



Chronicles of Heaven Unshackled - Part 7 - A Few Conclusions

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Chronicles of Heaven Unshackled is a lightly edited version of Pete Lowman's doctoral thesis. Links to each part will be enabled as they are published.

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7. A FEW CONCLUSIONS

The tragedy of the modern world, said Solzhenitsyn in his Templeton Address, is that humankind has forgotten God.

Or perhaps one should say white European humankind. One chapter of this study was written in Lagos; and among the Nigerian university community the writer was struck by the prevalence of a supernaturalistic worldview that seemed universally acceptable and that often made the average Britisher – even the average British Christian – seem a humanist by comparison. One encounters a similar situation in many other cultural contexts: in the Middle East, for example, and among African-Americans. A worldview that is dominated by an exclusively

naturalistic causality is a fairly 'local' phenomenon of the contemporary West. That it should be merely the view of a minority (an influential minority) does not *per se* prove it to be false, of course. Many things believed only by a minority have later turned out to be true. But it certainly makes it worth enquiring whether prose fiction must always be expected to reflect this particular 'party line'; and if it did not – if, in Solzhenitsyn's terms, it remembers God – what it would become. And it is also worth asking what effect the dominance of such a convention is having, in terms of shaping our consciousnesses and the ways in which we are capable of seeing the world.

At the same time, whatever may be true in other cultures, the contemporary English novelist writes in a tradition largely shaped in Britain; along with other influences from America, France, and Russia, in particular. (S)he writes in a tradition and for an audience largely conditioned by the aftermath of the Enlightenment and the nineteenth-century loss of faith, and in a social context most of the components of which reflect the presuppositions of humanism.

We have observed that in this situation some Christian writers have turned to the fantasy model. And to some extent this has been chosen as an apologetic strategy: a shape in events that might not be easy for readers to cope with in a so-called realistic novel may be palatable if it appears in a fantasy world. What can we learn from the work of the writers who have chosen this approach? Has it worked?

(i) Problems of the Fantasy Mode

There are perhaps four problem-areas that emerge from our discussions of the fantasy fiction of Lewis and Tolkien. We shall not concern ourselves with the charge that these fantasies are 'escapist': as the appendix that follows will demonstrate, they bear a very definite relation to reality, though not the relation of the realistic novel. Likewise, we shall not be concerned with the stylistic weaknesses of individual writers. Tolkien, for example, is prone to verbal disasters of the 'That is the doom that we must deem' variety[1]; but that tells us nothing about his choice of fictional strategy and its suitability as a vehicle for creating of a narrative marked by Christian supernaturalism.

(a) The first question is whether such an approach lends itself to the presentation only of a certain type of content. In particular, the objectification of spiritual states characteristic of the fantasy form naturally means that physical combat and the physical destruction of evil become important. This is perhaps most problematic in C.S. Lewis' trilogy. Evil is removed in *That Hideous Strength* by what Robert Plank rightly refers to as a 'peerless massacre'[2]; one feels that Lewis himself sensed the problem, and his efforts to get rid of it sound slightly lame. The apocalypse that extinguishes the NICE also wipes out Edgestow as a whole, and Lewis' suggestion that the entire university community were tarred with the same brush, that the NICE was only taking all their attitudes to their logical conclusion, feels somewhat forced:

"Aren't Merlin and the eldils a trifle...well, wholesale. Did all Edgestow deserve to be wiped out?"

"Who are you lamenting?" said MacPhee. "The jobbing town council that'd have sold their own wives and daughters to bring the N.I.C.E. to Edgestow?... It'll learn them not to keep bad company."...

"I know," said Denniston. "One's sorry for a man like Churchwood. I knew him well; he was an old dear. All his lectures were devoted to proving the impossibility of ethics, though in private life he'd have walked ten miles rather than leave a penny debt unpaid. But all the same... was there a single doctrine practised at Belbury which hadn't been preached by some lecturer at Edgestow?"...

"I'm afraid it's all true, my dear," said Dimple.

"Trahison des clerics. None of us are quite innocent."

