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C.S. Lewis: Defender of the Permanent Things

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I. Introduction and Central Thesis

C.S. Lewis published over 40 volumes before his death in 1963. Almost all are available today, and most are still read and discussed. Due to the quality of his work and the variety of subject matter, Lewis has achieved several reputations among different reading publics. In 1936, at age 38, Lewis first attracted international attention with *The Allegory of Love: a Study in Medieval Literature*, almost immediately recognized by medievalists as a classic in the area of medieval literature. Years later, for children and the childlike, he created Narnia with its imaginary adventures set in another world. Readers of science fiction are probably familiar with his three space novels and Christian apologists know him through *Mere Christianity*. Still others have encountered Lewis through his work in philosophy, fiction, and literary criticism. His main occupation, however, was scholarship and university teaching.

In one of the Narnia books a wise old professor summarizes an important fact-finding session with "It's all in Plato, all in Plato: bless me, what *do* they teach them at those schools!"[1] Indeed, from the early Greeks we have inherited two quite different interpretations of the universe. The line of thought which most represents the Greek outlook is that embodied in the works of Plato and Aristotle. According to this view, the regularity and orderliness of the universe are due to the presence of mind or purpose. Other Greek philosophers believed that the universe could be better interpreted in terms of matter in motion. The atomism of Democritus was probably the first systematic presentation of this

brand of materialism, which has gained considerable support in Western thought right down to the 20th century. Today, many physiologists, biologists, and psychologists attempt to employ solely physical and mechanistic explanations in their interpretations of all living creatures, including human persons.

Lewis was well aware of the difference between plot and theme in works of literature.[2] A story must have a plot, a series of events. It was Lewis's view, however, that this plot is often only a net through which something else is caught. My thesis in this Weter lecture is that that "something else" brings us to many of the central themes in Lewis's works as well as to some of the most significant ideas in our Western heritage, to what the universe is, who we are, and what we ought to be about during our three score years and ten on this earth. He was an avid defender of objective values, the belief that certain attitudes and beliefs are really true, and others really false. Lewis concluded that until quite modern times teachers (and almost everyone else) believed that the universe was such "that objects did not merely receive, but could *merit* our approval or disapproval, our reverence, or our contempt."[3] Moreover, this traditional morality is neither "Christian nor Pagan, neither Eastern nor Western, neither ancient nor modern, but general.[4]

The central thesis of my lecture is that the life and work of C.S. Lewis is a defense of many of the most important values of the Western world. He agreed with those who contend that you cannot understand where you are going unless you know and build upon where you have been. Included among the permanent things which Lewis defends, and which many in our modern world are rejecting at their own peril, are the following: the truth, beauty, and goodness of the

Christian faith; freedom and the infinite significance of persons; the cardinal virtues (prudence, temperance, justice, fortitude); and the theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity).

Russell Kirk in the book *Enemies of the Permanent Things* writes about vices or flaws in some of the norms and standards by which we think and live in the 20th century. Conversely, I think Lewis throughout all his works is a defender of enduring standards and rules of conduct which we ignore only at our peril. Moreover, my view is that Lewis is firmly and enthusiastically entrenched in the greatest tradition of philosophy, which includes Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Pascal, and Kant.[5]

II. The Truth of the Christian Faith[6]

All conversions to Christianity are important and most are interesting. Lewis's is both. His conversion initially was chiefly conceptual and intellectual. The turning point came when, at the age of thirty-two, Ultimate Reality in the person of Jesus Christ closed in on him. Lewis describes himself as the most reluctant convert in all England. His mind had been suddenly transformed by Truth (Lewis understood Truth to be objective, separate from us subjects, and out there to be discovered by each of us). Lewis initially affirmed Christianity because the Christian world view seemed to him to address the necessary questions of life more fully than other views of truth. He concluded that Christianity is a system of life and thought which provides answers to the basic needs and questions of human beings.

The aim of Lewis's apologetics was to explain and defend that which to his mind had been affirmed by nearly all Christians at all times. Lewis set out to distinguish between Christianity and Protestantism, Catholicism and Greek Orthodoxy. He was persuaded that that which divides us should not be discussed except with those who already believe that there is one God and that Jesus Christ is His only Son.[7] Lewis spent much of his later life defending in one way or another what he called "mere" Christianity, the faith "preached by the Apostles, attested by the Martyrs, embodied in the Creeds, and expounded by the Fathers."[8] His "passion" (in the Hegelian sense of whole energy of will and character devoted to the attainment of a certain end) was to bring the outsider into the Christian hall from which he/she could choose to enter one of numerous rooms. Lewis was not writing about something he could call "his religion." He set out to expound "mere" Christianity, what it is and what it was long before Lewis was born, and whether he liked it or not.[9]

In addition to this Faith, we hold many opinions which seem to us to be consistent with it as true and significant. But as apologists we are to defend Christianity, not "our" religion.

We must keep before us continuously the question of Truth. People will confuse the true with the good. They will try to escape from the issue True/False into things like: a good society, morals, the incomes of Bishops or television Evangelists, Poland, South Africa, or anything whatever. Lewis: "One must keep on pointing out that Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of *no* importance, and, if true, of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately

important.[10]

There is substantial agreement today about what is historic, biblical Christianity. We are united about many of the fundamentals: We believe in God the Father, infinite, personal, the creator and sustainer of the universe. We believe in the unique God-man Jesus Christ, and the atoning death and resurrection.

