; he cured those who had withered or crippled limbs, or were suffering from hernia; he rescued prisoners from captivity and brought those in danger of shipwreck to port and safety; he granted a safe delivery to women who were in childbirth, and cast out the Devil from those who were possessed; he cured those suffering from a hemorrhage and cleansed the lepers, healed people who had received fatal injuries; he even restored the dead to life, which is the greatest miracle of all.

8 *Eighth lesson:* All over the world God's gifts are still being bestowed in abundance, through Francis' intercession; I who have written this life know this from my own experience. When I was still only a child, I became seriously ill and my mother made a vow to St. Francis, so that I was snatched from the jaws of death and restored to perfect health and strength. I remember it well and I put it on record now, for fear that I might be condemned for ingratitude, if I failed to mention such a favor.

Holy father, receive my poor thanks, such as they are, so unequal to what you deserve and the gifts you have given me. Receive our offering and forgive us our shortcomings. Pray for those who are devoted and loyal to you, that you may save them from the dangers of the present life and lead them to eternal happiness.

9 *Ninth lesson:* Nothing remains now but to say a few words by way of conclusion to all that we have written. The person who has read the whole story up to these words should meditate on one last point, which is this: St. Francis' wonderful life from the very beginning, his efficacy in preaching, and his outstanding virtues; his spirit of prophecy and his grasp of Sacred Scripture, together with the obedience shown him by irrational creatures; the reception of the stigmata and his marvelous passage from this life to heaven, are so many testimonies — seven in all — which proclaim him before the whole world as the glorious herald of Christ, bearing in his own body the seal of the

living God (Ap 7, 2). They prove that he is worthy of all veneration by reason of his office, that his teaching is true, and that his holiness should arouse our admiration.

Those who abandon the Egypt of this world can follow Francis with complete confidence; the Cross of Christ will part the waters of the sea for them like Moses' rod, and they will traverse the desert to the promised land of the living, where they will enter by the miraculous power of the Cross, having crossed the Jordan of our human mortality.

May our Savior and Leader, Jesus, bring us there, through the intercession of St. Francis. To him be all praise and honor and glory, with the Father and the Holy Spirit in perfect Trinity, for ever and ever. Amen.

Transposition

C. S. Lewis

This selection is a sermon Lewis delivered on 28 May 1944 in the Mansfield College Chapel, Oxford University. The occasion was Pentecost—or “Whit-Sunday” as it is called in the Anglican Church—the annual liturgical celebration of the descent of the Holy Spirit, as described in Acts 2.

In the church to which I belong, this day is set apart for commemorating the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the first Christians shortly after the Ascension. I want to consider one of the phenomena which accompanied, or followed, this descent; the phenomenon which our translation calls "speaking with tongues" and which the learned call *glossolalia*. You will not suppose that I think this the most important aspect of Pentecost, but I have two reasons for selecting it. In the first place it would be ridiculous for me to speak about the nature of the Holy Ghost or the modes of His operation: that would be an attempt to teach where I have nearly all to learn. In the second place, *glossolalia* has often been a stumbling-block to me. It is, to be frank, an embarrassing phenomenon. St. Paul himself seems to have been rather embarrassed by it in 1 Corinthians and labours to turn the desire and the attention of the Church to more obviously edifying gifts. But he goes no further. He throws in almost parenthetically the statement that he himself spoke with tongues more than anyone else, and he does not question the spiritual, or supernatural, source of the phenomenon.

The difficulty I feel is this. On the one hand, *glossolalia* has remained an intermittent "variety of religious experience" down to the present day. Every now and then we hear that in some revivalist meeting one or more of those present has burst into a torrent of what appears to be gibberish. The thing does not seem to be edifying, and all non-Christian opinion would regard it as a kind of hysteria, an involuntary discharge of nervous excitement. A good deal even of Christian opinion would explain most instances of it in exactly the same way; and I must confess that it would be very hard to believe that in all instances of it the Holy Ghost is operating. We suspect, even if we cannot be sure, that it is usually an affair of the nerves. That is one horn of the dilemma. On the other

hand, we cannot as Christians shelve the story of Pentecost or deny that there, at any rate, the speaking with tongues was miraculous. For the men spoke not gibberish but languages unknown to them though known to other people present. And the whole event of which this makes part is built into the very fabric of the birth-story of the Church. It is this very event which the risen Lord had told the Church to wait for—almost in the last words He uttered before His ascension. It looks, therefore, as if we shall have to say that the very same phenomenon which is sometimes not only natural but even pathological is at other times (or at least at one other time) the organ of the Holy Ghost. And this seems at first very surprising and very open to attack. The sceptic will certainly seize this opportunity to talk to us about Occam's razor, to accuse us of multiplying hypotheses. If most instances of *glossolalia* are covered by hysteria, is it not (he will ask) extremely probable that that explanation covers the remaining instances too?

It is to this difficulty that I would gladly bring a little ease if I can. And I will begin by pointing out that it belongs to a class of difficulties. The closest parallel to it within that class is raised by the erotic language and imagery we find in the mystics. In them we find a whole range of expressions—and therefore possibly of emotions—with which we are quite familiar in another context and which, in that other context, have a clear natural significance. But in the mystical writings it is claimed that these elements have a different cause. And once more the sceptic will ask why the cause which we are content to accept for ninety-nine instances of such language should not be held to cover the hundredth too. The hypothesis that mysticism is an erotic phenomenon will seem to him immensely more probable than any other.

Put in its most general terms our problem is that of the obvious continuity between things which are admittedly natural and things which, it is claimed, are spiritual; the reappearance in what professes to be our supernatural life of all the same old elements which make up our natural life and (it would seem) of no others. If we have really been visited by a revelation from beyond Nature, is it not very strange that an Apocalypse can furnish heaven with nothing more than selections from terrestrial experience (crowns, thrones, and music), that devotion can find no language but that of human lovers, and that the rite whereby Christians enact a mystical union should turn out to be only the old, familiar act of eating and drinking? And you may add that the very same problem also

breaks out on a lower level, not only between spiritual and natural but also between higher and lower levels of the natural life. Hence cynics very plausibly challenge our civilized conception of the difference between love and lust by pointing out that when all is said and done they usually end in what is, physically, the same act. They similarly challenge the difference between justice and revenge on the ground that what finally happens to the criminal may be the same. And in all these cases, let us admit that the cynics and sceptics have a good *prima facie* case. The same acts do reappear in justice as well as in revenge: the consummation of humanized and conjugal love is physiologically the same as that of the merely biological lust; religious language and imagery, and probably religious emotion too, contains nothing that has not been borrowed from Nature.

Now it seems to me that the only way to refute the critic here is to show that the same *prima facie* case is equally plausible in some instance where we all know (not by faith or by logic, but empirically) that it is in fact false. Can we find an instance of higher and lower where the higher is within almost everyone's experience? I think we can. Consider the following quotation from *Pepys's Diary*:

With my wife to the King's House to see *The Virgin Martyr*, and it is mighty pleasant.... But that which did please me beyond anything in the whole world was the wind musick when the angel comes down, which is so sweet that it ravished me and, indeed, in a word, did wrap up my soul so that it made me really sick, just as I have formerly been when in love with my wife . . . and makes me resolve to practise wind musick and make my wife do the like. (Feb. 27, 1668.)

There are several points here that deserve attention. Firstly that the internal sensation accompanying intense aesthetic delight was indistinguishable from the sensation accompanying two other experiences, that of being in love and that of being, say, in a rough channel crossing. (2) That of these two other experiences one at least is the very reverse of pleasurable. No man enjoys nausea. (3) That Pepys was, nevertheless, anxious to have again the experience whose sensational accompaniment was identical with the very unpleasant accompaniments of sickness. That was why he decided to take up wind music.

Now it may be true that not many of us have fully shared Pepys's experience; but we have all experienced that sort of thing. For myself I find that if, during a moment of

intense aesthetic rapture, one tries to turn round and catch by introspection what one is actually feeling, one can never lay one's hand on anything but a physical sensation. In my case it is a kind of kick or flutter in the diaphragm. Perhaps that is all Pepys meant by "really sick". But the important point is this: I find that this kick or flutter is exactly the same sensation which, in me, accompanies great and sudden anguish. Introspection can discover no difference at all between my neural response to very bad news and my neural response to the overture of *The Magic Flute*. If I were to judge simply by sensations I should come to the absurd conclusion that joy and anguish are the same thing, that what I most dread is the same with what I most desire. Introspection discovers nothing more or different in the one than in the other. And I expect that most of you, if you are in the habit of noticing such things, will report more or less the same.

Now let us take a step further. These sensations—Pepys's sickness and my flutter in the diaphragm—do not merely accompany very different experiences as an irrelevant or neutral addition. We may be quite sure that Pepys hated that sensation when it came in real sickness: and we know from his own words that he liked it when it came with wind music, for he took measures to make as sure as possible of getting it again. And I likewise love this internal flutter in one context and call it a pleasure and hate it in another and call it misery. It is not a mere sign of joy and anguish: it becomes what it signifies. When the joy thus flows over into the nerves, that overflow is its consummation: when the anguish thus flows over, that physical symptom is the crowning horror. The very same thing which makes the sweetest drop of all in the sweet cup also makes the bitterest drop in the bitter.

And here, I suggest, we have found what we are looking for. I take our emotional life to be "higher" than the life of our sensations—not, of course, morally higher, but richer, more varied, more subtle. And this is a higher level which nearly all of us know. And I believe that if anyone watches carefully the relation between his emotions and his sensations he will discover the following facts; (1) that the nerves do respond, and in a sense most adequately and exquisitely, to the emotions; (2) that their resources are far more limited, the possible variations of sense far fewer, than those of emotion; (3) and that the senses compensate for this by using the same sensation to express more than one emotion—even, as we have seen, to express opposite emotions.

Where we tend to go wrong is in assuming that if there is to be a correspondence between two systems it must be a one-for-one correspondence—that A in the one system must be represented by *a* in the other, and so on. But the correspondence between emotion and sensation turns out not to be of that sort. And there never could be correspondence of that sort where the one system was really richer than the other. If the richer system is to be represented in the poorer at all, this can only be by giving each element in the poorer system more than one meaning. The transposition of the richer into the poorer must, so to speak, be algebraical, not arithmetical. If you are to translate from a language which has a large vocabulary into a language that has a small vocabulary, then you must be allowed to use several words in more than one sense. If you are to write a language with twenty-two vowel sounds in an alphabet with only five vowel characters then you must be allowed to give each of those five characters more than one value. If you are making a piano version of a piece originally scored for an orchestra, then the same piano notes which represent flutes in one passage must also represent violins in another.

As the examples show we are all quite familiar with this kind of transposition or adaptation from a richer to a poorer medium. The most familiar example of all is the art of drawing. The problem here is to represent a three-dimensional world on a flat sheet of paper. The solution is perspective, and perspective means that we must give more than one value to a two-dimensional shape. Thus in a drawing of a cube we use an acute angle to represent what is a right angle in the real world. But elsewhere an acute angle on the paper may represent what was already an acute angle in the real world: for example, the point of a spear on the gable of a house. The very same shape which you must draw to give the illusion of a straight road receding from the spectator is also the shape you draw for a dunce's cap. As with the lines, so with the shading. Your brightest light in the picture is, in literal fact, only plain white paper: and this must do for the sun, or a lake in evening light, or snow, or human flesh.

I now make two comments on the instances of Transposition which are already before us:

(1) It is clear that in each case what is happening in the lower medium can be understood only if we know the higher medium. The instance where this knowledge is

most commonly lacking is the musical one. The piano version means one thing to the musician who knows the original orchestral score and another thing to the man who hears it simply as a piano piece. But the second man would be at an even greater disadvantage if he had never heard any instrument but a piano and even doubted the existence of other instruments. Even more, we understand pictures only because we know and inhabit the three-dimensional world. If we can imagine a creature who perceived only two dimensions and yet could somehow be aware of the lines as he crawled over them on the paper, we shall easily see how impossible it would be for him to understand. At first he might be prepared to accept on authority our assurance that there was a world in three dimensions. But when we pointed to the lines on the paper and tried to explain, say, that "This is a road," would he not reply that the shape which we were asking him to accept as a revelation of our mysterious other world was the very same shape which, on our own showing, elsewhere meant nothing but a triangle? And soon, I think, he would say, "You keep on telling me of this other world and its unimaginable shapes which you call solid. But isn't it very suspicious that all the shapes which you offer me as images or reflections of the solid ones turn out on inspection to be simply the old two-dimensional shapes of my own world as I have always known it? Is it not obvious that your vaunted other world, so far from being the archetype, is a dream which borrows all its elements from this one?"

(2) It is of some importance to notice that the word *symbolism* is not adequate in all cases to cover the relation between the higher medium and its transposition in the lower. It covers some cases perfectly, but not others. Thus the relation between speech and writing is one of symbolism. The written characters exist solely for the eye, the spoken words solely for the ear. There is complete discontinuity between them. They are not like one another, nor does the one cause the other to be. The one is simply a *sign* of the other and signifies it by a convention. But a picture is not related to the visible world in just that way. Pictures are part of the visible world themselves and represent it only by being part of it. Their visibility has the same source as its. The suns and lamps in pictures seem to shine only because real suns or lamps shine on them: that is, they seem to shine a great deal because they really shine a little in reflecting their archetypes. The sunlight in a picture is therefore not related to real sunlight simply as written words are to spoken. It is

a sign, but also something more than a sign: and only a sign because it is also more than a sign, because in it the thing signified is really in a certain mode present. If I had to name the relation I should call it not symbolical but sacramental. But in the case we started from—that of emotion and sensation—we are even further beyond mere symbolism. For there, as we have seen, the very same sensation does not merely accompany, nor merely signify, diverse and opposite emotions, but becomes part of them. The emotion descends bodily, as it were, into the sensation and digests, transforms, transubstantiates it, so that the same thrill along the nerves *is* delight or *is* agony.

I am not going to maintain that what I call Transposition is the only possible mode whereby a poorer medium can respond to a richer: but I claim that it is very hard to imagine any other. It is therefore, at the very least, not improbable that Transposition occurs whenever the higher reproduces itself in the lower. Thus, to digress for a moment, it seems to me very likely that the real relation between mind and body is one of Transposition. We are certain that, in this life at any rate, thought is intimately connected with the brain. The theory that thought therefore is merely a movement in the brain is, in my opinion, nonsense; for if so, that theory itself would be merely a movement, an event among atoms, which may have speed and direction but of which it would be meaningless to use the words "true" or "false". We are driven then to some kind of correspondence. But if we assume a one-for-one correspondence this means that we have to attribute an almost unbelievable complexity and variety of events to the brain. But I submit that a one-for-one relation is probably quite unnecessary. All our examples suggest that the brain can respond—in a sense, adequately and exquisitely correspond—to the seemingly infinite variety of consciousness without providing one single physical modification for each single modification of consciousness.

But that is a digression. Let us now return to our original question, about Spirit and Nature, God and Man. Our problem was that in what claims to be our spiritual life all the elements of our natural life recur: and, what is worse, it looks at first glance as if no other elements were present. We now see that if the spiritual is richer than the natural (as no one who believes in its existence would deny) then this is exactly what we should expect. And the sceptic's conclusion that the so-called spiritual is really derived from the natural, that it is a mirage or projection or imaginary extension of the natural, is also

exactly what we should expect; for, as we have seen, this is the mistake which an observer who knew only the lower medium would be bound to make in every case of Transposition. The brutal man never can by analysis find anything but lust in love; the Flatlander never can find anything but flat shapes in a picture; physiology never can find anything in thought except twitchings of the grey matter. It is no good browbeating the critic who approaches a Transposition from below. On the evidence available to him his conclusion is the only one possible.

Everything is different when you approach the Transposition from above, as we all do in the case of emotion and sensation or of the three-dimensional world and pictures, and as the spiritual man does in the case we are considering. Those who spoke with tongues, as St. Paul did, can well understand how that holy phenomenon differed from the hysterical phenomenon—although be it remembered, they were in a sense exactly the same phenomenon, just as the very same sensation came to Pepys in love, in the enjoyment of music, and in sickness. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man judges all things and is judged of none.

But who dares claim to be a spiritual man? In the full sense, none of us. And yet we are somehow aware that we approach from above, or from inside, at least some of those Transpositions which embody the Christian life in this world. With whatever sense of unworthiness, with whatever sense of audacity, we must affirm that we know a little of the higher system which is being transposed. In a way the claim we are making is not a very startling one. We are only claiming to know that our apparent devotion, whatever else it may have been, was not simply erotic, or that our apparent desire for Heaven, whatever else it may have been, was not simply a desire for longevity or jewelry or social splendours. Perhaps we have never really attained at all to what St. Paul would describe as spiritual life. But at the very least we know, in some dim and confused way, that we were trying to use natural acts and images and language with a new value, have at least desired a repentance which was not merely prudential and a love which was not self-centred. At the worst, we know enough of the spiritual to know that we have fallen short of it: as if the picture knew enough of the three-dimensional world to be aware that it was flat.