"You are all forgetting," said Grace, "that nearly everyone, except the very good (who were ripe for fair dismissal) and the very bad, had already left Edgestow." [3]

'None of us are quite' convincing; both MacPhee's 'It'll learn them...' and Denniston's cosy 'old dear' seem to depend on the people concerned not having been decimated in the way Lewis has described; Dimple's contribution sounds like moralising, and Grace's stretches the reader's credulity (or else leaves a lot of work for providence). And yet the wiping out of Edgestow is logical enough in the fiction as a whole;

apocalypse has come, and in the time of apocalypse it is the doers of hidden evil as well as the perpetrators of blatant iniquities who face judgement. It is true, too, that Lewis' underlying point, the fundamental 'either/or' nature of good and evil, is perfectly orthodox. (He returns to this theme in *The Great Divorce*.) But it is rather hard to conceive 'wholesale apocalypse' in the same world as the Studdocks' marital breakdown; in a world that seems at times to smack of everyday reality, wholesale destruction reminds the reader of the Bomb. And that is not quite the connotation one normally associates with grace. There is too little room in this pattern for the redemption of the evildoer, as Plank points out.[4]

The same problem exists in *Voyage to Venus*. J.B.S. Haldane's hostile summary is unfair but contains a grain of truth: 'Ransom's arguments against the devil are inadequate, so he finally kills Weston, and is returned to earth by angels, with thanks for services rendered.'[5] It is true that if Lewis must recreate Barfield's "ancient unities", then disposing of a spiritual evil will involve disposing of something physical as well[6]; it is true that the vividly-narrated fight gives dramatic strength to the book; it is true too (perhaps) that this denouement may have been more acceptable to the wartime audience for whom the book was written, who might perhaps have seen themselves in an analogous situation. But it is also true that because Weston is (despite Lewis' efforts) not entirely unlike a human being[7], Ransom is not entirely unlike a murderer; and that there is a hint of 'might is right'. (What if Weston had been physically stronger than Ransom? Ransom's success in combat seems arbitrary – it owes nothing to supernatural aid.)

The difficulty is that the spiritual issue is not in fact objectified entirely. Lewis poses the problem of the Un-man first of all as an abstract, moral problem, something to be handled on the logical level; but then that is not how it is finally dealt with. In terms of the plot this makes sense: the Lady has been tempted 'enough' (cf. Paul's comment to the Corinthian church that 'God... will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear'[8]), and the tempter has to be disposed of somehow. It would have been tidier – though less dramatically effective – if Weston was repulsed simply by the Lady's realisation of what the true spiritual issues were (which in fact happens after

the fight[9]). Alternatively, Tolkien's approach has consistency to recommend it: in Mordor objectification is total, so that the evil that is combated by physical conflict is also something that expresses itself primarily by physical, rather than moral, destruction. What is hateful about the 'dark lord' is that he creates places like Gorgoroth, not that he lures people into sinning. But of course this option has its own weakness. Edmund Wilson complains that Tolkien never tells the reader 'what exactly was so terrible' in Mordor[10]; and what he is asking for is a moral temptation, for example one in which Mordor might seem 'a plausible and pleasant place'. [11] Lewis avoids this problem. But to raise the spiritual issues he does is to some extent to situate the most essential combat in a non-objectified context, where killing the mouthpiece of evil still constitutes murder.

In *The Lord of the Rings* the question of physical combat reappears. Where there is battle, we are likely to be invited to admire the warrior virtues. Eomer's defiance of impending doom at the battle of Pelennor is imaginatively impressive: 'To hope's end I rode and to heart's breaking', he sings. 'Now for wrath, now for ruin and a red nightfall!' Tolkien continues, 'Once more lust of battle was on him... He was young, and he was king: the lord of a fell people. And lo! even as he laughed at despair he looked out again on the black ships, and he lifted up his sword to defy them.' [12] But surely such battle-lust stems from the Nordic part of Tolkien's imagination, not the Christian; and there is a tension between this and what is represented by the figure of Frodo, triumphing by grace and *eucatastrophe* rather than by force of arms, struggling weaponless across Mordor ('I'll bear no weapon, fair or foul' [13]), objecting to the use of violence in the 'Scouring of the Shire' [14], and refusing to sanction violence against Saruman although the latter has proved himself a murderer capable of wrecking an entire country. [15] Possibly some such tension is going to be an inevitable part of any fantasy that objectifies the combat against spiritual evil into physical terms; and then the question will be whether the dramatic power that can be gained thereby is sufficient to make such an inconsistency a price worth paying.