Nevertheless, we are not united. No sooner do we bridge old conflicts between Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions than new tensions arise. As John Stott has pointed out, some of these divisive issues are theological while others are temperamental. What is the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility? Who qualifies for holy baptism and how much water is to be used? Which spiritual gifts are available today? I (and I'm sure Lewis did as well) applaud enthusiastically the famous epigram:

> In essentials unity,
> In non-essentials liberty,
> In all things charity.[11]

The Christian seeks a proper blend between the heart and the mind. There is no incompatibility between the warm heart and the clear head. Just as children may need to learn to think logically, adults may need to rediscover the magic of the imagination. Scripture points to our rationality as a part of the divine image in which we are created. On the other hand, God made us emotional as well as rational. We humans are capable of deep feelings of love, compassion, and sorrow. Significantly, Jesus was not ashamed to express emotion. Twice he burst into tears in public. Lewis allows Screwtape to say that humans "are amphibians--half spirit and half animal....As spirits they belong to the eternal world, but as animals they

inhabit time. This means that while their spirit can be directed to the eternal object, their bodies, passions, and imaginations are in continual change...."[12]

Lewis's work is an apologetic for an affirmation of continuity and a delight in change. G.K. Chesterton argues similarly for the combination of the strange and romantic with that which is secure.[13] Lewis and Chesterton delight in and celebrate the fact that God does not make any two things the same. Yet at the same time, they appreciate the form, structure, and unity built into this world. All creation seems to point to both unity and diversity as it bears witness to the Creator. Everything is a part of what Lewis in *Perelandra* calls the Great Dance. Each grain, each flower says in its own way: I am the center. Blessed be He![14]

III. Freedom and The Significance of Persons

It has been said that the central premise of Lewis's theological writings is that *all* persons are immortal.[15] Lewis defends the view that every individual person is going to live forever. Granted, many things would not be worth our concern if we were going to live only seventy years. We had better bother about them most seriously, however, if we are going to live forever. For Lewis, it is in the light of this awe-inspiring possibility that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all our friendships, all our play, all our loves, all our scholarship. "There are no *ordinary* people. You have never talked to a mere mortal," Lewis states in his sermon "The Weight of Glory."[16]

In the Kantian tradition, Lewis argues that there is an *essential* difference

between persons and all else in creation. If we compare people and beasts, we observe as most striking not how like but how unlike we are to the brutes. Lewis agreed with Chesterton that it is exactly when we do regard man as an animal that we know he is not an animal.[17]

Lewis is a defender of the freedom of the will in human persons. Somehow God created human beings which have free will, creatures which can elect to act either wrongly or rightly. Lewis is aware that some thinkers imagine a being which is free yet has no possibility of going wrong. Lewis simply cannot.[18] Lewis would have labeled as regress not progress the more recent view of B.F. Skinner that the concept of autonomous man is simply a device which seeks to explain what we cannot explain in any other way.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) can serve us well as a negative example. Nietzsche's "new morality" was "mere innovation," according to Lewis.[19] Nietzsche announced through Zarathustra (and numerous other ways) the relativity of all values and moralities, saying that each people had adhered to a different scheme of values worked out solely in connection with local conditions. "Nothing is true, everything is permitted," states Nietzsche, quoting one of Dostoevsky's characters. Nietzsche is one climax of a horizontal philosophy which sees the world as ours to make, not discover, which maintains that we are the center and the lawgiver of it all. Nietzsche says that God is dead. If he is right, and God is identified with truth, then truth must also be dead. This is another way of stating that there is perhaps no truth, no objective order, nothing which we should acknowledge as higher than ourselves--fixed, eternal, and unchanging. The supernatural world is without operative power. Man is no longer determined in the least by

anything outside.

Numerous of Lewis's fictional characters remind us (and warn us) of this new morality. They emphasize, as Nietzsche does, that society is a foundation and scaffolding by means of which a select class of beings can elevate themselves to their new duties and to a higher existence. One thinks, for example, of Weston in the science (or interplanetary) fiction trilogy when he and Ransom are discussing the morality appropriate for future generations. Weston states that the "world leaps forward through great men and greatness always transcends mere moralism." A short time later, in the climax to this scene, Weston concludes that there is "no possible distinction in concrete thought between me and the universe. In so far as I am the conductor of the central forward pressure of the universe, I am it. Do you see, you timid, scruple-mongering fool? I *am* the Universe. I, Weston, am your God and your Devil."[20]

Lewis's fictional works are comprised of characters who, in the end, either affirm self or God. In the final analysis, as Lewis's mentor George MacDonald says in *The Great Divorce*: God either says to you "Thy will be done" or you say to God "Thy will be done."[21]

In the end, however, the infinite value of the person does not rest in him or her. The value of each human person considered solely in itself, out of relation to God, will be insignificant.[22] Persons are capable of receiving value. They receive it by union with Christ. Thus, persons will be true and everlasting and really divine only in Heaven. The immortal soul must give itself freely to that which is truly permanent. But this brings us to love and its significance, which we will

save until later in our lecture.