It is not only for humility's sake (that, of course) that we must emphasize the dimness of our knowledge. I suspect that, save by God's direct miracle, spiritual experience can never abide introspection. If even our emotions will not do so (since the attempt to find out what we are now feeling yields nothing more than a physical sensation), much less will the operations of the Holy Ghost. The attempt to discover by introspective analysis our own spiritual condition is to me a horrible thing which reveals, at best, not the secrets of God's spirit and ours, but their transpositions in intellect, emotion, and imagination, and which at worst may be the quickest road to presumption or despair.

With this my case, as the lawyers say, is complete. But I have just four points to add:

(1) I hope it is quite clear that the conception of Transposition, as I call it, is distinct from another conception often used for the same purpose—I mean the conception of development. The Developmentalist explains the continuity between things that claim to be spiritual and things that are certainly natural by saying that the one slowly turned into the other. I believe this view explains some facts, but I think it has been much overworked. At any rate it is not the theory I am putting forward. I am not saying that the natural act of eating after millions of years somehow blossoms into the Christian sacrament. I am saying that the Spiritual Reality, which existed before there were any creatures who ate, gives this natural act a new meaning, and more than a new meaning: makes it in a certain context to be a different thing. In a word, I think that real landscapes enter into pictures, not that pictures will one day sprout into real trees and grass.

(2) I have found it impossible, in thinking of what I call Transposition, not to ask myself whether it may help us to conceive the Incarnation. Of course if Transposition were merely a mode of symbolism it could give us no help at all in this matter: on the contrary, it would lead us wholly astray, back into a new kind of Docetism (or would it be only the old kind?) and away from the utterly historical and concrete reality which is the centre of all our hope, faith, and love. But then, as I have pointed out, Transposition is not always symbolism. In varying degrees the lower reality can actually be drawn into the higher and become part of it. The sensation which accompanies joy becomes itself joy: we can hardly choose but say "incarnates joy". If this is so, then I venture to suggest,

though with great doubt and in the most provisional way, that the concept of Transposition may have some contribution to make to the theology—or at least to the philosophy—of the Incarnation. For we are told in one of the creeds that the Incarnation worked "not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the Manhood into God". And it seems to me that there is a real analogy between this and what I have called Transposition: that humanity, still remaining itself, is not merely counted as, but veritably drawn into, Deity, seems to me like what happens when a sensation (not in itself a pleasure) is drawn into the joy it accompanies. But I walk in *mirabilibus supra me* and submit all to the verdict of real theologians.

(3) I have tried to stress throughout the inevitableness of the error made about every transposition by one who approaches it from the lower medium only. The strength of such a critic lies in the words "merely" or "nothing but". He sees all the facts but not the meaning. Quite truly, therefore, he claims to have seen all the facts. There is nothing else there; except the meaning. He is therefore, as regards the matter in hand, in the position of an animal. You will have noticed that most dogs cannot understand *pointing*. You point to a bit of food on the floor: the dog, instead of looking at the floor, sniffs at your finger. A finger is a finger to him, and that is all. His world is all fact and no meaning. And in a period when factual realism is dominant we shall find people deliberately inducing upon themselves this doglike mind. A man who has experienced love from within will deliberately go about to inspect it analytically from outside and regard the results of this analysis as truer than his experience. The extreme limit of this self-blinding is seen in those who, like the rest of us, have consciousness, yet go about to study the human organism as if they did not know it was conscious. As long as this deliberate refusal to understand things from above, even where such understanding is possible, continues, it is idle to talk of any final victory over materialism. The critique of every experience from below, the voluntary ignoring of meaning and concentration on fact, will always have the same plausibility. There will always be evidence, and every month fresh evidence, to show that religion is only psychological, justice only self-protection, politics only economics, love only lust, and thought itself only cerebral biochemistry.

(4) Finally, I suggest that what has been said of Transposition throws a new light on the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. For in a sense Transposition can do anything. However great the difference between Spirit and Nature, between aesthetic joy and that flutter in the diaphragm, between reality and picture, yet the Transposition can be in its own way adequate. I said before that in your drawing you had only plain white paper for sun and cloud, snow, water, and human flesh. In one sense, how miserably inadequate! Yet in another, how perfect. If the shadows are properly done that patch of white paper will, in some curious way, be very like blazing sunshine: we shall almost feel cold while we look at the paper snow and almost warm our hands at the paper fire. May we not, by a reasonable analogy, suppose likewise that there is no experience of the spirit so transcendent and supernatural, no vision of Deity Himself so close and so far beyond all images and emotions, that to it also there cannot be an appropriate correspondence on the sensory level? Not by a new sense but by the incredible flooding of those very sensations we now have with a meaning, a transvaluation, of which we have here no faintest guess?

The Way of a Pilgrim

Anonymous

Below are the first two chapters of *The Way of a Pilgrim*, the English translation of a now-classic volume of Russian Orthodox spirituality entitled “Candid Narratives of a Pilgrim to His Spiritual Father”. The anonymous nineteenth-century author describes his discovery and practice of the Jesus Prayer.

I

By the grace of God I am a Christian man, by my actions a great sinner, and by calling a homeless wanderer of the humblest birth who roams from place to place. My worldly goods are a knapsack with some dried bread in it on my back, and in my breast-pocket a Bible. And that is all.

On the 24th Sunday after Pentecost I went to church to say my prayers there during the Liturgy. The first Epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians was being read, and among other words I heard these—“*Pray without ceasing.*” It was this text, more than any other, which forced itself upon my mind, and I began to think how it was possible to pray without ceasing, since a man has to concern himself with other things also in order to make a living. I looked at my Bible, and with my own eyes read the words which I had heard, *i.e.*, that we ought always, at all times and in all places, to pray with uplifted hands. I thought and thought, but knew not what to make of it. “What ought I to do?” I thought. “Where shall I find someone to explain it to me? I will go to the churches where famous preachers are to be heard; perhaps there I shall hear something which will throw light on it for me.” I did so. I heard a number of very fine sermons on prayer; what prayer is, how much we need it, and what its fruits are; but no one said how one could succeed in prayer. I heard a sermon on spiritual prayer, and unceasing prayer, but how it was to be done was not pointed out.

Thus listening to sermons failed to give me what I wanted, and having had my fill of them without gaining understanding, I gave up going to hear public sermons. I settled on another plan—by God's help to look for some experienced and skilled person who

would give me in conversation that teaching about unceasing prayer which drew me so urgently.

For a long time I wandered through many places. I read my Bible always, and everywhere I asked whether there was not in the neighbourhood a spiritual teacher, a devout and experienced guide, to be found. One day I was told that in a certain village a gentleman had long been living and seeking the salvation of his soul. He had a chapel in his house. He never left his estate, and he spent his time in prayer and reading devotional books. Hearing this, I ran rather than walked to the village named. I got there and found him.

"What do you want of me?" he asked.

"I have heard that you are a devout and clever person", said I. "In God's name please explain to me the meaning of the Apostle's words, '*Pray without ceasing.*' How is it possible to pray without ceasing? I want to know so much, but I cannot understand it at all."

He was silent for a while and looked at me closely. Then he said: "Ceaseless interior prayer is a continual yearning of the human spirit towards God. To succeed in this consoling exercise we must pray more often to God to teach us to pray without ceasing. Pray more, and pray more fervently. It is prayer itself which will reveal to you how it can be achieved unceasingly; but it will take some time."

So saying, he had food brought to me, gave me money for my journey, and let me go.

He did not explain the matter.

Again I set off. I thought and thought, I read and read, I dwelt over and over again upon what this man had said to me, but I could not get to the bottom of it. Yet so greatly did I wish to understand that I could not sleep at night.

I walked at least a hundred and twenty-five miles, and then I came to a large town, a provincial capital, where I saw a monastery. At the inn where I stopped I heard it said that the Abbot was a man of great kindness, devout and hospitable. I went to see him. He met me in a very friendly manner, asked me to sit down, and offered me refreshment.

"I do not need refreshment, holy Father," I said, "but I beg you to give me some spiritual teaching. How can I save my soul?"

"What? Save your soul? Well, live according to the commandments, say your prayers, and you will be saved."

"But I hear it said that we should pray without ceasing, and I don't know how to pray without ceasing. I cannot even understand what unceasing prayer means. I beg you, Father, explain this to me."

"I don't know how to explain further, dear brother. But, stop a moment, I have a little book, and it is explained there." And he handed me St. Dmitri's book on *The Spiritual Education of the Inner Man*, saying, "Look, read this page."

I began to read as follows: "The words of the Apostle '*Pray without ceasing*' should be understood as referring to the creative prayer of the understanding. The understanding can always be reaching out towards God, and pray to Him unceasingly."

"But", I asked, "what is the method by which the understanding can always be turned towards God, never be disturbed, and pray without ceasing?"

"It is very difficult, even for one to whom God Himself gives such a gift", replied the Abbot.

He did not give me the explanation.

I spent the night at his house, and in the morning, thanking him for his kindly hospitality, I went on my way; where to, I did not know myself. My failure to understand made me sad, and by way of comforting myself I read my Bible. In this way I followed the main road for five days.

At last towards evening I was overtaken by an old man who looked like a cleric of some sort. In answer to my question he told me that he was a monk belonging to a monastery some six miles off the main road. He asked me to go there with him. "We take in pilgrims," said he, "and give them rest and food with devout persons in the guest house." I did not feel like going. So in reply I said that my peace of mind in no way depended upon my finding a resting-place, but upon finding spiritual teaching. Neither was I running after food, for I had plenty of dried bread in my knapsack.

"What sort of spiritual teaching are you wanting to get?" he asked me. "What is it puzzling you? Come now! Do come to our house, dear brother. We have *startsi* of ripe

experience well able to give guidance to your soul and to set it upon the true path, in the light of the word of God and the writings of the holy Fathers."

"Well, it's like this, Father", said I." About a year ago, while I was at the Liturgy, I heard a passage from the Epistles which bade men pray without ceasing. Failing to understand, I began to read my Bible, and there also in many places I found the divine command that we ought to pray at all times, in all places; not only while about our business, not only while awake, but even during sleep, for *'I sleep, but my heart waketh.'* This surprised me very much, and I was at a loss to understand how it could be carried out and in what way it was to be done. A burning desire and thirst for knowledge awoke in me. Day and night the matter was never out of my mind. So I began to go to churches and to listen to sermons. But however many I heard, from not one of them did I get any teaching about how to pray without ceasing. They always talked about getting ready for prayer, or about its fruits and the like, without teaching one *how* to pray without ceasing, or what such prayer means. I have often read the Bible and there made sure of what I have heard. But meanwhile I have not reached the understanding that I long for, and so to this hour I am still uneasy and in doubt."

Then the old man crossed himself and spoke. "Thank God, my dear brother, for having revealed to you this unappeasable desire for unceasing interior prayer. Recognize in it the call of God, and calm yourself. Rest assured that what has hitherto been accomplished in you is the testing of the harmony of your own will with the voice of God. It has been granted to you to understand that the heavenly light of unceasing interior prayer is attained neither by the wisdom of this world, nor by the mere outward desire for knowledge, but that on the contrary it is found in poverty of spirit and in active experience in simplicity of heart. That is why it is not surprising that you have been unable to hear anything about the essential work of prayer, and to acquire the knowledge by which ceaseless activity in it is attained. Doubtless a great deal has been preached about prayer, and there is much about it in the teaching of various writers. But since for the most part all their reasonings are based upon speculation and the working of natural wisdom, and not upon active experience, they sermonize about the qualities of prayer, rather than about the nature of the thing itself. One argues beautifully about the necessity of prayer, another about its power and the blessings which attend it, a third again about

the things which lead to perfection in prayer, *i.e.*, about the absolute necessity of zeal, an attentive mind, warmth of heart, purity of thought, reconciliation with one's enemies, humility, contrition, and so on. But what is prayer? And how does one learn to pray? Upon these questions, primary and essential as they are, one very rarely gets any precise enlightenment from present-day preachers. For these questions are more difficult to understand than all their arguments that I have just spoken of, and require mystical knowledge, not simply the learning of the schools. And the most deplorable thing of all is that the vain wisdom of the world compels them to apply the human standard to the divine. Many people reason quite the wrong way round about prayer, thinking that good actions and all sorts of preliminary measures render us capable of prayer. But quite the reverse is the case, it is prayer which bears fruit in good works and all the virtues. Those who reason so, take, incorrectly, the fruits and the results of prayer for the means of attaining it, and this is to depreciate the power of prayer. And it is quite contrary to Holy Scripture, for the Apostle Paul says, *'I exhort therefore that first of all supplications be made'* (1 Tim., ii, 1). The first thing laid down in the Apostle's words about prayer is that the work of prayer comes before everything else: *'I exhort therefore that first of all . . .'* The Christian is bound to perform many good works, but before all else what he ought to do is to pray, for without prayer no other good work whatever can be accomplished. Without prayer he cannot find the way to the Lord, he cannot understand the truth, he cannot crucify the flesh with its passions and lusts, his heart cannot be enlightened with the light of Christ, he cannot be savingly united to God. None of those things can be effected unless they are preceded by constant prayer. I say 'constant,' for the perfection of prayer does not lie within our power; as the Apostle Paul says, *'For we know not what we should pray for as we ought'* (Rom. viii, 26). Consequently it is just to pray often, to pray always, which falls within our power as the means of attaining purity of prayer, which is the mother of all spiritual blessings. 'Capture the Mother, and she will bring you the children,' said St. Isaac the Syrian. Learn first to acquire the power of prayer and you will easily practise all the other virtues. But those who know little of this from practical experience and the profoundest teaching of the holy Fathers, have no clear knowledge of it and speak of it but little."

During this talk, we had almost reached the monastery. And so as not to lose touch with this wise old man, and to get what I wanted more quickly, I hastened to say, "Be so kind, Reverend Father, as to show me what prayer without ceasing means and how it is learnt. I see you know all about these things."

He took my request kindly and asked me into his cell. "Come in," said he; "I will give you a volume of the holy Fathers from which with God's help you can learn about prayer clearly and in detail."

We went into his cell and he began to speak as follows. "The continuous interior Prayer of Jesus is a constant uninterrupted calling upon the divine Name of Jesus with the lips, in the spirit, in the heart; while forming a mental picture of His constant presence, and imploring His grace, during every occupation, at all times, in all places, even during sleep. The appeal is couched in these terms, 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.' One who accustoms himself to this appeal experiences as a result so deep a consolation and so great a need to offer the prayer always, that he can no longer live without it, and it will continue to voice itself within him of its own accord. Now do you understand what prayer without ceasing is?"

"Yes indeed, Father, and in God's name teach me how to gain the habit of it," I cried, filled with joy.

"Read this book," he said. "It is called *The Philokalia*, and it contains the full and detailed science of constant interior prayer, set forth by twenty-five holy Fathers. The book is marked by a lofty wisdom and is so profitable to use that it is considered the foremost and best manual of the contemplative spiritual life. As the revered Nicephorus said, 'It leads one to salvation without labour and sweat.'"

"Is it then more sublime and holy than the Bible?" I asked.

"No, it is not that. But it contains clear explanations of what the Bible holds in secret and which cannot be easily grasped by our short-sighted understanding. I will give you an illustration. The sun is the greatest, the most resplendent and the most wonderful of heavenly luminaries, but you cannot contemplate and examine it simply with unprotected eyes. You have to use a piece of artificial glass which is many millions of times smaller and darker than the sun. But through this little piece of glass you can examine the magnificent monarch of stars, delight in it, and endure its fiery rays. Holy

Scripture also is a dazzling sun, and this book, *The Philokalia*, is the piece of glass which we use to enable us to contemplate the sun in its imperial splendour. Listen now, I am going to read you the sort of instruction it gives on unceasing interior prayer."

He opened the book, found the instruction by St. Simeon the New Theologian, and read: "Sit down alone and in silence. Lower your head, shut your eyes, breathe out gently and imagine yourself looking into your own heart. Carry your mind, *i.e.*, your thoughts, from your head to your heart. As you breathe out, say 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.' Say it moving your lips gently, or simply say it in your mind. Try to put all other thoughts aside. Be calm, be patient, and repeat the process very frequently."

The old man explained all this to me and illustrated its meaning. We went on reading from *The Philokalia* passages of St. Gregory of Sinai, St. Callistus and St. Ignatius, and what we read from the book the *starets* explained in his own words. I listened closely and with great delight, fixed it in my memory, and tried as far as possible to remember every detail. In this way we spent the whole night together and went to Mattins without having slept at all.

The *starets* sent me away with his blessing and told me that while learning the Prayer I must always come back to him and tell him everything, making a very frank confession and report; for the inward process could not go on properly and successfully without the guidance of a teacher.