There is another aspect to this question, however, although perhaps a non-literary one. Susan

Sontag observes in an essay on science fiction films that:

Another kind of satisfaction these films supply is extreme moral simplification – that is to say, a morally acceptable fantasy where one can give outlet to cruel or at least amoral feelings.... In the figure of the monster from outer space, the freakish, the ugly, and the predatory all converge – and provide a fantasy target for righteous bellicosity to discharge itself.... Again and again, one detects the hunger for a "good war," which poses no moral problems, admits of no moral qualifications. [16]

Neither Lewis nor Tolkien could really be said to indulge emotionally in the violence they present; still, their presentations of conflict with the Un-man or the orcs need to be considered in the light of these comments.

(b) Susan Sontag's remarks also provide a cue for discussion of a different issue; the question of whether – in the hands of Lewis and Tolkien at least – the movement away from realism has not resulted in an over-simplification of *character*. Hardly any of the characters in *That Hideous Strength* are particularly believable (it is, as we have noted, very much a 'tall story'); *The Lord of the Rings* has perhaps one credible female human character, it has been said, and she dresses up as a man. Tolkien also has a tendency to present his characters making moral decisions by discussing them aloud with themselves, which can be a trifle bizarre. [17] This is not, of course, the whole story. Lewis' portrayal of Ransom in *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Voyage to Venus* contains much shrewd psychological insight (for instance in the long debate with the Darkness in the latter book). Even Tolkien's characters are not totally one-dimensional (Aragorn is capable of pride and fussiness [18], Gollum of tenderness [19]), and they are not altogether free from moral dilemmas. [20] It seems, however, that Lewis at any rate deliberately avoided complexity of characterisation. There was 'a good deal to be said', he once suggested, for the point of view that 'the first business of a novel is to tell a story and that characters etc. come second.' [21] And in *On Other Worlds* he argues that this is especially true of stories dealing with the fantastic:

It is absurd to condemn them because they do not

often display any deep or sensitive characterization. They oughtn't to. It is a fault if they do.... Every good writer knows that the more unusual the scenes and events of his story are, the slighter, the more ordinary, the more typical his persons should be.[22]

Irwin quotes Northrop Frye in defence of the similar practice of Lewis' friend Charles Williams:

The nature of romance invites portrayals of absolutes rather than highly individualized persons. As Northrop Frye has demonstrated, characters in romance usually owe their being and energy to a principle or allegiance which has been somewhat internalized rather than to any original inner prompting. One does not look to romance for a probing of the psyche and emotions.[23]

Another relevant point is Ian Watt's observation that in the novel 'the importance of the plot is in inverse proportion to that of character'[24]; if he is correct, it is not surprising that writers like Lewis and Tolkien who are very consciously 'telling stories' should not be overly concerned about complexity of character. And yet there has to be a balance, especially if the notion of providence is to be used; for, while providence provides a theoretical basis for the notion of a pattern within history and hence a validation of the concept of plot, providence is also supposed to be concerned with the development of human beings as individuals. (This element is visible in Tolkien's treatment of Boromir, Saruman and Gollum, as we noted in an earlier chapter.) Surely *The Lord of the Rings* is a stronger book because through his struggles Frodo appears to have 'grown' (Saruman's word[25]) from a 'twee' hobbit into something sadder but more mature; and surely Lewis' choice (apparently deliberate[26]) to remove Ransom's 'warm humanity' in *That Hideous Strength* leaves something of a vacuum in that book. Orual in *Till We Have Faces* proves that Lewis could combine fantasy with a more complex characterisation, and the result is a heroine vastly superior to Jane Studdock in *That Hideous Strength*.

(c) Two other questions are worth considering, of a more extra-literary kind. Is there, perhaps, a danger of repeating an ancient error, in lumping together the 'Christian supernatural' and the

fantastic? Does this not tend to reduce the Christian supernatural to the level of hobbits and Elves, making providence seem a concept suited only to lovers of 'fairy-tales'? – which are a specialised taste, despite the apologies of the Inklings. It might be argued that the urgent need today is to make the presence of God seem more real, not more fantastic. Against this, of course, stands the possibility that a 'baptism of the imagination' in a fantasy context is almost the *only* way of presenting thoroughgoing supernaturalism to a secularised readership at the present time.

Related to this is the difficulty we noted in the case of *That Hideous Strength*, that the use of certain types of Christian content in what is palpably a 'tall story' can seem almost to smack of irreverence; and it would be unfortunate to become entirely insensitive to the kind of issues raised by Johnson when he complained that in *Lycidas* Milton was mingling 'trifling fictions' with 'the most sacred and awful truths, such as ought never to be polluted with such irreverend combinations.'[27] It is at least a question worth asking; otherwise the sense of the dignity of God could unwittingly be forfeited in the fantasy mode.