IV. The "Cardinal" Virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance

I was interested to learn how those working with the Broadway musical *Fiddler on the Roof* discovered that the show was about "the disintegration of a whole way of life."[23] Moreover, I have encountered numerous times the view that the intellectual history of the West since the Renaissance or since the Enlightenment is about "tradition and its dissolution."[24]

Alfred North Whitehead suggests that you best discover the philosophy of an epoch by pinpointing the fundamental assumptions which are presupposed. Some of the assumptions may seem so obvious that one may not know what is being assumed. It is in this manner also that we come to some of the quintessentials of Western heritage which Lewis defends.

We can go back at least as far as Agathon in Plato's *Symposium* to look for an intellectual emphasis of the four "cardinal" virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. Lewis endorses this "doctrine of virtue" as one of the important discoveries in our self-understanding. These "cardinal" virtues are not uniquely Christian. Lewis argues that they are recognized by all civilized people. However, this fact does not make them any less important or any less Christian. They are an integral part of much of the philosophy since Plato and they are an integral part of the Christian faith. Lewis defines these virtues as follows:

Prudence- practical common sense, as when one takes the time and trouble to think through what one should do or is doing, and what is likely to come of it;

Justice- including fairness, honesty, truthfulness, keeping one's promises;

Fortitude- including the kind of courage which faces danger as well as the kind that sticks to the task at hand even if one does not feel like it.

Temperance- referring not specially to drink, but to all pleasures; temperance does not mean abstaining, but going the right length and not more.[25]

These four virtues are genuine virtues needed in human life. I agree with professor of logic Peter Geach of the University of Leeds (England):"Men are benefited by virtues as bees are by having stings, even though the use of this valuable possession may be fatal to the individual man or bee."[26] So long as there is agreement about ultimate ends, people of different religions (or no religion at all) can agree to certain things, like the building of a hospital to fight disease more effectively. Agreement about policies and values may make possible an increased measure of peace and civilization in our world. This agreement is worth striving for.

A. Prudence

Prudence is pre-eminent. To realize the good, to have goodwill, you must know reality. One can do good only if one knows what is real. Realization of the good presupposes that one's actions are aligned with objective reality, the way things really are. Thus the good presupposes the true.

Prudence is the "mold and mother" of the other cardinal virtues. None but the prudent can be just, brave, and temperate, and the good person is good insofar as he is prudent.[27] Thus all virtue is necessarily prudent. The ability/capacity to make right decisions is pivotal to a discussion of right action. But prudence is not only cognition or knowing. This knowledge must be transformed into the prudent decision.[28]

But what about the many of us who don't have an abundance of prudence, what Agatha Christie allows Hercule Poirot to call "the little grey cells." Lewis notes the following:

> It is, of course, quite true that God will not love you any the less, or have less use for you, if you happen to have been born with a very second-rate brain. He has room for people with very little sense, but He wants every one to use what sense they have. The proper motto is not 'Be good, sweet maid, and let he who can be clever,' but 'Be good, sweet maid, and don't forget that this involves being as clever as you can.'[29]

B. Justice

When we analyze justice, so many issues come to mind that it seems unlikely we can find any thread of connection: equal rights; capital punishment; euthanasia; abortion;... Nevertheless, there is an idea of utmost simplicity to which much can be reduced. It is the notion that each person is to be given what is his/her due. The thread of this idea can be traced through Plato, Aristotle, Roman Law, Augustine, Aquinas, and Kant. Justice is a habit whereby a person wills to render to other persons their due.

Right or due is fundamental. Right comes before justice. If something is due a person, the fact of its being due has not come into existence through justice. And if, to the question: "How does a person come to have his/her due?" we answer: "By reason of creation," we have said much. Human persons are unique in this sense. Even though stones, plants, and animals have been created as well, we do not say that these things have rights in the same sense.

Those who are aware of this (Lewis calls this the Tao, the Way, and finds essential agreement in Aristotle, Christianity, and the Orient)

> can hold that to call children delightful or old men venerable is not simply to record a psychological fact about our own parental or filial emotions at the moment, but to recognize a quality which *demands* a certain response from us whether we make it or not. I myself do not enjoy the society of small children: because I speak from within the *Tao* I recognize this as a defect in myself--just as a man may have to recognize that he is tone deaf or color blind.[30]

Lewis refers specifically to Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine in *The Abolition of Man*, stressing that the aim of education is to make the pupil like and dislike what he/she ought, that virtue is the condition of the affections in which every object is accorded the kind and degree of love which is appropriate to it. The child must be trained to "feel pleasure, liking, disgust, and hatred at those things which really are pleasant, likeable, disgusting, and hateful."[31] All this should become a part of the person before one is of the age to reason. Lewis argues for a *rapprochement* between the world of feelings and the world of justice. Our heart and our head should tell us the same thing. Trained emotions/feelings are necessary in order for a person to be virtuous. It is, in fact, by this means that we are persons. Lewis: "It may even be said that it is by this middle element that

man is man: for by his intellect he is mere spirit and by his appetite mere animal."[32]

Lewis builds upon the great insights of the past when he identifies three basic forms of justice: 1) the relations of individuals to one another (*ordo partium ad partes*); 2) the relations of the social whole to individuals (*ordo totius ad partes*); and 3) the relations of individuals to the purpose of human life as a whole (*ordo partium ad totum*).