In church I felt a glowing eagerness to take all the pains I could to learn unceasing interior prayer, and I prayed to God to come to my help. Then I began to wonder how I should manage to see my *starets* again for counsel or confession, since leave was not given to remain for more than three days in the monastery guesthouse, and there were no houses near.

However, I learned that there was a village between two and three miles from the monastery. I went there to look for a place to live, and to my great happiness God showed me the thing I needed. A peasant hired me for the whole summer to look after his kitchen garden, and what is more gave me the use of a little thatched hut in it where I could live alone. God be praised! I had found a quiet place. And in this manner I took up my abode and began to learn interior prayer in the way I had been shown, and to go to see my *starets* from time to time.

For a week, alone in my garden, I steadily set myself to learn to pray without ceasing exactly as the *starets* had explained. At first things seemed to go very well. But then it tired me very much, I felt lazy and bored and overwhelmingly sleepy, and a cloud of all sorts of other thoughts closed round me. I went in distress to my *starets* and told him the state I was in.

He greeted me in a friendly way and said, "My dear brother, it is the attack of the world of darkness upon you. To that world, nothing is worse than heartfelt prayer on our part. And it is trying by every means to hinder you and to turn you aside from learning the Prayer. But all the same the enemy only does what God sees fit to allow, and no more than is necessary for us. It would appear that you need a further testing of your humility, and that it is too soon, therefore, for your unmeasured zeal to approach the loftiest entrance to the heart. You might fall into spiritual covetousness. I will read you a little instruction from *The Philokalia* upon such cases."

He turned to the teaching of Nicephorus and read, 'If after a few attempts you do not succeed in reaching the realm of your heart in the way you have been taught, do what I am about to say, and by God's help you will find what you seek. The faculty of pronouncing words lies in the throat. Reject all other thoughts (you can do this if you will) and allow that faculty to repeat only the following words constantly, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me." Compel yourself to do it always. If you succeed for a time, then without a doubt your heart also will open to prayer. We know it from experience.'

"There you have the teaching of the holy Fathers on such cases," said my *starets*, "and therefore you ought from to-day onwards to carry out my directions with confidence, and repeat the Prayer of Jesus as often as possible. Here is a rosary. Take it, and to start with say the Prayer three thousand times a day. Whether you are standing or sitting, walking or lying down, continually repeat 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.' Say it quietly and without hurry, but without fail exactly three thousand times a day without deliberately increasing or diminishing the number. God will help you and by this means you will reach also the unceasing activity of the heart."

I gladly accepted this guidance and went home and began to carry out faithfully and exactly what my *starets* had bidden. For two days I found it rather difficult, but after that it became so easy and likeable, that as soon as I stopped, I felt a sort of need to go on

saying the Prayer of Jesus, and I did it freely and willingly, not forcing myself to it as before.

I reported to my *starets*, and he bade me say the Prayer six thousand times a day, saying, "Be calm, just try as faithfully as possible to carry out the set number of prayers. God will vouchsafe you His grace."

In my lonely hut I said the Prayer of Jesus six thousand times a day for a whole week. I felt no anxiety. Taking no notice of any other thoughts however much they assailed me, I had but one object, *i.e.*, to carry out my *starets'* bidding exactly. And what happened? I grew so used to my Prayer that when I stopped for a single moment, I felt, so to speak, as though something were missing, as though I had lost something. The very moment I started the Prayer again, it went on easily and joyously. If I met anyone I had no wish to talk to him. All I wanted was to be alone and to say my Prayer, so used to it had I become in a week.

My *starets* had not seen me for ten days. On the eleventh day he came to see me himself, and I told him how things were going. He listened and said, "Now you have got used to the Prayer. See that you preserve the habit and strengthen it. Waste no time, therefore, but make up your mind by God's help from to-day to say the Prayer of Jesus twelve thousand times a day. Remain in your solitude, get up early, go to bed late, and come and ask advice of me every fortnight."

I did as he bade me. The first day I scarcely succeeded in finishing my task of saying twelve thousand prayers by late evening. The second day I did it easily and contentedly. To begin with, this ceaseless saying of the Prayer brought a certain amount of weariness, my tongue felt numbed, I had a stiff sort of feeling in my jaws, I had a feeling at first pleasant but afterwards slightly painful in the roof of my mouth. The thumb of my left hand, with which I counted my beads, hurt a little. I felt a slight inflammation in the whole of that wrist, and even up to the elbow, which was not unpleasant. Moreover, all this aroused me, as it were, and urged me on to frequent saying of the Prayer. For five days I did my set number of twelve thousand prayers, and as I formed the habit I found at the same time pleasure and satisfaction in it.

Early one morning the Prayer woke me up as it were. I started to say my usual morning prayers, but my tongue refused to say them easily or exactly. My whole desire

was fixed upon one thing only—to say the Prayer of Jesus, and as soon as I went on with it I was filled with joy and relief. It was as though my lips and my tongue pronounced the words entirely of themselves without any urging from me. I spent the whole day in a state of the greatest contentment, I felt as though I was cut off from everything else, I lived as though in another world, and I easily finished my twelve thousand prayers by the early evening. I felt very much like still going on with them, but I did not dare to go beyond the number my *starets* had set me. Every day following I went on in the same way with my calling on the Name of Jesus Christ, and that with great readiness and liking. Then I went to see my *starets* and told him everything frankly and in detail.

He heard me out and then said, "Be thankful to God that this desire for the Prayer and this facility in it have been manifested in you. It is a natural consequence which follows constant effort and spiritual achievement. So a machine to the principal wheel of which one gives a drive, works for a long while afterwards by itself; but if it is to go on working still longer, one must oil it and give it another drive. Now you see with what admirable gifts God in His love for mankind has endowed even the bodily nature of man. You see what feelings can be produced even outside a state of grace in a soul which is sinful and with passions unsubdued, as you yourself have experienced. But how wonderful, how delightful and how consoling a thing it is when God is pleased to grant the gift of self-acting spiritual prayer, and to cleanse the soul from all sensuality! It is a condition which is impossible to describe, and the discovery of this mystery of prayer is a foretaste on earth of the bliss of Heaven. Such happiness is reserved for those who seek after God in the simplicity of a loving heart. Now I give you my permission to say your Prayer as often as you wish and as often as you can. Try to devote every moment you are awake to the Prayer, call on the Name of Jesus Christ without counting the number of times, and submit yourself humbly to the will of God, looking to Him for help. I am sure He will not forsake you, and that He will lead you into the right path."

Under this guidance I spent the whole summer in ceaseless oral prayer to Jesus Christ, and I felt absolute peace in my soul. During sleep I often dreamed that I was saying the Prayer. And during the day if I happened to meet anyone, all men without exception were as dear to me as if they had been my nearest relations. But I did not concern myself with them much. All my ideas were quite calmed of their own accord. I

thought of nothing whatever but my Prayer, my mind tended to listen to it, and my heart began of itself to feel at times a certain warmth and pleasure. If I happened to go to church the lengthy service of the monastery seemed short to me, and no longer wearied me as it had in time past. My lonely hut seemed like a splendid palace, and I knew not how to thank God for having sent to me, a lost sinner, so wholesome a guide and master.

But I was not long to enjoy the teaching of my dear *starets*, who was so full of divine wisdom. He died at the end of the summer. Weeping freely I bade him farewell, and thanked him for the fatherly teaching he had given my wretched self, and as a blessing and a keepsake I begged for the rosary with which he said his prayers.

And so I was left alone. Summer came to an end and the kitchen garden was cleared. I had no longer anywhere to live. My peasant sent me away, giving me by way of wages two roubles, and filling up my bag with dried bread for my journey. Again I started off on my wanderings. But now I did not walk along as before, filled with care. The calling upon the Name of Jesus Christ gladdened my way. Everybody was kind to me, it was as though everyone loved me.

Then it occurred to me to wonder what I was to do with the money I had earned by my care of the kitchen garden. What good was it to me? Yet stay! I no longer had a *starets*, there was no one to go on teaching me. Why not buy *The Philokalia* and continue to learn from it more about interior prayer?

I crossed myself and set off with my Prayer. I came to a large town, where I asked for the book in all the shops. In the end I found it, but they asked me three roubles for it, and I had only two. I bargained for a long time, but the shopkeeper would not budge an inch. Finally he said, "Go to this church near by, and speak to the churchwarden. He has a book like that, but it's a very old copy. Perhaps he will let you have it for two roubles." I went, and sure enough I found and bought for my two roubles a worn and old copy of *The Philokalia*. I was delighted with it. I mended my book as much as I could, I made a cover for it with a piece of cloth, and put it into my breast pocket with my Bible.

And that is how I go about now, and ceaselessly repeat the Prayer of Jesus, which is more precious and sweet to me than anything in the world. At times I do as much as forty-three or four miles a day, and do not feel that I am walking at all. I am aware only of the fact that I am saying my Prayer. When the bitter cold pierces me, I begin to say my

Prayer more earnestly and I quickly get warm all over. When hunger begins to overcome me, I call more often on the Name of Jesus, and I forget my wish for food. When I fall ill and get rheumatism in my back and legs, I fix my thoughts on the Prayer and do not notice the pain. If anyone harms me I have only to think, "How sweet is the Prayer of Jesus!" and the injury and the anger alike pass away and I forget it all. I have become a sort of half-conscious person. I have no cares and no interests. The fussy business of the world I would not give a glance to. The one thing I wish for is to be alone, and all by myself to pray, to pray without ceasing; and doing this, I am filled with joy. God knows what is happening to me! Of course, all this is sensuous, or as my departed *starets* said, an artificial state which follows naturally upon routine. But because of my unworthiness and stupidity I dare not venture yet to go on further, and learn and make my own, spiritual prayer within the depths of my heart. I await God's time. And in the meanwhile I rest my hope on the prayers of my departed *starets*. Thus, although I have not yet reached that ceaseless spiritual prayer which is self-acting in the heart, yet I thank God I do now understand the meaning of those words I heard in the Epistle— "*Pray without ceasing.*"

2

I wandered about for a long time in different districts, having for my fellow-traveller the Prayer of Jesus, which heartened and consoled me in all my journeys, in all my meetings with other people and in all the happenings of travel.

But I came to feel at last that it would be better for me to stay in some one place, in order to be alone more often, so as to be able to keep by myself and study *The Philokalia*. Although I read it whenever I found shelter for the night or rested during the day, yet I greatly wished to go more and more deeply into it, and with faith and heartfelt prayer to learn from it teaching about the truth for the salvation of my soul.

However, in spite of all my wishes, I could nowhere find any work that I was able to do, for I had lost the use of my left arm when quite a child. Seeing that because of this I should not be able to get myself a fixed abode, I made up my mind to go into Siberia to the tomb of St. Innocent of Irkutsk. My idea was that in the forests and steppes of Siberia I should travel in greater silence and therefore in a way that was better for prayer and

reading. And this journey I undertook, all the while saying my oral Prayer without stopping.

After no great lapse of time I had the feeling that the Prayer had, so to speak, by its own action passed from my lips to my heart. That is to say, it seemed as though my heart in its ordinary beating began to say the words of the Prayer within at each beat. Thus for example, *one*, "Lord," *two*, "Jesus," *three*, "Christ," and so on. I gave up saying the Prayer with my lips. I simply listened carefully to what my heart was saying. It seemed as though my eyes looked right down into it; and I dwelt upon the words of my departed *starets* when he was telling me about this joy. Then I felt something like a slight pain in my heart, and in my thoughts so great a love for Jesus Christ that I pictured myself, if only I could see Him, throwing myself at His feet and not letting them go from my embrace, kissing them tenderly, and thanking Him with tears for having of His love and grace allowed me to find so great a consolation in His Name, me, His unworthy and sinful creature! Further there came into my heart a gracious warmth which spread through my whole breast. This moved me to a still closer reading of *The Philokalia* in order to test my feelings, and to make a thorough study of the business of secret prayer in the heart. For without such testing I was afraid of falling a victim to the mere charm of it, or of taking natural effects for the effects of grace, and of giving way to pride at my quick learning of the Prayer. It was of this danger that I had heard my departed *starets* speak. For this reason I took to walking more by night, and chose to spend my days reading *The Philokalia* sitting down under a tree in the forest. Ah! what wisdom, such as I had never known before, was shown me by this reading! Giving myself up to it I felt a delight which till then I had never been able to imagine. It is true that many places were still beyond the grasp of my dull mind. But my prayer in the heart brought with it the clearing up of things I did not understand. Sometimes also, though very rarely, I saw my departed *starets* in a dream, and he threw light upon many things, and, most of all, guided my ignorant soul more and more towards humility.

In this blissful state I passed more than two months of the summer. For the most part I went through the forests and along by-paths. When I came to a village I asked only for a bag of dried bread and a handful of salt. I filled my bark jar with water, and so on for another sixty miles or so.

Towards the end of the summer temptation began to attack me, perhaps as a result of the sins on my wretched soul, perhaps as something needed in the spiritual life, perhaps as the best way of giving me teaching and experience. A clear case in point was the following. One day when I came out on to the main road as twilight was falling, two men with shaved heads who looked like a couple of soldiers, came up to me. They demanded money. When I told them that I had not a farthing on me, they would not believe me, and shouted insolently, "You're lying, pilgrims always pick up lots of money."

"What's the good of arguing with him!" said one of them, and gave me such a blow on the head with his oak cudgel that I dropped senseless. I do not know whether I remained senseless long, but when I came to I found myself lying in the forest by the roadside robbed. My knapsack had gone, all that was left of it were the cords from which it hung, which they had cut. Thank God they had not stolen my passport, which I carried in my old fur cap so as to be able to show it as quickly as possible on demand. I got up weeping bitterly, not so much on account of the pain in my head as for the loss of my books, the Bible and *The Philokalia*, which were in the stolen knapsack.

Day and night I did not cease to weep and lament. Where was it now, my Bible which I had always carried with me, and which I had always read from my youth onwards? Where was my *Philokalia*, from which I had gained so much teaching and consolation? Oh unhappy me, to have lost the first and last treasures of my life before having had my fill of them! It would have been better to be killed outright than to live without this spiritual food. For I should never be able to replace the books now.

For two days I just dragged myself along, I was so crushed by the weight of my misfortune, and on the third I quite reached the end of my strength, and dropping down in the shelter of a bush I fell asleep. And then I had a dream. I was back at the monastery in the cell of my *starets* deploring my loss. The old man was trying to comfort me. He said, "Let this be a lesson to you in detachment from earthly things, for your better advance towards heaven. This has been allowed to happen to you to save you from falling into the mere enjoyment of spiritual things. God would have the Christian absolutely renounce all his desires and delights and attachments, and to submit himself entirely to His divine will. He orders every event for the help and salvation of man; He willeth that all men should

be saved. Take courage then and believe that God will with the temptation provide also a way of escape, (1 Cor. 10:13.) Soon you will be rejoicing much more than you are now distressed." At these words I awoke, feeling my strength come back to me and my soul full of light and peace, "God's will be done," I said. I crossed myself, got up and went on my way. The Prayer again began to be active in my heart, as before, and for three days I went along in peace.

All at once I came upon a body of convicts with their military escort. When I came up to them I recognized the two men who had robbed me. They were in the outside file, and so I fell at their feet and earnestly begged them to tell me what they had done with my books. At first they paid no heed to me, but in the end one of them said, "If you will give us something we will tell you where your books are. Give us a rouble." I swore to them that even if I had to beg the rouble from someone for the love of God, I would certainly give it to them, and by way of pledge I offered them my passport. Then they told me that my books were in the wagons which followed the prisoners, among all the other stolen things they were found with.

"How can I get them?"

"Ask the officer in charge of us."

I hurried to the officer and told him the whole story.

"Can you really read the Bible?" he asked me. "Yes," I answered, "not only can I read everything, but what is more, I can write too. You will see a signature in the Bible which shows it is mine, and here is my passport showing the same name and surname."

He then told me that the rascals who had robbed me were deserters living in a mud hut in the forest and that they had plundered many people, but that a clever driver whose *troika* they had tried to steal had captured them the day before. "All right," he added, "I will give you your books back if they are there, but you come with us as far as our halting place for the night; it is only a little over two miles, then I need not stop the whole convoy and the wagons just for your sake." I agreed to this gladly, and as I walked along at his horse's side, we began to talk.

I saw that he was a kindly and honest fellow and no longer young. He asked me who I was, where I came from, and where I was going. I answered all his questions without hiding anything, and so we reached the house which marked the end of the day's

march. He found my books and gave them back to me, saying, "Where are you going, now night has come on? Stay here and sleep in my ante-room." So I stayed.

Now that I had my books again, I was so glad that I did not know how to thank God. I clasped the books to my breast and held them there so long that my hands got quite numbed. I shed tears of joy, and my heart beat with delight. The officer watched me and said, "You must love reading your Bible very much!" But such was my joy that I could not answer him, I could only weep. Then he went on to say, "I also read the Gospel regularly every day, brother." He produced a small copy of the Gospels, printed in Kiev and bound in silver, saying, "Sit down, and I will tell you how it came about."