(d) Likewise, the tendency of fantasy to concern itself with the unique periods of apocalypse, while making possible the construction of paradigmatic situations revealing an interplay of forces that would normally be concealed, can on the other hand suggest that the norm is something totally different and thoroughly naturalistic. God takes an active part in human existence once in a millennium, when the events of the Fall or the tower of Babel are about to be repeated; but the mundane world is a closed naturalistic system, and the experience of the eternal is only for the saint. Here indeed arises a complication, for, as C.S. Lewis says, the overt miracle is perhaps not to be understood as an everyday event:

God does not shake miracles into Nature at random as if from a pepper-caster. They come on great occasions: they are found at the great ganglions of history – not of political or social history, but of that spiritual history which cannot be fully known by men. If your own life does not happen to be near one of those great ganglions, how should you expect to see one? If we were heroic missionaries, apostles, or martyrs, it would

be a different matter. But why you or I?[28]

Yet there is a sort of 'inverse elitism' about this which does not tell the whole story. For Christianity is about the redemptive concern of God not merely for the vanguard of 'heroic missionaries, apostles or martyrs' but for the ordinary individual Christian. Jack Clemo affirms that the norm of Christian experience is the 'personal covenant', when

God takes the former rebel into His confidence and allots to him some stretch of existential territory where he can practice the divine presence. To a consecrated Christian life all events are ordered towards certain definite objectives.... The sense of covenant is one of the chief marks which distinguish the Christian from the mere religious man. The latter is largely concerned with abstractions.... Every Christian is to let his light shine, coloured by the experience which has proved to him personally the faithfulness of God.[29]

Clemon and Lewis are not in direct disagreement, of course[30]; Lewis is talking about the overt miracle, Clemo about the patterning in the ordinary individual's life which need not necessarily involve such an event.[31] Yet it is not without significance that Lewis, whose stories depict God's presence in the life of someone so unusual that he never dies, should feel concerned to write the above caveat on the rarity of the miraculous, whereas Clemo's fiction and non-fiction both stress the possibility and opportunity of perceiving and acting upon the purposes of God in the everyday.

There is a difference of emphasis. And on Clemo's side it might be argued that, if *all* providentialist fiction were written in the fantasy mode, it would have succumbed to the post-Enlightenment dichotomy Francis Schaeffer emphasises, where order, design, meaning and so on tend to belong to a sphere of religious myth divorced from empirical reality. And that would almost be the world of Greene's *The Heart of the Matter*: 'Heaven remained rigidly in its proper place on the other side of death, and on this side flourished the injustices, the cruelties, the meanness....'[32] It would, of course, be foolish to overemphasise this aspect of the fantasy mode; we have noted throughout our studies of Lewis

and Tolkien the strong parallelism between what occurs in their fantasy world and what they believe occurs in reality. But a Christian writer faced with a world that has (as Solzhenitsyn suggests) 'forgotten God' may see it as a prime need to reawaken the awareness of God's purposive presence in the everyday world of mundane affairs; and at that point, the apocalyptic preoccupation of the fantasy mode may appear a disadvantage.

(ii) Challenges and Strategies

There is in contrast so little contemporary fiction possessing both artistic merit and a fictional hypothesis of providentialist realism that it is impossible to make sweeping statements about the latter strategy. (There are some encouraging recent examples that we haven't looked at here; two worth singling out are *First and Vital Candle* by Rudy Wiebe, one of Canada's finest novelists, and on this side of the Atlantic the very funny *Foreign Bodies* by Hwee Hwee Tan.) But some tentative general observations may be made.

Firstly, the attempt to express providentialism, especially in terms of everyday reality, will be prone to show up mercilessly the inconsistencies in the artist's own vision. Any unresolved conflict of values – let us call it syncretism – will become all too plain.

This may be illustrated elsewhere, from the difficult fusions between the Christian and the capitalist in Defoe, the Christian and the Romantic in *Jane Eyre*, the Christian and the aesthete in *Brideshead Revisited*. The materialistic reward of the heroine's virtue that mars Richardson's *Pamela* also deserves mention here.