C. Fortitude

"Fortitude presupposes vulnerability."[33] Thus Professor Josef Pieper begins his reflections on the virtue of fortitude. The ultimate injury is death. Therefore fortitude would seem to be intrinsically related to being prepared, if necessary, to die. Fortitude points to something else; ultimately, it derives its value from something else. It is no accident that in the list of cardinal virtues fortitude comes third.

To be brave is not the same as to have no fear. Persons who, realizing the good, face the fearful/dreadful, are truly brave. Thus the two senses of fortitude: endurance and attack.

Numerous are the ways Lewis portrays this great virtue. My favorite examples in Lewis come from the seven books which many think will be Lewis's chief claim to fame: *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Remember Peter in *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*. Just before Peter's first battle, in which he was successful, Lewis says

of him: "Peter did not feel very brave; indeed, he felt he was going to be sick. But that made no difference to what he had to do."[34]

My favorite Narnian character is Reepicheep, "the most valiant of all the Talking Beasts of Narnia and the Chief Mouse."[35] Reep is a splendid example of fortitude as a character quality. When many of the crew grow weary and wish to turn back, Reep is heard to say:

> No....My own plans are made. While I can, I sail east in the Dawn Treader. When she fails me, I paddle east in my coracle. When she sinks, I shall swim east with my four paws. And when I can swim no longer, if I have not reached Aslan's country, or shot over the edge of the world in some vast cataract, I shall sink with my nose to the sunrise and Peepiceek will be head of the talking mice in Narnia.[36]

Not long thereafter, at The Very End of the World, Reep goes on alone. The others

> did not even try to stop him, for everything now felt as if it had been fated or had happened before. They helped him to lower his little coracle. Then he took off his sword ('I shall need it no more,' he said) and flung it far away across the lilied sea. Where it fell it stood upright with the hilt above the surface. Then he bade them good-bye, trying to be sad for their sakes; but he was quivering with happiness. Lucy, for the first and last time did what she had always wanted to do, taking him in her arms and caressing him. Then hastily he got into his coracle and took his paddle, and the current caught it and away he went, very black against the lilies. But no lilies grew on the wave; it was a smooth green slope. The coracle went more and more quickly, and beautifully it rushed up the wave's side. For one split second they saw its shape and Reepicheep's on the very top. Then it vanished, and since that moment no one can truly claim to have seen Reepicheep the Mouse. But my belief is that he came safe to Aslan's country and is alive there to this day.[37]

And just in case you are skeptical about the fate of Reepicheep the Mouse: From book seven, *The Last Battle*, as the followers of the Lion get ever nearer to Aslan's country: "...a great horn, wonderfully loud and sweet, blew from somewhere inside that walled garden and the gates swung open.

> Tirian stood holding his breath and wondering who would come out. And what came out was the last thing he had expected: a little, sleek, bright-eyed Talking Mouse with a feather stuck in a circlet on its head and its left paw resting on a long sword. It bowed, a most beautiful bow, and said in its shrill voice: 'Welcome, in the Lion's name. Come further up and further in.'"[38]

D. Temperance

Unlike prudence and justice, temperance is not one of God's attributes. Temperance can belong only to beings with bodily needs and appetites. The natural desire toward sensual enjoyment which manifests itself in our delight of food and drink and sexual pleasure is the reflection of our strong desire for self-preservation. Yet while these forces are closely allied to some of our deepest drives, they can become exceedingly destructive once they degenerate into selfishness. Lewis emphasizes, possibly too much, that temperance does not mean teetotalism. "Mohammedanism, not Christianity is the teetotal religion."[39] So far as I can determine, alcohol (even in small doses) always takes the fine edge off intellectual performance and impairs the execution of tasks requiring skills. If it is a duty (many argue it is not) to be mentally as much alert as possible for as long as possible, this would speak against any consumption of alcohol at all. However, as Aquinas remarks, it is one of reason's precepts that the exercise of reason should be interrupted. Both in sleep and in the sexual act, this is normally the case. Moreover, there seems to be nothing immoral in allowing a doctor to give anaesthetics before an operation. Lewis argues similarly:

> ...it may be the duty of a particular Christian, or of any Christian, at a particular time, to abstain from strong drink, either because he is the sort of man who cannot drink at all without drinking too much, or because he wants to give the money to the poor, or because he is with

> people who are inclined to drunkenness and must not encourage them by drinking himself. But the whole point is that he is abstaining, for a good reason, from something which he does not condemn and which he likes to see other people enjoying. One of the marks of a certain type of bad man is that he cannot give up a thing himself without wanting every one else to give it up. That is not the Christian way. An individual Christian may see fit to give up all sorts of things for special reasons--marriage, or meat, or beer, or the cinema; but the moment he starts saying the things are bad in themselves, or looking down his nose at other people who do use them, he has taken the wrong turning.[40]

Of course "blowing one's mind," deliberately seeking a kind of temporary insanity via psychedelic drugs or other ways, does seem to be a detestable abuse of the faculty which distinguishes us from the brutes.