"Hullo there, let us have some supper," he shouted.

We drew up to the table and the officer began his story,

"Ever since I was a young man I have been with the army in the field and not on garrison service. I knew my job, and my superior officers liked me for a conscientious second-lieutenant. Still, I was young, and so were my friends. Unhappily I took to drink, and drunkenness became a regular passion with me. So long as I kept away from drink, I was a good officer, but when I gave way to it, I was no good for anything for six weeks at a time. They bore with me for a long while, but the end of it was that after being thoroughly rude while drunk to my commanding officer, I was cashiered and transferred to a garrison as a private soldier for three years. I was threatened with a still more severe punishment if I did not give up drinking and mend my ways. Even in this miserable state of affairs, however much I tried, I could not regain my self-control, nor cure myself. I found it impossible to get rid of my passion for drink, and it was decided to send me to a disciplinary corps. When I was informed of this I was at my wits' end, I was in barracks occupied with my wretched thoughts when there arrived a monk who was going round collecting for a church. We each of us gave him what we could.

"He came up to me and asked me why I was so unhappy, and I talked to him and told him my troubles. He sympathized with me and said, 'The same thing happened to my own brother, and what do you think helped him? His spiritual father gave him a copy of the Gospels with strict orders to read a chapter without a moment's delay every time he felt a longing for wine coming over him. If the desire continued he was to read a second chapter, and so on. That is what my brother did, and at the end of a very short time his

drunkenness came to an end. It is now fifteen years since he touched a drop of alcohol. You do the same and you will see how that will help you. I have a copy of the Gospels which you must let me bring you.'

"I listened to him, and then I said, 'How can your Gospels help me since all efforts of my own and all the medical treatment have failed to stop me drinking?' I talked in that way because I had as yet never been in the habit of reading the Gospels. 'Don't say that,' replied the monk, 'I assure you that it will be a help.' As a matter of fact, the next day he brought me this very copy. I opened it, took a glance, and said, 'I cannot accept it, I am not used to Church Slavonic and don't understand it.' But the monk went on to assure me that in the very words of the Gospel there lay a gracious power, for in them was written what God Himself had spoken. 'It does not matter very much if at first you do not understand, go on reading diligently. A monk once said, "If you do not understand the Word of God, the devils understand what you are reading, and tremble," and your drunkenness is certainly the work of devils. And here is another thing I will tell you. St. John Chrysostom writes that even a room in which a copy of the Gospels is kept, holds the spirits of darkness at bay, and becomes an unpromising field for their wiles.'

"I forget what I gave the monk. But I bought his book of the Gospels, put it away in a trunk with my other things and forgot it. Some while afterwards a bout of drunkenness threatened me. An irresistible desire for drink drove me hurriedly to open my trunk to get some money and rush off to the public-house. But the first thing my eyes fell on was the copy of the Gospels, and all that the monk had said came back vividly to my mind. I opened the book and began to read the first chapter of St. Matthew. I got to the end of it without understanding a word. Still I remembered that the monk had said, 'No matter if you do not understand, go on reading diligently.' 'Come,' said I, 'I must read the second chapter.' I did so and began to understand a little. So I started on the third chapter and then the barracks bell began to ring; everyone had to go to bed, no one was allowed to go out, and I had to stay where I was. When I got up in the morning I was just on the point of going out to get some wine when I suddenly thought—supposing I were to read another chapter? What would be the result? I read it and I did not go to the public-house. Again I felt the craving, and again I read a chapter. I felt a certain amount of relief. This encouraged me, and from that time on, whenever I felt the need of drink, I used to

read a chapter of the Gospels. What is more, as time went on things got better and better, and by the time I had finished all four Gospels my drunkenness was absolutely a thing of the past, and I felt nothing but disgust for it. It is just twenty years now since I drank a drop of alcohol.

"Everybody was astonished at the change brought about in me. Some three years later my commission was restored to me. In due course I was promoted, and finally got my majority. I married; I am blessed with a good wife, we have made a position for ourselves, and so, thank God, we go on living our life. As far as we can, we help the poor and give hospitality to pilgrims. Why, now I have a son who is an officer and a first-rate fellow. And mark this—since the time when I was cured of drunkenness, I have lived under a vow to read the Gospels every single day of my life, one whole Gospel in every twenty-four hours, and I let nothing whatever hinder me. I do this still. If I am exceedingly pressed with business, and unusually tired, I lie down and get my wife or my son to read the whole of one of the Evangelists to me, and so avoid breaking my rule. By way of thanksgiving and for the glory of God I have had this book of the Gospels mounted in pure silver, and I always carry it in my breast pocket."

I listened with great joy to this story of his. "I also have come across a case of the same sort," I told him. "At the factory in our village there was a craftsman, very skilful at his job, and a good, kindly fellow. Unhappily, however, he also drank, and very often at that. A certain God-fearing man advised him when the desire for drink seized him, to repeat the Prayer of Jesus thirty-three times in honour of the Holy Trinity, and in memory of the thirty-three years of the earthly life of Jesus Christ. He took his advice and started to carry it out, and very soon he quite gave up drinking. And, what is more, three years later he went into a monastery."

"And which is the best," he asked, "the Prayer of Jesus, or the Gospels?"

"It's all one and the same thing," I answered. "What the Gospel is, that the Prayer of Jesus is also, for the Divine Name of Jesus Christ holds in itself the whole gospel truth. The holy Fathers say that the Prayer of Jesus is a summary of the Gospels."

After our talk we said prayers, and the Major began to read the Gospel of St. Mark from the beginning, and I listened and said the Prayer in my heart. At two o'clock in the morning he came to the end of the Gospel, and we parted and went to bed.

As usual I got up early in the morning. Everyone was still asleep. As soon as it began to get light, I eagerly seized my beloved *Philokalia*. With what gladness I opened it! I might have been getting a glimpse of my own father coming back from a far country, or of a friend risen from the dead. I kissed it, and thanked God for giving it me back again. I began at once to read Theolept of Philadelphia, in the second part of the book. His teaching surprised me when he lays down that one and the same person at one and the same time should do three quite different things. "Seated at table," he says, "supply your body with food, your ear with reading and your mind with prayer." But the memory of the very happy evening the day before really gave me from my own experience the meaning of this thought. And here also the secret was revealed to me that the mind and the heart are not one and the same thing.

As soon as the Major rose I went to thank him for his kindness and to say good-bye. He gave me tea and a rouble and bade me farewell. I set off again feeling very happy. I had gone over half a mile when I remembered I had promised the soldiers a rouble, and that now this rouble had come to me in a quite unlooked-for way. Should I give it to them or not? At first I thought: they beat you and they robbed you, moreover this money will be of no use to them whatever, since they are under arrest. But afterwards other thoughts came to me. Remember it is written in the Bible, "*If thine enemy hunger Feed him,*" and Jesus Christ himself said, "*Love your enemies,*" "*And if any man will take away thy coat let him have thy cloak also.*" That settled it for me. I went back and just as I got to the house all the convicts came out to start on the next stage of their march. I went quickly up to my two soldiers, I handed them my rouble and said, "Repent and pray! Jesus Christ loves men, He will not forsake you." And with that I left them and went on my way.

After doing some thirty miles along the main road I thought I would take a by-path so that I might be more by myself and read more quietly. For a long while I walked through the heart of the forest, and but rarely came upon a village. At times I passed almost the whole day sitting under the trees and carefully reading *The Philokalia*, from which I gained a surprising amount of knowledge. My heart kindled with desire for union with God by means of interior prayer, and I was eager to learn it under the guidance and control of my book. At the same time I felt sad that I had no dwelling where I could give

myself up quietly to reading all the while. During this time I read my Bible also, and I felt that I began to understand it more clearly than before, when I had failed to understand many things in it and had often been a prey to doubts. The holy Fathers were right when they said that *The Philokalia* is a key to the mysteries of Holy Scripture. With the help it gave me I began to some extent to understand the hidden meaning of the Word of God. I began to see the meaning of such sayings as—"The inner secret man of the heart," "true prayer worships in the spirit," "the kingdom is within us," "the intercession of the Holy Spirit with groanings that cannot be uttered," "abide in me," "give me thy heart," "to put on Christ," "the betrothal of the Spirit to our hearts," the cry from the depths of the heart, "Abba, Father," and so on. And when with all this in mind I prayed with my heart, everything around me seemed delightful and marvellous. The trees, the grass, the birds, the earth, the air, the light seemed to be telling me that they existed for man's sake, that they witnessed to the love of God for man, that everything proved the love of God for man, that all things prayed to God and sang His praise.

Thus it was that I came to understand what *The Philokalia* calls "the knowledge of the speech of all creatures," and I saw the means by which converse could be held with God's creatures.

In this way I wandered about for a long while, coming at length to so lonely a district that for three days I came upon no village at all. My supply of dried bread was used up, and I began to be very much cast down at the thought I might die of hunger. I began to pray my hardest in the depths of my heart. All my fears went, and I entrusted myself to the will of God. My peace of mind came back to me, and I was in good spirits again. When I had gone a little further along the road, which here skirted a huge forest, I caught sight of a dog which came out of it and ran along in front of me. I called it, and it came up to me with a great show of friendliness. I was glad, and I thought, Here is another case of God's goodness! No doubt there is a flock grazing in the forest and this dog belongs to the shepherd. Or perhaps somebody is shooting in the neighbourhood. Whichever it is I shall be able to beg a piece of bread if nothing more, for I have eaten nothing for twenty-four hours. Or at least I shall be able to find out where the nearest village is.

After jumping around me for some little time and seeing that I was not going to give him anything, the dog trotted back into the forest along the narrow footpath by which he had come out. I followed, and a few hundred yards further on, looking between the trees, I saw him run into a hole, from which he looked out and began to bark. At the same time a thin and pale middle-aged peasant came into view from behind a great tree. He asked me where I came from, and for my part I wanted to know how he came to be there, and so we started a friendly talk.

He took me into his mud hut and told me that he was a forester and that he looked after this particular wood, which had been sold for felling. He set bread and salt before me, and we began to talk. "How I envy you," said I, "being able to live so nicely alone in this quiet instead of being like me! I wander from place to place and rub along with all sorts of people."

"You can stop here too, if you like," he answered. "The old forester's hut is quite near here. It is half ruined, but still quite fit to live in in summer. I suppose you have your passport. As far as bread goes, we shall always have plenty of that, it is brought to me every week from my village. This spring here never dries up. For my part, brother, I have eaten nothing but bread and have drunk nothing but water for the last ten years. This is how things stand. When autumn comes and the peasants have ended their work on the land, some two hundred workmen will be coming to cut down this wood. Then I shall have no further business here, and you will not be allowed to stay either."

As I listened to all this I all but fell at his feet, I felt so pleased. I did not know how to thank God for such goodness. In this unlooked-for way my greatest wish was to be granted me. There were still over four months before next autumn; during all that time I could enjoy the silence and peace needed for a close reading of *The Philokalia* in order to study and learn ceaseless prayer in the heart. So I very gladly stayed there, to live during that time in the hut he showed me.

I talked further with this simple brother who gave me shelter, and he told me about his life and his ideas. "I had quite a good position in the life of our village," said he. "I had a workshop where I dyed fustian and linen, and I lived comfortably enough, though not without sin. I often cheated in business, I was a false swearer, I was abusive, I used to drink and quarrel. In our village there was an old *dyachok* who had a very old

book on the Last Judgment. He used to go from house to house and read from it, and he was paid something for doing so. He came to me too. Give him threepence and a glass of wine into the bargain and he would go on reading all night till cock crow. There I would sit at my work and listen while he read about the torments that await us in Hell. I heard how the living will be changed and the dead raised; how God will come down to judge the world; how the angels will sound the trumpets; I heard of the fire and pitch, and of the worm which will devour sinners. One day as I listened I was seized with horror, and I said to myself: What if these torments come upon me! I will set to work to save my soul. It may be that by prayer I can avoid the results of my sins. I thought about this for a long time. Then I gave up my work, sold my house, and as I was alone in the world, I got a place as forester here and all I ask of my *mir* is bread, clothes and some candles for my prayers. I have been living like this for over ten years now. I eat only once a day and then nothing but bread and water. I get up at cock crow, make my devotions and say my prayers before the holy icons with seven candles burning. When I make my rounds in the forest during the day, I wear iron chains weighing sixty pounds next my skin. I never grumble, drink neither wine nor beer, I never quarrel with anybody at all, and I have had nothing to do with women and girls all my life. At first this sort of life pleased me, but lately other thoughts have come into my mind, and I cannot get away from them. God only knows if I shall be able to pray my sins away in this fashion, and it's a hard life. And is everything written in that book true? How can a dead man rise again? Supposing he has been dead over a hundred years and not even his ashes are left? Who knows if there is really a Hell or not? What more is known of a man after he dies and rots? Perhaps the book was written by priests and masters to make us poor fools afraid and keep us quiet. What if we plague ourselves for nothing and give up all our pleasure in vain? Suppose there is no such thing as another life, what then? Isn't it better to enjoy one's earthly life, and take it easily and happily? Ideas of this kind often worry me, and I don't know but what I shall not some day go back to my old work."

I heard him with pity. They say, I thought, that it is only the learned and the clever who are free thinkers and believe in nothing! Yet here is one of ourselves, even a simple peasant, a prey to such unbelief. The kingdom of darkness throws open its gates to everyone, it seems, and maybe attacks the simple-minded most easily. Therefore one

must learn wisdom and strengthen oneself with the Word of God as much as possible against the enemy of the soul.

So with the object of helping this brother and doing all I could to strengthen his faith, I took *The Philokalia* out of my knapsack. Turning to the 109th chapter of Isikhi, I read it to him. I set out to prove to him the uselessness and vanity of avoiding sin merely from fear of the tortures of Hell, I told him that the soul could be freed from sinful thoughts only by guarding the mind and cleansing the heart, and that this could be done by interior prayer. I added that according to the holy Fathers, one who performs saving works simply from the fear of Hell follows the way of bondage, and he who does the same just in order to be rewarded with the Kingdom of Heaven follows the path of a bargainer with God. The one they call a slave, the other a hireling. But God wants us to come to Him as sons to their Father, He wants us to behave ourselves honourably from love for Him and zeal for His service, He wants us to find our happiness in uniting ourselves with Him in a saving union of mind and heart.

"However much you spend yourself on treating your body hardly," I said, "you will never find peace of mind that way, and unless you have God in your mind and the ceaseless Prayer of Jesus in your heart, you will always be likely to fall back into sin for the very slightest reason. Set to work, my brother, upon the ceaseless saying of the Prayer of Jesus. You have such a good chance of doing so here in this lonely place, and in a short while you will see the gain of it. No godless thoughts will then be able to get at you, and the true faith and love for Jesus Christ will be shown to you. You will then understand how the dead will be raised, and you will see the Last Judgment in its true light. The Prayer will make you feel such lightness and such bliss in your heart, that you will be astonished at it yourself, and your wholesome way of life will be neither dull nor troublesome to you."

Then I went on to explain to him as well as I could how to begin, and how to go on ceaselessly with the Prayer of Jesus, and how the Word of God and the writings of the holy Fathers teach us about it. He agreed with it all and seemed to me to be calmer.

Then I left him and shut myself up in the hut which he had shown me. Ah! how delighted I was, how calmly happy when I crossed the threshold of that lonely retreat, or rather, that tomb! It seemed to me like a magnificent palace filled with every consolation

and delight. With tears of rapture I gave thanks to God and said to myself, Here in this peace and quietude I must seriously set to work at my task and beseech God to give me light. So I started by reading through *The Philokalia* again with great care, from beginning to end. Before long I had read the whole of it, and I saw how much wisdom, holiness and depth of insight there was in this book. Still, so many matters were dealt with in it, and it contained such a lot of lessons from the holy Fathers, that I could not very well grasp it all, and take in as a single whole what was said about interior prayer. And this was what I chiefly wanted to know, so as to learn from it how to practise ceaseless self-acting prayer in the heart.

This was my great desire, following the divine command in the Apostle's words, "*Covet earnestly the best gifts,*" and again, "*Quench not the Spirit.*" I thought over the matter for a long time. What was to be done? My mind and my understanding were not equal to the task, and there was no one to explain. I made up my mind to besiege God with prayer. Maybe He would make me understand somehow. For twenty-four hours I did nothing but pray without stopping for a single moment. At last my thoughts were calmed, and I fell asleep. And then I dreamed that I was in my departed *starets'* cell and that he was explaining *The Philokalia* to me. "The holy book is full of profound wisdom," he was saying. "It is a secret treasury of the meaning of the hidden judgments of God. It is not everywhere and to everyone that it is accessible, but it does give to each such guidance as he needs, to the wise, wise guidance, to the simple-minded, simple guidance. That is why you simple folk should not read the chapters one after the other as they are arranged in the book. That order is for those who are instructed in theology. Those who are uninstructed, but who nevertheless desire to learn interior prayer from this book, should take things in this order, (1) First of all read through the book of Nicephorus the monk (in part 2), then (2) the whole book of Gregory of Sinai, except the short chapters, (3) Simeon the New Theologian on the Three Forms of Prayer and his discourse on Faith, and after that (4) the book of Callistus and Ignatius. In these Fathers there are full directions and teaching on interior prayer of the heart, in a form which everyone can understand.