Secondly, artistic success may depend to some extent on the writer's ability to present a convincing fusion of nature and grace, of the human and divine. The writer for whom grace is a concept situated away at the back of his thinking will not be experimenting with providentialist fiction at all. But if the events are 'swamped' by supernatural overruling, the outcome can be false to reality. Human choice can cease to matter; or the conflict can become one in which there is no danger of any real defeat or any real pain. This is perhaps a problem in the climax of *That Hideous Strength*, and Tolkien too has been accused of

being unprepared to 'allow any really telling loss or vicissitude' into the overall pattern of *The Lord of the Rings*.^[33] That, of course, would simply be untrue to experience; anyone's experience.

At the same time, an overcompensating attempt to emphasise human responsibility can remove the divine presence to an inaccessible distance. Arguably this too is a problem in Tolkien, where no real relationship of faith underlies the repeated *eucaatastrophes*. (The question arises in a different mode when Scobie condemns himself by committing adultery in Greene's *The Heart of the Matter*.) At its best, a providentialist fiction should seek to portray an interplay of divine initiative and free human choice; and this is indeed to be found in Ransom's encounter with the Darkness in *Voyage to Venus*, in the climax of *The Lord of the Rings*, in *Till We Have Faces* and *Wilding Graft* at their best.

Thirdly, providentialist fiction will need to come to terms with the thorny aspects of the doctrine of providence; for example the problem of suffering, which is central to *Wilding Graft* (as it is to Greene's *The End of the Affair* and Dostoevski's *Brothers Karamazov*); or the clash that can occur between the claims of human and divine love which is central to *Till We Have Faces* (and to *Jane Eyre*, *Brideshead Revisited* and much of Graham Greene's fiction. We have examined these in the companion study to this, *Fictional Absence*.) It will also need to grapple with the problem of the silence and absence of God. This is, after all, part of the biblical doctrine of God; one thinks of the Psalms ('My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"... I say to God my Rock, "Why have You forgotten me?"'^[34]), or Habakkuk ('How long, O Lord, must I cry for help, but You do not listen?'^[35]), or Isaiah ('Truly You are a God who hides Himself, O God and Saviour of Israel'^[36]). This question too is confronted directly in *Till We Have Faces* (as it is, after his own fashion, in the fiction of Graham Greene).

Fourthly, developments in this field in the foreseeable future in Britain are going to face a readership not very sympathetic to overt expression of Christian supernaturalism; even though a large proportion of the population would still seem to acknowledge some kind of belief in some kind of deity, there seems to be a problem

with any printed expression of what that deity may be up to. (One suspects from experience that this problem is far less common in the context of a private conversation; but the expression of a deviant belief in a conversation has a living person present to support it.) The exclusively naturalistic convention that we have been discussing is undoubtedly a mark (and a cause) of the average reader's expectations. Thus writers attempting to write providentialist fiction have a choice of writing for a minority readership, or else finding some way of breaking out of the mould. C.S. Lewis said of *Voyage to Venus* that it was 'mainly for my co-religionists'^[37]; and it may be that certain types of stories can, at certain points in history, only be written for a minority.

Possibly the end of *Voyage to Venus* is in this category. But of course the committed Christian is likely to want to find some way of sharing what (s)he has found of the presence of God with other people; rather than finding something wonderful and then keeping it secret.

Various strategies seem to emerge from this situation. One is the attempt to present God in unusual ways. There is, for example, the emphasis on the violence or alienness of grace in *Wilding Graft* and *The End of the Affair* and *Till We Have Faces* (cf. too the powerful image of the avalanche at the end of *Brideshead Revisited*), and in Lewis' deliberate use of connotations of the distasteful and unpleasant in his evocation of the unfallen supernatural in *Out of the Silent Planet* and the start of *Voyage to Venus*. Related to this are the attempts to present God in the context of sexuality. Clemo seems to have felt a calling, as 'priest and lover', to forge anew a Christian celebration of redeemed sexuality^[38], and this is related to the subject-matter of *Wilding Graft*. Similarly in Greene's *The End of the Affair* Sarah's love for God is given a sense of real devotion by analogy with human affection; however the result of this approach in Greene's work is at times the presentation of religion as something furtive and quasi-pornographic; and it lacks the note of triumphant exuberance that marks Clemo at his best. In this connection, there is the danger of a novelist ending up mixing providentialism with a thoroughly sub-Christian and voyeuristic approach to sexuality. (To this reader, that would appear a valid criticism of Updike's *Rabbit, Run*, for example.)