In addition, as Lewis reminds us again and again, one should not restrict the word temperance to the question of drink. *Temperantia* has a wider significance and a higher rank. One can be intemperate about many things. Golf, cars, clothes, chess, travel, etc. can easily become the center of one's life. Of course, these things do not show on the outside so easily. Lewis: "bridge-mania or golf-mania do not make you fall down in the middle of the road. But God is not deceived by externals."[41] Other topics appropriate to a discussion of temperance are: chastity, virginity, fasting, gluttony, humility. Let me say a word about humility and leave the others, as important as they are, for another time.

Humility is a person's proper estimation of himself/herself according to truth. Self-accusation, feelings of inferiority, disparagement of one's being are not characteristics of the virtue of humility. In fact, humility and high-mindedness are akin to one another. It is fitting that the mind should strive toward great things.

V. The "Theological" Virtues: Faith, Hope, Love

Lewis, the defender of orthodox Christianity, is also the defender of the three "theological" virtues. He defines them as follows:

Faith- the ability to continue to affirm that which one's reason has accepted as true in spite of one's changing moods;
Hope- the real want for Heaven which is a part of all of us, even though we do not always recognize it. (Here Lewis is mindful of Augustine, who is also convinced that human persons are eternally restless until they find their rest in God);
Love- a "state not of the feelings but of the will."[42] It is a state of the will which one has naturally about oneself, and which one is commanded to have and must learn to have about others.

A. Faith

We are called to be faithful. What is a good working definition of faith or belief?[43] Pieper concludes in a philosophical tract: "belief means that we think a statement true and consider the stated matter real, objectively existent."[44] The believer "accepts a given matter as real on the testimony of someone else."[45] Perhaps even better: "Belief means to accept something unconditionally as real and true on the testimony of someone else who understands the matter out of his own knowledge."[46]

Lewis emphasizes in *Mere Christianity* that he believes Jesus to be a worthy authority. Jesus refers to Himself as God. "He claims to forgive sins. He says he has always existed. He says He is coming to judge the world at the end of

time."[47] Lewis is particularly interested in the claim to forgive sins.

> Now unless the speaker is God, this is really so preposterous as to be comic. We can all understand how a man forgives offenses against himself. You tread on my toe and I forgive you, you steal my money and I forgive you. But what should we make of a man, himself unrobbed and untrodden on, who announced that he forgave you for treading on other men's toes and stealing other men's money? ...This makes sense only if He really was the God whose laws are broken and whose love is wounded in every sin.[48]

The conclusion of this line of thinking for Lewis is the following:

> I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic--on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg--or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.[49]

Unfortunately, all too many people still today characterize Jesus as only a great human teacher. But for many believers, those mysterious actions of baptism and the Lord's Supper make sense chiefly because Jesus is our authority, for it does seem plain that Jesus taught His followers to become baptized and to participate in Holy Communion. Compare Aquinas in his tract on belief: "In all belief, the decisive factor is who it is whose statement is assented to: by comparison the subject matter which is assented to is in a certain sense secondary."[50] And according to Geach, "we have no warrant on belief unless the chain terminates in someone who did not believe but knew.... It is...false to say that the faith of the Apostolic Church was a matter of believing *in* a Person *as opposed to* believing *that* something is true. The earliest creed of Christians is to be found in the New

Testament: 'I believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.' This is just as propositional as any later creed."[51]

Persons can be *compelled* to do many things, but persons believe only if they wish to (or will to). There is astonishing unanimity on this point: belief rests upon volition.

The truth of faith cannot be proved by rational argument. Hence the old rule of thumb: The Christian who wishes to conduct a disputation on his/her belief should not attempt a proof, but a defense.[52]

Lewis concludes that faith is, most simply, our ability to hold on to our commitment to Jesus Christ in spite of our changes of mood, which undoubtedly arise. Faith is a necessary virtue, and it is something that must be trained. We creatures must be continually reminded about what we believe. Neither Christianity nor any other view of the world will automatically remain alive in our minds. Lewis notes that "if you examined a hundred people who had lost their faith in Christianity...how many of them would turn out to have been reasoned out of it by honest argument? Do not most people simply drift away."[53]

Primarily to train our faith, the Old Testament instructs us not only to fix God's words in our hearts and minds, but to tie them as symbols on our hands and bind them on our foreheads. It admonishes us to teach them to our children, talking about them when we sit at home and when we walk on the road. The door frames of our houses and our gates should act as pointers.[54]

One model for the training of faith is the following: keep some of the main doctrines of Christianity before our minds every day: pray continually throughout the day, for ourselves and others; express daily our commitment in specific actions; live temperately and simply; worship regularly. My purpose in making these particular suggestions is to direct our minds repeatedly and regularly to right thinking and right doing; i.e., to nurture, in this way, our faith.