"And if, in addition, you want to find a very understandable instruction on prayer, turn to part 4 and find the summarized pattern of prayer by the most holy Callistus, Patriarch of Constantinople."

In my dream I held the book in my hands and began to look for this passage, but I was quite unable to find it. Then he turned over a few pages himself and said, "Here it is, I will mark it for you." He picked up a piece of charcoal from the ground and made a mark in the margin, against the passage he had found. I listened to him with care, and tried to fix in my mind everything he said, word for word. When I woke up it was still dark. I lay still and in thought went over my dream and all that my *starets* had said to me. "God knows," thought I, "whether it is really the spirit of my departed *starets* that I have seen, or whether it is only the outcome of my own thoughts, because they are so often taken up with *The Philokalia* and my *starets*." With this doubt in my mind I got up, for day was beginning to break; and what did I see? There on the stone which served as a table in my hut lay the book open at the very page which my *starets* had pointed out to me, and in the margin, a charcoal mark just as in my dream! Even the piece of charcoal itself was lying beside the book! I looked in astonishment, for I remembered clearly that the book was not there the evening before, that it had been put, shut, under my pillow, and also I was quite certain that before there had been nothing where now I saw the charcoal mark.

It was this which made me sure of the truth of my dream, and that my revered master of blessed memory was pleasing to God. I set about reading *The Philokalia* in the exact order he had bidden. I read it once, and again a second time, and this reading kindled in my soul a zealous desire to make what I had read a matter of practical experience. I saw clearly what interior prayer means, how it is to be reached, what the fruits of it are, how it filled one's heart and soul with delight, and how one could tell whether that delight came from God, from nature, or from temptation.

So I began by searching out my heart in the way Simeon the New Theologian teaches. With my eyes shut I gazed in thought, *i.e.*, in imagination, upon my heart. I tried to picture it there in the left side of my breast and to listen carefully to its beating. I started doing this several times a day, for half an hour at a time, and at first I felt nothing but a sense of darkness. But little by little after a fairly short time I was able to picture my

heart and to note its movement, and further with the help of my breathing I could put into it and draw from it the Prayer of Jesus in the manner taught by the saints, Gregory of Sinai, Callistus, and Ignatius. When drawing the air in I looked in spirit into my heart and said, "Lord Jesus Christ," and when breathing out again, I said, "Have mercy on me." I did this at first for an hour at a time, then for two hours, then for as long as I could, and in the end almost all day long. If any difficulty arose, if sloth or doubt came upon me, I hastened to take up *The Philokalia* and read again those parts which dealt with the work of the heart, and then once more I felt ardour and zeal for the Prayer.

When about three weeks had passed I felt a pain in my heart, and then a most delightful warmth, as well as consolation and peace. This aroused me still more and spurred me on more and more to give great care to the saying of the Prayer so that all my thoughts were taken up with it and I felt a very great joy. From this time I began to have from time to time a number of different feelings in my heart and mind. Sometimes my heart would feel as though it were bubbling with joy, such lightness, freedom, and consolation were in it. Sometimes I felt a burning love for Jesus Christ and for all God's creatures. Sometimes my eyes brimmed over with tears of thankfulness to God, who was so merciful to me, a wretched sinner. Sometimes my understanding, which had been so stupid before, was given so much light that I could easily grasp and dwell upon matters of which up to now I had not been able even to think at all. Sometimes that sense of a warm gladness in my heart spread throughout my whole being and I was deeply moved as the fact of the presence of God everywhere was brought home to me. Sometimes by calling upon the Name of Jesus I was overwhelmed with bliss, and now I knew the meaning of the words "*The Kingdom of God is within you.*"

From having all these and other like feelings I noted that interior prayer bears fruit in three ways: in the Spirit, in the feelings, and in revelations. In the first, for instance, is the sweetness of the love of God, inward peace, gladness of mind, purity of thought, and the sweet remembrance of God. In the second, the pleasant warmth of the heart, fullness of delight in all one's limbs, the joyous "bubbling" in the heart, lightness and courage, the joy of living, power not to feel sickness and sorrow. And in the last, light given to the mind, understanding of Holy Scripture, knowledge of the speech of created things,

freedom from fuss and vanity, knowledge of the joy of the inner life, and finally certainty of the nearness of God and of His love for us.

After spending five months in this lonely life of prayer and such happiness as this, I grew so used to the Prayer that I went on with it all the time. In the end I felt it going on of its own accord within my mind and in the depths of my heart, without any urging on my part. Not only when I was awake, but even during sleep just the same thing went on. Nothing broke into it and it never stopped even for a single moment, whatever I might be doing. My soul was always giving thanks to God and my heart melted away with unceasing happiness.

Faith*C. S. Lewis*

The following two chapters on “Faith” are taken from Lewis’s *Mere Christianity*, Book III, “Christian Behavior”. In Chapter 11, he defines faith as “the art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods”; in Chapter 12 he helps to show that both faith and “good actions”—that is, works—are essential parts of the Christian life, as necessary to each other as the two blades of a pair of scissors.

11

I must talk in this chapter about what the Christians call Faith. Roughly speaking, the word Faith seems to be used by Christians in two senses or on two levels, and I will take them in turn. In the first sense it means simply Belief—accepting or regarding as true the doctrines of Christianity. That is fairly simple. But what does puzzle people—at least it used to puzzle me—is the fact that Christians regard faith in this sense as a virtue. I used to ask how on earth it can be a virtue—what is there moral or immoral about believing or not believing a set of statements? Obviously, I used to say, a sane man accepts or rejects any statement, not because he wants or does not want to, but because the evidence seems to him good or bad. If he were mistaken about the goodness or badness of the evidence that would not mean he was a bad man, but only that he was not very clever. And if he thought the evidence bad but tried to force himself to believe in spite of it, that would be merely stupid.

Well, I think I still take that view. But what I did not see then—and a good many people do not see still—was this. I was assuming that if the human mind once accepts a thing as true it will automatically go on regarding it as true, until some real reason for reconsidering it turns up. In fact, I was assuming that the human mind is completely ruled by reason. But that is not so. For example, my reason is perfectly convinced by good evidence that anesthetics do not smother me and that properly trained surgeons do not start operating until I am unconscious. But that does not alter the fact that when they have me down on the table and clap their horrible mask over my face, a mere childish panic begins inside me. I start thinking I am going to choke, and I am afraid they will start

cutting me up before I am properly under. In other words, I lose my faith in anesthetics. It is not reason that is taking away my faith: on the contrary, my faith is based on reason. It is my imagination and emotions. The battle is between faith and reason on one side and emotion and imagination on the other.

When you think of it you will see lots of instances of this. A man knows, on perfectly good evidence, that a pretty girl of his acquaintance is a liar and cannot keep a secret and ought not to be trusted; but when he finds himself with her his mind loses its faith in that bit of knowledge and he starts thinking, "Perhaps she'll be different this time," and once more makes a fool of himself and tells her something he ought not to have told her. His senses and emotions have destroyed his faith in what he really knows to be true. Or take a boy learning to swim. His reason knows perfectly well that an unsupported human body will not necessarily sink in water: he has seen dozens of people float and swim. But the whole question is whether he will be able to go on believing this when the instructor takes away his hand and leaves him unsupported in the water—or whether he will suddenly cease to believe it and get in a fright and go down.

Now just the same thing happens about Christianity. I am not asking anyone to accept Christianity if his best reasoning tells him that the weight of the evidence is against it. That is not the point at which Faith comes in. But supposing a man's reason once decides that the weight of the evidence is for it. I can tell that man what is going to happen to him in the next few weeks. There will come a moment when there is bad news, or he is in trouble, or is living among a lot of other people who do not believe it, and all at once his emotions will rise up and carry out a sort of blitz on his belief. Or else there will come a moment when he wants a woman, or wants to tell a lie, or feels very pleased with himself, or sees a chance of making a little money in some way that is not perfectly fair some moment, in fact, at which it would be very convenient if Christianity were not true. And once again his wishes and desires will carry out a blitz. I am not talking of moments at which any real new reasons against Christianity turn up. Those have to be faced and that is a different matter. I am talking about moments where a mere mood rises up against it.

Now Faith, in the sense in which I am here using the word, is the art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods. For moods will

change, whatever view your reason takes. I know that by experience. Now that I am a Christian I do have moods in which the whole thing looks very improbable: but when I was an atheist I had moods in which Christianity looked terribly probable. This rebellion of your moods against your real self is going to come anyway. That is why Faith is such a necessary virtue: unless you teach your moods "where they get off," you can never be either a sound Christian or even a sound atheist, but just a creature dithering to and fro, with its beliefs really dependent on the weather and the state of its digestion. Consequently one must train the habit of Faith.

The first step is to recognize the fact that your moods change. The next is to make sure that, if you have once accepted Christianity, then some of its main doctrines shall be deliberately held before your mind for some time every day. That is why daily prayers and religious reading and churchgoing are necessary parts of the Christian life. We have to be continually reminded of what we believe. Neither this belief nor any other will automatically remain alive in the mind. It must be fed. And as a matter of fact, if you examined a hundred people who had lost their faith in Christianity, I wonder how many of them would turn out to have been reasoned out of it by honest argument? Do not most people simply drift away?

Now I must turn to Faith in the second or higher sense: and this is the most difficult thing I have tackled yet. I want to approach it by going back to the subject of Humility. You may remember I said that the first step towards humility was to realize that one is proud. I want to add now that the next step is to make some serious attempt to practise the Christian virtues. A week is not enough. Things often go swimmingly for the first week. Try six weeks. By that time, having, as far as one can see, fallen back completely or even fallen lower than the point one began from, one will have discovered some truths about oneself. No man knows how bad he is till he has tried very hard to be good. A silly idea is current that good people do not know what temptation means. This is an obvious lie. Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. After all, you find out the strength of the German army by fighting against it, not by giving in. You find out the strength of a wind by trying to walk against it, not by lying down. A man who gives in to temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later. That is why bad people, in one sense, know very little about

badness. They have lived a sheltered life by always giving in. We never find out the strength of the evil impulse inside us until we try to fight it: and Christ, because He was the only man who never yielded to temptation, is also the only man who knows to the full what temptation means—the only complete realist. Very well, then. The main thing we learn from a serious attempt to practise the Christian virtues is that we fail. If there was any idea that God had set us a sort of exam, and that we might get good marks by deserving them, that has to be wiped out. If there was any idea of a sort of bargain—any idea that we could perform our side of the contract and thus put God in our debts so that it was up to Him, in mere justice, to perform His side—that has to be wiped out.

I think every one who has some vague belief in God, until he becomes a Christian, has the idea of an exam, or of a bargain in his mind. The first result of real Christianity is to blow that idea into bits. When they find it blown into bits, some people think this means that Christianity is a failure and give up. They seem to imagine that God is very simple-minded! In fact, of course, He knows all about this. One of the very things Christianity was designed to do was to blow this idea to bits. God has been waiting for the moment at which you discover that there is no question of earning a pass mark in this exam, or putting Him in your debt.

Then comes another discovery. Every faculty you have, your power of thinking or of moving your limbs from moment to moment, is given you by God. If you devoted every moment of your whole life exclusively to His service you could not give Him anything that was not in a sense His own already. So that when we talk of a man doing anything for God or giving anything to God, I will tell you what it is really like. It is like a small child going to its father and saying, "Daddy, give me sixpence to buy you a birthday present." Of course, the father does, and he is pleased with the child's present. It is all very nice and proper, but only an idiot would think that the father is sixpence to the good on the transaction. When a man has made these two discoveries God can really get to work. It is after this that real life begins. The man is awake now. We can now go on to talk of Faith in the second sense.

I want to start by saying something that I would like everyone to notice carefully. It is this. If this chapter means nothing to you, if it seems to be trying to answer questions you never asked, drop it at once. Do not bother about it at all. There are certain things in Christianity that can be understood from the outside, before you have become a Christian. But there are a great many things that cannot be understood until after you have gone a certain distance along the Christian road. These things are purely practical, though they do not look as if they were. They are directions for dealing with particular cross-roads and obstacles on the journey and they do not make sense until a man has reached those places. Whenever you find any statement in Christian writings which you can make nothing of, do not worry. Leave it alone. There will come a day, perhaps years later, when you suddenly see what it meant. If one could understand it now, it would only do one harm.

Of course all this tells against me as much as anyone else. The thing I am going to try to explain in this chapter may be ahead of me. I may be thinking I have got there when I have not. I can only ask instructed Christians to watch very carefully, and tell me when I go wrong; and others to take what I say with a grain of salt—as something offered, because it may be a help, not because I am certain that I am right.

I am trying to talk about Faith in the second sense, the higher sense. I said last time that the question of Faith in this sense arises after a man has tried his level best to practise the Christian virtues, and found that he fails, and seen that even if he could he would only be giving back to God what was already God's own. In other words, he discovers his bankruptcy. Now, once again, what God cares about is not exactly our actions. What he cares about is that we should be creatures of a certain kind or quality—the kind of creatures He intended us to be—creatures related to Himself in a certain way. I do not add "and related to one another in a certain way," because that is included: if you are right with Him you will inevitably be right with all your fellow-creatures, just as if all the spokes of a wheel are fitted rightly into the hub and the rim they are bound to be in the right positions to one another. And as long as a man is thinking of God as an examiner who has set him a sort of paper to do, or as the opposite party in a sort of bargain—as long as he is thinking of claims and counterclaims between himself and

God—he is not yet in the right relation to Him. He is misunderstanding what he is and what God is. And he cannot get into the right relation until he has discovered the fact of our bankruptcy.

When I say "discovered," I mean really discovered: not simply said it parrot-fashion. Of course, any child, if given a certain kind of religious education, will soon learn to *say* that we have nothing to offer to God that is not already His own and that we find ourselves failing to offer even that without keeping something back. But I am talking of really discovering this: really finding out by experience that it is true.

Now we cannot, in that sense, discover our failure to keep God's law except by trying our very hardest (and then failing). Unless we really try, whatever we say there will always be at the back of our minds the idea that if we try harder next time we shall succeed in being completely good. Thus, in one sense, the road back to God is a road of moral effort, of trying harder and harder. But in another sense it is not trying that is ever going to bring us home. All this trying leads up to the vital moment at which you turn to God and say, "You must do this. I can't." Do not, I implore you, start asking yourselves, "Have I reached that moment?" Do not sit down and start watching your own mind to see if it is coming along. That puts a man quite on the wrong track. When the most important things in our life happen we quite often do not know, at the moment, what is going on. A man does not always say to himself, "Hullo! I'm growing up." It is often only when he looks back that he realises what has happened and recognizes it as what people call "growing up." You can see it even in simple matters. A man who starts anxiously watching to see whether he is going to sleep is very likely to remain wide awake. As well, the thing I am talking of now may not happen to every one in a sudden flash—as it did to St. Paul or Bunyan: it may be so gradual that no one could ever point to a particular hour or even a particular year. And what matters is the nature of the change in itself, not how we feel while it is happening. It is the change from being confident about our own efforts to the state in which we despair of doing anything for ourselves and leave it to God.

I know the words "leave it to God" can be misunderstood, but they must stay for the moment. The sense in which a Christian leaves it to God is that he puts all his trust in Christ: trusts that Christ will somehow share with him the perfect human obedience

which He carried out from His birth to His crucifixion: that Christ will make the man more like Himself and, in a sense, make good his deficiencies. In Christian language, He will share His "sonship" with us, will make us, like Himself, "Sons of God": in Book IV I shall attempt to analyze the meaning of those words a little further [see Selection 6]. If you like to put it that way, Christ offers something for nothing: He even offers everything for nothing. In a sense, the whole Christian life consists in accepting that very remarkable offer. But the difficulty is to reach the point of recognizing that all we have done and can do is nothing. What we should have liked would be for God to count our good points and ignore our bad ones. Again, in a sense, you may say that no temptation is ever overcome until we stop trying to overcome it—throw up the sponge. But then you could not "stop trying" in the right way and for the right reason until you had tried your very hardest. And, in yet another sense, handing everything over to Christ does not, of course, mean that you stop trying. To trust Him means, of course, trying to do all that He says. There would be no sense in saying you trusted a person if you would not take his advice. Thus if you have really handed yourself over to Him, it must follow that you are trying to obey Him. But trying in a new way, a less worried way. Not doing these things in order to be saved, but because He has begun to save you already. Not hoping to get to Heaven as a reward for your actions, but inevitably wanting to act in a certain way because a first faint gleam of Heaven is already inside you.