Similarly, the likelihood of a sceptical readership raises the technical question of how best to present experience of the supernatural. The sceptical narrator, as employed in *The End of the Affair* and *Brideshead Revisited*, is one solution. The first-person believing narrator may also be attractive, in that their reflections can be introduced without necessitating quite the same degree of authorial endorsement as is implied in a more impersonal approach. Instead, an individual's perspective can be offered, and then the 'baptism of the imagination' can do its own work: offering a shape for the reader's contemplation, but not insisting on its verifiability. The 'stream of consciousness' approach of *To the Lighthouse* and similar works may have some untapped potential; it does after all enable a free movement between the specifics of an occurrence and a wide range of other relevant material (which is the point at which a tentative linkage with providential patterning could be made), without insisting on the nature of the connection between these items.[39]

It is no easy task. It is not surprising that there should be instances of writers apparently making some attempt to represent providential causality and then, before the end of the book, drifting increasingly into fantasy. (This is a reasonable interpretation of the telepathic message at the climax of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*.) It is also not surprising that there should be committed Christian novelists who have left providential causality out of their fiction almost altogether, presenting the beliefs and actions of their characters in terms that are virtually or entirely naturalistic. One thinks of Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, which only gives a couple of isolated cues to the effect that the ultimate causality of events is providential:

So Nekhlyudov, now appreciating the baseness of what he had done, felt the mighty hand of the Master; but he still did not realize the significance of what he had done, or recognize the Master's hand. He did not want to believe that what he saw now was his doing; but the inexorable, invisible hand held him and he already had a presentiment that he would never wriggle free.[40]

That is clear enough; but Tolstoy has given his readers one hint of the ultimate pattern, and he

gives very few others. Other novelists have done the same, for various reasons: the neo-classicist Fielding's general assertions of a benign providence in *Tom Jones*, Waugh's 'twitch upon the thread' in *Brideshead Revisited*, and Updike's 'something that wants me to find it' in *Rabbit, Run* are all general assertions of providence that do not receive much embodiment in the specific events of their books. Such caution runs the risk of turning the notion of providence into a myth with no conceivable specific meaning. In that case, the concrete assertion that God is active in history becomes reduced to a mere 'religious way of looking at things'[41], and nobody really knows what it actually refers to. But in a situation where these expressions of providence that we have quoted are among the very few exceptions to a dominant naturalistic convention in the novel, and in a culture that is growing increasingly secularised, it is not an unexpected compromise.

(iii) Conventions and Distortions

And what, in the end, does it matter? The answer to that question will obviously depend on the individual's presuppositions.

Of course the Christian will concede that the specific direction of providence in the everyday is frequently highly obscure to the human observer. Hence, a narrative of events including no clear expression of providential causality is acceptable as a model of reality as it frequently *appears*, even to the most hardened believer. But the situation changes as the panorama widens. When a whole lifetime or a whole society or a set of crucial events (a marriage or a bankruptcy or a war) come into the picture (as they tend to do in most novels) the Christian will feel it imperative to ask, Where is the presence of God in what is happening here? What is God's purpose here, and how do I act upon it? For if there is a God at all, He is obviously the prime factor in any situation.

The Christian's complaint about the naturalistic convention we face in fiction is, therefore, that it amounts to a repetitive imaginative training in thinking about events without any reference to God's purposes, and dealing with them entirely independently of His power. It fosters our logically preposterous situation where the average Britisher believes vaguely (so most pollsters tell

us) in some sort of almighty God, but pays no practical attention to Him whatsoever. Logically, that isn't very sensible. If there were indeed a God, there could be nothing more disastrous – or absurd – than attempting to put together the jigsaw puzzle of our lives with the central piece left out. Yet our culture trains us in many subtle ways to do just this: training us, perhaps, to be deaf or blind.[42] It is this 'training to leave God out' that we find happening in most of the most vivid and imaginatively striking novels we read; and this has a profound impact on the mental frameworks through which we look out at the world. The price of our deafness to God may be considerable. We can be deeply thankful, therefore, for those authors who have gone against the tide, and sought to develop and model for us an alternative 'way of seeing'.

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References:

- [1] Tolkien, *TLOTR*, p.236.
[2] Robert Plank, 'Some Psychological Aspects of Lewis' Trilogy', in *Shadows of Imagination*, ed. Mark R.Hillegas (Southern Illinois, 1969), p.35.
[3] C.S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength* (1955 edition), p.243.
[4] Plank, *ibid*.
[5] J.B.S. Haldane, 'Auld Hornie, F.R.S.', in Hillegas, *ibid*, p.15.
[6] As Lewis himself points out (*Voyage to Venus*, pp.18-19, 131).
[7] For example, when Weston arrives on Perelandra he has a will that seems distinct from, though committed to, the Bent One (*ibid*, p.86).
[8] 1 Corinthians 10:13.
[9] Lewis, *Voyage to Venus*, p.193.
[10] Edmund Wilson, *The Bit Between My Teeth* (1965), p.331.
[11] *Ibid*, p.330.
[12] Tolkien, *TLOTR*, p.829.
[13] *Ibid*, p.916.
[14] *Ibid*, p.983.
[15] *Ibid*, p.996.
[16] Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation* (New York, 1969), pp.218, 222.
[17] Eg. Tolkien, *op.cit.*, pp.618-19, 918.
[18] *Ibid*, pp.499-500.
[19] *Ibid*, p.699.
[20] Eg. *ibid*, pp.672-73.
[21] Quoted Chad Walsh, 'C.S. Lewis: The Man and the Mystery', in Hillegas, *op.cit.*, p.5.
[22] C.S. Lewis, *Of Other Worlds*. (New York.1966), pp.64-65.
[23] W.R. Irwin. 'Christian Doctrine and the Tactics of Romance: The Case of Charles Williams', in Hillegas, *op.cit.*, p.142. The reference to Frye is to *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, 1957), pp.304-05.
[24] Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (1957; Pelican edition of 1972), p.317.
[25] Tolkien, *TLOTR*, p.996.
[26] Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper, *C.S. Lewis: a Biography* (1974; Fount edition of 1979), p.179.
[27] Quoted Basil Willey, *The Seventeenth Century Background* (1942), p.234.
[28] C.S. Lewis, *Miracles* (1947; Fontana edition of 1960), pp.171-172.
[29] Jack Clemo, *The Invading Gospel*, (1958; Lakeland edition of 1972), pp.44-45.
[30] Indeed, Clemo explicitly recognises the kinship of Lewis' notion of 'immortal longings' with his own concept of the 'personal covenant' (*ibid*, p.61), where he also speaks with enthusiasm of Lewis' this-worldly supernaturalism in *The Screwtape Letters*.
[31] Clemo does however remark that how 'exotic' the fruits of the personal covenant will be 'depends on the intensity of individual faith in Christianity as the stumbling-block, the upsetting and dislocating factor in the midst of human progress. Orthodoxy has always maintained that angels rush in where fools fear to tread... Religious people who want to appear "scientific" will try any dodge before they will admit that the natural sphere has been invaded by a Power which knows no law except faithfulness to the covenant of Scripture.' (*Ibid*, pp.89-90).
[32] Greene, *The Heart of the Matter*, p.36.
[33] C.N. Manlove, *Modern Fantasy* (1975).p.185. This may be supported from a consideration of which characters are permitted to be killed, and under what circumstances. But Frodo's loss is real.
[34] Psalm 42:3, 9.
[35] Habakkuk 1:2.
[36] Isaiah 45:15.
[37] Lewis, *Of Other Worlds*, p.78.
[38] Clemo, *The Invading Gospel*, pp.46, 75.
[39] An interesting model, not exactly a novel, is

Amy Carmichael's *His Thoughts said... His Father Said...* (1941), which is essentially a series of situations described in terms of the Christian's thoughts and the 'Father's' response; that is, a dialogue taking place inside the Christian's consciousness. A number of these situations are triggered by an external situation, and it would seem that joining this technique with a continuous external narrative could produce a new kind of novel.

[40] Leo Tolstoy, *Resurrection* (1899; trans. Rosemary Edmonds, 1966), p.111.

[41] Cf. Os Guinness, *The Dust of Death* (1973), p.341. The problem of whether 'religious language' actually has any real meaning was of course a major battleground among philosophers of the twentieth century.

[42] Sociologist Alan Gilbert, in *The Making of Post-Christian Britain* (1980) cites Weber's remark 'I am a-musical as far as religion is concerned, and have neither the desire nor the capacity to build religious architectures in myself.' 'It is a salient fact', comments Gilbert, 'that the crisis of contemporary Christianity lies not in challenges to the truth of its dogmas, but in the fact that... people in a secular culture have become increasingly "tone-deaf" to the orchestration of those dogmas.' (p.14).

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