B. Hope

"What may I hope for?" was wisely identified by the philosopher Immanuel Kant as one of the four basic questions with which the discipline of philosophy deals. The French language is helpful when attempting to get at the Christian concept of hope. The French have two different words for hope, *espoir* and *espérance*. *Espérance* is the better word for our purposes. Here there is no plural. We are talking about Hope, not our hopes. In essence, our hope, in contrast to our hopes, cannot be disappointed. It is "by its nature...just as unshakable as existence itself."[55]

Hope, in its essence, is that real longing or desire for Heaven, which is present in each one of us. We all, if we were really to look into our hearts, would recognize that we want, acutely, something that this world does not offer. The longings we have when we fall in love, when we think of some foreign country, when we think of some subject, book, film, or artifact--are desires or longings which none of these things are able to satisfy. Even the best examples within these categories (wonderful wives, trips, hikes) leave us unsatisfied. Very basically, Lewis identifies three ways to relate to this deep desire or longing which

most, if not all, of us have.[56]

First, we can be the fool. The fool puts the blame on the things themselves. The next woman or man, the next trip, book, or artifact will allow one to catch that mysterious something which he/she is after. There are millions of bored, dissatisfied people who are fools in this sense of the word.

Secondly, we can assume that, now that we are adults, we are to put away these childish thoughts. The mature, sensible adult settles down and represses that part of himself/herself which used to reach for the rainbow's end. This second way is, of course, better than the first, and makes a person less of a nuisance to society. In fact, it would be the best approach to take, unless we really can "know God and enjoy Him forever."[57]

Thirdly, there is the Christian way. The Christian essentially says that the creature is not born with desires unless these desires can be satisfied. Lewis, one of the great authorities on Christian hope (he often calls it Joy), says it well:

> A baby feels hunger: well there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing.[58]

If this is true, then we should go to neither of two extremes. On the one hand, we must never despise or even be ungrateful for all earthly blessings. But we must also not mistake them for that which we are really looking for.

Intriguingly, a recurring metaphor with which the poet has sought to express this hope is what some call "the Great Banquet."[59] Plato, too, speaks explicitly of the banquet at which the soul, outside of time, shares at the table with the gods, beholding true Being.[60] The food we are all looking for,exceeding every expectation-- the ultimate triumph of good over evil, the conquest of death, the resurrection, the New Heaven and New Earth, infinite happiness--this and more is the hope of the Christian.

C. Love

Love (*agapē*) is the greatest of the virtues. The Scriptures are abundantly clear: "Faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."[61] Love is what God is, and is eternally.[62] Perhaps all else is impermanent. Will the other two theological virtues pass away in the end: faith into seeing and hope into fruition? To my knowledge, Lewis never claimed to have a strong opinion about this. But what does seem certain is that love will abide, for God, the Eternal God, is love. In the nature of things love is most supreme. With love's ingredients infused into our lives, then everything we do would seem to take on eternal significance.

Lewis is concerned that many people point to unselfishness as the highest of the virtues. A negative term is then substituted for that which is supremely positive.[63] The New Testament does indeed have much to say about self-denial, but never about self-denial as an end in itself.

Love is the central meaning of our universe. Our primary task as persons is to know this love and to offer it to God and to those around us. The words of *A*

Simple Prayer, often attributed to St. Francis, seem so fitting:

> O Divine Master, grant that I may not so
> much seek
> to be consoled...as to console,
> to be understood...as to understand,
> to be loved...as to love.

Dostoevsky caught the significance of this idea beautifully at one point in *The Brothers Karamozov:*

> Love all God's creation, the whole and every grain of it. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things. Once you perceive it, you will begin to comprehend it better every day.[64]

Love in the distinctly Christian sense is not a feeling or emotion. Love is a state of the will, which we have naturally about ourselves but which we must learn to have about other people.

Lewis did not advise waiting until we *feel* like loving before we begin to act lovingly. As is the case many times in the world of work, we may not feel like working, but once we have been at it a while, our feelings seem to come. As Lewis wisely notes in *The Screwtape Letters*: "All mortals tend to turn into the thing they are pretending to be."[65] We should not spend an inordinate amount of time reflecting on whether we love or not; we should act as if we do.

A fundamental motif in Lewis is that it is most important to *be* loving, not only to do the loving thing. How does one become a virtuous person? Normally by practice. What makes a person a good musician, a good sculptor, a good student? Practice. Practice would seem also to be a crucial part in the making of a good

person. Henry Drummond noted when writing about Love: "There is nothing capricious about religion. We do not get the soul in different ways, under different laws, from those in which we get the body and the mind."[66]

What are some of the ways that we, at a university, might exercise this virtue? How should we love and care about our students? Certainly we must try to learn who they are. What are their names? What are their abilities and their limitations? What are their needs? What is conducive to their growth? In addition, we in university teaching can love by being persons who think clearly and communicate well. Stott has written a little book called *Your Mind Matters*. Hear! Hear! The mind matters. Concern for right thinking is a primary responsibility of university faculty. And concerning communication skills: Lewis was asked shortly before he died about how to develop a good style of writing. His response was: a) to know exactly what you want to say, and b) to make sure you say exactly that.[67] Quite frankly, I think that is excellent advice.

Let me conclude, not irreverently, these reflections on love and these lesser things with a plea for laughter, merriment, and a sense of humor. When I look back over the landscape we have tried to cover this evening, I conclude that we are not very far up the mountain. We are not very far in. The permanent things are hard even to uncover. They are impossible to define. Moreover, even if we were to define and describe adequately what we are calling "the permanent things," we dare not forget that we are looking at them through one window. There are undoubtedly many other viewpoints. Thus the need for laughter and humor.