Christians have often disputed as to whether what leads the Christian home is good actions, or Faith in Christ. I have no right really to speak on such a difficult question, but it does seem to me like asking which blade in a pair of scissors is most necessary. A serious moral effort is the only thing that will bring you to the point where you throw up the sponge. Faith in Christ is the only thing to save you from despair at that point: and out of that Faith in Him good actions must inevitably come. There are two parodies of the truth which different sets of Christians have, in the past, been accused by other Christians of believing: perhaps they may make the truth clearer. One set were accused of saying, "Good actions are all that matters. The best good action is charity. The best kind of charity is giving money. The best thing to give money to is the Church. So hand us over £10,000 and we will see you through." The answer to that nonsense, of course, would be that good actions done for that motive, done with the idea that Heaven

can be bought, would not be good actions at all, but only commercial speculations. The other set were accused of saying, "Faith is all that matters. Consequently, if you have faith, it doesn't matter what you do. Sin away, my lad, and have a good time and Christ will see that it makes no difference in the end." The answer to that nonsense is that, if what you call your "faith" in Christ does not involve taking the slightest notice of what He says, then it is not Faith at all—not faith or trust in Him, but only intellectual acceptance of some theory about Him.

The Bible really seems to clinch the matter when it puts the two things together into one amazing sentence. The first half is, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"—which looks as if everything depended on us and our good actions: but the second half goes on, "For it is God who worketh in you"—which looks as if God did everything and we nothing. I am afraid that is the sort of thing we come up against in Christianity. I am puzzled, but I am not surprised. You see, we are now trying to understand, and to separate into water-tight compartments, what exactly God does and what man does when God and man are working together. And, of course, we begin by thinking it is like two men working together, so that you could say, "He did this bit and I did that." But this way of thinking breaks down. God is not like that. He is inside you as well as outside: even if we could understand who did what, I do not think human language could properly express it. In the attempt to express it different Churches say different things. But you will find that even those who insist most strongly on the importance of good actions tell you you need Faith; and even those who insist most strongly on Faith tell you to do good actions. At any rate that is as far as I go.

I think all Christians would agree with me if I said that though Christianity seems at first to be all about morality, all about duties and rules and guilt and virtue, yet it leads you on, out of all that, into something beyond. One has a glimpse of a country where they do not talk of those things, except perhaps as a joke. Every one there is filled full with what we should call goodness as a mirror is filled with light. But they do not call it goodness. They do not call it anything. They are not thinking of it. They are too busy looking at the source from which it comes. But this is near the stage where the road passes over the rim of our world. No one's eyes can see very far beyond that: lots of people's eyes can see further than mine.

The Future Life*Origen*

Origen (185-253) was the most prolific and influential of the early Church Fathers, writing many hundreds of books, including the first systematic theology, *On First Principles*. The selections that follow are taken from that monumental, if controversial, volume; "The Promises" is Chapter XI of Book II, and "The Consummation of the World" is Chapter VI of Book III

THE PROMISES

It is certain that no living creature can be altogether inactive and immovable, but that it is eager for every kind of movement and for continual action and volition; and it is clear, I think, that this nature resides in all living beings. Much more then must a rational being such as man be always engaged in some movement or activity. And if a man forgets himself and is unaware of what befits him, his whole purpose centres round bodily experiences and in all his movements he is occupied with the pleasures and lusts of the body. If, however, he is one who strives to care or provide for the common good, he applies himself either to serving the State or obeying the magistrates or to whatever else may seem to be clearly of benefit to people generally. But if there be a man who can discern something better than these activities, which appear to be connected with the body, and can give diligent attention to wisdom and knowledge, he will undoubtedly direct all his efforts towards studies of this sort, with the object of learning, through inquiry into truth, what are the causes and reason of things. As therefore in this life one man decides that the highest good is the pleasure of the body, another the service of the State, and another devotion to studies and learning, so we seek to know whether in that life which is the true one, the life which is said to be 'hid with Christ in God' (Col. III. 3), that is, in the eternal life, there will be for us any such order or condition of existence.

Now some men, who reject the labour of thinking and seek after the outward and literal meaning of the law, or rather give way to their own desires and lusts, disciples of the mere letter, consider that the promises of the future are to be looked for in the form of pleasure and bodily luxury. And chiefly on this account they desire after the resurrection

to have flesh of such a sort that they will never lack the power to eat and drink and to do all things that pertain to flesh and blood, not following the teaching of the apostle Paul about the resurrection of a 'spiritual body' (1 Cor. 15:44). Consequently they go on to say that even after the resurrection there will be engagements to marry and the procreation of children, for they picture to themselves the earthly city of Jerusalem about to be rebuilt with precious stones laid down for its foundations and its walls erected of jasper and its battlements adorned with crystal; it will also have an outer wall composed of different precious stones, namely, jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardius, onyx, chrysolite, chrysoprase, hyacinth and amethyst (Rev. 21:10-21; Is. 54:12; Ezek. 28:13). Then, too, they suppose that 'aliens' are to be given them to minister to their pleasures, and that they will have these for 'plowmen' or 'vinedressers' or 'wall-builders' (Is. 61:5; 60:10), so that by them their ruined and fallen city may be raised up again; and they consider that they are to receive the 'wealth of nations' to live on and that they will have control over their riches, so that even the camels of Midian and Ephah will come and bring them 'gold, incense and precious stones' (Is. 61:6; 60:5, 6).

All this they try to prove on prophetic authority from those passages of scripture which describe the promises made to Jerusalem; where it is also said that 'they who serve God shall eat and drink, but sinners shall hunger and thirst', and that 'the righteous shall enjoy gladness, but confusion shall possess the wicked' (Is. 65:13, 14). From the New Testament, too, they quote the Saviour's saying, in which he makes a promise to his disciples of the gladness that wine brings; 'I will not drink of this cup until the day that I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom' (Matt. 26:29). They add also the following, that the Saviour calls those blessed who now hunger and thirst, and promises them that they shall be filled (Matt. 5:6; Luke 6:21); and they quote from the scriptures many other illustrations, the force of which they do not perceive must be figurative and spiritual. Then, too, after the fashion of what happens in this life, and of this world's positions of dignity or rank or supreme power, they consider that they will be kings and princes, just like the corresponding earthly rulers, relying on the saying in the gospel, 'Thou shalt have authority over five cities' (Jer. 17:25; Luke 19:19). And, to speak briefly, they desire that all things which they look for in the promises should correspond in every detail with the course of this life, that is, that what exists now should exist again. Such are

the thoughts of men who believe indeed in Christ, but because they understand the divine scriptures in a Judaistic sense, extract from them nothing that is worthy of the divine promises.

Those, however, who accept a view of the scriptures which accords with the meaning of the apostles do indeed hope that the saints will eat; but they will eat the 'bread of life' (John 6:35), which is to nourish the soul and enlighten the mind with the food of truth and wisdom and to cause it to drink from the cup of divine wisdom, as the divine scripture says: 'Wisdom has prepared her table, she has slain her victims, she has mingled her wine in the bowl and cries with a loud voice, Turn in to me and eat the bread which I have prepared for you, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you' (Prov. 9:2-5). The mind, when nourished by this food of wisdom to a whole and perfect state, as man was made in the beginning, will be restored to the 'image and likeness' (Gen. 1:26) of God; so that, even though a man may have departed out of this life insufficiently instructed, but with a record of acceptable works, he can be instructed in that Jerusalem, the city of the saints, that is, he can be taught and informed and fashioned into a 'living stone', a 'stone precious and elect' (1 Peter 2:4-6), because he has borne with courage and endurance the trials of life and the struggles after piety. There, too, he will come to a truer and clearer knowledge of the saying already uttered here, that 'man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God' (Matt. 4:4). Moreover, the princes and rulers must be understood to be those who both rule over the souls of lower condition and also instruct and teach them and initiate them into things divine.

But if these considerations seem scarcely able to produce a worthy desire in minds that hope for literal promises, let us continue our inquiry a little, and see how an eager longing for the reality of things is natural to us and implanted in our soul; so that we may at last be able, by following out a spiritual view of scripture, to describe as it were the true forms of the 'bread of life' and the quality of that 'wine' and the characteristics of the 'principalities' (John 6:35; Prov. 9:2, 5; Luke 19:17, 19). As, then, in those arts, which are accomplished by manual labour, the design, the why or how or for what uses a thing is made, lies in the mind, but its practical efficacy is unfolded through the help of the work of our hands, so we must believe that in regard to God's works, which have been made by him, their design and meaning remain a secret. Now when our

eye sees the works of the craftsman, if it observes an article which has been made with unusual skill, immediately the mind burns to discover of what sort it is and how and for what uses it was made. Much more, and beyond all comparison, does the mind burn with unspeakable longing to learn the design of those things which we perceive to have been made by God. This longing, this love has, we believe, undoubtedly been implanted in us by God; and as the eye naturally demands light and vision and our body by its nature desires food and drink, so our mind cherishes a natural and appropriate longing to know God's truth and to learn the causes of things.

Now we have not received this longing from God on the condition that it should not or could not ever be satisfied; for in that case the 'love of truth' (2 Thess. 2:10) would appear to have been implanted in our mind by God the Creator to no purpose, if its gratification is never to be accomplished. So when even in this life men devote themselves with great labour to sacred and religious studies, although they obtain only some small fragments out of the immeasurable treasures of divine knowledge (Col. 2:2, 3), yet [they gain this advantage,] that they occupy their mind and understanding with these questions and press onward in their eager desire. Moreover they derive much assistance from the fact that by turning their mind to the study and love of truth they render themselves more capable of receiving instruction in the future. For when a man wishes to paint a picture, if he first sketches with the faint touch of a light pencil the outlines of the proposed figure and inserts suitable marks to indicate features afterwards to be added, this preliminary drawing with its faint outline undoubtedly renders the canvas more prepared to receive the true colours. So it will be with us, if only that faint form and outline is inscribed 'on the tablets of our heart' (2 Cor. 3:3) by the pencil of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is perhaps the reason why it is said, 'To every one that hath shall be given and added' (Matt. 25:29). It is clear, then, that to those who have now in this life a kind of outline of truth and knowledge there shall be added in the future the beauty of the perfect image.

Such was, I think, the 'desire' indicated by him who said, 'I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ; for this is far better' (Phil. 1:23). He knew that when he had gone back to Christ he would learn more clearly the reasons for all things that happen on earth, that is, the reasons which account for man, for his soul or

his mind, or whichever of these constitutes man, and what is the meaning of the 'ruling spirit', and of the 'spirit who works', and of the 'living spirit' (Eph. 2:2; 1 Cor. 12:6, 11; Rom. 8:2), and of the grace of the Holy Spirit which is given to the faithful. Then also he will understand the significance of the name Israel, and of the diversity of races; and also of the twelve tribes contained in Israel, and of the people of each several tribe. He will also understand the reasons for the priests and Levites and for the different priestly orders, and whose type it was that was seen in Moses; and he will learn, too, what is the true meaning in God's sight of the jubilees and the weeks of years. Further, he will see the reason of the feast days and the holy days and will perceive the causes of all the sacrifices and purifications. He will observe the reason for the cleansing after leprosy and for the different kinds of leprosy, and the meaning of the purification of those who suffer an emission of seed. He will learn about the good powers, what they are, and their greatness and qualities, and likewise about the opposite kind, and the explanation of the love which the former bear towards mankind and of the persistent jealousy of the latter. He will perceive what is the reason of souls and the meaning of the diversity among animals, whether those that live in water, or birds, or beasts; and for what cause each genus is divided into so many species; and what purpose of the Creator or what indication of his wisdom is concealed in each individual thing. Further, he will learn the reason why certain properties are attached to certain roots and herbs; and what is the reason of the fallen angels, and for what cause they are allowed to flatter in some respects those who do not despise them with complete faith and to exist for the purpose of deceiving and leading men astray. He will learn the judgment of divine providence about each individual thing; about things which happen to men, that they happen not by chance or accident, but by a reason so carefully thought out, and so high above us, that it does not overlook even the number of the hairs of our head, and that not of the saints only but probably of all men; the scope of which providence extends even to the 'two sparrows' (Matt. 10:30, 31) which are sold for a penny, whether 'sparrows' is to be understood spiritually or literally. For now in this present life we seek, but there we shall see plainly (1 Cor. 13:12).

All this leads us to suppose that no small interval of time may pass before the reason merely of things on earth can be shown to worthy and deserving men after their

departure from life, in order that through their acquaintance with it all and the grace of full knowledge they may enjoy an indescribable gladness.

So then, if the air between heaven and earth is not devoid of living and even rational beings, as the apostle said, 'Wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of this air, the spirit who now worketh in the children of disobedience' (Eph. 2:2), and again, 'We shall be caught up in the clouds to meet Christ in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord' (1 Thess. 4:17), we must suppose that the saints will remain there for some time, until they learn the reason of the ordering of all that goes on in the air, in its two-fold form. By two-fold form I mean, for example; when we were on earth we saw animals or trees and we perceived the differences among them and also the very great diversity among men. But when we saw these things we did not understand the reasons for them; but this alone was suggested to us by the very diversity of what we saw, that we should search out and inquire for what reason all these were created diverse and arranged in such variety; and if we have cherished on earth a zeal and love for this kind of knowledge, there will be given to us after death an acquaintance with and understanding of that reason, if indeed the matter turns out as we should wish. When therefore we have comprehended that in its fullness, we shall comprehend in two-fold form the things we saw on earth.

We may speak in some such way also about the abode in the air. I think that the saints as they depart from this life will remain in some place situated on the earth, which the divine scripture calls 'paradise' (Gen. 2:8; Luke 23:43). This will be a place of instruction and, so to speak, a lecture room or school for souls, in which they may be taught about all that they had seen on earth and may also receive some indications of what is to follow in the future; just as when placed in this life they had obtained certain indications of the future, seen indeed 'through a glass darkly', and yet truly seen 'in part' (1 Cor. 13:12), which are revealed more clearly and brightly to the saints in their proper times and places. If anyone is 'pure in heart' (Matt. 5:8) and of unpolluted mind and well-trained understanding he will make swifter progress and quickly ascend to the region of the air, until he reaches the kingdom of the heavens, passing through the series of those 'abiding places' (John 14:2), if I may so call them, which the Greeks have termed spheres, that is, globes, but which the divine scripture calls heavens. In each of these he will first

observe all that happens there, and then learn the reason why it happens; and thus he will proceed in order through each stage, following him who has 'entered into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God' (Heb. 4:14), and who has said, 'I will that, where I am, they also may be with me' (John 17:24). Further, he alludes to this diversity of places when he says, 'In my Father's house are many abiding-places' (John 14:2). He himself, however, is everywhere and runs through all things; nor are we any longer to think of him as being confined within those narrow limits in which he once lived for our sakes, that is, not as being in that circumscribed condition which was his when he dwelt on earth among men in a body like ours, so that it was then possible to think of him as being enclosed in some one place.

When the saints have reached the heavenly places, then they will see clearly the nature of the stars, one by one, and will understand whether they are living creatures or whatever may be truth about them. They will also perceive the other reasons for God's works, which he himself shall reveal to them. For now he will show to them, as to sons, the causes of things and the perfection of his creation, teaching them why one star is placed in its particular position in the sky and why it is separated from another by so great an interval of space; what would happen, for example, if it were nearer or farther away; or if this star had been greater than that, how the entire universe would not retain its identity but everything would be changed into another form. And when they have gone through everything connected with the reason of the stars and with those ways of life that exist in heaven they will come to 'the things which are not seen' (2 Cor. 4:18), or to those whose names alone we have as yet heard, and to the things 'invisible' (Rom. 1:20; Col. 1:16). That there are many of these we learn from Paul the apostle, but what they are or what differences exist among them we cannot even guess with our feeble intellect.

And so the rational being, growing at each successive stage, not as it grew when in this life in the flesh or body and in the soul, but increasing in mind and intelligence, advances as a mind already perfect to perfect knowledge, no longer hindered by its former carnal senses, but developing in intellectual power, ever approaching the pure and gazing 'face to face' (1 Cor. 13:12), if I may so speak, on the causes of things. And it attains perfection, first that perfection by which it rises to this condition, and secondly

that by which it remains therein, while it has for the food on which it feeds the problems of the meaning of things and the nature of their causes. For as in this bodily life of ours we grew first of all bodily into that which we now are, the increase being supplied in our early years merely by a sufficiency of food, whereas after the process of growth has reached its limit we use food not in order to grow but as a means of preserving life within us; so, too, I think that the mind, when it has come to perfection, still feeds on appropriate and suitable food in a measure which can neither admit of want nor of superfluity. But in all respects this food must be understood to be the contemplation and understanding of God, and its measures to be those that are appropriate and suitable to this nature which has been made and created. These measures will rightly be observed by every one of those who are beginning to 'see God', that is, to understand him through 'purity of heart' (Matt. 5:8).

THE CONSUMMATION OF THE WORLD

In regard to the end and consummation of all things we have already in a previous chapter discussed to the best of our ability, so far as the authority of divine scripture allowed us, those points which we consider sufficient for purposes of instruction. Now, however, we call to mind a few further points, since the course of our inquiry has brought us again to that topic. The highest good, towards which all rational nature is progressing, and which is also called the end of all things, is defined by very many even among philosophers in the following way, namely, that the highest good is to become as far as possible like God. But this definition is not so much, I think, a discovery of their own, as something taken by them out of the divine books. For Moses, before all others, points to it when in recording the first creation of man he says, 'And God said, Let us make man in our own image and likeness' (Gen. 1:26). Then he adds afterwards, 'And God made man; in the image of God made he him; male and female made he them, and he blessed them' (Gen. 1:27, 28).

Now the fact that he said, 'He made him in the image of God', and was silent about the likeness, points to nothing else but this, that man received the honour of God's image in his first creation, whereas the perfection of God's likeness was reserved for him

at the consummation.' The purpose of this was that man should acquire it for himself by his own earnest efforts to imitate God, so that while the possibility of attaining perfection was given to him in the beginning through the honour of the 'image', he should in the end through the accomplishment of these works obtain for himself the perfect 'likeness'. More openly and unmistakably the apostle John lays down that such is the case when he makes this declaration: 'Little children, we know not yet what we shall be; but if he shall be revealed'—speaking undoubtedly of the Saviour—'we shall be like him' (1 John 3:2). Here he most certainly indicates that we are to hope both for the end of all things, the nature of which he says is still unknown to him, and also for the likeness to God which will be conferred on us in proportion to the perfection of our merits. The Lord himself also in the gospel points out that these things will not only come to pass but will come to pass by his own intercession, when he deigns to make this request to the Father for his disciples: 'Father, I will that, where I am, they also may be with me', and, 'as I and thou art one, so they may be one in us' (John 17:24, 21). Here indeed the likeness seems, if we may say so, to make an advance and from being something similar to become 'one thing'; for this reason undoubtedly, that in the consummation or end God is 'all in all' (1 Cor. 15:28).

In this connection the question is asked by some whether the essence of our bodily nature, however perfectly purified it may be and rendered completely spiritual, does not appear to offer an obstacle both to the honour of our likeness to God and to our fitness for union with him. For it does not seem possible to say that the nature which is in a body can either be like the divine nature, which is certainly above all things incorporeal, or that it can be truly and rightly described as becoming one with it; especially since the fact of the Son being 'one with the Father' (John 10:30) is shown by the true doctrine of our faith to refer to that nature which is peculiar to him. And further, when the same apostle says that 'the whole creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the sons of God', we understand it in such a way as to say that the first creation of rational creatures was also an incorporeal one, which was not meant to be in bondage to corruption for the reason that it was not clothed with bodies; for wherever bodies are, corruption follows immediately. But it will

afterwards be 'delivered from the bondage of corruption' when it has received the glory of the Son of God and when 'God shall be all in all' (Rom. 8:21; 1 Cor. 15:28).

We are also led to believe that the end of all things will be incorporeal by the statement of our Saviour, in which he says, 'That as I and thou are one, so they also may be one in us' (John 17:21). For we ought to know what God is and what the Saviour will be in the end, and how the likeness of the Father and the Son has been promised to the saints, so that as the Father and the Son are one in themselves, so, too, the saints may be one in them. For we must either suppose that the God of the universe is clothed with a body and enveloped with some sort of matter in the same way as we are with flesh, in order that the likeness of God's life may in the end be brought to the level of the saints; or, if this view is unseemly, as it most certainly is to those who desire even in the smallest degree to dwell on the majesty of God and to apprehend the glory of his unbegotten and all-surpassing nature, then we are compelled to accept one of two alternatives and either despair of ever attaining the likeness of God if we are destined always to have bodies, or else, if there is promised to us a blessedness of the same life that God has, then we must live in the same condition in which God lives.

Now when it is promised that in the end God is 'all in all' (1 Cor. 15:28), we must not imagine, in strictly logical wise, that animals, either cattle or wild beasts, will come to that end, lest it should be implied that God dwells even in animals, whether cattle or wild beasts; neither will stocks and stones, lest it should be said that God dwells in them also. So, too, we must not suppose that any evil reaches that end, lest when it is said that 'God is in all' he should be said to dwell even in some vessel of evil. For although we say that even now God is everywhere and in all things, for the reason that nothing can be empty of God, still we do not say it so as to mean that he now actually is all things in which he is present. Hence we must look more carefully to see what this condition is which marks the perfection of blessedness, and the end of things, in which God is said not only to be in all things but even to be all things. Let us inquire, therefore, what are these 'all things' which God shall be 'in all things' (1 Cor. 15:28).

Now I myself think that when it is said that God is 'all in all' (1 Cor. 15:28), it means that he is all things in each individual person. And he will be all things in each person in such a way that everything which the rational mind, when purified from all the

dregs of its vices and utterly cleared from every cloud of wickedness, can feel or understand or think will be all God and that the mind will no longer be conscious of anything besides or other than God, but will think God and see God and hold God and God will be the mode and measure of its every movement; and in this way God will be all to it. For there will no longer be any contrast of good and evil, since evil nowhere exists; for God, whom evil never approaches, is then all things to it; nor will one who is always in the good and to whom God is all things desire any longer to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17).

If then the end is renewed after the pattern of the origin and the issue of things made to resemble their beginning and that condition restored which rational nature once enjoyed when it had no need to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, so that all consciousness of evil has departed and given place to what is sincere and pure and he alone who is the one good God becomes all things to the soul and he himself is all things not in some few or in many things but in all things, when there is nowhere any death, nowhere any sting of death (1 Cor. 15:55), nowhere any evil at all, then truly God will be all in all. But some think that this perfection and blessedness of rational natures can only remain in the condition which we have described above, that is, the condition in which all things possess God and God is all things to them, if they are in no way impeded by union with a bodily nature. Otherwise, if there were any intermingling of a material substance, they consider that the glory of the highest blessedness would be prevented. On this subject the arguments that may be raised have been fully dealt with and discussed by us in a previous chapter.

But now, since we find the apostle Paul making mention of a 'spiritual body' (1 Cor. 15:44), let us inquire to the best of our ability what sort of idea we ought to form from this passage about such a body. So far then as our understanding can grasp it, we believe that the quality of a spiritual body is something such as will make a fitting habitation not only for all saints and perfected souls but also for that 'whole creation' which is to be 'delivered from the bondage of corruption' (Rom. 8:21). Of this body the same apostle has also said that 'we have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens' (2 Cor. 5:1), that is, in the dwelling-places of the blest. From this statement we may then form a conjecture of what great purity, what extreme fineness, what great glory

is the quality of that body, by comparing it with those bodies which, although heavenly and most splendid, are yet made with hands and visible. For of that body it is said that it is a house not made with hands but 'eternal in the heavens' (2 Cor. 5:1). Now since 'the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal' (2 Cor. 4:18), all those bodies which we see whether on earth or in the heavens, which are capable of being seen and are made with hands and not eternal, are very greatly surpassed in excellence by that which is neither visible nor made with hands but is eternal.

From this comparison we may gain an idea how great is the beauty, how great the splendour, and how great the brightness of a spiritual body, and how true is the saying that 'eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what things God hath prepared for them that love him' (1 Cor. 2:9). But we must not doubt that the nature of this present body of ours may, through the will of God who made it what it is, be developed by its Creator into the quality of that exceedingly refined and pure and splendid body, according as the condition of things shall require and the merits of the rational being shall demand. Finally, when the world was in need of variety and diversity, matter lent itself to the fashioning of the diverse aspects and classes of things in wholly obedient service to the Maker, as to its Lord and Creator, that from it he might produce the diverse forms of things heavenly and earthly. But when events have begun to hasten towards the ideal of all being one as the Father is one with the Son (John 17:21, 10:30), we are bound to believe as a logical consequence that where all are one there will no longer be any diversity.

It is on this account, moreover, that the last enemy, who is called death, is said to be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26); in order, namely, that there may be no longer any sadness when there is no death nor diversity when there is no enemy. For the destruction of the last enemy must be understood in this way, not that its substance which was made by God shall perish, but that the hostile purpose and will which proceeded not from God but from itself will come to an end. It will be destroyed, therefore, not in the sense of ceasing to exist, but of being no longer an enemy and no longer death. For to the Almighty nothing is impossible (Job 42:2), nor is anything beyond the reach of cure by its Maker; for it was on this account that he made all things, that they might exist, and those things which were made in order to exist cannot cease to exist. Consequently they will suffer

change and difference of such a kind as to be placed in a better or worse position in accordance with their merits; but things which were made by God for the purpose of permanent existence cannot suffer a destruction of their substance. Those things which in the opinion of the common people are believed to perish have not really perished, as the principles of our faith and of the truth alike agree.

Our flesh indeed is considered by the uneducated and by unbelievers to perish so completely after death that nothing whatever of its substance is left. We, however, who believe in its resurrection know that death only causes a change in it and that its substance certainly persists and is restored to life again at a definite time by the will of its Creator and once more undergoes a transformation; so that what was at first flesh, 'of the earth earthy' (1 Cor. 15:47), and was then dissolved through death and again made 'dust and ashes' (Gen. 18:27),—for 'dust thou art', it is written, 'and unto dust shalt thou return' (Gen. 3:19)—is raised again from the earth and afterwards, as the merits of the 'indwelling soul' shall demand, advances to the glory of a 'spiritual body' (1 Cor. 15:44).

Into this condition, therefore, we must suppose that the entire substance of this body of ours will develop at the time when all things are restored and become one and when 'God shall be all in all' (1 Cor. 15:28). We must not think, however, that it will happen all of a sudden, but gradually and by degrees, during the lapse of infinite and immeasurable ages, seeing that the improvement and correction will be realized slowly and separately in each individual person. Some will take the lead and hasten with swifter speed to the highest goal, others will follow them at a close interval, while others will be left far behind; and so the process will go on through the innumerable ranks of those who are making progress and becoming reconciled to God from their state of enmity, until it reaches even to the last enemy, who is called death (1 Cor. 15:26), in order that he, too, may be destroyed and remain an enemy no longer.

When therefore all rational souls have been restored to a condition like this, then also the nature of this body of ours will develop into the glory of a 'spiritual body' (1 Cor. 15:44). For just as in the case of rational natures we see that there is not one kind which on account of its sins has lived in dishonour and another kind which on account of its merits has been summoned to blessedness, but that these are the same natures, which were formerly sinful and afterwards through being converted and reconciled to God were

recalled to blessedness; so, too, in regard to our bodily nature we must understand that there is not one body which we now use in lowliness and corruption and weakness, and a different one which we are to use hereafter in incorruption and power and glory, but that this same body, having cast off the weaknesses of its present existence, will be transformed into a thing of glory and made spiritual, with the result that what was a vessel of dishonour shall itself be purified and become a vessel of honour and a habitation of blessedness (Rom. 9:21). And we must believe that in this condition it remains for ever unchangeably by the will of the Creator, of which fact we are made certain by the statement of the apostle Paul in which he says, 'We have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens' (2 Cor. 5:1).

For the faith of the Church does not accept the opinion derived from certain Greek philosophers that besides this body which is composed of the four elements, there is a fifth body which is entirely other than and diverse from our present body; since we can neither produce from the holy scriptures the least suspicion of such an opinion, nor can its acceptance be allowed as a logical inference, particularly as the holy apostle clearly lays it down that no new bodies are to be given to those who rise from the dead but that they are to receive the same ones which they possessed during life, only transformed from a worse to a better condition. For he says: 'It is sown a natural body, it will rise a spiritual body', and, 'it is sown in corruption, it will rise in incorruption; it is sown in weakness, it will rise in power; it is sown in dishonour, it will rise in glory' (1 Cor. 15:42-44). As therefore man makes a kind of progress, so that although he is first a 'natural man,' who does not understand the 'things of the Spirit of God', he arrives by means of instruction at the stage of becoming spiritual and of 'judging all things while he himself is judged of no man' (1 Cor. 2:14, 15); so also in regard to the condition of the body we must suppose that this same body which now on account of its service to the soul is called a soul-like or natural body will advance through a kind of progress, when the soul has been joined to God and made 'one spirit' (1 Cor. 6:17) with him and the body then as it were renders service to the spirit, into a spiritual condition and quality, especially since the bodily nature, as we have often shown, was so made by the Creator that it could easily pass into whatever quality he should wish or the circumstances should demand.

The whole argument, then, comes to this, that God has created two universal natures, a visible, that is, a bodily one, and an invisible one, which is incorporeal. These two natures each undergo their own different changes. The invisible, which is also the rational nature, is changed through the action of the mind and will by reason of the fact that it has been endowed with freedom of choice; and as a result of this it is found existing sometimes in the good and sometimes in its opposite. The bodily nature, however, admits of a change in substance, so that God the Artificer of all things, in whatever work of design or construction or restoration he may wish to engage, has at hand the service of this material for all purposes, and can transform and transfer it into whatever forms and species he desires, as the merits of things demand. It is to this, clearly, that the prophet points when he says, 'God who makes and transforms all things' (Amos 5:8).

And now we must certainly ask whether in the consummation of all things, when 'God shall be all in all' (1 Cor. 15:28), the whole of bodily nature will consist of one species and whether the only quality of body will be that which will shine with that unspeakable glory which we must believe will belong to the spiritual body. Now if we interpret correctly the passage which Moses writes in the forefront of his book namely, 'In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth' (Gen. 1:1), as referring to the beginning of the entire creation, it is appropriate that the end and consummation of all things should consist of a return to this beginning; that is, that the heaven and earth there spoken of should exist as a dwelling place and rest for the pious, so that the saints and the meek may be the first to obtain an inheritance in that earth; for this is the teaching of both the law and the prophets and the gospel. In that earth there exists, I believe, the true and living forms of that divine service which Moses handed down through the 'shadow' of the law (Heb. 10:1). For it is said of them, that is, of those who served under the law, that 'they serve that which is a copy and shadow of the heavenly things' (Heb. 8:5). Moreover it was said to Moses himself, 'See that thou make all things according to the form and likeness which was shown thee in the mount' (Exod. 25:40). It seems to me, therefore, that as in this earth the law was a kind of schoolmaster to those who by it were appointed to be led to Christ (Gal. 3:24) and to be instructed and trained in order that after their training in the law they might be able with greater facility to receive the more perfect

precepts of Christ, so also that other earth, when it receives all the saints, first imbues and educates them in the precepts of the true and eternal law in order that they may with greater facility accept the precepts of heaven which are perfect and to which nothing can ever be added. And in heaven will truly exist what is called the 'eternal gospel' and the testament that is always new, which can never grow old (Rev. 14:6; Heb. 9:15, 12:24, 8:13).

This, then, is how we must suppose that events happen in the consummation and restitution of all things, namely, that souls, advancing and ascending little by little in due measure and order, first attain to that other earth and the instruction that is in it, and are there prepared for those better precepts to which nothing can ever be added. For in the place of 'stewards' and 'governors' (Gal. 4:2) Christ the Lord, who is King of all, will himself take over the kingdom; that is, he himself will instruct those who are able to receive him in his character of wisdom, after their preliminary training in the holy virtues, and will reign in them until such time as he subjects them to the Father, who subjected all things to him; or in other words, when they have been rendered capable of receiving God, then God will be to them 'all in all' (1 Cor. 15:28). It follows of necessity that then even their bodily nature will assume that supreme condition to which nothing can ever be added.

So far, then, we have discussed the question of our bodily nature and of the spiritual body. We leave it to the reader's judgment to choose which of the two opinions he decides to be the better.

Heaven*C. S. Lewis*

This final selection from Lewis is the concluding chapter (Chapter X) of his most sustained set of reflections on theodicy, *The Problem of Pain*, a book in which he sets out to make evil and suffering, not palatable, but intelligible.

It is required
 You do awake your faith. Then all stand still;
 On; those that think it is unlawful business
 I am about, let them depart.

Shakespeare, *Winter's Tale*

Plunged in thy depth of mercy let me die
 The death that every soul that lives desires.

Cowper out of *Madame Guion*.