I have read many times Viktor Frankl's little book *Man's Search For Meaning*, the graphic account of the life and death struggles which millions of Jews suffered in German concentration camps during the Second World War. At one point in this book, Frankl, who himself experienced these horrors, points to the importance of having a sense of humor, even in those horrible surroundings. Frankl notes that humor is one of the "soul's weapons in the fight for self-preservation."[68] He notes further that "humor, more than anything else in the human makeup, can afford an aloofness and an ability to rise above any situation, even if only for a few seconds."

Lewis reminds me often that we Christians can be serious without being solemn. We must play and joke and be merry.

> But our merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind) which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously--no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption. And our charity must be a real and costly love, with deep feeling for the sins in spite of which we love the sinner--no mere tolerance or indulgence which parodies love as flippancy parodies merriment. Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbour is the holiest object presented to your senses. If he[she] is your Christian neighbour he[she] is holy in almost the same way, for in him[her] also Christ yere latitat--the glorifier and the glorified, Glory Himself, is truly hidden.[69]

1. *The Last Battle*, New York, Collier Books, p.170. Lewis believed that much in the old myths points to the reality of the supernatural, and may well be a "preparatio evangelica, a divine hinting in poetic and ritual form at the same central truth which was later focused and (so to speak) historicized in the Incarnation." Lewis first approached Christianity from a delighted interest in, and reverence for, the best pagan imagination. He loved Balder before Christ and Plato before St Augustine. ("Religion Without Dogma," *God in the Dock*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, p. 132.)

2. *Of Other Worlds*, New York, Harcourt Brace, p.20-1.

3. *The Abolition of Man*, New York, Macmillan, p. 25.

4. "On Ethics," *Christian Reflections*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, p.52. To those who maintain that the ethical standards of different cultures are so different that there is no common tradition, Lewis responds as follows: "If a man will go into a library and spend a few days with the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* he will soon discover the massive unanimity of the practical reason in man. From the Babylonian Hymn to Samos, from the *Laws of Manu*, the *Book of the Dead*, the Analects, the Stoics, the Platonists, from the Australian aborigines and Redskins, he will collect the same triumphantly monotonous denunciations of oppression, murder, treachery and falsehood, the same injunctions of kindness to the aged, the young, and the weak, of almsgiving and impartiality and honesty. ...he will no longer doubt that there is such a thing as the Law of Nature. There are, of course, differences. ...But..." "The Poison of Subjectivism," *Christian Reflections*, p.77.

5. I am aware that Lewis often spoke disparagingly of Kant's influences; yet he surely appreciates his clarity about the significance of persons as well as Kant's identification of the three great questions for philosophy: What can we know? What should we do? What may we hope?

6. I am indebted to the Institute for Christian Leadership and Renewal in Portland, Oregon, for a grant which allowed me to attend its Writing Conference II in April, 1984. Several of the ideas for this section were developed at that Conference.

7. *Mere Christianity*, New York, Collier Books, see preface. For Lewis, mere Christianity was to be found (among other places) in Puritan Bunyan, Anglican Hooker, and Thomist Dante. (see "On the Reading of Old Books," *God in the Dock*, p. 203.)

8. "Christian Apologetics," *God in the Dock*, p. 90.

9. What are the potential responses to the complex and differing theological conclusions of the mainstream Christian churches? I see three chief possibilities: 1) we can become nihilists and skeptics who affirm that nothing can be relied upon; 2) we can affirm the authority of one of the (relative) positions, affirming that a church, or a philosophy, or a value is absolute; or 3) we can accept the relativities at the same time believing in the infinite and absolute God to whom all our relative views, values, and duties are subject. (cf. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, New York, Harper Torchbooks, p. 238.) The generally acknowledged great Christian teachers are often wary of tunnel vision and one-track rules. Augustine, for example, said long ago that if one person thinks you should receive the Eucharist daily, and another thinks the opposite, each one should do, in piety, what he/she thinks is right. Neither did Zacchaeus and the Roman officer dispute with one another, although the one received the Lord with joy into his house and the other said: "I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof." (Luke 19:6; 7:6). Both, notes Augustine, honored the Savior, though not in the same manner. (Pieper, *Four Cardinal Virtues*, New York, Harcourt Brace, p. 192)

10. "Christian Apologetics," *op. cit.*, p. 101. According to Lewis, religions, like soups, can be divided into 'thick' and 'clear'. By a 'thick' religion, Lewis cites some in Africa which have orgies and ecstasies and mysteries. By 'clear' he means those which are philosophical, ethical and universalizing: Stoicism, Buddhism, and the Ethical Church. True religion must be both Thick and Clear for God made both the child and the adult, both the head and the belly. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

11. Stott, John R. W., *Balanced Christianity*, Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, p. 8. Lewis considered that at least some of the divisions that separate Christians were sinful and scandalous. Lewis always tried to hold to traditional, dogmatic positions. Early on he was amazed to receive letters of agreement from what are ordinarily regarded as very different kinds of Christians. He concluded that the main-stream elements in every Christian Church hold similar views, that millions of people of quite different types affirm essentially the same thing. ("Answers to Questions on Christianity," *God in the Dock*, p. 60.)

12. *The Screwtape Letters*, letter 8.

13. *Orthodoxy, New York, Image Books, p. 10-11.*

14. Perelandra, New York, Macmillan, p. 214-19.

15. Hooper, Walter, "Preface," *Christian Reflections*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, p. vii.

16. *The Weight of Glory*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, p. 15.

17. See *The Everlasting Man.*

18. We must choose. We do not have the freedom not to choose. Choice appears to be involved when we resolve to wait before we commit ourselves to a belief or line of action. Spectators we cannot be.

19. "The Poison of Subjectivism," *op. cit.*, p.77. *The Humanist Manifestos I (1933) and II (1973)* are a more recent statement of that against which Lewis stands. Lewis argues often against the following tenets of the secular humanist: 1) The universe is self-existing and not created. 2) Persons are a part of nature. They have emerged as the result of a continuous process. 3) Religion must formulate its hopes and plans in the light of the scientific spirit and method. 4) The complete realization of human personality is the end of a person's life.

20. *Perelandra, op. cit.* p. 96-7.

21. New York, Macmillan, p. 72.

22. Membership," *Fern-Seed and Elephants*, Glasgow, Collins, p. 20.

23. Pelikan, Jaroslav, *The Vindication of Tradition*, New Haven, Yale University Press, p.3-4. Much of our societal energies are expended in the conservation of values. Our houses, schools and temples stand in almost continuous need of repair. But our laws and liberties, our institutions of learning and religion, art, language, and morality--these cannot be conserved by keeping in good repair the walls and documents that are their symbols. These must be written anew each generation "on the tablets of the heart." (Niebuhr, *op.cit.*, p. 37.)

24. *Ibid.* p.19.

25. *Mere Christianity, op. cit.*, p. 74-5.

26. Geach, P.T., *The Virtues*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. vii. I delight that a professor of logic (who taught at Cambridge, Birmingham, Leeds) delivered the Stanton Lectures at Cambridge in the 1970s on (among other things) the significance of the seven traditional virtues. The discipline of philosophy is finding itself again!

27. Pieper, Josef, *The Four Cardinal Virtues, op. cit.*, p. 3. I am indebted to professors Pieper and Geach for numerous insights related to the significance of the virtues.

28. Many subscribe to the view that prudence and conscience mean essentially the same thing. That conscience is fundamentally cognitive seems confirmed by the root meaning in the Latin: *con-scientia.* (Pieper, *Four Virtues*, p.12)

29. *Mere Christianity, op. cit.*, p 75.

30. *Abolition of Man, op. cit.*, p. 29.

31. *Ibid.* p. 27.

32. Ibid. p. 34.

33. Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, p. 117.

34. *Lion*, New York, Collier Books, p. 127. Readiness to die for Christ's sake is a cornerstone of the Christian life.

35. *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Collier, p. 11.

36. *Ibid.* p. 184.

37. *Voyage, op. cit.*, p. 213.

38. *The Last Battle*, op. cit., p. 176-7.

39. *Mere Christianity, op. cit.*, p. 75-6.

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*

42. *Ibid.* p. 115.

43. The German *Glaube* means both belief and faith.

44. Pieper, *Belief and Faith*, New York, Pantheon, p. 7.

45. *Ibid.* p. 17.

46. *Ibid.* p. 52.

47. p. 54.

48. p. 55.

49. p. 56.

50. Pieper, *Belief*, p. 20. There is a story in German about a charcoal burner who met a learned scholar and was asked what he believed. "I believe what the church believes," the charcoal burner responded. For his answer the charcoal burner has been ridiculed by some. But in a sense the answer is no more contemptible than if a scholar of economics were asked an opinion on the nature of matter, and he/she made reference to the teachings of modern physics.

51. Geach, *op. cit.*, p. 35-7.

52. Pieper, *Belief*, p. 75.

53. *Mere Christianity*, p. 124. cf. Geach: "The testing-point of the virtue of faith is: hanging on to the truth once received, in spite of all temptations." (P.43)

54. Deut. 11:18-20.

55. Pieper, *Hope and History*, New York, Herder and Herder, p. 27.

56. *Mere Christianity*, chapter on hope.

57. The chief end of man according to the Westminster Catechism.

58. *Mere Christianity*, p. 120.

59. Pieper, *Hope*, p. 89.

60. *Phaedrus*, 247a-e.

61. I Cor. 13:13b.

62. Will Durant, author of the multivolumed *History of Civilization*, distilled thousands of years of history into the three words: "Love one another." "My final lesson of history," said the 92-year-old Durant, "is the same as that of Jesus." "You may think that's a lot of lollipop," Durant added with a laugh. "But just try it. Love is the most practical thing in the world." (quoted in Morton T. Kelsey, Caring , New York, Paulist Press, p. 4-5.)

63. *The Weight of Glory, op. cit.*, p.1.

64. Dostoevsky, Fyodor, Great Books Edition, *Encyclopedia Brittanica*, Chicago, 1952, p. 167.

65. Letter 10.

66. Drummond, Henry, *The Greatest Thing in the World*, Springdale, Whitaker House, p. 38-9.

67. "Cross-Examination," *God in the Dock*, p. 263.

68. Frankl, Viktor, *Man's Search For Meaning*, New York, Pocket Books, p. 64.

69. *The Weight of Glory, op. cit.*, p.15.