"I reckon", said St. Paul, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). If this is so, a book on suffering which says nothing of heaven is leaving out almost the whole of one side of the account. Scripture and tradition habitually put the joys of heaven into the scale against the sufferings of earth, and no solution of the problem of pain which does not do so can be called a Christian one. We are very shy nowadays of even mentioning heaven. We are afraid of the jeer about "pie in the sky", and of being told that we are trying to "escape" from the duty of making a happy world here and now into dreams of a happy world elsewhere. But either there is "pie in the sky" or there is not. If there is not, then, Christianity is false, for this doctrine is woven into its whole fabric. If there is, then this truth, like any other, must be faced, whether it is useful at political meetings or no. Again, we are afraid that heaven is a bribe, and that if we make it our goal we shall no longer be disinterested. It is not so. Heaven offers nothing that a mercenary soul can desire. It is safe to tell the pure in heart that they shall see God, for only the pure in heart want to. There are rewards that do not sully motives. A man's love for a woman is not mercenary

because he wants to marry her, nor his love for poetry mercenary because he wants to read it, nor his love of exercise less disinterested because he wants to run and leap and walk. Love, by definition, seeks to enjoy its object.

You may think that there is another reason for our silence about heaven—namely, that we do not really desire it. But that may be an illusion. What I am now going to say is merely an opinion of my own without the slightest authority, which I submit to the judgment of better Christians and better scholars than myself. 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 may have noticed that the books you really love are bound together by a secret thread. You know very well what is the common quality that makes you love them, though you cannot put it into words: but most of your friends do not see it at all, and often wonder why, liking this, you should also like that. Again, you have stood before some landscape, which seems to embody what you have been looking for all your life; and then turned to the friend at your side who appears to be seeing what you saw—but at the first words a gulf yawns between you, and you realize that this landscape means something totally different to him, that he is pursuing an alien vision and cares nothing for the ineffable suggestion by which you are transported. Even in your hobbies, has there not always been some secret attraction which the others are, curiously ignorant of—something, not to be identified with, but always on the verge of breaking through, the smell of cut wood in the workshop or the clap-clap of water against the boat's side? Are not all lifelong friendships born at the moment when at last you meet another human being who has some inkling (but faint and uncertain even in the best) of that something which you were born desiring, and which, beneath the flux of other desires and in all the momentary silences between the louder passions, night and day, year by year, from childhood to old age, you are looking for, watching for, listening for? 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 thing we desired before we met our wives or made our friends or chose our work, and which we shall still desire on our deathbeds, when the mind no longer knows wife or friend or work. While we are, this is. If we lose this, we lose all.

This signature on each soul may be a product of heredity and environment, but that only means that heredity and environment are among the instruments whereby God creates a soul. I am considering not how, but why, He makes each soul unique. If He had no use for all these differences, I do not see why He should have created more souls than one. Be sure that the ins and outs of your individuality are no mystery to Him; and one day they will no longer be a mystery to you. The mould in which a key is made would be a strange thing, if you had never seen a key: and the key itself a strange thing if you had never seen a lock. Your soul has a curious shape because it is a hollow made to fit a particular swelling in the infinite contours of the divine substance, or a key to unlock one of the doors in the house with many mansions. For it is not humanity in the abstract that is to be saved, but you—you, the individual reader, John Stubbs or Janet Smith. Blessed and fortunate creature, your eyes shall behold Him and not another's. All that you are, sins apart, is destined, if you will let God have His good way, to utter satisfaction. The Brocken spectre "looked to every man like his first love", because she was a cheat. But 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.

It is from this point of view that we can understand Hell in its aspect of privation. All your life an unattainable ecstasy has hovered just beyond the grasp of your consciousness. The day is coming when you will wake to find, beyond all hope, that you have attained it, or else, that it was within your reach and you have lost it forever.

This may seem a perilously private and subjective notion of the pearl of great price, but it is not. The thing I am speaking of is not an experience. You have experienced only the *want* of it. The thing itself has never actually been embodied in any thought, or image, or emotion. Always it has summoned you out of yourself. And if you will not go out of yourself to follow it, if you sit down to brood on the desire and attempt to cherish it, the desire itself will evade you. "The door into life generally opens behind us" and "the

only wisdom" for one "haunted with the scent of unseen roses, is work." This secret fire goes out when you use the bellows: bank it down with what seems unlikely fuel of dogma and ethics, turn your back on it and attend to your duties, and then it will blaze. The world is like a picture with a golden background, and we the figures in that picture. Until you step off the plane of the picture into the large dimensions of death you cannot see the gold. But we have reminders of it. To change our metaphor, the black-out is not quite complete. There are chinks. At times the daily scene looks big with its secret.

Such is my opinion; and it may be erroneous. Perhaps this secret desire also is part of the Old Man and must be crucified before the end. But this opinion has a curious trick of evading denial. The desire—much more the satisfaction—has always refused to be fully present in any experience. Whatever you try to identify with it turns out to be not it but something else: so that hardly any degree of crucifixion or transformation could go beyond what the desire itself leads us to anticipate. Again, if this opinion is not true, something better is. But "something better"—not this or that experience, but beyond it—is almost the definition of the thing I am trying to describe.

The thing you long for summons you away from the self. Even the desire for the thing lives only if you abandon it. This is the ultimate law—the seed dies to live, the bread must be cast upon the waters, he that loses his soul will save it. But the life of the seed, the finding of the bread, the recovery of the soul, are as real as the preliminary sacrifice. Hence it is truly said of heaven "in heaven there is no ownership. If any there took upon him to call anything his own, he would straightway be thrust out into hell and become an evil spirit." But it is also said "To him that overcometh I will give a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Rev. 2:17). What can be more a man's own than this new name which even in eternity remains a secret between God and him? And what shall we take this secrecy to mean? Surely, that each of the redeemed shall forever know and praise some one aspect of the divine beauty better than any other creature can. Why else were individuals created, but that God, loving all infinitely, should love each differently? And this difference, so far from impairing, floods with meaning the love of all blessed creatures for one another, the communion of the saints. If all experienced God in the same way and returned Him an identical worship, the song of the Church triumphant would have no

symphony, it would be like an orchestra in which all the instruments played the same note. Aristotle has told us that a city is a unity of unlikes, and St. Paul that a body is a unity of different members (1 Cor. 12:12-30). Heaven is a city, and a Body, because the blessed remain eternally different: a society, because each has something to tell all the others—fresh and ever fresh news of the "My God" whom each finds in Him whom all praise as "Our God". For doubtless the continually successful, yet never completed, attempt by each soul to communicate its unique vision to all others (and that by means whereof earthly art and philosophy are but clumsy imitations) is also among the ends for which the individual was created.

For union exists only between distincts; and, perhaps, from this point of view, we catch a momentary glimpse of the meaning of all things. Pantheism is a creed not so much false as hopelessly behind the times. Once, before creation, it would have been true to say that everything was God. But God created: He caused things to be other than Himself that, being distinct, they might learn to love Him, and achieve union instead of mere sameness. Thus He also cast His bread upon the waters. Even within the creation we might say that inanimate matter, which has no will, is one with God in a sense in which men are not. But it is not God's purpose that we should go back into that old identity (as, perhaps, some Pagan mystics would have us do) but that we should go on to the maximum distinctness there to be reunited with Him in a higher fashion. Even within the Holy One Himself, it is not sufficient that the Word should *be* God; it must also be *with* God. The Father eternally begets the Son and the Holy Ghost proceeds: deity introduces distinction within itself so that the union of reciprocal loves may transcend mere arithmetical unity or self identity.

But the eternal distinctness of each soul—the secret which makes of the union between each soul and God a species in itself—will never abrogate the law that forbids ownership in heaven. As to its fellow-creatures, each soul, we suppose, will be eternally engaged in giving away to all the rest that which it receives. And as to God, we must remember that the soul is but a hollow which God fills. Its union with God is, almost by definition, a continual self-abandonment—an opening, an unveiling, a surrender, of itself. A blessed spirit is a mould ever more and more patient of the bright metal poured into it, a body ever more completely uncovered to the meridian blaze of the spiritual sun. We

need not suppose that the necessity for something analogous to self-conquest will ever be ended, or that eternal life will not also be eternal dying. It is in this sense that, as there may be pleasures in hell (God shield us from them), there may be something not all unlike pains in heaven (God grant us soon to taste them).

For in self-giving, if anywhere, we touch a rhythm not only of all creation but of all being. For the Eternal Word also gives Himself in sacrifice; and that not only on Calvary. For when He was crucified He "did that in the wild weather of His outlying provinces which He had done at home in glory and gladness". From before the foundation of the world He surrenders begotten Deity back to begetting Deity in obedience. And as the Son glorifies the Father, so also the Father glorifies the Son (John 17:1, 4, 5). And, with submission, as becomes a layman, I think it was truly said "God loveth not Himself as Himself but as Goodness; and if there were aught better than God, He would love that and not Himself". 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. This is not a heavenly law which we can escape by remaining earthly, nor an earthly law which we can escape by being saved. What is outside the system of self-giving is not earth, nor nature, nor "ordinary life", but simply and solely Hell. Yet even Hell derives from this law such reality as it has. That fierce imprisonment in the self is but the obverse of the self-giving which is absolute reality; the negative shape which the outer darkness takes by surrounding and defining the shape of the real, or which the real imposes on the darkness by having a shape and positive nature of its own.

The golden apple of selfhood, thrown among the false gods, became an apple of discord because they scrambled for it. They did not know the first rule of the holy game, which is that every player must by all means touch the ball and then immediately pass it on. To be found with it in your hands is a fault: to cling to it, death. But when it flies to and fro among the players too swift for eye to follow, and the great master Himself leads the revelry, giving Himself eternally to His creatures in the generation, and back to Himself in the sacrifice, of the Word, then indeed the eternal dance "makes heaven drowsy with the harmony". All pains and pleasures we have known on earth are early initiations in the movements of that dance: but the dance itself is strictly incomparable

with the sufferings of this present time. As we draw nearer to its uncreated rhythm, pain and pleasure sink almost out of sight. There is joy in the dance, but it does not exist for the sake of joy. It does not even exist for the sake of good, or of love. It is Love Himself, and Good Himself, and therefore happy. It does not exist for us, but we for it. The size and emptiness of the universe which frightened us at the outset of this book should awe us still, for though they may be no more than a subjective by-product of our three dimensional imagining, yet they symbolize great truth. As our Earth is to all the stars, so doubtless are we men and our concerns to all creation; as all the stars are to space itself, so are all creatures, all thrones and powers and mightiest of the created gods, to the abyss of the self-existing Being, who is to us Father and Redeemer and indwelling Comforter, but of whom no man nor angel can say nor conceive what He is in and for Himself, or what is the work that he "maketh from the beginning to the end". For they are all derived and unsubstantial things. Their vision fails them and they cover their eyes from the intolerable light of utter actuality, which was and is and shall be, which never could have been otherwise, which has no opposite.

APPENDIX

I. A Sampling of New Testament Christology

Jesus wept (John 11:35).

But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father (Mark 13:32).

And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt (Matt. 26:39)

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man (Luke 2:52).

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed (Luke 4:18).

For what credit is it, if when you do wrong and are beaten for it you take it patiently? But if when you do right and suffer for it you take it patiently, you have God's approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips (1 Pet. 2:20-22).

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 5:7-10).

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5).

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. But God raised him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it (Acts 2:22-24).

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end. And Mary said to the angel, How shall this be, since I have no husband? And the angel said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God (Luke 1:31-35).

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory (1 Tim. 3:16).

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage. For surely it is not with angels that he is concerned but with the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted (Heb. 2:14-18).

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God (2 Cor. 4:3-4).

He whom God raised up saw no corruption. Let it be known to you therefore, brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him every one that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses (Acts 13:37-39).

And he asked them, But who do you say that I am? Peter answered him, You are the Christ (Mark 8:29).

Jesus was silent. And the high priest said to him, I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus said to him, You have said so. But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest tore his robes, and said, He has uttered blasphemy. Why do we still need witnesses? You have now heard his blasphemy (Matt. 26:63-65).

The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach); because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved (Rom. 10:8-9).

But he was silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am; and you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven (Mark 14:61-62).

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father and the voice was borne to him by the

Majestic Glory, This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased, we heard this voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain (2 Pet. 1:16-18).

You heard me say to you, I go away, and I will come to you. If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father; for the Father is greater than I (John 14:28).

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one (John 10:27-31).

For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf (Heb. 9:24).

All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him (Matt. 11:27).

Be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you well. This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, but which has become the head of the corner. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:10-12).

Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die (John 11:25-26).

When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to every one (1 Cor. 15:28).

And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said to him, Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone (Mark 10:17-18).

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:5-11).

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age (Matt. 28:16-20).

Jesus answered them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up (John 2:19).

Jesus said to him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me. (John 14:6).

See to it that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness of life in him, who is the head of all rule and authority (Col. 2:8-10).

For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me; and this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:38-40).

He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities--all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell (Col. 1:15-19).

In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs (Heb. 1:1-4).

Jesus said to him, Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, Show us the Father? (John 14:9).

And now, Father, glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made (John 17:5).

No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man, who is in heaven (John 3:13).

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was

not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men... The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father (John 1:1-4, 9-14).

Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am (John 8:58).

Then he said to Thomas, Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing. Thomas answered him, My Lord and my God! Jesus said to him, Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe (John 20:27-29).

Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end (Rev. 22:12-13).

II. Early Christian Creeds

The Apostles' Creed (Second Century)

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence he shall come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Creed of Caesarea

(Presented by Eusebius of Caesarea at the Council of Nicaea, 325 A.D.)

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things without exception, visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God: God from God, Light from Light, Life from Life, the only-begotten Son, first-born of all creation, begotten of the Father before all ages, through Whom also all things came to be; Who for our salvation was made flesh and dwelt among men; suffered, and rose the third day, and ascended to the Father; and He shall come again to judge the living and the dead.

We also believe in the Holy Spirit.

The Creed of Nicaea

(Derived from the Creed of Caesarea by revision at the Council of Nicaea, 325 A.D.)

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father uniquely, that is, of the essence of the Father: God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, being of one essence with the Father [*homoousion to patri*]; by whom all things were made both in heaven and on earth; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; He suffered, and the third day He rose again, and ascended into heaven; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

And in the Holy Spirit.

But those who say: “There was a time when He was not”; and “He was not before He was made”; and “He was made out of nothing”, or “He is of another substance” or “essence”, or “the Son of God is created” or “changeable” or “alterable”—they are anathematized by the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

The Nicene Creed

(Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, 381 A.D.)

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, being of one essence with the Father [*homoousion to patri*]; by whom all things were made;

who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; from thence He shall come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father [and the Son = *filioque*], who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And in one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church; we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Definition of Chalcedon (451 A.D.)

Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in divinity and complete in humanity, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one essence with the Father [*homoousion to patri*] as regards His divinity, and at the same time of one essence with us [*homoousion hemin*] as regards His humanity; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards His divinity, begotten of the Father before the ages, but as regards His humanity begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the *Theotokos*; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of Him, and our Lord Jesus Christ Himself taught us, and the creed of the fathers has handed down to us.

Since therefore these matters have been determined by us with all possible precision and care, this Holy and Ecumenical Synod decrees that it is not permissible for anyone to propose, write, compose, think, or teach anything else. But those who dare to compose another creed or to bring forward or teach or transmit another creed to people who want to turn to the knowledge of truth from Hellenism or Judaism or from any heresy whatever—such persons, if they are bishops or other clergy, are deposed, the bishops form their episcopate and the clergy from their office; but if they are monks or laity, they are anathematized.

The *Quicumque Vult*, or Athanasian Creed (Fifth Century)

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith. Which Faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholic Faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity. Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance.

For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is all One, the Glory Equal, the Majesty Co-Eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit. The Father Uncreated, the Son Uncreated, and the Holy Spirit Uncreated. The Father Incomprehensible, the Son Incomprehensible, and the Holy Spirit Incomprehensible. The Father Eternal, the Son Eternal, and the Holy Spirit Eternal, and yet they are not Three Eternals but One Eternal. As also there are not Three Uncreated, nor Three Incomprehensibles, but One Uncreated, and One Incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Spirit Almighty. And yet they are not Three Almighties but One Almighty.

So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. And yet they are not Three Gods, but One God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy

Spirit Lord. And yet not Three Lords but One Lord. For, like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by Himself to be God and Lord, so are we forbidden by the Catholic Religion to say, there be Three Gods or Three Lords. The Father is made of none, neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone; not made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Spirit is of the Father, and of the Son neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.

So there is One Father, not Three Fathers; one Son, not Three Sons; One Holy Spirit, not Three Holy Spirits. And in this Trinity none is afore or after Other, None is greater or less than Another, but the whole Three Persons are Co-eternal together, and Co-equal. So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.

Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting Salvation that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right Faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man:

God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man, of the substance of His mother, born into the world. Perfect God and Perfect Man, of a reasonable Soul and human Flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His Manhood. Who, although He be God and Man, yet He is not two, but One Christ. One, not by conversion of the Godhead into Flesh, but by taking of the Manhood into God. One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by Unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one Man, so God and Man is one Christ.

Who suffered for our salvation, descended into Hell, rose again the third day from the dead. He ascended into Heaven, He sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty, from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into

everlasting fire.

This is the Catholic Faith, which except a man believe faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved.