

THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT IN THE WRITINGS OF C.S. LEWIS

THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT IN THE WRITINGS OF C.S. LEWIS

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A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy

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Ph.D. Thesis - R. Vendetti; McMaster University - Religious Studies.

McMaster University DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (2018) Hamilton, Ontario (Religious
Studies)

TITLE: The Doctrine of the Atonement in the Writings of C.S. Lewis AUTHOR:
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SUPERVISOR: Dr. Peter Widdicombe NUMBER OF PAGES: xii, 318

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the theology of C.S. Lewis in light of the writings of Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm. Specifically, it looks at the role that justice and mercy play in each of these theologian's understanding of the atonement. It proceeds on the basis that Lewis does in fact have a specific, robust, and coherent understanding of the atonement, and that his theological anthropology and his understanding of sanctification are an outworking of his understanding of the atonement. Chapter 1 lays out Lewis' theological orientation and his method. Chapter 2 engages with Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm on the atonement, and it lays out the particular concepts that were crucial in their understanding of the atonement, namely the justice and mercy of God. It outlines the fundamental concepts that we find in seedling form in Athanasius and Augustine and that were brought to full fruition in Anselm. It also argues that Anselm's satisfaction theory is best understood as grounded in the nature of God, rather than in Anselm's feudal, Medieval context. Chapter 3 examines Lewis on the atonement, and it traces the concepts that Lewis uses to describe and explain Christ's death and resurrection. While Lewis does not adhere to any one doctrine or understanding of the atonement, there is a common thread that unites the various pictures that he takes to be true representations of the atonement. Fundamentally, for Lewis, the atonement is about the restitution of proper order that was disrupted in the Fall. Chapter 3 examines which theories of the atonement Lewis accepts and which he rejects. It also traces his understanding of the atonement to his understanding of the nature of God, relying on the concept of *justitia* defined as proper order, which has its source in the nature of God himself. In so doing, it aims to show that Lewis' later understanding of the atonement is fundamentally Anselmian. Chapter 4 engages with Lewis' theological anthropology and his understanding of sanctification, focusing on the process of "good infection" and how Lewis envisions the spread of the new life made available after Christ's act of atonement. Sanctification, for Lewis, like the atonement, is also fundamentally about proper order. This plays out in his theological anthropology largely in terms of humility and obedience to God. Finally, chapter 5 addresses *Narnia* specifically and traces the concepts of *justitia* and proper order throughout the series and aims to show that, by focusing on proper order, we can see how the series hangs together as a whole theologically as an outworking of Lewis' understanding of the atonement.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge the financial support provided for the completion of this dissertation by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and McMaster University.

I am thankful to my supervisor, Dr. Peter Widdicombe, for the support, encouragement, and guidance that he has offered throughout my time at McMaster. His eye for detail, his patience, and his insight have proved invaluable. I would also like to thank Dr. Travis Kroeker and Dr. Stephen Westerholm, for their continued support throughout my time at McMaster. Their insight and their detailed feedback have helped numerous times, especially when it came to finding secondary sources and relevant information in Lewis' own texts that I may have otherwise overlooked.

I am especially grateful to my church family, at St. John the Evangelist, who have supported me in countless ways throughout my doctoral degree. I am thankful for the support of my family, especially for my husband Jacob who has been a solid foundation amidst chaos, and to my children, Elijah and Zechariah, who have given me perspective on life and joy to balance out the stringency of graduate school.

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List of Abbreviations and Editions of Primary Sources

Anselm of Canterbury:

WGBM: Why God Became Man. Translated by Janet Fairweather. In *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*. Edited by Brian Davies and G.R. Evans, Oxford University Press, 2008, 260-356.

Monologion. Translated by Simon Harrison. In *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*. Edited by Brian Davies and G.R. Evans, Oxford University Press, 2008, 5-81.

Virgin Conception and Original Sin. Translated by Camilla McNab. In *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*. Edited by Brian Davies and G.R. Evans, Oxford University Press, 2008, 357-389.

Athanasius:

Inc.: On the Incarnation. Translated by John Behr, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011.

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On The Trinity. Translated by Stephen McKenna, C.S.S.R., vol. 45 in *The Fathers of the Church*. The Catholic University of America Press, First paperback reprint, 2002.

C.S. Lewis:

AM: The Abolition of Man. In *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*. First Paperback Edition, HarperOne, 2007, 689-738.

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The Four Loves. Harcourt, Inc., 1988.

GD: The Great Divorce. In *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*. First Paperback Edition, HarperOne, 2007, 463-541.

GO: A Grief Observed. In *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*. First Paperback Edition, HarperOne, 2007, 647-688.

HHB: The Horse and His Boy. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*. First American edition, Harper Collins Publishers, 2001, 199-310.

“The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment.” In *God in the Dock*. Edited by Walter Hooper, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970, 287-294.

LB: The Last Battle. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*. First American edition, Harper Collins Publishers, 2001, 665-767.

LM: Letters to Malcom: Chiefly on Prayer. Harcourt, Inc., 1992.

LWW: The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*. First American edition, Harper Collins Publishers, 2001, 107-198.

MN: The Magician’s Nephew. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*. First American edition, Harper Collins Publishers, 2001, 7-106.

M: Miracles. In *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*. First Paperback Edition, HarperOne, 2007, 296-462.

MC: Mere Christianity. In *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*. First Paperback Edition, HarperOne, 2007, 1-177.

On Stories And Other Essays on Literature. Harcourt, Inc., 1982.

The Pilgrim's Regress. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014.

Preface: Preface. On the Incarnation, by St Athanasius. Translated by John Behr, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011

PPL: A Preface to Paradise Lost. Oxford University Press, 1961.

PC: Prince Caspian. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*. First American edition, Harper Collins Publishers, 2001, 311-418.

PP: The Problem of Pain. In *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*. First Paperback Edition, HarperOne, 2007, 543-646.

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TWHF: Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, First Mariner Books edition, 2012.

VDT: Voyage of the Dawn Treader. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*. First American edition, Harper Collins Publishers, 2001, 419-542.

INTRODUCTION

Although much attention has been given to C.S. Lewis in confessional circles in the past fifty years, his work was, for a long time, neglected within more secular academic circles. Until quite recently, and still now among many, Lewis has been regarded as little more than a popularizer of Christian theology. This trend is beginning to change, as both well-established and budding theologians and scholars are beginning to pay attention to Lewis' work. We can see this reflected in the growing number of academic publications that engage with Lewis' thought. Recently, we can cite the publication of *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis* (published in 2015), Michael Ward's *Planet Narnia* (published in 2010), and the Blackwell Great Minds' volume on C.S. Lewis (published in 2018). Consequently, there is much that is still to be explored, and Lewis scholarship is proving a fruitful ground for theological discussion. One aspect of Lewis' work that requires more attention is his understanding of the atonement and its effects considered broadly in his theological corpus as a whole.

Many critics, and even those sympathetic to Lewis, do not see theology proper as Lewis' strong suit: Wesley Kort, for instance, regarding Lewis' corpus, says that "What is arresting and useful lies not so much in its theological content, which by his own admission is rather standard and minimal"¹ and suggests that Lewis is best read in English departments for his literary theory rather than in departments of religion or theology. Many of those who do write on Lewis' theology give little attention to his understanding of the atonement. Will Vaus, for example, in *Mere Theology: A Guide to the Thought of*

¹ Wesley A Kort. *C.S. Lewis: Then and Now*. Oxford University Press, 2001, 5.

C.S. Lewis, addresses a wide range of topics in Lewis' work, from the doctrine of the Trinity through the Fall and soteriology. However, he gives only the most cursory summary of the atonement as Lewis presents it in *Mere Christianity*, saying nothing of the development in Lewis' thought or his depiction of the atonement in his other works, and reinforcing the superficial notion that Lewis rejects Anselm's satisfaction theory of the atonement.² David G. Clark, in *C.S. Lewis: A Guide to His Theology*, draws out the parallels between Christ and Aslan, in *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*, as well as the parallels between *Perelandra* and Christ's defeat of the devil. In both cases, the atonement is a theme that runs implicitly beneath the surface, but Clark never fully engages with *how* Christ's death (Aslan's death in *The Lion*), and the defeat of the devil (Ransom's defeat of the Un-man in *Perelandra*), puts us right with God, for Lewis.³ *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis* contains only two references to the atonement: one in the introduction, when Robert McSwain notes that Lewis "was not committed to a specific theory of the atonement",⁴ and one in Paul S. Fiddes' chapter "On theology", where Fiddes insists that for Lewis, "what matters is the suffering and death of Christ in order to expiate our sins and destroy the power of death, not any particular *theory* of the atonement".⁵ Fiddes notes that Lewis was "impressed by the idea of Christ as the perfect penitent", and that we can only turn towards God and away from ourselves if we are

² Will Vaus. *Mere Theology: A Guide to the Thought of C.S. Lewis*. InterVarsity Press, 2004, 85-87.

³ David G. Clark. *C.S. Lewis: A Guide to his Theology*. Blackwell Publishing, 2007, 56-80.

⁴ Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward. *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*. Kindle ed, Cambridge University Press, 2010. "Clive Staples ('Jack') Lewis: 1898-1963", par. 9.

⁵ Robert MacSwain and Michael Ward. *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*. "Clive Staples ('Jack') Lewis: 1898-1963, "Invasion and immersion", par. 4.

helped to do so, “and this is the effect of Christ’s death”.⁶ However, that is the extent to which the atonement is dealt with, by Fiddes (though he goes into great depth on the topic of sanctification).

Contrary to this tendency to skim over the atonement in Lewis, or entirely dismiss Lewis as a serious theologian, I intend to show that Lewis has a vivid and robust understanding of the atonement strongly rooted in the Patristic and Medieval eras, and that his understanding of the atonement is based in his understanding of *justitia* as proper order, which provides the lynchpin for his entire theological endeavor. While Lewis’ theology may be ‘standard’, in the sense that he is not doing anything substantially new, and he is in large part ‘translating’ (a term that Lewis himself uses to depict the process of taking doctrine and turning it into easily understandable images and analogies) what has already been said by earlier theologians, we will see that his theology is in fact robust and has great depth and coherence.

By beginning with Lewis’ understanding of the atonement, and examining Lewis’ works with an eye to Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm, we can see how Lewis’ theological corpus as a whole fits together.⁷ We will see that Lewis’ understanding of the atonement is rooted in the concept of *justitia* that was introduced by Augustine (though present implicitly in Athanasius)⁸ and made systematic by Anselm.⁹ Since *justitia* is

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ What I mean by Lewis’ “theological corpus” is the body of his work that has to do with theology (i.e. with God). Since Lewis was a scholar of medieval literature, many of his works are commentaries on medieval authors and are not relevant to our discussion of his view of the atonement. The goal of this thesis is to examine Lewis’ writings that have to do with God, and to show how they ‘hang together’.

⁸ While Augustine is the first to use the term *justitia* and apply it directly to the atonement, we will see that Athanasius before him was also crucial in the formation of this concept. Athanasius does not dwell at length on justice, and his writings on the atonement are not systematic, and yet his concern for bringing

“rectitude of order, which has its source in God Himself”,¹⁰ any theology based on this concept will ultimately be rooted in the theologian’s doctrine of God. This is the case for Anselm, whose primary concern is to preserve both the justice and the mercy of God, and for Augustine, who focused on Christ’s defeating the devil through *justice*. While Lewis does not lay this out systematically, we will see that at the heart of his theology are the justice and mercy of God. As for Augustine and Anselm (and implicitly for Athanasius), so for Lewis, the atonement is first and foremost about this rectitude of order which has its foundation in God himself. The task of this dissertation will be to examine Lewis’ understanding of the atonement in light of Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm, and to situate Lewis’ thought on the atonement within his broader understanding of *justitia* and his doctrine of God.

Once this is complete with respect to the atonement, we will then explore Lewis’ theological anthropology. This is where we get a glimpse of how a classically oriented understanding of the atonement, rooted in *justitia*, plays out ‘on the ground’, so to speak, in the lives of individual Christians as moral agents. Here we will see further reflections of Anselm’s thought in Lewis’ work, as his theological anthropology deals directly with the place of human beings within the cosmic order. We will see, in Lewis’ theological anthropology, how sin is a matter of self-exclusion from the divine plan, which is a result

the corruptible to incorruptibility, his solution to the divine dilemma (Given sin, what should God do?) and his insistence that the law concerning death was “fully expended” (*Inc.*, 67) in Christ are all formative for the later Patristic and medieval thought of Augustine and Anselm. Thus, while I am claiming that Lewis’ understanding of the atonement is rooted in *justitia* as it was expressed by Augustine and Anselm, we will see that Athanasius is also a pillar of Lewis’ thought.

⁹ While Lewis does not use the term *justitia* explicitly, we have good reason for asserting its foundational role in his thought, which will be explored in chapters three and four.

¹⁰ Robert D. Crouse, writing of Anselm in “The Augustinian background of St. Anselm’s concept *Justitia*”. In *Canadian Journal of Theology*. 4:2. 1958, 114.

of a stubborn attempt at self-sovereignty. The sinful creature, for Lewis as for Anselm, experiences the wrath of God (what Poettcker identifies as Godforsakenness)¹¹ precisely in the falling out of the beautiful order for which it was created. We will also see that Lewis' solution to the problem of self-sovereignty comes in the form of a healing of the will that allows us, as creatures, once again to fit into the divine plan.

As we examine Lewis' understanding of the atonement as well as his theological anthropology, with an eye to the Patristic and Medieval influences of his thought, we will see that Lewis' understanding of the atonement grows out of his general sense that there must be an objective structure to reality. This is tied into his understanding of *justitia*, or proper order: the world *is* a certain way and we, as human beings, can choose to fit into our proper place, or not. Our 'fitting in' is what reconciliation to God looks like. With this in mind, we can see that Lewis' work, although not systematic, does have an underlying coherence based on Lewis' understanding of *justitia*, which is ultimately rooted in his doctrine of God.

How this thesis will proceed

First, in chapter one, we must identify Lewis' theological orientation when it comes to such basics as his attitude to the theological tradition, his interpretation of Scripture, and his attitude to denominational differences. This will help us to orient Lewis within the broader theological tradition and to understand certain theological tenets that he takes for granted. We will also consider Lewis' method in actually doing theology,

¹¹ Grant Poettcker. "Redeeming Wrath and Apocalyptic Violence". PhD Dissertation, McMaster University, 2013.

as well as his use of genres, and what impact this will have on our analysis of his thought. Finally, chapter one will address the fact that Lewis does not use the term *justitia* explicitly, and examine why that is as well as the grounds for my using it to describe his theology.

Once we have examined these foundational elements in Lewis' thought, in chapter two we will then proceed to examine in brief the theological tradition upon which Lewis is drawing, namely the writings of Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm. While Lewis' relationships to Athanasius and Augustine are fairly straightforward, his relationship to Anselm is more complex. Before we examine Lewis' use of each of these thinkers, however, we must consider each of Athanasius', Augustine's, and Anselm's own views of the atonement and what they contributed to the specific understanding that Lewis defends in his apologetics and brings to life in his fiction.

In chapter three, we will look at Lewis' writings on the atonement in detail, with an eye to how he uses the tradition, which understandings of the doctrine he is making use of, and which he rejects. We will also look at how the concept of *justitia* functions with respect to the atonement in Lewis' thought, and where we can see echoes of Athanasius, Augustine and Anselm on *justitia*.

In chapter four, we will examine Lewis' theological anthropology within the framework of *justitia* and the place of human beings in the cosmic order. This is where we will explore Lewis' understanding of human nature as it was intended by God, as it is post-Fall, and as it could be upon reconciliation to God. This will involve an in-depth look at self-sovereignty and the distortion of reality that a focus on the self brings about,

as well as Lewis' envisioned solution to this problem which comes in the form of a healing of the will.

Finally, chapter five will be devoted exclusively to the *Narnia* series. I believe that in *Narnia* we find Lewis' most mature expression of the atonement. It is here where Lewis artfully combines elements of Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm, showing how an understanding of the atonement as Christ's victory over death and defeat of the devil fits with the understanding of the atonement as a propitiatory sacrifice. Not only this, but in this series of books, Lewis is depicting the entire Christian story from the Fall and the introduction of evil into the world in *The Magician's Nephew*, through to eschatology in *The Last Battle*. Throughout this series, we also see Lewis' most in depth and insightful analysis of sin as self-exclusion from the divine order (i.e. our decision *not* to fit into the divine plan) in various character sketches. Thus, we will see how Lewis' entire theology hangs together, and how *justitia* is the lynchpin of the whole endeavor.

Two Notes on Lewis' Sources

When speaking of Lewis' debt to any given theologian or thinker, we have to be circumspect, as Lewis very rarely identifies his sources outright. There is good reason for this. Writing for a popular audience, much footnoting and citing of references would only get in the way of his writing style. Consequently, in many instances we cannot say how *exactly* Lewis was influenced by whom. However, we can examine the broad strokes of his theological orientation, his estimation of certain authors and their influence, and the particulars of his theology of the atonement and his theological anthropology. In so doing

we will see an author whose work has been steeped in Patristic and Medieval theology, and whose understanding of the Christian story as a whole – from the Fall through the atonement and soteriology – is heavily influenced by the concept of *justitia* that was central to Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm.

Further, although I am claiming that Lewis’ theology is heavily Athanasian, Augustinian, and Anselmian, many of his claims, such as that the Fall was a result of pride, may conceivably have been influenced by other thinkers and writers, as they are not unique to any one of these three thinkers. I do not see this as a weakness in my case, as I am not trying to demonstrate that any of Lewis’ theology was exclusively Augustinian, Athanasian, or Anselmian. In fact, Lewis himself would have rejected a theory or an account if it were, since he was trying to “translate” and defend a “core Christianity”, common to nearly all Christians at all times.¹² Thus, it should be a measure of success if we can say, about Lewis’ theology, ‘Yes, this part is Athanasian (or Augustinian or Anselmian) but it is *also* characteristic of many Christian thinkers throughout history.’

Terminology and Scope of the Project

The purpose of this project is to examine Lewis’ understanding of the atonement, to show that the atonement is, for Lewis, first and foremost about rectitude of order which has its foundation in the nature of God, and to examine the outworking of the atonement

¹² C.S. Lewis. *Mere Christianity*. In *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*. First Paperback Edition, HarperOne, 2007, 6. Subsequent references to *Mere Christianity* will be cited using the abbreviation *MC* in parentheses within the main body of the text.

in the lives of individual Christians as moral agents. I am using the terms “theological anthropology” and also “sanctification” to refer to the effects of the atonement in the lives of individual agents. I am using “theological anthropology” broadly to refer to the study of the human being as he or she relates to God. I will not be treating the entirety of Lewis’ theological anthropology, since this would include too much material and too many topics, ranging from prayer to character formation to ecclesiology, etc., etc. I will, however, refer to “theological anthropology” when speaking of the human being’s place in the created order, and his/her relationship to God. More specifically, I will be writing about “sanctification”, which refers to the process of becoming a heavenly creature, i.e. what happens when we appropriate the salvation made available to all in principle by Christ in his act of atonement. In fact, an entire dissertation could be written just on Lewis’ concept of sanctification. For the purposes of my project, I will be examining sanctification in terms of character formation, and I will restrict my focus to examining how one appropriates salvation and fits into one’s proper place (i.e. becomes a heavenly creature). Thus, we could say that I am looking at Lewis’ theological anthropology generally, in terms of the study of how the human being fits into the universe, and his relationship to God. Within this topic of the human being’s relationship to God, I will be examining the process of sanctification as we see it working out especially in Lewis’ fiction. Underlying Lewis’ theological anthropology and his understanding of sanctification, as well as his understanding of the atonement, is this concept of *justitia* as proper order.

At times I will also use the word “ethics”. When I speak of Lewis’ ethics, I am referring to the actions taken by individuals as they undergo this process of sanctification. There is not room here to discuss the entirety of Lewis’ ethics, and to examine his views on specific ethical questions, moral rules, and the virtues. However, ethics will come into play as we look at how individuals experience the character formation that *is* sanctification, for Lewis.

Two other terms that deserve clarification here are the terms “objective understanding of the atonement” and “subjective understanding of the atonement”. As we examine Lewis’ understanding of the atonement, we will see that what he is defending is an objective understanding of the atonement, against a subjective understanding. Broadly speaking, the objective model of the atonement is focused on the nature of God. In “The Atonement in Medieval Theology,” Walters notes that “[f]or Anselm the goal was to preserve God’s honor; for Abelard it was to propound God’s love. Anselm focused on the objective; Abelard, on the subjective. Anselm emphasized the effects of the atonement on God, and Abelard the effects of the atonement on humanity”.¹³ In *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*,¹⁴ Eddy and Beilby classify the objective paradigm as having a “Godward” focus: the goal in the objective theory is the preservation of God’s honour, in Anselm’s words, or, as we will be framing it, the preservation of God’s self-consistency. An objective theory of the atonement understands the work of Christ as primarily addressing a necessary demand of God. Anselm’s satisfaction theory is a

¹³ Gwenfair M Walters. “The Atonement in Medieval Theology.” In *The Glory of the Atonement*, edited by Charles E. Hill & Frank A. James III, IVP Academic, 2004, 245.

¹⁴ James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy, editors. *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*. Intervarsity Press, 2006.

classic example of this type of paradigm. Anselm places the emphasis not on the moral transformation of humanity but rather on the nature of God and the satisfaction of an affront to his honour. We will examine this model of the atonement in more detail in chapters two and three.

In the subjective paradigm, the primary focus is humanward, emphasising the change effected in human beings, rather than on the satisfaction of a demand of God. Abelard's moral influence theory is the most famous of this type of atonement model. In his *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans*, Abelard asserts that the Son of God has taken upon himself our nature and thus taught us by word and example. The result is that "our hearts should be enkindled by such a gift of divine grace and true charity [that we] should not now shrink from enduring anything for him".¹⁵ The subjective model is focused on a change that takes place in human beings, rather than on satisfying a necessary demand of God.

I will be taking Anselm as the model of the objective understanding, and examining Lewis side by side with him, since he was the first to systematise this model of the atonement, and since Anselm's expression of the objective model is the one that informs Lewis' own understanding – or, at the very least, Lewis' understanding of the atonement fits into the same framework as does Anselm's (regardless of whether or not Lewis was consciously informed by Anselm).¹⁶

¹⁵ Peter Abelard. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2.3.26. In *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham*. Trans. and ed. E. R. Fairweather. SCM Press, 1956, 283.

¹⁶ Of course, as we will see below, Lewis knew of Anselm and had an opinion of his understanding of the atonement. In this sense, he was certainly informed by Anselm. Whether or not we can say that Lewis consciously changed his early negative opinion of Anselm – which looks likely but is not certain – what we can say is that the later Lewis' depiction of the atonement fits into the same framework as Anselm's.

CHAPTER ONE: Lewis' Theological Orientation

What is most certain is the vast mass of doctrine which I find agreed on by scripture, the Fathers, the Middle Ages, moderns RCs, modern Protestants. That is true "catholic" doctrine. Mere "modernism" I reject at once. – Lewis' letter to H. Lyman Stebbins, 8 May 1945

Before we delve into Lewis' theology in depth, it will be helpful to outline his position on certain fundamentals as his attitude towards the theological tradition, and his understanding of divine inspiration and how we are to read Scripture. We must also examine his method and his use of genre, and what he understands himself to be doing. Addressing Lewis' theological assumptions will help us to orient him within the broader theological tradition, which we will need to do before we proceed to examine his own writings on the atonement and theological anthropology.

The purpose of this chapter is thus to lay out how Lewis proceeds to actually do theology. While he is not systematic, and not always explicit, nevertheless we will see that we can recognize certain patterns in his theological corpus that reveal his roots in Patristic and Medieval theology, specifically in Athanasius', Augustine's, and Anselm's writings on the atonement and theological anthropology. Examining Lewis' self-described task, his attitude towards the theological tradition, and his understanding of Scripture and divine inspiration will help us to establish this. Examining his method and his use of genre will help us to understand why we must be somewhat circumspect when speaking of Lewis' influences and his understanding of such Christian doctrines as the atonement and sanctification.

How this chapter will proceed

First, I will outline Lewis' self-described task, which is a defense of a core Christianity. This will involve identifying what Lewis sees as making up the core. Second, I will examine Lewis' attitude to the Christian theological tradition. This section will largely be concerned with the issue of authority: who does Lewis take to be an authoritative source and why? Third, I will examine Lewis' understanding of Scripture. The divine inspiration of Scripture plays a large role in determining what, and who, counts as an authority for Lewis. Fourth, I will discuss Lewis' method, focusing on the dynamics of writing for a popular audience, and his use of fiction. Fifth, I will give a brief outline of the genres that Lewis writes in and what impact his use of genres will have on our analysis of his theology. Finally, I will define the concept of *justitia* and outline the reasons why I believe this term can be applied to Lewis' thought, even though he does not use the term itself.

Lewis' Self-Described Task

Lewis describes himself as an apologist to the skeptic and the unbeliever. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis writes that, "ever since I became a Christian I have thought that the best, perhaps the only, service I could do for my unbelieving neighbours was to explain and defend the belief that has been common to nearly all Christians at all times" (6). Lewis is a strong believer in what he calls "mere Christianity", a mass of beliefs that have been held by nearly all Christians from the time of the apostles and the Church Fathers

through the nineteenth century.¹⁷ Lewis identifies Richard Baxter as his source of inspiration for this idea, when he identifies his purpose as a “defence of *what Baxter calls* ‘mere’ Christianity” (*MC*, 6; emphasis added). Richard Baxter, writing in the 17th century, identifies himself as a “mere” Christian.

I am a CHRISTIAN, a MEER CHRISTIAN, of no other religion; and the Church that I am of is the Christian Church, and hath been visible wherever the Christian Religion and Church hath been visible. But must you know what Sect or Party I am of? I am against all Sects and dividing Parties: But if any will call *Meer Christians* by the name of a Party, because they take up *Meer Christianity, Creed, and Scripture*, and I will not be of any dividing or contentious Sect, I am of that Party which is so against Parties: If the Name CHRISTIAN be not enough, call me a CATHOLICK CHRISTIAN; not as the word signifieth an hereticating majority of Bishops, but as it signifieth one that hath no Religion, but that which by Christ and the Apostles was left to the Catholick Church, or the Body of Jesus Christ on Earth.¹⁸

Like Baxter, Lewis sees himself as an apologist for this common Christianity that underlies denominational differences. While Lewis claims to be a professing Anglican,¹⁹ throughout his theological corpus he does not defend any one denomination over any other. His task is not to help someone to pick any one denomination, but to bring them into the ‘main hall’ of Christianity, to explain and defend that common core that underlies all denominations: In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis describes this common

¹⁷ C.S. Lewis. “Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism.” In *Christian Reflections*, edited by Walter Hooper, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014, 189. Subsequent references to “Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism” will be cited in parentheses within the main body of the text.

¹⁸ Richard Baxter. “What History is Credible, and What is Not.” In *Church-history of the Government of Bishops and their Councils*, Text Creation Partnership, 2008, xvii. <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A26898.0001.001>. Accessed 05 April 2018. Capitalization and italics in original.

¹⁹ In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis writes that “[t]here is no mystery about my own position. I am a very ordinary layman of the Church of England, not especially ‘high’, nor especially ‘low’, nor especially anything else,” 6.

Christianity as a hall off of which are many rooms, each of these rooms representing a different denomination of Christianity, “Congregationalism or Greek Orthodoxy or anything else” (8). Once a person has accepted this core Christian doctrine, Lewis insists that they must choose a room – “[t]he hall is a place to wait in, a place from which to try various doors, not a place to live in” (*ibid.*) – but his task is just to bring them into the main hall.

Regarding this common core, Lewis writes, in his 1952 letter to the editor of the Church Times, of a supernaturalism that unites the Evangelical and the Anglo-Catholic against the liberal and the modernist, and also unites them with “the Christian religion as understood *ubique et ab omnibus*” (‘everywhere and by all’; *Collected Letters, vol. 3*, p.164).²⁰ Lewis’ use of the Latin term *ubique et ab omnibus* may be a nod to Vincent of Lerins, a fifth century Christian monk who defended a core Christian doctrine against heresies. Lerins wrote that, “in the Catholic Church itself, all possible care must be taken, that we hold that faith which has been believed everywhere, always, by all”.²¹ What is especially significant about Lerins for our consideration of Lewis is how he identified a ‘Catholic’ or core doctrine. Lerins wrote,

For that is truly and in the strictest sense ‘Catholic,’ which, as the name itself and the reason of the thing declare, comprehends all universally. This rule we shall

²⁰ C.S. Lewis. “Letter to The Editor of The Church Times”. In *Collected Letters. Vol. III*. Kindle ed., edited by Walter Hooper, HarperCollins e-books. Subsequent references to Lewis’ letters will be cited in the main body of the text, citing the correspondent and date in the style that Lewis used for each individual letter. What Lewis means by supernaturalism is discussed below.

²¹The original Latin reads: “Id teneamus quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est”, i.e. Let us hold on to that which has been believed everywhere, always, by everyone. Vincent of Lerins, “The Commonitory of Vincent of Lerins, for the Antiquity and Universality of the Catholic Faith against the Profane Novelties of all Heresies,” translated by Revd C.A. Heurtley, D.D.. *The Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Volume 11: Sulpitius Sesverus, Vincent of Lerins, John Cassian*, Eerdmans, 2002, Ch. 2 § 6. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3506.htm>. Accessed 04 April 2018.

observe if we follow universality, antiquity, consent. We shall follow universality if we confess that one faith to be true, which the whole Church throughout the world confesses; antiquity, if we in no wise depart from those interpretations which it is manifest were notoriously held by our holy ancestors and fathers; consent, in like manner, if in antiquity itself we adhere to the consentient definitions and determinations of all, or at least of almost all priests and doctors.²²

These same principles could be applied to Lewis' thought as well. Lewis seems to recognize universality when he claims to be defending a common Christianity held *ubique et ab omnibus*, and when he writes, in *The Problem of Pain*, that "I have tried to assume nothing that is not professed by all baptised and communicating Christians".²³ He is adhering to the principle of antiquity when he insists that he is not doing anything new, but is translating "ancient and orthodox" doctrine into common vernacular (*PP*, 550; *MC*, 183).²⁴ When we come to Lewis' debate with Norman Pittenger, we will also see that he takes his common core from what we might call the consentient definitions and determinations of the "great doctors".²⁵

Denominational Differences

Lewis' belief in a common, core Christianity that underlies various denominations helps to explain his view of denominational differences. In a letter to Mrs. Johnson (19 March 1955), Lewis writes that that "I have always in my books been concerned simply

²² *The Commonitory of Vincent of Lerins*, Ch. 2 § 6.

²³ C.S. Lewis. *The Problem of Pain*. In *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*. First Paperback Edition, HarperOne, 2007, 550. Subsequent references to *The Problem of Pain* will be cited, using the abbreviation *PP*, in parentheses within the main body of the text.

²⁴ What counts as "ancient and orthodox" is discussed on p.20 below.

²⁵ Lewis refers to the "great doctors" in *PP*, 590. He also identifies the "great doctors" as a source of authority in "Rejoinder to Dr Pittenger." In *God in the Dock*. Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1970, 177-183. Subsequent references to "Rejoinder to Dr Pittenger" will be cited in parentheses in the main body of the text.

to put forward ‘mere’ Christianity, and am no guide on these (most regrettable) ‘interdenominational’ questions”. In fact, Lewis repeatedly expresses reluctance to pass judgement on any given denomination, saying that “[t]he ‘map’”, that is, the map that helps us navigate the world in which we find ourselves, “can be found in almost any Christian teaching” (Letter to Miss Reidy, 28 June 1952).

Because of his belief in this underlying unity, Lewis recommends obedience to the denomination in which one finds oneself. In writing to Mary Van Deusen (28 Nov 1953), Lewis says that “[t]he Bishop sounds a good one and I don’t see how you can go wrong in following his orders”, suggesting that Mary ought to obey the authority under which she finds herself, even though Lewis himself belongs to a different denomination. Also, in *The Screwtape Letters*, Lewis emphasizes the importance of loyalty to a church, even if it is not exactly what one might wish it to be,²⁶ and in another letter to Mary Van Deusen (28 Dec 1953) he emphasizes the importance of obedience, even under a bad pastor. These examples prioritize the importance of obedience and humility over questions of denominational difference.

This reflects Lewis’ larger attitude towards the denominational question: there is a core unity among Christians, a “mere Christianity”, and while one must choose a denomination to follow, it is like choosing one room amongst many in a greater hall. To some degree, the choice of a room is a matter of preference, and the crucial thing is to be

²⁶ C.S. Lewis. *The Screwtape Letters*. In *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*. First Paperback Edition, HarperOne, 2007, 230. Subsequent references to *The Screwtape Letters* will be cited, using the abbreviation *Screwtape*, in parentheses in the main body of the text.

loyal to the church and the denomination that you find yourself in. This is demonstrated, for instance, in Lewis' letter to Mrs. Johnson on 13 March 1956:

The doctrines about the Blessed Virgin which you mention are Roman Catholic doctrines aren't they? And as I'm not a Roman Catholic I don't see that I need bother about them. But the habit (of various Protestant sects) of plastering the landscape with religious slogans about the Blood of the Lamb *et cetera* is a different matter. There is no question here of doctrinal difference: we agree with the doctrines they are advertising. What we disagree with is their *taste*. Well, let's go on disagreeing but don't let's *judge*.

Since he is not a Roman Catholic, Lewis feels no compulsion to discuss matters specific to Roman Catholicism, which implies the principle of 'obedience to the denomination in which you find yourself'. He also notes that certain denominational differences, like the focus on (the "plastering [of] the landscape with") the Blood of the Lamb *et cetera* are matters of taste. What is important in such disagreements is that we do not judge.

Regarding different services and different practices, Lewis says that each kind, "the very 'low' and the very 'high' [has] its own value" (letter to Mary Van Deusen, 6 April 1953), and that "it may even be proper at times to adopt practices which you yourself think unnecessary, and which *are* unnecessary to you, if your difference on such points is a stumbling-block to the Christians you find yourself among" (letter to Mary Van Deusen, 8 June 1953). We can see here an emphasis on unity despite difference: each denomination has its own value; each may be well suited to certain people and not to others; and yet, there is a bond of charity and a unity that underlies these differences: you may be required to adopt certain practices which are unnecessary to you, at times, if your difference is a stumbling-block to a fellow Christian.

These comments of Lewis on denominational differences and on the importance of charity towards one's fellow believers point to another commonality between Lewis and Baxter. N.H Keeble, writing on Baxter and Lewis on the topic of mere Christianity, writes that "Baxter refused to admit 'as universally Necessary in Religion' any opinions other than those taken as essential 'in the days of the Apostles and Primitive Church.' This is a common enough Protestant principle: what was (and is) far less common was Baxter's readiness to welcome as true Christians any who held these essentials no matter what further beliefs they also maintained".²⁷ This seems to be true of Lewis as well. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis claims to be defending a common Christian core which, we will see shortly, is based on Scripture and the writings of the early Church Fathers. In his letters, he seems to welcome as true any Christians who hold these essentials, despite other differences in belief and in practice. Over the course of this chapter, we will examine what these essentials are, for Lewis, and in the coming chapters we will draw out his understanding of this common core when it comes to the atonement and to Lewis' theological anthropology.

We can say, then, that to a significant degree, denominational differences for Lewis are matters of preference and of interpretation and do not interfere with a more fundamental unity of all Christendom. Of course, not all differences are matters of preference. Regarding denominational differences, Lewis writes that "variations are permissible when they do not alter doctrine" ("Letter to The Editor of The Church Times,

²⁷ N.H. Keeble. "C.S. Lewis, Richard Baxter, and 'Mere Christianity'." In *Christianity and Literature*, 30:3, 1981, 32; Richard Baxter quote from Baxter, *Christian Directory*, I, vi, 322; capitalisation in original.

20 May 1949"). What counts as core doctrine, for Lewis – those elements that are not open to variation – we will examine presently.

Restating Ancient and Orthodox Doctrines

Part of this ‘core’ Christianity that Lewis is defending is its foundation in ‘ancient and orthodox doctrines’. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis calls this ‘core’, this common set of beliefs, the H.C.F., the “Highest Common Factor”, and he writes that it is "something not only positive but pungent; divided from all non-Christian beliefs by a chasm to which the worst divisions inside Christendom are not really comparable at all" (*MC*, 8). Those who have always lived within the Christian fold may be too easily dispirited by these divisions, writes Lewis. In his preface to Athanasius’ *On the Incarnation*, he writes, “[t]hey are bad, but such people do not know what it looks like from without. Seen from there, what is left intact despite all the divisions, still appears (and truly is) an immensely formidable unity. I know, for I saw it; and well our enemies know it. That unity any of us can find by going out of his own age”.²⁸ Lewis writes there of the need to go out of one’s own age. He comments that the biggest danger of an exclusively contemporary diet is that we are often blind to the assumptions of our own age and an exclusively contemporary diet will not correct, and may even reinforce, the characteristic mistakes of our period. "Every age has its own outlook. It is specially good at seeing certain truths and specially liable to make certain mistakes. We all, therefore, need the books that will correct the

²⁸ C.S. Lewis. Preface. *On the Incarnation*, by St Athanasius. Translated by John Behr, St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011, 14-15. Subsequent references to Lewis’ Preface to Athanasius’ *On the Incarnation* will be cited, using the abbreviation *Preface*, in parentheses within the main body of the text.

characteristic mistakes of our own period" (*Preface*, 12). For Lewis, these books that will correct the characteristic mistakes of our own period are the theological treatises of the early Church Fathers. In his *Preface*, Lewis gives two primary reasons for this: i) they are not subject to the same characteristic mistakes that we are, one of which is the temptation to think that "'Christianity' is a word of so many meanings that it means nothing at all" (*Preface*, 14); ii) they have been "tested against the great body of Christian thought down the ages, and all [their] hidden implications...have to be brought to light" (*Preface*, 12). As we address Lewis' view of authority below, we will also see that he takes these texts to have been divinely inspired, to some degree, and therefore can be taken as authoritative.²⁹

In fact, in defending this common core, Lewis insists he is not doing anything substantially new. In *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis claims to be "restating ancient and orthodox doctrines.... I have tried to assume nothing that is not professed by all baptised and communicating Christians" (550). In *Mere Christianity* he describes himself as a translator, "turning Christian doctrine...into vernacular, into a language that unscholarly people would attend to and could understand" (183). What this means for our analysis is that we can expect Lewis' theology to be strongly rooted in what he considers 'ancient and orthodox doctrines'. What he means by this (what counts as 'ancient and orthodox') we will explore presently.

²⁹ See below, pp. 28-30.

What Constitutes the ‘Core’

Throughout his works, Lewis identifies this common core as fully supernaturalist and based in Scripture, the Creeds, the early Church Councils, and the writings of the Church Fathers. We will first explore Lewis’ position on what he calls a full supernaturalism, as well as the common doctrines that make up this core. Then we can proceed to examine Lewis’ thoughts on Scripture, the Creeds, early Church Councils, and the Church Fathers. Examining each of these elements in turn will help us to understand Lewis’ theological orientation and his major influences.

In his Letter to The Editor of The Church Times (February, 1952), Lewis identifies one element of this common belief as a thoroughgoing supernaturalism. There, he writes of the gulf that separates the supernaturalists from the ‘liberal’ or ‘modernist’ and non-miraculous versions of Christianity. This supernaturalism is what unites the Evangelical and the Anglo-Catholic, writes Lewis, against the liberal and the modernist, and also unites them with “the Christian religion as understood *ubique et ab omnibus*” (‘everywhere and by all’; *Collected Letters, Vol. III*). This unambiguous acceptance of the supernatural bucks the trend of modern liberal theology and biblical criticism. Lewis names Rudolf Bultmann as one example of a modern biblical scholar who rejects the supernaturalism of the Bible.³⁰ In “New Testament and Mythology”, Bultmann writes that “[i]t is impossible to use electric light and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time to believe in the New

³⁰ We will address Lewis’ critique of modern biblical criticism and his understanding of Scripture in more depth below.

Testament world of spirits and miracles".³¹ Lewis devotes an entire book to this topic, insisting in *Miracles* that miracles do not in fact break the laws of nature (i.e. that we can use electric light and at the same time believe in the New Testament miracles), and that, while the Bible was written in a prescientific age,³² it is not that the early Christians attributed everything to God because they did not have the scientific knowledge to explain their experiences, but rather that they really had an encounter with the incarnate God and that the images that the early church used to depict this encounter may be unscientific, but are not for that reason untrue.³³ Lewis insists on this point in *Miracles*, when he says that "the Christian doctrines which are 'metaphorical' - or which have become metaphorical with the increase of abstract thought - mean something which is just as 'supernatural' or shocking after we have removed the ancient imagery as it was before".³⁴ Lewis gives the example of Christ having come down from Heaven, in *Miracles*, where he writes that we may remove the image of vertical movement, insisting

³¹ Rudolf Bultmann. "New Testament and Mythology." In *Kerygma and Myth: a theological debate*, edited by H.W. Bartsch, translated by R.H. Fuller, Harper & Row, 1961, 5

³² Of course, we must be careful when making statements like this. Lewis would agree that the early Christians lived in a 'prescientific age' insofar as they did not have electricity and running water, they did not employ scientists to solve problems and educate the masses, and the like. However, we could not say that it was a 'prescientific age' if we mean by this an age where the general populace was ignorant of the laws of nature. Lewis notes in *Miracles* (342) that the early Christians were just as familiar with the laws of nature as his contemporaries were. 'Prescientific' thus refers more to technology, systematic scientific knowledge, and abstract thinking, rather than to familiarity with the laws of nature.

³³ Lewis writes in *Miracles*, "We can suppose a Galilean peasant who thought that Christ had literally and physically 'sat down at the right hand of the Father'. If such a man had then gone to Alexandria and had a philosophical education he would have discovered that the Father had no right hand and did not sit on a throne. Is it conceivable that he would regard this as making any difference to what he had really intended and valued, in the doctrine during his days of naivety? For unless we suppose him to have been not only a peasant but a fool...physical details about a supposed celestial throne-room would not have been what he cared about" (366).

³⁴ C.S. Lewis. *Miracles*. In *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*. First Paperback Edition, HarperOne, 2007, 370. Subsequent references to *Miracles* will be cited, using the abbreviation *M*, in parentheses within the main body of the text.

that this ‘coming down from Heaven’ is meant as a metaphor, but this concession does not mean that God (the uncreated, unconditioned reality which causes the universe to be) did not *really* enter the universe. The thoroughgoing supernaturalism of a common Christianity insists that the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus were actual historical events.³⁵ Even if we remove the mental images of vertical movement, of Christ’s being seated at the right hand of the Father (of course God does not have hands, Lewis notes in *Miracles*, 366), we are still left with the supernatural having come into nature and having redeemed it.

This insistence on a fully supernatural and miraculous understanding of Christianity is part of that whole mass of Christian belief held from the time of the apostles and the early Church Fathers through the nineteenth century. It is something that is central to a common Christianity, on Lewis’ view, that cannot be jettisoned or exchanged for a metaphorical reading that denies the literal truth of the church doctrines and the Scriptures. Lewis writes, in *Miracles*, that the Christian doctrines, even after they have been stripped of ‘metaphor’ and mental images, mean that,

in addition to the physical or psycho-physical universe known to the sciences, there exists an uncreated and unconditioned reality which causes the universe to be; that this reality has a positive structure or constitution which is usefully, though doubtless not completely, described in the doctrine of the Trinity; and that this reality, at a definite point in time, entered the universe we know by becoming one of its own creatures and there produced effects on the historical level which the normal workings of the natural universe do not produce; and that this has brought about a change in our relations to the unconditioned reality (370).

³⁵ We can again compare Lewis with Bultmann on this point to gain insight into that against which Lewis was defending this common core. While Bultmann thought that the historical person of Jesus was turned into a myth by early Christians, who added the miracles as peripheral legends to the central story, Lewis insists that the miracles worked by Jesus *are* the central story, and that they are a part of Scripture to be taken literally. We will discuss this in more depth below, when we consider Lewis on Scripture.

This, in fact, covers the gamut of Christian doctrines that Lewis takes to be held *ubique et ab omnibus*: the doctrine of creation (*there exists an uncreated and unconditioned reality which causes the universe to be*); the doctrine of the Trinity; the doctrine of the incarnation (*this uncreated reality entered the universe as a definite point in time*); the reality of miracles (while not a doctrine, Lewis holds the reality of miracles, especially the miracles of the incarnation, the resurrection, and the ascension, as well as the other miracles described in Scripture, to be foundational to a core Christianity); as well as the Fall, the atonement and sanctification (*that there has been a change in our relations to the unconditioned reality*). While it is not within the scope of this project to examine the details of each doctrine from the Fall through sanctification and eschatology, we will examine Lewis' understanding of the atonement, and sanctification briefly here and in more depth in the coming chapters.

In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis identifies the central core of Christianity in two different places, focusing on the atonement and sanctification. Regarding the atonement, Lewis writes, "We are told that Christ was killed for us, that His death has washed out our sins, and that by dying He disabled death itself. *That is the formula. That is Christianity. That is what has to be believed*" (*MC*, 54; emphasis added). While Lewis goes on to insist that any explanations as to *how* Christ's death accomplishes this are quite secondary to the fact of the thing itself, and that any doctrines or theories are "mere plans or diagrams to be left alone if they do not help us, and, even if they do help us, not to be confused with the thing itself" (*MC*, 54), there are certain things that we *can* say *about* the atonement that Lewis would hold to be part of this common core. That Christ was killed

for us, that His death has washed out our sins, and that by dying He disabled death itself, implies an objective understanding of the atonement (in contrast to a strictly exemplary view) and some element of substitution. We will examine the details of Lewis' understanding of the atonement, how he presents it in his apologetics and his fiction, and what he takes to be part of Christianity held *ubique et ab omnibus*, in more depth in chapter three.

Later in *Mere Christianity*, he writes that,

the whole offer Christianity makes is this: that we can, if we let God have His way, come to share in the life of Christ. If we do, we shall then be sharing a life which was begotten, not made, which always has existed and always will exist. Christ is the Son of God. If we share in this kind of life we also shall be sons of God. We shall love the Father as He does and the Holy Ghost will arise in us. He came to this world and became a man in order to spread to other men the kind of life He has – by what I call ‘good infection’. Every Christian is to become a little Christ. *The whole purpose of becoming a Christian is simply nothing else* (144; emphasis added).

This reveals the centrality of sanctification, for Lewis, in the common core. This is the whole purpose of Christianity: that we should share in the life of Christ. Exactly *how* this works we will explore in depth in chapter four when we deal with Lewis' theological anthropology and the process of sanctification.

So we have two interlocking crucial elements in Lewis' “mere” core: that Christ died for us, and in so doing has somehow washed out our sins, and has disabled death itself; and our purpose now is to turn to God, to “let God have his way” in our lives, and in this way to share in the life of Christ. This, for Lewis, is what unites Christians across denominations, and it is what he is attempting to explain and defend against skepticism and unbelief. How exactly these core doctrines play out, Lewis examines throughout his

corpus. In the coming chapters, we will be focusing specifically on Lewis' understanding of the atonement and soteriology and fleshing out this part of his "mere" core.

Lewis' Attitude to the Theological Tradition

Having established that Lewis sees himself as a defender of a common Christian core that is based in "ancient and orthodox" doctrines, we can now turn to what counts as "ancient and orthodox", i.e. Lewis' attitude to the theological tradition. We will see presently that Lewis' attitude towards the Christian tradition can be broken down into three interlocking pieces: i) his attitude towards authority generally, including what, and whom, he takes to be authoritative; ii) his opinion of Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm specifically; iii) how his understanding of the inspiration of Scripture, and divine inspiration generally, plays into his understanding of authority. We will address Lewis' attitude towards the authority of the Church Fathers generally first, and then specifically his thoughts on Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm. After that, we can turn to Lewis' understanding of Scripture and divine inspiration.

What, and Who, Counts as an Authority?

We can glean some insight into Lewis' attitude towards the theological tradition from his debate with Norman Pittenger, a twentieth century process theologian with whom Lewis had correspondence. Pittenger's critique of Lewis centers on the latter's *Miracles* and on his reliance on the supposition that there is a core of Christian doctrine developed during the Patristic era, which has been held always, everywhere, and by all.

Pittenger rejects this by arguing that uncritically accepting as true the doctrines of Church tradition leads Lewis to the assumption that it is ultimately authority which forms the basis of Christian faith: Pittenger writes, “Lewis belongs to the modern school of thought which believes that if the catholic church has taught something long enough, then that something must necessarily be true, with the corollary that this superstructure will then establish the foundations upon which it is in fact based”.³⁶ Lewis takes up the issue of authority in his reply.

Dr. Pittenger says that I base the faith on authority (which has 'grown up in the Church and won the assent of great doctors' [Pittenger, 1106, quoting Lewis' *Problem of Pain* ch.V p.60]). So does he; his authority is 'the total consentient witness of all Christians from the Apostles' time' (Pittenger, 1106). I am not sure why he calls my authority 'mechanical'. Surely it differs from his mainly by being discoverable? The 'total consentient witness' would be grand if we had it. But of course the overwhelming majority of Christians, as of other men, have died, and are dying while I write, without recording their 'witness'. How does Dr. Pittenger consult his authority? (“Rejoinder to Dr Pittenger”, 181).

This comment of Lewis’ is significant as it reveals some of his sentiment toward authority and tradition. It is important that Lewis does not deny his reliance on authority and church tradition. In fact, he acknowledges an authority: the “great doctors” whom he cites in the *Problem of Pain* (590).

The passage in question, where Lewis identifies the “great doctors” as an authority, comes in the context of Lewis’ discussion of the Fall of humanity. Regarding the doctrine of the Fall that makes the apple in the garden “simply and solely a pledge of obedience” (*PP*, 590) (in contrast to the “magic apple” version that brings together the trees of life and knowledge, and that Lewis holds in higher regard than the obedience

³⁶ Norman W. Pittenger. “Apologist versus Apologist: A Critique of C.S. Lewis as ‘Defender of the Faith’.” In *Christian Century* LXXV (1958), 1106.

version), Lewis writes, “I assume that the Holy Spirit would not have allowed the [obedience version] to grow up in the Church and win the assent of the great doctors unless it was also true and useful as far as it went” (*PP*, 590). We will see shortly that, on Lewis’ understanding of the divine inspiration of Scripture, it was not only the authors of Scripture who were divinely inspired, but also the Church in preserving and editing the documents, and the individuals involved in drafting the Creeds. If a doctrine had grown up in the Church and won the assent of the “great doctors”, then God must have had a hand in preserving it. While Lewis may not have thought that the writings of the likes of Athanasius and Augustine were inspired to the same degree as was Scripture,³⁷ we can be certain that he believed that the Holy Spirit had a hand in the composition and preservation of their works: the interpretation of the Fall, for instance, that foregrounds the importance of obedience, as we find front and center in Augustine, was “allowed...to grow up in the Church and win the assent of the great doctors”. This is why Lewis takes the “great doctors”, i.e. the Church Fathers who contributed to the Creeds and the writings widely accepted into the Christian canon, as authorities.

It is significant, also, that Lewis stresses that his authority differs from Pittenger’s in being “discoverable”. Pittenger relies on the “total consentient witness” of all Christians, which, on Lewis’ estimation, cannot be had, since the vast majority of Christians since the time of the apostles have died without recording their witness. While Lewis claims to be defending a core Christian doctrine that is confessed by all believers,

³⁷ To what degree the Church Fathers were inspired in their writings is open to interpretation in Lewis’ writings, since he acknowledges the role of the Holy spirit in their writings, but he does not explicitly say whether or not this was the same degree of inspiration as it was for the writers, editors, and redactors of Scripture (i.e. whether we could class them together).

he does not rely on all believers as his authority. Lewis relies on the authority of Scripture, the early Church Fathers, and the Creeds, all of which can be consulted. This is what Lewis means by his authority being “discoverable”. “How does Pittenger consult his authority?” asked Lewis. We cannot consult the “total sentient witness”, but we can consult the Scriptures, the Creeds, and the Church Fathers, and since they were all inspired by God, we can take them to be reliable and authoritative.³⁸ While this does not tell us *how* exactly Lewis is influenced by the early Church Fathers, it does support my contention that Lewis is a theologian whose work has been steeped in the Patristic and Medieval traditions.

Esteem for Athanasius and Augustine

Granted that Lewis takes the Church Fathers as reliable authorities regarding Christian doctrine, we can now examine his attitude to certain specific Fathers in detail. In numerous places, Lewis identifies both Athanasius and Augustine as champions of orthodoxy. It is worth taking some time here to briefly examine the most straightforward and explicit references of Lewis’ to these two early theologians, in order to establish their privileged place in Lewis’ thought.

Firstly, in *Preface to Paradise Lost*, Lewis identifies Augustine’s writings on the Fall with the theology of “the Church as a whole”.³⁹ Also in *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis

³⁸ See below for Lewis’ attitude towards the authority of Scripture and the Creeds.

³⁹ C.S. Lewis. *Preface to Paradise Lost*. Oxford University Press, 1961, 66. Subsequent references to “Preface to Paradise Lost” will be cited, using the abbreviation *PPL*, in parentheses within the main body of the text. In his *Preface to Paradise Lost*, Lewis identifies eleven crucial features of this account, the first four of which are particularly relevant for my discussion of Lewis’ own thoughts on the atonement and

takes Augustine as an authority regarding sin and the Fall. Writing on original sin, Lewis notes that “[t]his sin has been described by Saint Augustine as the result of Pride, of the movement whereby a creature (that is, an essentially dependent being whose principle of existence lies not in itself but in another) tries to set up on its own, to exist for itself” (*PP*, 592; citing Augustine’s *City of God*, xiv, xiii). He goes on to explore the implications of this, adopting an Augustinian understanding of the Fall, and identifying our fallen state primarily as a state of the will not focused on God.

Lewis’ other references to Augustine are liberally scattered throughout his work and in his letters. In *The Abolition of Man*, he cites Augustine approvingly in reference to virtue generally as “*ordo amoris*, the ordinate condition of the affections in which every object is accorded that kind of degree of love which is appropriate to it”.⁴⁰ In *The Four Loves*, Lewis writes of Augustine, “to whom my own glad debts are incalculable”,⁴¹ although without explicitly identifying what those “glad debts” are. In his letters, he explicitly identifies Augustine as an influence on his own thought and cites him as an

sanctification: i) if there had been no Fall, the human race would have multiplied until its numbers were full and then been promoted to angelic status; ii) the Fall consisted in disobedience; iii) while the Fall *consisted* in disobedience, it *resulted* from pride; iv) since the Fall consisted in man’s disobedience to his superior (God), it was punished by man’s loss of authority over his inferiors (chiefly his passions and his physical organism). The other features of Augustine’s thought that Lewis identifies with “the church as a whole” are as follows: v) that God created all things without exception good; vi) what we call bad things are good things perverted; vii) that good can exist without evil, but not evil without good; viii) though God has made all creatures good, He foreknows that some will voluntarily make themselves bad; ix) Satan attacked Eve rather than Adam because he knew she was less intelligent and more credulous; x) Adam was not deceived but yielded to Eve because of the bond between them; xi) the disobedience of man’s organism is especially evident in sexuality as it now is but would not have been before the Fall (a crucial element of this being lust).

⁴⁰ C.S. Lewis. *The Abolition of Man*. In *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*. First Paperback Edition, HarperOne, 2007, 700. Subsequent references to *The Abolition of Man* will be cited, using the abbreviation *AM*, in parentheses within the main body of the text.

⁴¹ C.S. Lewis. *The Four Loves*. Harcourt, Inc., 1988, 145. Subsequent references to *The Four Loves* will be cited, using the abbreviation *FL*, in parentheses within the main body of the text.

authority multiple times.⁴² This is all to say that Lewis is a theologian who has an extremely high regard for Augustine, and whose theology, and thought in general, is thoroughly steeped in the Augustinian tradition.

Lewis also recognizes Athanasius as a pillar of Church doctrine and of Christian orthodoxy. In his preface to Athanasius' *On the Incarnation*, Lewis identifies Athanasius as a champion of one of the central Christian doctrines, subsequently held *ubique et ab omnibus*. Athanasius, writes Lewis, "stood for the Trinitarian doctrine, 'whole and undefiled', when it looked as if all the civilised world was slipping back from Christianity into the religion of Arius.... It is his glory that he did not move with the times" (16). Lewis also calls Athanasius' *On the Incarnation* "a masterpiece" (16). If Lewis is defending a common Christian "core" that is "ancient and orthodox", and if Athanasius is taken by Lewis to be the champion of one of the central Christian doctrines held *ubique et ab omnibus*, then we can reasonably surmise that Athanasius will hold a central position in Lewis' thought. While Lewis' explicit statement about the centrality of Athanasius has to do with the Trinity, rather than the atonement, whether this statement holds true for the latter as well can only be demonstrated as we examine Lewis' thought concretely in chapter three.

Lewis' remarks on the authority of the "great doctors" in the Pittenger-Lewis debate, combined with Lewis' high esteem of Athanasius and Augustine provides evidence that would suggest that any echoes of these theologians in Lewis' thought are not coincidental. In the coming chapters, we will examine the common threads between

⁴² E.g. Letter to Charles Williams, June 7th 1938; Letter to Mr H. Morland, Aug 19th 1942. In *Collected Letters*, Vol. II. Letter to Corbin Scott Carnell, Oct 13th 1958. In *Collected Letters*, Vol. III.

these two early theologians and Lewis' thought on the atonement and sanctification, especially as they relate to the concept of *justitia*.

Lewis' Evolving Relationship to Anselm

While Lewis' relationship to Athanasius and to Augustine is fairly straightforward, his relationship to Anselm is not. In chapter three, we will be exploring in detail Lewis' evolving opinion of Anselm, which progresses from dismissal to a fruitful use of the Anselmian theory of the atonement. It is worth noting here that there is no one definition of the atonement endorsed by the church in the councils and creeds as there is one definition of Christology. Thus, Lewis could not point to some specific text that he recognized as authoritative in engaging with the doctrine of the atonement. This may be one of the reasons why Lewis' relationship to Anselm on the atonement was complex and changing, though of course this bit is purely speculative. What we do know is that Lewis moves from an outright dismissal of Anselm's theory of the atonement to a fruitful use of it. Although he nowhere explicitly and outright endorses it in unambiguous terms, we will see that his later writings show a fruitful engagement with the substitutionary theory of the atonement of which Anselm was the champion.

Understanding of Scripture

In "Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism", Lewis writes that "[t]he undermining of the old orthodoxy has been mainly the work of divines engaged in New Testament criticism. The authority of experts in that discipline is the authority in

deference to whom we are asked to give up a huge mass of beliefs shared in common by the early church, the Fathers, the Middle Ages, the Reformers, and even the nineteenth century”.⁴³ This simple quotation speaks volumes regarding Lewis’ attitude to tradition and authority. We have seen that Lewis’ self-described purpose is to explain and defend a common Christianity, a core set of beliefs held *ubique et ab omnibus*. Modern biblical criticism, for Lewis, is an exercise in dismantling this huge mass of beliefs. In examining Lewis’ attitude towards Scripture, we will look not only at Lewis’ suspicion of modern biblical criticism, but also his understanding of the divine inspiration of the texts and his manner of reading Scripture. Lewis’ understanding of Scripture reinforces his overall attitude towards the authority of Church tradition and the authority of the Church Fathers as well as his emphasis on humility in his theological anthropology (which will be the topic of chapter four).

Lewis v. Modern Biblical Criticism

Lewis explains his suspicion of biblical criticism and scholars like Bultmann, Tillich, and Schweitzer, by comparing modern biblical scholars to reviewers of literature. In both cases, the critics attempt to reconstruct the genesis of the texts they are studying. When it comes to Lewis’ own reviewers, he writes that “in the whole of my experience not one of these guesses [about my own motives, intentions, or influences] has on any one

⁴³ Lewis read this essay at Westcott House, Cambridge, on 11 May 1959. It was published under the same title in *Christian Reflections*, edited by Walter Hooper, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981, 189. Subsequent references to “Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism” will be cited in parentheses in the main body of the text.

point been right” (“Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism”, 197).⁴⁴ While he acknowledges that he may be subject to some confirmation bias⁴⁵ in recollecting his critics’ failures, he concludes that, “What I think I can say with certainty is that they are usually wrong” (“Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism”, 197). If this is the case with literary critics, who share customs, language, race-characteristics, class-characteristics, a religious background, habits of composition, and basic assumptions with the writers whom they are analyzing, then on what grounds, Lewis asks, can we assume that modern biblical scholars, who share none of these things with their subjects, can accurately surmise the genesis of the texts, their audience, motives, intentions, and other elements of the authors’ minds? Lewis writes that,

whatever these men may be as Biblical critics, I distrust them as critics. They seem to me to lack literary judgement, to be imperceptive about the very quality of the texts they are reading.... If he tells me that something in a Gospel is legend or romance, I want to know how many legends and romances he has read, how well his palate is trained in detecting them by the flavour; not how many years he has spent on that Gospel (“Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism”, 189-90).

⁴⁴ It is important to note here that this gives any commentator on Lewis reason for pause, myself included. Since Lewis was so thoroughly opposed to critics who attempt to reconstruct his motives or audience or influence or intention, I will not surmise any of these things and will restrict myself to what Lewis himself outright identified as such. Since Lewis so rarely explicitly identifies his influences, we must be especially careful when trying to determine where he was influenced by whom. The purpose of my project is not to prove that Lewis knew x and y about Athanasius, or Augustine, or Anselm, and that he used that knowledge in the development of any specific doctrine or assertion about doctrines. Rather, it is to examine the broad shape of his theology, to show that it is rooted in these Patristic and Medieval writers generally, and to show that his understanding of the atonement and his theological anthropology fit into a framework that is fundamentally Anselmian.

⁴⁵ Confirmation bias refers to the bias we have towards remembering evidence that confirms our hypotheses, evaluations, or opinions, and forgetting evidence to the contrary.

Lewis gives the example of the Gospel of John, insisting that it is neither poem nor romance or vision-literature nor legend nor myth.⁴⁶ Based on his lifetime of reading such texts, and studying them professionally, he insists that,

I know what [poem, romance, vision-literature, legend, and myth] are like. I know that none of them is like this. Of this text there are only two possible views. Either this is reportage – though it may no doubt contain errors – pretty close up to the facts.... Or else, some unknown writer in the second century, without known predecessors or successors, suddenly anticipated the whole technique of modern, novelistic, realistic narrative (“Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism”, 191).

Even if modern biblical scholars were literary critics of the caliber that Lewis wants them to be, however, he still insists that Scripture is not something to be picked apart and analyzed for its genesis, its historicity, and the motives of the author. We cannot gain access to this information, writes Lewis (“Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism”, 198), and in any case, it is irrelevant to the divine inspiration of the text. This is because, for Lewis, the writing, editing, and redacting of Scripture were all inspired and led by God. Lewis cites *Isaiah 53* as an example, noting that whether Isaiah consciously foresaw the sufferings of Christ, or whether he was, on the conscious level, referring to Israel itself, the whole nation personified, makes no difference to the divine inspiration of the text. Because Isaiah was inspired by God, Lewis takes this text to be authoritative in its reference to Christ’s death on the cross. Even if Isaiah did not know what he was saying at the time, Lewis insists that God had used Isaiah in this passage as a messenger referring to Christ.⁴⁷ And so, even if we could accurately assess the author’s motives and the text’s genesis, it would not affect the authority and the reliability of the text. The

⁴⁶ Myth here is used in the sense of Greek myth or Egyptian myth: a fable about the gods or God which did not actually happen.

⁴⁷ C.S. Lewis. “Scripture.” In *Reflections on the Psalms*. First Mariner Books edition, Mariner Books, 2012, 118. Subsequent references to “Scripture” will be cited in parentheses in the main body of the text.

author's motives may have been one thing, while God's motives may have been quite another thing.

It is not only the authors of Scripture that Lewis takes to be divinely inspired. The Christian Church in preserving and canonising the Scriptures, and the editors and redactors in modifying them, have also been subject to a "Divine pressure", writes Lewis ("Scripture", 111), by which he means having been guided by God. This is why Lewis distrusts modern biblical criticism so heavily. Whereas scholars like Bultmann suggest that there is a core, historical Jesus that was embellished by the early Church through the addition of miracles (which did not really happen, on this account), Lewis insists that the entire process of writing, editing, and preserving both the Old and New Testaments was guided by God. Thus, for Lewis, Scripture as a whole is divinely inspired and reliable.⁴⁸

While Lewis is quite clear about the divine inspiration of Scripture, we also saw, in Lewis' mention of the "great doctors" in *The Problem of Pain*, that the early Church Fathers, in preserving and interpreting church doctrine, were led by God.⁴⁹ Lewis believes not only that Scripture was inspired by God, but also that the interpretations of Scripture that "[grew] up" in the Church and gained the assent of the "great doctors" are inspired by God. This would include the Creeds as well as the theories, interpretations,

⁴⁸ Kevin J. Vanhoozer makes a similar point about Lewis' view of Scripture in "On Scripture", in *The Cambridge Companion to C.S. Lewis*, Kindle ed, Cambridge University Press, 2010. Vanhoozer notes that, for Lewis, Scripture is authoritative and, "when taken as a whole and rightly interpreted, it is true" ("Authority and interpretation", par. 2). Vanhoozer's overall point is that, while not every statement in Scripture is true in the same way (for Lewis, we must take in account the genre of a book, and not insist that all are literally and historically true in the same way), nevertheless, Scripture is reliable, authoritative and inspired by God.

⁴⁹ See my discussion of Lewis on the Fall in *The Problem of Pain*, above.

and understandings of things like the Fall and the atonement that are put forward by writers like Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm, and that gain wide acceptance within the Christian tradition. This is the foundation upon which we can see that Lewis bases his interpretation: Scripture, the Creeds, and the Church Fathers. These are the “ancient and orthodox doctrines” that Lewis claims to be defending; they are the understandings of Scripture that were “allowed to grow up in the Church”. This is Lewis’ “authority” that he consults, and this is what informs his own theology. This basis in Scripture, the Creeds, and the Church Fathers aligns Lewis with the Patristic tradition and it gives weight to our assessment that Lewis’ own understanding of the atonement is heavily Patristic and Anselmian.

The Authority and Reliability of Scripture despite Inconsistencies

Having established that Lewis takes Scripture to be reliable, authoritative, and divinely inspired, we can now turn to his assessment of divine inspiration despite inconsistencies.

It is true that Lewis takes the Gospels at face value, as an historical account of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and as an accurate and reliable source on the nature of God. We can see this, for example, in *Mere Christianity*, where Lewis gives us his formula which has become, “lunatic, liar, or Lord”. Lewis rejects outright the maxim popular in his time, that Jesus is not God but simply a great moral teacher.

That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said that 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 and 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 patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to (*MC*, 50-51).

Lewis takes the Gospel accounts of Jesus at face value, and he uses what he finds there as reliable information about the nature of God: in this case, that Jesus is really the son of God.

However, Lewis also acknowledges that Scripture is full of paradox, irony, and even at times inconsistencies. This may not be the way that we would have liked God to express himself, notes Lewis. In *Reflections on the Psalms*, he writes that Scripture “seems, no doubt, an untidy and leaky vehicle” for divine revelation (“Scripture”, 112). We may have preferred that the teachings of Christ were given to us in a cut-and-dried, fool-proof, and systematic fashion, but that is not the way that God chose to communicate and, as we will see shortly, an irresistible and indisputable discourse would not have allowed God to accomplish his goal of our salvation and sanctification.

What we get, in fact, with Scripture, is a human phenomenon – the act of writing, replete with all the inconsistencies and the vagaries that go with expressing oneself in a particular language, at a particular time, in a particular place with its own customs and turns of speech, etc. – that becomes the vehicle of divine revelation. The human elements do not disappear but are taken up into the divine expression. Lewis compares this to the incarnation itself, which “proceeded ‘not by the conversion of godhead into flesh, but by the taking up 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" ("Scripture", 116). For Lewis, Scripture is the vehicle that God chose for divine revelation. He has taken it up to be the vehicle of his word, but in so doing, the vehicle has retained the vagaries of human language. It is not *just* human language, un-inspired, however. Scripture, writes Lewis, is "originally merely natural", but has "been raised by God above itself, qualified by Him and compelled by Him to serve purposes which of itself it would not have served" ("Scripture", 111). This view of Scripture has two important implications for our analysis of Lewis' theology. First, as we have seen, his insistence on the divine inspiration of the authors, editors, redactors, and the Church in preserving the texts, means that he can take the whole of the early church tradition as authoritative and reliable: the Scriptures themselves as well as the Creeds and the writings of the early Church Fathers. Second, the fact that God has chosen this "leaky vehicle" as his method of divine revelation means that we must engage with the text in a different way than we would if it were merely a series of cut-and-dried, irrefutable proofs. How this plays out in Lewis' theology we will explore presently.

Humility, Character Formation, and Scripture

Writing on the reliability and authority of Scripture, Lewis notes that it is not authoritative in the way that an encyclopedia is, but more in the way that a person is: we must get to know it, immerse ourselves in the Personality of Jesus,⁵⁰ allow it to help us in

⁵⁰ Lewis uses capitals in the original.

acquiring a new outlook and temper, and recognize that it may express itself in different ways, through parable, exaggeration, paradox, irony, and proverb (“Scripture”, 113).

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 and temper and so learning its overall message (“Scripture”, 112).

This is what Lewis means by immersing ourselves in the Personality of Christ: reading Scripture is less like reading cut-and-dried proofs, rules and doctrines, and more like getting to know a person. It involves “steeping ourselves in its tone and temper and so learning its overall message”. It is meant to shape us. We will see Lewis depict this process of being shaped in various forms throughout his corpus; the common thread is this: we must allow God to enter into us and shape us into the sorts of creatures who would be at home in heaven. Even our interaction with Scripture must be like this. We must enter into it, allowing the parable, the proverbs, the paradoxes and ironies to shape us into creatures who *fit* into our place in the universe. It is not a matter of learning proofs, rules, and doctrines by rote.⁵¹

Why this is the case – why God uses things like parables and paradoxes rather than indisputable facts – Lewis addresses in both *Reflections on the Psalms* and in *The Screwtape Letters*. In *Reflections on the Psalms*, Lewis suggests that fool-proof propositions may have been fatal to us if granted, and that the Scripture instead demands

⁵¹ We will see Lewis demonstrate this principle in Uncle Andrew and the Dwarfs in the *Narnia* series, as well as in the case of Mr. Neo-Angular in *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, in chapter four. It is there where we will examine in more detail what it means to fit into our place in the universe.

a response from our whole person that gives us a whole new outlook and temper, and allows God to “to rebuild in us the defaced image of Himself” (115). This rebuilding involves, on our part, a heavy dose of humility and deference to the authority of God, two themes that we will examine in detail in our analysis of Lewis’ theological anthropology and the process of sanctification.

Furthermore, Lewis notes in *Screwtape* that this rebuilding must leave the freedom of our wills intact. In the words of Screwtape, the senior devil, Lewis writes that “the Irresistible and the Indisputable are the two weapons which the very nature of [God’s] scheme forbids Him to use. Merely to override a human will...would be for Him useless...the creatures are to be one with Him, and yet themselves; merely to cancel them, or assimilate them, will not serve” (*Screwtape*, 207). If God is to grant us free will, and if our return to him must be something that we freely choose, then fool-proof propositions are not what we need.

Also in *Screwtape*, Lewis has the senior Devil identify biblical criticism and the construction of a ‘historical Jesus’ as a weapon of the Devil himself and his underlings: “Now this idea must be used by us to encourage once again the conception of a ‘historical Jesus’ to be found by clearing away later ‘accretions and perversions’ and then to be contrasted with the whole Christian tradition.... The advantages of these constructions, which we intend to change every thirty years or so, are manifold” (251-52). Encouraging this endeavor accomplishes four things, says Screwtape: i) “it directs men’s devotion to something which does not exist”, for each new ‘historical Jesus’ comes about by suppression of some points and exaggeration of others (252); ii) “all such constructions

place the importance of their historical Jesus in some particular theory” (252); iii) historical Jesus research destroys the devotional life: “Instead of the Creator adored by its creature, you soon have merely a leader acclaimed by a partisan, and finally a distinguished character approved by a judicious historian” (252); iv) no nation, and few individuals, are converted to Christianity by the historical study of the biography of Jesus (252). Regardless of the truth or falsity (or usefulness, if true) of point iv), Lewis’ other three points reinforce an important theme that runs throughout Lewis’ thought: the centrality of humility and the necessity of our submitting our wills to that of God. In creating our own pictures of the historical Jesus, and in placing the importance of any such depiction in some particular theory, we are making *ourselves* the measure, rather than God: we are determining the criteria for what *counts* as historical, for which points are to be exaggerated and which suppressed. Instead of taking the Gospels as God gives them to us, we are setting our will above his and attempting to replace God’s word with our own constructions; instead of entering into Scripture with an attitude of humility and adoration, we are trying to improve on the text until we have a portrait of Jesus that fits the criteria we have imposed. This, for Lewis, is fatal to the devotional life. What we need is humility and deference to our Creator; what we get is the tendency to pick and choose what *counts* according to standards that we ourselves have set. As we will see in chapter three, this attempt to make ourselves the measure of truth, to establish our own

criteria above God's, is the very same dynamic that resulted in the Fall. It is thus fitting that Lewis would reject a method that he sees as so self-centered.⁵²

This understanding of Scripture places Lewis more in line with the Patristic and Medieval theologians than it does with the moderns. Lewis believes that Scripture hangs together as a whole, that it is authoritative and reliable, that it gives us insight into the objective nature of God, and that it is divinely inspired, something to be taken as God's word, and not picked apart for its genesis and its historicity. The reasons that he gives for this reinforce the centrality of humility in Lewis' theological anthropology, and his respect for church tradition. Having established that Lewis is explaining and defending a common 'core' based in Scripture, the Creeds, and the Church Fathers, one that is fully supernatural and takes the Bible at face value, we can now move onto Lewis' method of explaining and defending this core.

Lewis' Method

We have already seen that, in *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis asserts that he is "restating ancient and orthodox doctrines" (x), and in *Mere Christianity*, he writes that he is translating doctrine into common language, and defending a common Christian "core". Speaking on a broad scale, this is Lewis' aim: to provide fresh images of Christianity to an unbelieving or skeptical audience. He does this in various ways, from direct apologetics such as we see in the *Broadcast Talks* that became *Mere Christianity*, to more

⁵² Self-centered in the sense that the modern biblical scholar (or a consensus among the field) is the one to establish the criteria of what is original and what is an accretion or perversion: human standards become the yardstick against which the Scripture are measured, rather than God's standards.

indirect approaches in his fiction in works like *The Great Divorce* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. In considering Lewis' method and how it impacts our analysis, we will need to consider two main issues: i) the fact that he is writing for a popular audience, and ii) his method specifically in his fiction.

The fact that Lewis is writing for a popular audience will add some complications to our analysis of his theology. Our primary obstacle is the fact that Lewis very rarely cites his sources. While this is fitting for his purposes, as constant citations and footnotes would interrupt the flow of narrative or logical analysis that Lewis cultivates, it does mean that we cannot be sure, in most cases, exactly what Lewis is taking from whom. Consequently, as I have already noted, the purpose of my project is not to prove that Lewis knew x and y about Augustine, or Anselm, or any other theologian, and used that knowledge in the development of any specific doctrine or assertion about doctrines. Rather, it is to examine the broad shape of his theology, to show that it is rooted in Patristic thought, and to show that his most mature expression of the atonement in *Narnia* is heavily Anselmian (and that Lewis exhibits an evolving attitude towards Anselm's theology). The best that we can do with much of Lewis' thought is to hold it up, side by side, with Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm, and to note that Lewis was attempting to do something similar to these thinkers; in fact, the broad shape of his theology will be shown to 'fit' into the same broad shape that Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm were all fundamental in crafting, that shape being an understanding of the atonement and

theological anthropology based in a concept of *justitia* (justice, based in the proper order of creation) that is ultimately rooted in the nature of God.⁵³

Writing specifically on his method in crafting fiction, Lewis reflects on the composition of *Narnia* in “Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What’s to Be Said” Although my concern here is not solely with Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*, what Lewis says about his method and motives in writing these books is instructive regarding his fiction as a whole, and, I will suggest, to his entire theological corpus. Regarding his motives in writing *Narnia*, Lewis distinguishes between the author as Author and the author as Man.⁵⁴ "What this comes to for me", he says, "is that there are usually two reasons for writing an imaginative work, which may be called Author's reason and the Man's".⁵⁵

In speaking of the Author's motives, Lewis says that,

In the Author's mind there bubbles up every now and then the material for a story. For me it invariably begins with mental pictures. This ferment leads to nothing unless it is accompanied with the longing for a Form: verse or prose, short story, novel, play or what not. When these two things click you have the Author's impulse complete. It is now a thing inside him pawing to get out. He longs to see that bubbling stuff pouring into that Form as the housewife longs to see the new jam pouring into the clean jam jar. This nags him all day

⁵³ We should note here that Lewis does not use the term *justitia*. This is not surprising, given that he is writing for a popular audience and using a technical Latin term would undermine his purpose of making Christianity fresh and accessible. My justification for using this term to describe Lewis’ theology is that it fits. Whether this is a wise decision will have to be assessed over the course of our analysis.

⁵⁴ I will use the word “man” here instead of a gender neutral term in order to preserve Lewis’ language. In this case, it is appropriate that Lewis uses “man”, since his writing in “Sometimes Fairy Stories...” is autobiographical and refers to himself and not to authors generally. I will also preserve the capitalization of the terms Author and Man as Lewis uses them, since these are used in the fashion of proper names in Lewis’ writings.

⁵⁵ C.S. Lewis. “Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What’s To Be Said.” In *On Stories*. Edited by Walter Hooper, Harcourt, Inc. 1982, 45. Subsequent references will be cited, using the abbreviation “Sometimes Fairy Stories...”, in parentheses within the main body of the text.

long and gets in the way of his work and his sleep and his meals. It's like being in love ("Sometimes Fairy Stories...", 45-46).

After the images came the form. Lewis writes that these images in his mind sorted themselves into events which "seemed to demand no love interest and no close psychology. But the Form which excludes these things is the fairy tale" (46). Lewis goes on to praise the fairy tale form, citing its brevity, its restraints on description, its flexible traditionalism and inflexible hostility to analysis, digression, reflections, and "gas" (46) as winning characteristics. The Author thus had the images, which were becoming a story, and the form. "Then of course the Man in me began to have his turn. I saw how stories of this kind could steal past a certain inhibition which had paralysed much of my own religion in childhood" (47). The attempt to "steal past those watchful dragons" (47), to cast the subject of God and the sufferings of Christ into an imaginary world, "stripping them of their stained-glass Sunday school associations" (47), and thus making them appear in their real potency - these Lewis identifies as the Man's motives.

Lewis' dated image of the housewife and the jam aside, we can learn a number of things from these passages: i) *Narnia*, specifically, did not begin as a Christian text. It began as a story; in fact, it began as a handful of images. Once Lewis had these images and the form of the fairy tale, the "Man" found that these stories could sneak past the inhibitions of skeptics and unbelievers and provide fresh images of Christianity, stripped of the usual associations that may instantly put off many readers who would otherwise find value in the stories. This fits with Lewis' overall purpose of explaining and defending a common Christian 'core'. We will explore how Lewis does this in more depth in chapter five. ii) While Lewis identifies various images, such as a faun carrying

an umbrella and a queen on a sledge, with the “bubbling” that he mentions in “Sometimes Fairy Stories...”, we can also see much of his theological writings, written and published prior to *Narnia*, as part of this “bubbling”. While Lewis does not specifically identify his theology as part of the “bubbling”, and I do not intend to show that this is in fact what he *thought* he was doing, I will demonstrate, over chapters three through five, that there is some development in Lewis’ thought on the atonement specifically, and that *Narnia* can be viewed as the “new jam” not only made out of the images in Lewis’ head, but also out of his wrestling with how we are to understand the atonement.

Lewis’ Use of Genre

Lewis writes in many different genres, and he uses these genres in different ways to express different ideas and accomplish different goals. We can examine Lewis’ use of genre briefly here and lay out which genres will be used for what purposes. We will look at Lewis’ apologetics, essays, fiction, letters, devotional and biblical writings, and his autobiographical works.

Lewis’ apologetics include *Mere Christianity*, *Miracles*, and *The Problem of Pain*. These works are where he sets out certain Christian doctrines and explains and defends what he takes to be the common “core” explicitly, and so will inform much of our analysis. In addition to his apologetics proper, Lewis has written multiple volumes of essays that also deal directly with topics ranging from the divine inspiration of Scripture to his own method in writing his fictional works to the doctrines of Christology, the atonement, and sanctification. We will draw on his various essays as they touch on the

topics in question. These include *God in The Dock*, *The Abolition of Man*,⁵⁶ and *Christian Reflections*.

Lewis' fiction includes *The Pilgrim's Regress*, *The Space Trilogy*, *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Great Divorce*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and *Till We Have Faces*, each of which will inform our analysis of Lewis' thought to some degree. Our consideration of Lewis' understanding of the atonement will largely deal with *Narnia*, since it is this work that Lewis explicitly identifies as a "supposal" of what the Christ event would look like in a different world. *Narnia* is Lewis' most explicit and straightforward treatment of the atonement in fiction, and it is where he draws together the multiple depictions of the atonement that he endorses in his apologetics and his fiction. When we turn to his theological anthropology, *Narnia* will also be a major player in our analysis, although his other works will come into play as well.

It is worth noting here that *Till We Have Faces* also deals with atonement, although it does so in a more veiled and indirect way than does *Narnia*. We will draw on *TWHF* in chapter three, but we must also acknowledge that a full treatment of this work in all its complexity is beyond the scope of this project. Similarly, with *The Space Trilogy* – which deals in depth with doctrinal issues such as the Fall and the resulting hubris on the part of human beings, a hubris that tries to claim self-sovereignty over God – we will examine parts of this work as it helps to inform our analysis, but a full treatment of the trilogy in all its complexity is also beyond the scope of this project. The

⁵⁶ *The Abolition of Man* is not a collection of essays, but rather a series of lectures that were delivered at King's College, Newcastle, in 1943. In terms of the organizational structure that I am using here, it fits best with essays rather than with apologetics proper, and so I am classifying *The Abolition of Man* with essays simply for organizational purposes. We will look at *The Abolition of Man* when we examine Lewis' notions of justice and mercy as they relate to the divine nature in chapter three.

fact is that each of Lewis' fictional works are rich and complex enough to warrant their own full treatment elsewhere. To try to examine and do justice to all of them in full in one place would be to overextend our analysis. Thus, we will bring in *TWHF* and *TST* when relevant, but we must acknowledge that there will be more to say than what fits here.

While Lewis' letters are a source rather than a genre proper, it is worth noting that in his letters, he sometimes clarifies or reinforces some element of his theology that we find in his propositional works or his fiction. Consequently, I will use his letters to explain or to support certain aspects of his theology.

In addition to his apologetics, essays, fiction, and letters, Lewis has also produced devotional works (*Letters to Malcolm*) and biblical writings (*Reflections on the Psalms*). His biblical writings are helpful in assessing Lewis' interpretation of the divine inspiration of Scripture, as we have already seen. His devotional works give us insight into Lewis' thought on such topics as prayer, predestination, and purgatory. While Lewis does not instruct in his devotional works, as he does in his apologetics, he is transparent about his opinions and how he understands certain Christian doctrines and beliefs. These works thus allow us to supplement what he writes in his apologetics and his essays as formal instruction.

Finally, Lewis has authored two autobiographical works, *Surprised by Joy* and *A Grief Observed*. Each of these works are used in a limited fashion in order to reinforce points made elsewhere. This is because each of these works, for the most part, deals with topics not directly related to our concerns here, although Lewis does make some

comments that will be relevant to our topic, but in a more minor fashion in these two works than in his others. *Surprised by Joy* deals mostly with Lewis' conversion and with one of his arguments, if we can call it that, for the existence of God.⁵⁷ It does not deal directly with any doctrinal issues such as the atonement or sanctification. It does, however, make mention of God's sovereignty *de jure* and *de facto*, which is relevant to our discussion of justice and proper order. *A Grief Observed* is largely autobiographical and offers us a picture of Lewis wrestling with grief after the loss of his wife. While it does not deal directly with issues of atonement and sanctification, it does engage with questions of God's goodness, which is relevant to our considerations here.

In sum, it is in Lewis' apologetics, his essays, and his letters where we find his most explicit and systematic engagement with Christian doctrine. In Lewis' fiction, he brings to life the interpretations of doctrine that he defends or explains in his propositional works. In examining Lewis' understanding of the atonement and sanctification, we will consider what he writes in his propositional works, including his apologetics, his essays, and his letters, as well as gather what support for his propositional claims that we can glean from his biblical and devotional writings. We will also draw on his fiction to see how it is that he understands the atonement and our resulting sanctification. Since Lewis does not lay out his understanding of the atonement systematically, this process will involve putting together bits and pieces, as it were, and building an overall picture out of what we find in his various works. In doing this, we will see that there is an overarching framework of *justitia* and proper order, which is

⁵⁷ I am referring here to Lewis' argument that the phenomenon of joy and our unfulfilled desires point us toward our true home in God.

ultimately grounded in the nature of God that informs not only Lewis' understanding of the atonement, but also his theological anthropology and his view of sanctification.

Definition of *Justitia* and Grounds for Attributing the Concept to Lewis

While Lewis does not use the word *justitia*, nevertheless I will be arguing that this concept can provide a framework within which we can understand Lewis' theology, especially his understanding of the atonement and his theological anthropology. If Lewis had the concept of *justitia* in mind, it is not surprising that we do not find it in his text, since the use of Latin terminology would not support his purpose of appealing to a popular audience and translating Christian theology into common vernacular. Even if Lewis did not have the concept of *justitia* in mind, we can see that the notion of justice conceived of as right order is in fact a governing concept for Lewis. Whether or not he knew this term is not the question at issue.

Following Robert Crouse, who uses the term *justitia* in reference to Augustine and to Anselm, I am defining *justitia* as "universal rectitude of order"⁵⁸ in which one recognizes and maintains one's proper station in life. Concretely, for Lewis, this means obedience to God and a recognition of his will as sovereign.

In chapter two, we will explore this term as it relates to Augustine's theology and to Anselm's theology. The term that both Augustine and Anselm use, which usually is translated as "justice", is *justitia*. For Augustine, *justitia* is conceived of as right order through obedience; it is a right relation to God and rectitude of order within man's own

⁵⁸ Robert D. Crouse. "The Augustinian background of St. Anselm's concept *Justitia*". In *Canadian Journal of Theology*. 4:2. 1958, 114.

nature, i.e. it is a proper ordering of loves that loves God first and above all else, and desires goods in proportion to the order willed by God.⁵⁹ Anselm's use of the term justice (*justitia*) is often interpreted juridically, in terms of a legal relation between man and God and a need for retribution in response to sin. However, I will argue that a better way to understand *justitia* in Anselm's work is as right order which preserves the self-consistency of God.

These interrelated ideas of right order through obedience, a proper ordering of loves that loves God first and above all else, and a right order that preserves the self-consistency of God are governing concepts in Lewis' thought as well. We will see that Lewis insists on an obedience and humility that makes God the ground of one's existence and makes God the measure (i.e. the measure, or standard, of truth and of the good), rather than attempting to make oneself the ground of one's own existence and the measure of truth and of the good. Lewis endorses this notion of right relation to God in terms of the Fall in *The Problem of Pain* and more generally in *Preface to Paradise Lost*.⁶⁰ Right relation to God in terms of proper ordering of loves is also a central theme in *A Grief Observed*, *The Four Loves*, and *The Great Divorce*. As we examine Lewis' understanding of the atonement and his theological anthropology, we will also see that the notion of proper order through obedience permeates his thought. It is thus that I believe I have grounds for attributing *justitia* to Lewis: regardless of whether he uses the term

⁵⁹ Augustine. *Confessions*. Translated by Maria Boulding, O.S.B. Edited by John E. Rotelle, O.S.A. 10th printing, New City Press, 2011, 13.9.10. Subsequent references to Augustine's *Confessions* will be cited in parentheses within the main body of the text.

⁶⁰ E.g. *PP*, 592; *PPL*, 66.

explicitly, the governing concepts in his theology fit into a framework that can be described with the term *justitia*.

CHAPTER TWO: Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm on the Atonement

Rowan Williams, in *The Lion's World*, makes a comment about Lewis' depiction of God (in this case, Christ depicted in the character of Aslan in Narnia) that can suitably frame our whole discussion of the atonement in Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm, as well as in Lewis: "[God] cannot break his laws. He is not bound by anything except what and who he is, but that is a real and unbreakable bond".⁶¹ For Lewis, as well as for these classic theologians, the doctrine of the atonement is an outworking of the doctrine of God, and the crucial characteristic that forms the basis for understanding God's work in Christ is God's self-consistency. We can see this in seedling form in Athanasius and Augustine, and brought to full fruition in Anselm.

While God's self-consistency provides the overarching framework within which we can understand each of these authors on the atonement, the details that I will focus on in this and the following chapter are: i) in Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm we see a direct confrontation of the paradoxical relation of justice and mercy in the doctrine of the atonement; ii) the concepts of debt and right order are crucial for these thinkers in understanding the work of God in Christ. In this chapter we will examine each of these early theologians' presentation of the atonement before moving on in chapter three to address Lewis' use of Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm in his own account.

⁶¹ Rowan Williams. *The Lion's World: A Journey into the Heart of Narnia*. Oxford University Press, 2012, 64. Williams writes this specifically of Aslan in *Narnia*, but, as we will see, it is a principle that can be applied to God generally for Lewis and for the theologians upon whom he is drawing.

How this chapter will proceed

First, I will briefly examine the concept of atonement and its etymological history. I will then proceed to examine Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm on the atonement. I will take each theologian in turn, focusing on his understanding of the atonement, especially as it relates to justice and mercy. In each case, this will involve examining the relevant works themselves as well as some representative secondary sources on the interpretation of each of these thinkers. I will examine Athanasius first, and analyse his understanding of the atonement as a defeat of death and the devil. I will also look at the more implicit theme of the fulfillment of justice in Athanasius' work. I will then turn to Augustine and take up the concept of justice (*justitia*) as we find it in his works. We will see that the focus, for Augustine, is the maintenance of justice in the atonement. Finally, I will turn to Anselm's understanding of the atonement. We will see that Anselm picks up many of the strands that are woven through Athanasius and Augustine and develops them into a systematic doctrine of the atonement. For Anselm, as we will see, the focus becomes the nature of God and his self-consistency. We will look at how this works itself out in Anselm's understanding of the atonement. Crucially, I will be claiming that the concept of *justitia* is central for Anselm, and that it arises not out of a feudal, Medieval context, which is a common criticism of Anselm, but rather out of logical considerations and the nature of God.

“At-one-ment”

Before we delve into the details of the Patristic and Medieval conceptions of the atonement as found in the writings of Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm, it will be fruitful to consider briefly the etiology of the word "atonement" and its place in early Christian thought. The term atonement literally means “at-one-ment”, a reconciliation, a making one what was once two. David Brown, in "Anselm on Atonement", notes that although the word can be used in a secular setting to ask how, despite fault on one side, reconciliation can be achieved between two or more parties, more commonly and by origin the term has religious connotations, addressing the question of "how, despite the presence of sin, human beings can be reconciled to God".⁶² So central is Christ to Christian self-understanding, says Brown, that "Christianity has almost invariably insisted that no such reconciliation with God is possible except through the mediation of Christ".⁶³ In this chapter, we will look at how this mediation is portrayed in the works of Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm, and then we will take up Lewis' portrayal of this mediation in chapter three.

P.H. Brazier notes that the word atonement (“at”-“one-ment”) was “[i]nvented in the sixteenth century, attributed to Bible scholar and translator William Tyndale,” and that it “was conceived to reflect the concept in the Hebrew Scriptures of *how* forgiveness takes place”.⁶⁴ This concept is meant to take into account the process of forgiving a

⁶² David Brown. “Anselm on Atonement.” In *The Cambridge Companion to Anselm*. Edited by Brian Davies and Brian Leftow, Cambridge University Press, 2004, 219.

⁶³ Brown. “Anselm on Atonement”, 280.

⁶⁴ P.H. Brazier. *C.S. Lewis: On the Christ of a Religious Economy, II. Knowing Salvation*. Pickwick Publications, 2014, 166.

transgression by and before God, a process that is a simultaneous remission of sin and a reconciliation of humanity to God, "taking into account the need of propitiation and satisfaction".⁶⁵ Not all theories of the atonement use the language of propitiation and satisfaction. However, we will see that these terms are crucial both for Anselm and for Lewis.

Many influential scholars have identified this concept of a propitiatory sacrifice in Anselm with his feudal, Medieval context. In contrast to this, I intend to show that for Anselm, and for Lewis after him, they are terms that have their basis not in Medieval legalism but rather in the self-consistency of God. In fact, as we examine Lewis in chapter three, we will see that he initially understands Anselm in a legalistic fashion, perhaps influenced by interpretations of Anselm such as that of Gustav Aulén, but that later in his career Lewis uses a satisfaction theory of the atonement that is heavily Anselmian, and that he understands it then as one that goes much deeper than mere legalism, and as one that is based in the self-consistency of God.⁶⁶

Before we dive into Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm on the atonement, there are two important points to note regarding the place of the atonement in early Christian thought: i) the mediation of Christ has been expounded in a number of different ways, most commonly in the Church Fathers as ransom, victory, example, penal substitution, and sacrifice; ii) the preoccupation of the early church during the first millennium was with how the incarnation was to be understood (Christ as simultaneously God and man).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ The problem with legalism, for Lewis, and what it means for a satisfaction theory to go "much deeper" will be examined in chapter three.

This means that no attempts were made at formal definition regarding the atonement in the early church. The result is that "only one of the two principal creeds of the Christian church insists that Christ acted 'for us,' and even then offers no guidance as to how exactly this was so".⁶⁷ This is why Anselm's late work, *Cur Deus Homo*, (written between 1094 and 1098) constitutes such a major landmark in the history of Christian thought. Anselm was the first Christian thinker to develop systematically a doctrine of the atonement proper. In this chapter, I will examine what Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm each have to say about the atonement and I will attempt to show that Athanasius and Augustine lay the foundation for the account that Anselm develops in depth and systematically.

A Note on the Use of the Word “Atonement”

Since Anselm was the first to lay out a systematic theory of the atonement, we should not be surprised that the word “atonement” is not used by earlier writers. While Athanasius and Augustine do not use the word “atonement”, they do write in depth on Christ’s incarnation, death, and resurrection. Specifically, both Athanasius and Augustine discuss the implications of Christ’s death for human beings and how the dynamics of Christ’s death (and his resurrection) reflects the nature of God. Athanasius writes on the healing of human nature and bringing the corruptible to incorruptibility. Augustine writes on the defeat of the devil and the release of human beings, the captives. These are both ways of speaking of our reconciliation to God, which is at the heart of the atonement.

⁶⁷ Brown. “Anselm on Atonement”, 280.

And so, when I write of Athanasius' writings or Augustine's writings "on the atonement", I am using the word "atonement" as shorthand for the broad spectrum of ways of expressing our reconciliation to our Creator. Neither Athanasius nor Augustine write on the atonement *per se* (they do not use the word "atonement") but they do write on our reconciliation to God through Christ's death and resurrection, a dynamic which will come to be referred to, in later writers, as the atonement. And so, I am using the term "atonement" somewhat anachronistically when it comes to Athanasius and Augustine, in order to refer to the various ways of expressing our reconciliation to God that will crystalize into a theory of the atonement in Anselm.

Athanasius on the Atonement

Before we delve into Athanasius' writings on the atonement, it is important to note that, while Athanasius does to some extent have an account of the atonement, he does not work out the reasons for and implications of Christ's death on the cross systematically. Athanasius, being a theologian of the fourth century, devoted most of his energies to developing an orthodox account of Christology against the Arians. Thus, it is somewhat misleading to call Athanasius' treatment of the atonement a *doctrine* of any kind, as this presupposes a sustained and systematic account which simply was not there. What we have in Athanasius are some of the seeds of a full doctrine of the atonement, seeds which will later be watered, so to speak, by Augustine and then brought to fruition by Anselm.

Remaining with the image of seeds bearing fruit, we can identify the core idea, the ‘trunk’ of this metaphorical tree, as God’s self-consistency. The two major branches of this conceptual tree are God’s justice and his mercy, the former of which will be dealt with extensively by Augustine and the latter of which forms the crux of Athanasius’ account. Justice, however, is not neglected by Athanasius, who insists that the law concerning death, the penalty pronounced on sinful humanity after Adam and Eve’s first transgression, cannot simply be done away with but rather must be defeated by being fulfilled in Christ and thus being “fully expended”.⁶⁸ Christ’s having fulfilled the law concerning death in his own body accomplishes two primary things: i) it heals the corruption of human nature and brings the corruptible to incorruptibility; ii) in healing the corruption of human nature, it upholds the goodness and the self-consistency of God.⁶⁹

The Divine Dilemma and the Goodness of God

In *On the Incarnation*, Athanasius presents his readers with a dilemma: God created human beings for immortality and incorruptibility,⁷⁰ and yet, as a result of their disobedience, human beings are now subject to the corruption of death. What should God, being good, do? On the one hand, it would be absurd that God should lie (that human beings would not die after transgressing God’s command); on the other hand, it would be “improper that what had once been made rational and partakes of his Word should perish,

⁶⁸ Athanasius. *On the Incarnation*. Translated by John Behr, St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011, 67. Subsequent references to *On the Incarnation* will be cited, using the abbreviation *Inc.*, in parentheses within the main body of the text.

⁶⁹ Where Athanasius writes this and how he understands it to work is discussed below.

⁷⁰ “God created the human being and willed that he should abide in immortality” (*Inc*, 59).

and once again return to non-being through corruption. It was not worthy of the goodness of God that those created by him should be corrupted through the deceit wrought by the devil upon human beings” (*Inc.*, 63). John Behr, in his introduction to Athanasius’ *On the Incarnation*, frames the dilemma this way: Should God “[a]llow death to hold sway, and so seem weak, lacking care and concern? Or should he himself go against the law that he had laid down, that death would follow on from transgression?”⁷¹ The divine dilemma grounds the atonement in the nature of God. Athanasius’ main concern is to preserve the goodness of God, which would be undermined if he allowed death to hold sway and permitted his rational creation to be corrupted through the deceit of the devil. His goodness would also be undermined if he went against the law that he himself had laid down and so should have been lying when he said that human beings would suffer death if they transgressed his command.

The solution to this problem, for Athanasius, is the incarnation and the death and resurrection of Christ. In this event, God takes on human nature and heals it of corruption, thereby solving the problem from the inside, so to speak.⁷² In *On the Incarnation*, Athanasius treats this problem and its solution both from the perspective of corruption (ontology) and from that of knowledge (epistemology), insisting that Christ came to heal and to teach (143 – 147). An ethical element is also bound up in the ontological, insofar as Christ heals the corruption of human nature by lifting the judgement that was issued in

⁷¹ John Behr. Introduction. *On the Incarnation*. St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011, 39.

⁷² In *On the Incarnation*, Athanasius insists that God could not have saved human beings from corruption and death simply by a command, since “the corruption which had occurred was not outside the body, but attached to it” (147) and hence it was necessary that life should cleave to the body as death once had. This is how God is said to have solved the problem *from the inside*. We will treat this further when considering the problem of corruption in Athanasius’ thought.

the Fall. We will now explore Athanasius' solution to the divine dilemma and how it is taken up by Anselm and by Lewis. We will start with the problem of corruption in *On the Incarnation* and then address the problem of knowledge in *On the Incarnation*. We will then examine justice, mercy, and the law concerning death in *On the Incarnation* and in Athanasius' *Against the Arians*. Finally, we will look at the themes of Christ's defeat of the devil and of sacrifice and substitution, using some secondary literature to draw out some elements that are less explicit in Athanasius' work, but that become central for both Anselm and for Lewis.

The Problem of Corruption in *On the Incarnation*

The divine dilemma is the central question driving Athanasius' thought in *On the Incarnation*, and it is the question that confronts the corruption of death head-on. Human beings were created for incorruptibility, writes Athanasius, and corruption was a result of the Fall, resulting in a return to our natural state, which is non-being (59). Given this situation, "what should God, being good, do? Permit the corruption prevailing against them and death to seize them?" (63). That God should abandon a rational work to death is improper to the goodness of God, for Athanasius, as this would betray a weakness in God, rather than goodness, if he were to allow his own workmanship to disappear through corruption. On the other hand, God could not simply set aside the law concerning death, as this would make him a liar. "It was absurd, on the one hand, that, having spoken, God should prove to be lying: that is, having legislated that the human being would die by death if he were to transgress the commandment, yet after the transgression he were not to

die but rather this sentence dissolved.... On the other hand, it was improper that what had once been made rational and partakers of his Word should perish, and once again return to non-being through corruption” (63). Crucially, repentance would not do: if human beings had repented of their sin, and been forgiven, without the law concerning death being fulfilled, then the consistency of God would not be preserved, and human nature would not be healed. Athanasius writes: “repentance would neither have preserved the consistency of God, for he again would not have remained true if human beings were not held fast by death, nor does repentance recall human beings from what is natural, but merely halts sins” (65).⁷³ Mere forgiveness does not address the problem of a corrupt human nature. If sin were merely a matter of offence, and not of corruption, then repentance would have sufficed. Since human beings are now held fast in natural corruption, it is necessary that human nature be recreated in the image of God. Thus, it is the task of the Word of God “who in the beginning made the universe from non-being...once more both to bring the corruptible to incorruptibility and to save the superlative consistency of the Father” (65). Solving the problem of corruption, for Athanasius, is clearly tied up in preserving the consistency and the goodness of God.

The problem of corruption must also be solved from the inside, so to speak. Mere repentance would not recall human beings from what is natural, and so Christ recreates human nature by healing it (143): since the corruption which had occurred was “attached to” the body, so that death had come to the body, Christ took on human nature so that the

⁷³ By this Athanasius means that if human beings had repented of their sin, and been forgiven, without the law concerning death being fulfilled, then God would not be consistent, and human nature would not be healed.

body, “being interwoven with life, might no longer remain as mortal in death, but, as having put on immortality, henceforth it might, when arising, remain immortal” (147). For Athanasius, then, the atonement is not just about the forgiveness of sins but about the healing of a corrupt human nature, which preserves the consistency (and the goodness) of God.

This healing can only come from one who is wholly God and wholly man,⁷⁴ a point that Athanasius insists upon and that will become central for Anselm and for Lewis as well. In *On the Incarnation*, Athanasius notes that only the creator can recreate: being the Word of God and transcendent of creation, “he alone consequently was both able to recreate the universe and was worthy to suffer on behalf of all and to intercede for all before the Father” (65). In *Against the Arians*, Athanasius insists, in a similar vein, that a creature could not effect the salvation of other creatures: “if the Son were a creature, man had remained mortal as before, not being joined to God; for a creature had not joined creatures to God, as seeking itself one to join it; nor would a portion of the creation have been the creation's salvation, as needing salvation itself”.⁷⁵ And yet, God cannot heal human nature from outside, since the corruption is attached to the body (*Inc.*, 147). In

⁷⁴ While I am attempting to use gender-neutral language and refer to “humanity”, instead of “man”, etc., I will retain the use of “man” to refer to humanity when it was used by Athanasius, Augustine, Anselm, and Lewis to refer to Christ. While the crucial theological point is that Christ took on *human* nature, and not necessarily masculine human nature, the term “God-man” is used throughout Anselm’s work, *Why God Became Man*, and thus for clarity and consistency’s sake I will retain the term that Anselm uses. The use of the term “man” in reference to Christ, as both God and “man”, is also perhaps warranted because he was (and is still, according to Christian doctrine) in fact a man (that is, a male of the human species).

⁷⁵ Athanasius. *Against the Arians*. “Four Discourses Against the Arians.” *New Advent*. Translated by John Henry Newman and Archibald Robertson. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, Vol. 4. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892, Discourse II, 69. Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. www.newadvent.org/fathers/2816.htm. Accessed 8 May 2018. Subsequent references to *Against the Arians* will be cited in parentheses within the main body of the text.

order to heal corruptible human nature, God must sanctify the body (*Inc.*, 145) and bring the corruptible back to incorruptibility. Thus, the need for a mediator who is both God and man.⁷⁶

Regarding how Christ brings corruptible human nature to incorruptibility, Athanasius writes that Christ takes a human body and delivers it over to death on our behalf, “taking from ours that which is like, since all were liable to the corruption of death, delivering it over to death on behalf of all” (*Inc.*, 67). As Christ is transcendent of creation, he is above all; thus, all die in him and the law concerning death is undone, “its power being fully expended in the lordly body and no longer having any ground against similar human beings” (67). And yet, being the immortal Son of the Father, “the Word was not able to die” (69). So, through the indwelling Word, the human body remains incorruptible, and corruption henceforth ceases. For this reason, “he takes to himself a body capable of death, in order that it, participating in the Word who is above all, might be sufficient for death on behalf of all, and through the indwelling Word would remain incorruptible, and so corruption might henceforth cease from all by the grace of the resurrection” (69). We see an element of healing in these passages, that corrupt human nature is healed because it is clothed in the immortality of the Word of God. We also see the lifting of judgement, since the power of the law concerning death is fully expended in

⁷⁶ Athanasius uses the term mediator to refer to Christ in *Against the Arians*, e.g. Discourse II, 26, 29, and 30.

Christ. In this sense, Christ fully satisfies a requirement on our behalf, and our salvation comes not as a reversal of the law concerning death, but as a result of its fulfillment.⁷⁷

The Problem of Knowledge in *On the Incarnation*

The first half of *On the Incarnation* treats the divine dilemma from the perspective of corruption. After Athanasius has shown how it is that Christ brings corruptible human nature to incorruptibility, he treats the same divine dilemma from the perspective of knowledge. God gave human beings themselves,⁷⁸ creation, and the law and the prophets for knowledge of him, notes Athanasius, and “knowing the Creator they might live the happy and truly blessed life” (75). But human beings despised the grace that was given to them and “so turned away from God and so darkened their own soul, that they not only forgot the concept of God but also fashioned for themselves others instead. They fabricated idols for themselves instead of the truth” (75). Athanasius asks the question, “Since, then, human beings had become so irrational and demonic deceit was thus overshadowing every place and hiding the knowledge of the true God, what was God to do?” (77) He could not remain silent and let human beings be deceived by the demons and be ignorant of God, for if they did not revere him but rather reckoned others to be their makers, then “God would be found creating them for others and not for himself”

⁷⁷ We will pick up this theme of the satisfaction of the law again when we consider justice and mercy in Athanasius’ thought. We will also see this very same dynamic of the fulfillment of the law, instead of its reversal, in Lewis’ *Narnia* in chapters three and five.

⁷⁸ By this, Lewis means that God gave us our moral compass (our conscience) for knowledge of him: i.e. we know what is good because the good is grounded in God, and in knowing the good, we know something of God.

(79). Athanasius illustrates this point using the analogy of a king: a human king does not permit the lands under him to pass to and serve others, nor does he abandon them to others,

but he reminds them with letters, and often enjoins them by friends, and, if need be, comes himself, shaming them by his own presence, only so that they not serve others and his work be in vain. How much more will God allow his own creatures to not be led astray from him and serve things that do not exist? In particular, since such error is the cause of their destruction and disappearance, it was not right that those who had once partaken of the image of God should be destroyed (79).

Hence the need for the Image of the Father: God had given human beings themselves, created in His image, the works of creation, as well as the law and the prophets, so that they might recognize Him through them. Nevertheless, human beings “did not raise their gaze to the truth, but sated themselves even more with evils and sins” (77). Once the mind of human beings descended to perceptible things, the Word himself submitted to appear through a body. Christ, in a human body, performs works of God, and this is how he gives us knowledge of God. If the minds of fallen men and women were predisposed towards human beings, reckoning them to be gods, then “comparing the works of the Savior with theirs, the Savior alone among human beings appeared the Son of God, for there were no such works among them as done by the God Word” (83). So too with demons, as they would see them “put to flight by the Lord” (83) and thus they would know that he was the only Son of God and that they were not gods. Thus, through works Christ appeared and made himself known to be the Word of the Father and true king of the universe.

While this strand of the divine dilemma is not picked up by Anselm or by Lewis specifically with respect to the atonement, we can note that we see the same dynamic portrayed in Lewis' *Mere Christianity* when he writes about human beings' knowledge of God: Lewis writes that God gave us conscience, "good dreams" – by which he means the "queer stories scattered all through the heathen religions about a god who dies and comes to life again and, by his death, has somehow given new life to men" (*MC*, 49) – the teaching of the Jews, and then finally Jesus Christ for knowledge of Him (*MC*, 49-50). And so, there is a sense for Lewis as well that the purpose of the incarnation was to solve the problem of our ignorance.

Justice, Mercy, and the Law Concerning Death in *On the Incarnation* and *Against The Arians*

Athanasius writes of the atonement within the context of the divine dilemma: given sin and the consequence of corruption and death, what should God do? This foregrounds the justice and mercy of God. While Athanasius does not do this explicitly, this dynamic is implicit in Athanasius' thought, and it will be brought to fruition with Anselm's satisfaction theory. In *Against the Arians*, Athanasius does write that God was "merciful, because in mercy to us He offered Himself for us" (Discourse II, 9.). And yet, God would not reverse or remove the consequences of sin without fulfilling the law that was laid down before the first human beings' transgression.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Had human beings not been held fast by death, then God should have proved lying (*Incarnation*, 63).

In both *On the Incarnation* and *Against the Arians*, we see the atonement connected to justice in terms of Christ's death fulfilling the law. We saw already, in *On the Incarnation*, that Athanasius states that the law concerning death was fully expended in Christ. In *Against the Arians*, Athanasius writes that, "[f]ormerly the world, as guilty, was under judgment from the Law; but now the Word has taken on Himself the judgment, and having suffered in the body for all, has bestowed salvation to all" (Discourse I, 60). Christ has lifted the judgement on human beings by taking on the judgement himself and fulfilling "the righteousness of the law" (*Against the Arians*, Discourse I, 51). There is a distinctly ethical element tied to the ontological element, for Athanasius, since it is Christ who lifts the judgement passed on human beings. Continuing in this vein, in *Against the Arians*, he writes, "[a]nd what room is there for judgment, when the Judge is on trial? Who will give to the just their blessing, who to the unworthy their punishment, the Lord, as you must suppose, standing on trial with the rest? By what law shall He, the Lawgiver, Himself be judged?" (Discourse II, 6). For Athanasius, Christ is fulfilling a requirement on our behalf, in fact *as our substitute*, as we see in *On the Incarnation*: "For being above all, the Word of God consequently, by offering his own temple and his bodily instrument *as a substitute for all*, fulfilled in death that which was required; and...clothed all with incorruptibility" (*Inc.*, 69; emphasis added). Thus, we might say that the justice is upheld because the law concerning death is fully satisfied. Christ does this in our place in order to heal the corruption of our nature and to save the self-consistency (and the goodness) of God. The satisfaction of the law, the substitution of Christ for us, and the preservation of

the consistency and the goodness of God are all elements that will form the backbone of Anselm's theory and of Lewis'.

Christ's Defeat of the devil

Athanasius frames the atonement not only in terms of the healing of a corrupt human nature, but also as the defeat of the devil. In fact, more commonly, Athanasius portrays the atonement in terms of the defeat of death itself, but we also see that a defeat of death is also a defeat of the devil, since the devil is the orchestrator, so to speak, of the Fall that brought the corruption of death onto human beings. We can see this in *On the Incarnation*, where Athanasius writes that it was not worthy of the goodness of God that his creation "should be corrupted though the deceit wrought by the devil" (63). His analogy of the king who comes into a city and thus no enemy comes against the city is also suggestive of a defeat of the devil, if we count the devil as this "enemy" (*Inc.*, 69): Athanasius uses the image of a king who enters a large city and makes his dwelling in one of the houses to illustrate his point about Christ's having fulfilled the law on our behalf and our being clothed in immortality as a result. Such a city, he says, "is certainly made worthy of high honor, and no longer does any enemy or bandit descend upon it" (*Inc.*, 69). So too with the King of all. "Coming himself into our realm, and dwelling in a body like the others, every design of the enemy against human beings has henceforth ceased, and the corruption of death, which had prevailed formerly against them, perished. For the race of human beings would have been utterly destroyed had not the Master and Savior of all, the Son of God, come for the completion of death" (*Inc.*, 69). In *Against the Arians*,

Athanasius more directly portrays the atonement as the defeat of the devil: in Discourse II, 55, he writes that Christ came to undergo death for our sakes, “to raise man up and destroy the works of the devil”, and that Christ “brought to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage”.⁸⁰ Reading this in light of what Athanasius writes about corruption and the divine dilemma, we can say that the healing of corrupt human nature, for Athanasius, is brought about by the defeat of death and the devil, thus saving God’s rational creation from destruction and preserving the consistency and the goodness of God.

Sacrifice and Substitution in Athanasius

While Athanasius frames the atonement in terms of the healing of a corrupt human nature through the defeat of death and the devil, there is also an element of sacrifice and substitution that is less explicit but still present in Athanasius’ theology. Not all interpreters of Athanasius agree on this point, however. In assessing Athanasius’ account of the atonement in Church history, David Maxwell gives a succinct two-line summary: “Athanasius focuses on salvation as victory over death, on the defeat of death more than on the forgiveness of sins, and on our salvation as a deliverance from our captivity to sin, death, and the devil.... [T]here is little or no mention of a propitiatory sacrifice in this narrative”.⁸¹ In contrast to Maxwell, Richard Clifford and Khaled

⁸⁰ Athanasius cites Hebrews 2:14-15 here.

⁸¹ David Maxwell. “The Resurrection of Christ: Its Importance in the History of the Church”. In *Concordia Journal*. 34:1-2. Ja-Apr 2008, 30-31.

Anatolios insist that *sacrifice* is the central theme upon which hangs Athanasius' whole account. Clifford and Anatolios offer three underlying systems or "models" for conceiving of Christian salvation: the "prophetic", the "liturgical", and the "sapiential".⁸² They characterize Athanasius as a proponent of the "liturgical" model, asserting that his soteriological vision was centered on the notion of sacrifice. Garry J. Williams takes this even further in "Penal Substitutionary atonement in the Church Fathers", where he argues for a sacrifice model in Athanasius, in terms of retribution and satisfaction, claiming that Athanasius is a precursor to a Medieval Latin theology of the atonement, teaching a penal substitutionary atonement.⁸³ Since I am claiming that Athanasius (and Augustine) plant the seeds that will be watered by Anselm, it will be useful here to consider the role that sacrifice and substitution play in Athanasius' thought.

Clifford and Anatolios focus on the motif of sacrifice in Athanasius' writings, arguing that the dominant image in his thought "is not so much that of repaying the debt, or withstanding the punishment for sin, but rather the more positive and active aspect of Christ's offering himself in death to the Father".⁸⁴ Clifford and Anatolios sees this aspect of Christ's offering himself in death as a sacrifice made on our behalf: "Christ does not merely die but *offers* his body to death (*prosagon eis thanaton* - *Inc. 9; paradidous to soma to thanato* - *Inc. 16*)" and in this way "becomes a sacrifice (*thusia*) and an offering

⁸² Clifford and Anatolios see the prophetic model as one in which "God initiates a process within history to rectify an unjust situation and employs human instruments to do so" (741). The liturgical model emphasizes the approach of the divine king through offering gifts and "taking steps to avoid offending him" (752). The sapiential model focuses on "salvation as knowledge of God" (763).

⁸³ Gary J Williams. "Penal Substitutionary atonement in the Church Fathers." In *Evangelical Quarterly*. 83:3. p.195-216. 2011.

⁸⁴ Clifford, Richard J. and Khaled Anatolios. "Christian Salvation: Biblical and Theological Perspectives". *Theological Studies*, 66:4, 2005, 758.

(*prosphora*) (*Inc.* 9, 10, 16, 20, 21, 31). In offering his body to death, Christ is not hereby making a transaction with death itself but rather making an offering to the Father (*prosege to patri - Inc.* 8)".⁸⁵ We can recall that in *Against the Arians*, Discourse II, 9, Athanasius writes that Christ *offered* himself for us. Also in *Against the Arians*, II 7, Athanasius depicts Christ as a high-priest, offering himself as a "sacrifice" to the Father and thus cleansing "us all from sins in His own blood". While the dominant motif in Athanasius' thought may be the healing of corruption and the defeat of death, the motif of sacrifice is present as well.

Clifford and Anatolios trace this logic to the context with which Athanasius would be familiar and within which such logic would be self-evident: the context of the Scriptures.

Within this logic, "sacrifice" and "offering" are in the most primary sense simply the means by which one approaches the deity. Just as one does not appear before an earthly suzerain empty handed, so a fortiori one does not show up in front of the Most Holy without offering a gift. For the author of Hebrews, Christ makes the perfect offering because it is not merely an extrinsic and perishable gift but the offering of his very self. Through his kinship with our common humanity, Christ's offering enables not only his own approach but that of everyone who believes in him. The same logic is presumed by Athanasius.⁸⁶

The death that resulted from the sin of Adam and Eve, write Clifford and Anatolios, was "the natural consequence and manifestation of the withdrawal from divine 'grace' that is sin".⁸⁷ Christ's death, in contrast, has the opposite momentum, that of "offering" rather than withdrawal. Considered this way, we can say that the Fall was a movement, for humanity, away from God, a corruption of human nature, a return to the nothingness from

⁸⁵ Clifford and Anatolios. "Christian Salvation", 759.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

whence it sprang. Reconciliation through the atoning sacrifice of Christ is, in contrast, a healing of human nature, a movement towards God and towards the true ground of life. How this was brought about has been outlined above, with Christ bringing incorruption/immortality, knowledge, and a lifting of the penalty, where there was once corruption/death, ignorance, and judgement.

Another proponent of the sacrifice model, this time in terms of retribution and satisfaction, is Garry J. Williams. Williams, in "Penal substitutionary atonement in the Church Fathers," aims to show that Athanasius (and other Church Fathers) does teach penal substitutionary atonement, against those that see Athanasius as a non- or anti-retributivist.⁸⁸ Williams identifies three key elements of a penal doctrine: i) retributive justice (the punishment deserved by sin from God); ii) element of desert; iii) satisfaction: "If a writer teaches that Christ effectively dealt with the penalty of sin deserved from God when he died bearing it, then he is teaching that his death made satisfaction".⁸⁹

In *On the Incarnation*, Williams claims that Athanasius uses both a legal framework and a medical framework for understanding the atonement, "set[ting] out a double necessity in his soteriology: the need is for both the removal of the legal debt of death, and the bringing of life and incorruption".⁹⁰ We have already examined the so-called medical framework in terms of Christ's healing of a corrupt human nature, and the so-called legal framework in terms of the fulfillment of the law concerning death in Christ. Williams uses the latter element especially to support his claim that we find a penal

⁸⁸ A penal substitutionary account of the atonement portrays Christ as having accepted a penalty on our behalf.

⁸⁹ Gary J. Williams. "Penal Substitutionary atonement", 196.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 204.

substitutionary theory in Athanasius' thought, claiming that the bringing of incorruptibility from Christ to his people, and a restoration or renewal of the image of God in human nature, are a result of the satisfaction of a legal debt. Attributing the notion of satisfaction of a legal debt to Athanasius is not ungrounded. In *Against the Arians*, Discourse II, 66, Athanasius speaks of Christ "paying the debt in our stead".

We can ask, however, whether the notion of the fulfillment of the law concerning death in Christ, and the mention of his paying our debt, is sufficient to categorize Athanasius' theory as one of penal substitution. Williams claims that "Athanasius is emphatic that the Word did not bypass the legal liability of the creature, as if it were simply displaced by a new system of restorative justice".⁹¹ Certainly, we see an element of Christ bearing a punishment that we deserve, and in so doing lifting the judgement on us because the law has been fully expended. In this sense, Christ's death fully satisfied the law, and so we have something of a satisfaction theory. Crucially, for Athanasius, the law must be fulfilled and not just set aside, in order not to infringe upon the immutability and the goodness of God.

Of course, we do not find a fully worked-out satisfaction theory in Athanasius, nor should we expect to, given that his focus was on Christology and defending the full divinity of Christ against the Arians. We do not find a fully worked out theory of any kind in Athanasius, though we do find certain elements of an atonement theory that will be nurtured into a fully worked-out theory by later thinkers. As we can see, there are the seeds of sacrifice, satisfaction, and even debt repayment in Athanasius' thought, along

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 207.

with more explicit themes of the healing of corruption and the defeat of death and the devil. We will see each of these themes nurtured by Lewis, and we will see the satisfaction theory made explicit and systematized by Anselm who brings together the elements of the self-consistency of God, the manhood and divinity of Christ, and the fulfillment of the law concerning death in the service of a full substitutionary and satisfaction theory.

Augustine, *On the Trinity* and *City of God*

In Augustine's treatment of the atonement, the emphasis is on the justice of God. Augustine refers both to the Fall and our reconciliation to God in terms of justice. This key concept of justice, or *justitia* in the original Latin, is grounded in the notion of the divine ordering of the world. Robert Crouse, in "The Augustinian background of St. Anselm's concept *Justitia*", describes this divine ordering clearly and succinctly as God's "right ordering of all things which prescribes man's place in the hierarchy of created beings, judges his defection, and effects his reconciliation".⁹² This notion of divine ordering will be crucial for Anselm and for Lewis, and it is the concept that I am claiming forms the backbone of Lewis' own theology, specifically his understanding of the atonement. Consequently, as we examine Augustine on the atonement, we will draw out this concept of *justitia* and place it in the overall context of Augustine's thought, which portrays the atonement as a restoration of right order, which puts justice first and power second in the economy of salvation. Augustine describes this process of reconciliation, or

⁹² Robert D. Crouse. "The Augustinian background", 114.

restoration, in terms of mediation, debt, sacrifice, and right order, and brings these concepts together in his depiction of Christ's defeat of the devil, which depicts dramatically the restoration of proper order, lost in the Fall, and humanity's consequent salvation and purification.

Before we dive into Augustine's thought on the atonement, we must note that Augustine, like Athanasius, did not have a fully worked out doctrine of the atonement. He did, however, have much to say about our reconciliation to God and our liberation from our fallen state through Christ. Much of this can be found in Augustine's *On the Trinity* and *City of God*, though additional references to *justitia* with respect to the Fall and the atonement are scattered throughout his writings. I will be focusing on Augustine's use of the term *justitia* to describe the atonement, and its foundation in the concept of proper order, as it is the key concept for Augustine on this topic, and it is picked up and developed further by Anselm and, later, Lewis.

We will begin our examination of Augustine by defining *justitia* in his thought. We will then look at how *justitia* was lost in the Fall, and how it is restored in Christ's act of atonement, which Augustine depicts as the defeat of the devil. This will include a consideration of Augustine's use of the concept of debt and what it is that we owe both to God and to the devil. We will examine the concepts of mediation and sacrifice, and pinpoint how they relate to justice, for Augustine. Finally, we will consider how Augustine's understanding of the atonement connects to the nature of God.

Definition of *Justitia* in Augustine's Thought

Augustine defines both the Fall and the atonement in terms of justice (*justitia*). Underlying Augustine's concept of *justitia* is the notion of a divine ordering of the world. Augustine notes that human beings were created "such that if they continued in perfect obedience they would be granted the immortality of the angels and an eternity of bliss, without the interposition of death, whereas if disobedient they would be justly condemned to the punishment of death".⁹³ Such obedience respects the divine ordering of the world where God is sovereign Creator and dependent creatures are subject to his will. In *The City of God*, Augustine links obedience to proper order when he writes that the devil "refused to be subject to his creator, and in his arrogance supposed that he wielded power as his own private possession and rejoiced in that power. And thus he was both deceived and deceiving, because no one can escape the power of the Omnipotent. He has refused to accept reality and in his arrogant pride presumes to counterfeit an unreality" (XI.13). That *unreality* to which Augustine refers is the notion that one can live by one's own standard of truth (*City of God*, XIV.4), that we, as dependent creatures, can be sovereign unto ourselves, so to speak; that we wield our own power (*City of God*, XI.13). It is a "perverse kind of exaltation" (*City of God*, XIV.13) that abandons God as the basis of our own existence and places our own wills above his, which happens "when he deserts that changeless God in which, rather than in himself, he ought to have found his satisfaction" (*City of God*, XIV.13). Obedience, on the other hand, preserves right order and accepts the reality of our position as creatures.

⁹³ Augustine. *City of God*. Translated by Henry Bettenson. Penguin Books, 2003, XIII.1. Subsequent references to Augustine's *City of God* will be cited in parentheses within the main body of the text.

If the Fall is about the disruption of proper order, for Augustine, then the atonement is about its restoration. Augustine makes this clear in *On the Trinity* when he writes that Christ had defeated the devil “at the justice game, not the power game, so that men too might imitate Christ by seeking to beat the devil at the justice game, not the power game. Not that power is to be shunned as something bad, but that the right order must be preserved which puts justice first”.⁹⁴ We will explore exactly how Christ beats the devil “at the justice game” shortly. For now, we can note that Christ *restores* the condition of justice on man’s side: In *On the Trinity*, Augustine writes that,

to contemplate God, which by nature we are not, we would have to be cleansed by him who became what by nature we are and what by sin we are not. By nature we are not God; by nature we are men; by sin we are not just. So God became a just man to intercede with God for sinful man. The sinner did not match the just, but the man did match the man. So he applied to us the similarity of his humanity to take away the dissimilarity of our iniquity, and becoming a partaker of our mortality he made us the partakers of his divinity. It was surely right that the death of the sinner issuing from the stern necessity of condemnation should be undone by the death of the just man issuing from the voluntary freedom of mercy (IV.4).

Christ, being the sinless man, could match our humanity, and take away our iniquity. In this way he acts as a mediator and restores justice to fallen humanity.

While Augustine is not systematic in dealing with the atonement, the notions of justice and of right order are scattered throughout his works and characterize his thought on the matter. Right order is characterised by dependent creatures accepting their status *as* dependent creatures, and not trying to usurp the position of their creator and wield their own power as though it was their own possession.

⁹⁴ Augustine. *On the Trinity*. Translated by Stephen McKenna, C.S.S.R., vol. 45 in *The Fathers of the Church*. The Catholic University of America Press, First paperback reprint, 2002, XIII.17. Subsequent references to Augustine’s *On the Trinity* will be cited in parentheses within the main body of the text.

Right order is also characterised by the proper ordering of loves, which goes hand in hand with accepting our position as dependent creatures. In *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, Augustine identifies justice as love. Justice, he says, is “the love of God and neighbour, which is diffused through all the others [virtues]”.⁹⁵ Regarding the proper ordering of love, Augustine in *City of God* identifies an order of love which imparts a hierarchy of goods established by God as objects of love and desire; and there he identifies virtue as “rightly ordered love” (XV.22). Sin in contrast, is a disruption of this order whereby human beings love their own will(s) above God’s. This disruption of right order leads, as a consequence, to a disorder *within* the human being herself.⁹⁶ This disordered state can only be rectified by Christ’s death on the cross, which restores order to creation and brings about the purification of the corrupt human being. We can see, then, how justice is built upon a foundation of right order, for Augustine; this right order is a proper ordering of loves which prescribes the human being’s proper place in the created order.

We will now examine justice and right order in depth as we find them in Augustine’s conception of the Fall and the atonement.

***Justitia* Lost in the Fall**

⁹⁵ Augustine. *Eighty-Three Different Questions*. Translated by David L. Mosher, in *Fathers of the Church* vol. 70. Catholic University of America Press, 1982, 61.4. Subsequent references to Augustine’s *Eighty-Three Different Questions* will be cited in parentheses within the main body of the text.

⁹⁶ The topic of the consequence of the Fall being disorder within the human being himself will be examined in more detail below.

We can say that justice, for Augustine, as right relation to God, is rectitude of order within a human being's own nature, i.e. it is a proper ordering of loves that loves God first and above all else, and desires other goods in proportion to the order willed by God. This is the state in which the human being was created, described as *justitia*, and this is what s/he lost by sinning.

The original evil, whereby humanity lost *justitia*, says Augustine, is that of pride: "man regards himself as his own light, and turns away from that light which would make man himself a light if he would set his heart on it" (*City of God*, XIV.15). This perverse kind of exaltation was present in the first humans before the devil tempted them to sin, since "the Devil would not have entrapped man by the obvious and open sin of doing what God had forbidden, had not man already started to please himself" (*City of God*, XIV.15). Instead of making God the ground of his existence and making God the measure, the human being rebels and attempts to make himself the ground, to wield his own power as though it were his possession. This is the original sin of pride: the desire to exalt oneself above the Creator God. As we have already noted, this disrupts the divine ordering of the world and it is, at its core, a refusal to accept reality.

Augustine insists that what follows this original sin of pride and disobedience was a just punishment.

Therefore it was a just punishment that followed, and the condemnation was of such a kind that man who would have become spiritual even in his flesh, by observing the command, became carnal even in his mind; and he who in his pride had pleased himself was by God's justice handed over to himself (*City of God*, XIV.15).

For Augustine, death is a just punishment for sin. God's warning to human beings, in the Garden, that "on the day that you eat from that tree you will die by the death" Augustine takes to be "tantamount to saying, 'On the day that you forsake me in disobedience, I shall forsake you with justice'" (*City of God*, XIV.15). The human being was thus handed over to himself and enslaved under the devil, and human nature was "changed...for the worse" (*City of God*, XIII.3). The punishment for this disobedience to God was simply disobedience itself: after the Fall, after the original transgression and the corruption of human nature, neither the human being's body nor his mind obeyed his will.⁹⁷ "For man's wretchedness is nothing but his own disobedience to himself, so that because he would not do what he could, he now wills to do what he cannot" (*City of God*, XIV.15). His very mind and even his flesh do not submit to his will: "through the justice of God, who is our Lord and master and whom we refused to serve as his subjects, our flesh, which had been subject to us, now gives us trouble through its non-compliance" (*City of God*, XIV.15). One way in which this punishment of disobedience displays itself is through bodily death: the human being's body, which would have remained immortal if he had remained obedient to God, now disobeys his will to live and his desire to remain exempt from death. Augustine notes that "no man lives as he wishes, unless he is happy; and no man is happy, unless he is righteous. But even the righteous man himself will not live the life he wishes unless he reaches that state where he is wholly exempt from death, deception, and distress, and has the assurance that he will for ever be exempt" (*City of*

⁹⁷ Augustine notes that it is not only our bodies that are disobedient to our wills, but also our emotions and desires – Augustine says our "mind[s]" (XIV.15). By this he means that human beings sometimes have desires or emotions that they wish they did not. He cites anger (XIV.15) and lust (XIV.16) as examples.

God, XIV.25). We are thus left in this unhappy state where we desire a happiness which is forever unattainable in this present life.

Once he finds himself in this unhappy state, humankind cannot rectify its own situation. Humanity cannot restore order on its own. Having lost, by its defection in Adam, the justice originally granted him by God, humanity “cannot give itself the justice which it lost and no longer has” (*On the Trinity*, XIV.21). Crouse notes of this dynamic that “it is impossible for [man] to restore rectitude of order in his relation to God, and within his own nature. Mankind can offer to God no pure offering in propitiation”.⁹⁸

It is Christ himself who is the most suitable means of freeing us from this unhappy state by taking on a human body and submitting to death on our behalf so that we may be set free from the power of the devil and the second and everlasting death.⁹⁹ God himself, in his mercy, effects reconciliation through Christ the Mediator between the human being and God (*City of God*, X.20). Christ takes pure humanity from the Virgin and becomes both priest and victim. He offers himself as “a pure sacrifice, *hostia immaculata*” (Crouse, 118),¹⁰⁰ and by his justice breaks humanity's bondage to the devil, fulfilling the requirements of divine *justitia*. How this “pure sacrifice” breaks humanity’s bondage to the devil we will examine presently.

***Justitia* Restored in the Atonement through Christ’s Defeat of the Devil**

⁹⁸ Robert D. Crouse. “The Augustinian background”, 118.

⁹⁹ Augustine defines the “first death” as the death of the body, which occurs when the soul abandons the body; and the “second death” as the death of the soul, which occurs when God abandons the soul. *City of God*, XIII.2, XIII.24; *On The Trinity*, IV.5.

¹⁰⁰ E.g. *City of God*, X.20.

Augustine depicts the atonement in terms of Christ's defeat of the devil, and within this narrative we can see elements of justice and right order play foundational roles. In his thesis "Redeeming Wrath and Apocalyptic Violence", Poettcker notes that "In Augustine's *De Trinitate*, the incarnation of the Son and Christ's Passion are to be understood as an interruption of the devil's lordship".¹⁰¹ After the first transgression, which was a wilful forsaking of God, God told the serpent, *you shall eat earth*;¹⁰² and he told the humans, *into earth you shall go*, which refers to bodily death, and *earth you are*, meaning that human nature is changed for the worse.¹⁰³ He thus handed humanity over to the devil. God did not order this, Augustine notes, but permitted it, justly, when he withdrew from the sinner and the author of sin marched in (*On the Trinity*, XIII.16). "By a kind of divine justice the human race was handed over to the power of the devil for the sin of the first man" (*On the Trinity*, XIII.16). Sin, we might say, disrupted the order of the universe as concerns humanity itself. A proper ordering of loves puts God above all. In the Fall, as a result of her free will, the human being turned from God and placed her own will above that of God. This disruption of right order resulted in further disorder within the human being herself, a disorder of her desires and her will. Humanity cannot restore order on its own since it cannot give itself the justice which it had lost. So, Christ restores order and saves humanity from its unhappy condition.

How this happens Augustine describes in Book IV of *On the Trinity* when he writes that in the atonement, the devil, a lover of power and deserter of justice, is

¹⁰¹ Grant Poettcker. "Redeeming Wrath and Apocalyptic Violence," 18.

¹⁰² Augustine, *On the Trinity*, XIII.12, citing Genesis 3.14.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, citing Genesis 3.19.

overcome primarily by God's justice and only secondarily by his power, i.e. it was justice that defeated the devil and not an unjust or amoral display of power; rather, it was power guided by justice. For human beings, death was a punishment for sin. Since Christ was sinless (and thus undeserving of death), and yet the devil killed him, "without him being in his debt", it was "perfectly just that he should let the debtors go free" (*On the Trinity* XIII.17). We can say, then, that Christ's death, since he was without sin, paid the price for our sins. As our death is the just punishment for the crime of forsaking God (we are handed over to the devil), so the devil's rights over humanity are cancelled by the unjust death of Christ.

In this context, the debt that we owe is a debt of death, owed to the devil. Death is owed by those who are guilty of sin: "the devil deservedly held those whom he had bound by the condition of death as guilty of sin" (*On the Trinity*, XIII.19). In Book IV of *On the Trinity*, Augustine writes of Christ's conflict with the devil and our consequent reconciliation to God through Christ. There, he insists that, "we have come to death through sin, He through justice; and, therefore, while our death is the punishment for sin, His death was a victim of propitiation for sin" (IV.15). The devil had rights over humankind, says Augustine, which were cancelled by the unjust death of Christ: "in being slain in his innocence by the wicked one, who was acting against us as it were with just rights, he won the case against him with the justest of all rights...and delivered us from the captivity we justly endured for sin, and by his just blood unjustly shed *cancelled the I.O.U.* (Col 2:14) of death, and justified and redeemed sinners" (IV.17). This, writes Augustine, is how we are said to be justified in the blood of Christ: Christ died for us, "to

pay for us debtors the debt he did not own himself" (*On the Trinity* XIII.18). Since Christ was unjustly killed by the devil, the devil was made to release those whom he justly held under his power. This preserves right order, which puts justice first and power second, and restores to humanity the condition of justice which they had lost in the Fall (*On the Trinity*, XIII. 17).

In order to pay our debt, Augustine insists that Christ had to be both God and man: "Unless he had been man he could not have been killed; unless he had been God no one would have believed he did not want to do what he could do, but they would simply have thought that he could not do what he wanted to; nor would we have imagined that he was preferring justice to power, but simply that he lacked the power" (*On the Trinity*, XIV.18). Unless he had been human, also, he could not have paid the debt which *we* owe. And unless he had been God, he would not have had the power to overcome the devil and release the captives.

It is not only death which is owed, in some sense, by humanity. We also owe to God obedience. Obedience to God maintains *justitia* since it recognizes our proper place as creatures dependent upon our Creator. It was through disobedience that we came to owe death to the devil; it was through obedience unto death that Christ conquered the devil and set us free (*City of God*, XIV.15). Thus, we can say that Christ, in his obedience to God as man reconciles us to God by restoring the condition of justice on humanity's side. Christ is obedient unto death and that death, the unjust killing of Christ by the devil, results in humanity, the debtors, being justly set free.

True Knowledge of God

As with Athanasius, so too with Augustine, knowledge plays a role in the Fall and the atonement. In *On Order*, Augustine writes that order is that which will lead us to God (1.9.27).¹⁰⁴ Joanne McWilliam, writing of Augustine, notes that “[t]he ability to perceive the divine order is achieved through that spiritual and intellectual discipline which leads to knowledge of self and of the spiritual world”.¹⁰⁵ While justice and the restoration of proper order cover the ethical and ontological issues for Augustine, there is still the issue of the epistemological problem created in the Fall and its solution in Christ.

The death and resurrection of Christ, for Augustine, is both a sacrament and a model: Christ "completed the mystery for our inner man and gave the example for our outer man" (*On the Trinity*, IV.6). It provides an example for imitation, an exemplary martyrdom, and a model for our future resurrection; it is a sacrament insofar as it mediates knowledge of interior spiritual qualities: it represents our spiritual sickness and forsakenness as well as the overcoming of these through repentance and a life of discipleship. Augustine states that "the Lord's bodily resurrection is a sacrament of our inner resurrection" (*On the Trinity*, IV.6) and that, "[b]y the crucifixion of the inner man is to be understood the sorrows of repentance and a kind of salutary torment of self-discipline, a kind of death to erase the death of ungodliness in which God does not leave us. And thus it is by this sort of cross that the *body of sin* is cancelled (Rom 6:6)" (*On the Trinity*, IV.6). Clifford and Anatolios focus on this mediation of interior spiritual

¹⁰⁴ Augustine. *On Order*. Translated by Silvano Borruso, St. Augustine's Press, 2007, 35.

¹⁰⁵ Joanne McWilliam. "De Ordine." In *Augustine Through the Ages Encyclopedia*. Edited by Allan D. Fitzgerald, Paperback edition, O.S.A. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009, 602.

qualities and suggest that Christ, for Augustine, in his self-giving on behalf of humanity, demonstrates the "justice of humility" (766) and provides an example for humanity: one should not seek primarily the power that conquers by force, but rather justice and humility. Clifford and Anatolios characterize this as "a 'sapiential' model of salvation, which focuses on the life-giving and redeeming efficacy of the knowledge of God".¹⁰⁶ They write that "the whole drama of the Christ event presents us with saving knowledge of the truth of our relation to God: knowledge of our sinfulness combined with God's love; the way from the death of sin to the victory of God's love as manifested and exemplified through Christ's death and Resurrection; and the manifestation of the humility of God and the priority of justice over power".¹⁰⁷

While the issue of knowledge is indeed critical for Augustine (one need look no further than *On the Trinity* to see this), it is perhaps too crude to say that the whole drama of the Christ event presents us with saving knowledge of the truth of our relation to God. While it is true that this is one thing that the Christ event does, it is hardly the lynchpin of Augustine's account of the atonement. The epistemological element in Augustine's account of the atonement and our salvation is best understood together with the ontological and the ethical elements. We can see these three working together in *On the Trinity* where we are taken from self-knowledge to knowledge of God and in true knowledge of self and God we can imitate the Son and participate in *justitia* which restores right order to creation in relation to its Creator: "[W]hen the mind loves God, and consequently as has been said remembers and understands him, it can rightly be

¹⁰⁶ Clifford and Anatolios. "Christian Salvation", 767.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

commanded to love its neighbour as itself. For now it loves itself with a straight, not a twisted love, now that it loves God; for sharing in him results not merely in its being that image, but in its being made new and fresh and happy after being old and worn and miserable” (*On the Trinity* XIV.18). In fact, our knowledge of justice is one of the things that may draw us back to knowledge of God. In Book VIII of *On the Trinity*, Augustine brings us from knowledge of the good, truth, and justice to knowledge of God as the source. “But where have we learnt what ‘just’ is even when we are not yet just? If we have learnt it outside ourselves then we have learnt it in some body. But this is not a bodily reality. So it is in ourselves that we have learnt what ‘just’ is” (*On the Trinity*, VIII.9). We somehow have a standard of justice, says Augustine, of which we all fall short. We cannot have learned what justice is from experience, nor from some external body, but must have this knowledge somewhere in ourselves. This provides, for Augustine, an ontological link between just things, good things, and the source of justice and goodness, God himself. Through our knowledge of truth, goodness, and justice, we have an indirect knowledge of God as the guarantor of these values.¹⁰⁸

Mediation, Sacrifice, and Justice

Augustine frames Christ's death not only in terms of justice and debt but also in terms of sacrifice. Christ's death, says Augustine, is "the one truest possible sacrifice" (*On the Trinity*, IV.17). He describes Christ as a holy and just priest who offered the "true sacrifice" (*On the Trinity*, IV.19) which is offered for the purification of humanity.

¹⁰⁸ We will see Lewis do the very same thing with knowledge of justice in *Mere Christianity* below.

Augustine also describes Christ as the "one true mediator" (*On the Trinity*, IV.19), who reconciled us to God by his sacrifice.

In both *City of God* and *On the Trinity*, Augustine elaborates on the theme of sacrifice and mediation. There, he says that Christ is the supreme and true sacrifice, the mediator between God and man, who, in the form of God receives the sacrifice, and in the form of a servant was himself the sacrifice (*On the Trinity*, I.14). Christ took on humanity as a mediator, taking body and soul (complete humanity), and thus he purifies the whole human being: "he took upon himself entire humanity, though without sin, for this precise purpose, that he might cure all the constituents of human nature of the plague of sins" (*City of God*, X.27). He had to have been both fully God and fully human to do this: he was able to mediate between us and God, since he was man; and he was able to purify the whole human being because the Word, "through whom everything came into existence" (*City of God*, X.24), has assumed a human body and soul. As a man, he is part of that race that needs reconciliation; as God, he is able to accomplish that reconciliation. Christ *receives* the sacrifice, lifts the penalty, and heals human nature as God; he *offers* the sacrifice as man. Augustine writes that Christ, as the Word, is thus the "principle" or beginning of our purification and regeneration (*City of God*, X.24). What is now left to us is to recognize him and entrust ourselves to him for our healing (*City of God*, X.27). Crucially, for Augustine, we do not *earn* our salvation; we receive this purification from

sin by the compassion of God, not through our own power; "we live under pardon" (*City of God*, X.22).¹⁰⁹

Thus, through Christ's death and his defeat of the devil, we are freed from the devil's power and we are reconciled to God: Christ, as mediator between humanity and God, offers himself as a sacrifice which pays a debt that he did not owe, and in so doing he restores the proper order of creation which puts justice first and power second. We were God's enemies, says Augustine, only in the sense that sins are the enemies of justice, and "when [sins] are forgiven such hostilities come to an end, and those whom he himself justifies are reconciled to the just one" (XIII.21). Thus, we are granted hope for that of which we had despaired. "Could anyone doubt that he is going to give life to his friends, for whom he gave his death while they were enemies?" (XIII.21) Through *justitia* we become sons and daughters of God through Christ and are born again, to God, of the Spirit.¹¹⁰

***Justitia* and the Self-Consistency of God**

Augustine begins Book IV of *On The Trinity* with a prayer, an address to God, which he ends with the statement that "God's essence, by which he is, has absolutely nothing changeable about its eternity or its truth or its will; there truth is eternal and love

¹⁰⁹ This notion of purification and regeneration, and of Christ as the beginning of this process, will become central for Lewis, and we will pick it up again in chapter four.

¹¹⁰ Augustine writes of being born again to God of the Spirit in "Tractate 12". In *Tractates on the Gospel of John*. In *New Advent*. Translated by John Henry Newman and Archibald Robertson. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, Vol. 4. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892. Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1701012.htm> Accessed 8 May 2018.

is eternal; there love is true and eternity true; there eternity is lovely and truth is lovely too" (IV.1). With the Fall, however, we have been exiled from this unchanging truth, love, and joy, "yet not so broken and cut off from it that we stopped seeking eternity, truth, and happiness" (IV.2). What we seek is happiness, which can be found only in immortality. We do not find this happiness here in this present life, but must return to that place with which, had we no connection, we would not be seeking for those things here.

While the unchangeability of God does not play the explicit role in Augustine's thinking about the atonement that it does in Anselm's, it is a pillar of Augustine's theology upon which the whole edifice is built. The focus of Augustine's writings on the atonement is on justice (*justitia*) and the human being's disruption of *justitia* with respect to himself in the Fall. The connection between justice and the unchangeability of God is implicit in Augustine: for Augustine, God *is* justice, *is* truth, *is* mercy, and we can know these ideals because of our connection to our immutable Creator. The self-consistency of God is a theme that will not be fully and systematically explored with respect to the atonement until Anselm, who takes the seeds planted by Athanasius and Augustine and brings them to full fruition in a systematic doctrine of the atonement.

We can also note here that, while the self-consistency of God is implicit in Augustine's thought, God's sovereignty and our position as creatures in the divine ordering of the world is front and center. Proper order puts God first and recognizes our dependence on him as creatures. In *The City of God*, Augustine notes, of the two cities (that city of which Christ is king and that city of which the Devil has dominion) that, "[i]n

one city the love of God has been given first place, in the other, love of self' (XIV.13). The primary problem in the Fall, for Augustine, is that we disrupted this order through disobedience, through trying to wield our own power and make ourselves the standard. This was rectified in the atonement insofar as Christ restored justice on humanity's side by being obedient unto death and thereby lifting the penalty of sin and healing corrupt human nature. Lewis will draw out these themes of the sovereignty of God and our dependence as creatures in his own understanding of the atonement and of sanctification.

Now that we have addressed the themes of justice and proper order, the self-consistency (and the sovereignty) of God, and Christ's defeat of the devil described in terms of sacrifice, mediation, and debt, we can turn to Anselm and see certain of these themes picked up and developed systematically.

Anselm: *Cur Deus Homo*

How we are to interpret Anselm on the atonement has been a matter of much contention. In examining the thought of Anselm in preparation for our reading of Lewis, I intend to show that Anselm's account of the atonement is first and foremost an outworking of his doctrine of God, and what may look like legalism, in terms of satisfaction of a debt owed to God, is not a reflection of Anselm's feudal Medieval context but is rather an outworking of God's self-consistency. We must pay special attention to Anselm's insistence that God is consistent with himself: what we can say about the atonement and our reconciliation to God results from the nature of God himself (and the nature of objective reality that is divinely ordered). In both the *Monologion* and

the *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm relies on what is 'fitting' to guide his meditations on the supreme nature, i.e. God. (e.g. *Monologion* 70; *WGBM*, I.10, I.12). This will be crucial in our reading of Anselm, as it is primarily logical considerations about the nature of God and not any external (legal) system that drives Anselm's thought about the atonement.

Before delving too deeply into Anselm's account of the atonement, it is important to consider what is meant by Anselm's term "necessity" with respect to God. In *Why God Became Man* II.5, Anselm says that "[t]he necessity to which I am referring is plainly nothing other than the unchangeability of God's honour, which he possesses of himself, and from no one apart from himself".¹¹¹ It is the unchangeability of God, and not something imposed on God, that looks like necessity. "What is being signified...is the unchangeability of his will.... [W]hen someone voluntarily plans to do some good thing, and afterwards, in accordance with the same will, completes what he planned, it is not right to say of him that he is doing what he is doing out of necessity" (II.17). Clearly this is not just a matter of God's honour and what we owe to him as our Creator, but first and foremost a matter of the consistency of God's nature. Anselm's most extensive treatment of the atonement is found in his work entitled *Why God Became Man* (*Cur Deus Homo* in the original Latin), where he addresses the question: Why did God become man? "By what logic or necessity did God become man, and by his death, as we believe and profess, restore life to the world, when he could have done this through the agency of some other person, angelic or human, or simply by willing it?" (I.1)

¹¹¹ Anselm. *Why God Became Man*. Translated by Janet Fairweather. In *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*. Edited by Brian Davies and G.R. Evans, Oxford University Press, 2008, 260-356.

Anselm's Method

Anselm's method in answering the question of why God became man is driven primarily by one premise: there is no unfitness in God. Anselm makes this explicit at the beginning of *Why God Became Man*.

I wish to come to an agreement with you: that no inappropriateness where God is concerned - not even the smallest - shall be accepted by us, and that no logical consideration - not even the smallest - shall be rejected by us unless a more important logical consideration conflicts with it. For just as, in the case of God, what follows from any inappropriateness - however small - is impossibility, correspondingly what follows from a small logical consideration, if it is not defeated by a larger one, is inevitability (I.10).¹¹²

Because Anselm is writing this treatise as an apologetic work, he wants to demonstrate the necessity of Christ: it is by no other way than through Christ that human beings can come to salvation. Thus, he does not begin with Christ, but rather argues *remoto Christo*:

Let us posit, therefore, that the incarnation of God and the things which we say about him as man had never happened, and let it be agreed between us that man was created for a state of blessedness which cannot be had in this life, and that no one can arrive at that state if his sins have not been got rid of, and that no man can pass through this life without sin; let us also accept the other matters in which we need to have faith in order to attain eternal salvation (I.10).

In fact, we see Lewis do something similar in *Mere Christianity* in establishing the reality of the Moral Law and the existence of a Creator God.¹¹³ We will see that both Anselm

¹¹² David Brown, in "Anselm on Atonement", regarding the topic of Anselm on necessity in God, says that "It is not a case of reason somehow imposing limits on God; rather, it is a matter of human beings coming to comprehend what follows from the fact that God remains consistent with his nature or else, putting it another way, is self-consistent" (284).

¹¹³ In Book One of *Mere Christianity*, Lewis uses the existence of the moral law to argue for the existence of God, a move similar to what we see Anselm do here. In chapter three we will return to the moral law and its significance in Lewis' theology.

and Lewis rely on logical considerations about the nature of God in thinking about the atonement.

Having outlined Anselm's method, we can now examine the content of his writings on the atonement and draw out the importance of the justice and the mercy of God. Like Augustine, Anselm relies heavily on the concept of justice (*justitia*) in thinking about the atonement. Consequently, we will start our examination of Anselm's atonement theory there.

***Justitia* in Anselm**

Following Robert Crouse, in "The Augustinian Background of St. Anselm's Concept *Justitia*", I will be arguing that "an interpretation of St. Anselm's concept of *justitia* in terms of legal justice or even of moral righteousness, is quite inadequate" (114).¹¹⁴ The essential content of this term, rather, is "rectitude of order, which has its source in God himself, and embraces the whole order of creation, regulating the relations of man to God, of man to man, and mutual relations within the interior being of man" (114). Thus, when Anselm uses this term in philosophical or theological discussions, he is not borrowing a concept from the courts of law, as legal justice is only one aspect of *justitia*: "God's justice as it is expressed in the organized maintenance of social order" (Crouse, 114). Rather, I will be arguing that the concept of *justitia* used by Anselm is primarily theological and philosophical, standing not for an essentially legal relationship,

¹¹⁴ Robert Crouse. "The Augustinian Background of St. Anselm's Concept *Justitia*." In *Canadian Journal of Theology*. 4:2, 1958, 111.

but for the rectitude of order which is the will of God. As Crouse notes, "We must concede to the critics that he does sometimes use the language of positive law; but we must not allow these legal illustrations to obscure the more fundamental theological meaning of *justitia* as universal rectitude of order" (114). This notion of right order as *justitia* is fundamentally Augustinian. We have seen that Augustine identifies justice (*justitia*) as right relation to God - the human being's original condition, lost in the Fall - a hierarchy of order and value which is a reflection of the nature of God, who is himself the highest justice. Anselm's indebtedness to Augustine on this point is most clear in his prologue to his *Monologion* where he claims that there is nothing in the *Monologion* that is inconsistent with the works of Augustine: "In the course of frequent rereading of this treatise I have been unable to find anything which is inconsistent with the writings of the Catholic Fathers, and in particular with those of the Blessed Augustine".¹¹⁵ Anselm cites *On the Trinity* in particular as the book of Augustine on the basis of which the reader is to judge Anselm's own account (*Monologion*, 6). While we are working primarily with *Why God Became Man* and not the *Monologion*, this quote from Anselm serves to establish that he was well-versed in Augustine's writings and held him in high regard. We should not be surprised, then, to find Augustinian themes throughout Anselm's other works. In *Why God Became Man*, I intend to argue that we can see a developed account of *justitia*: Anselm takes Augustine's concept of God as the highest justice and develops it into a systematic account of the atonement as an event following from the inviolability

¹¹⁵ Anselm. *Monologion*. Translated by Simon Harrison. In *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*. Edited by Brian Davies and G.R. Evans, Oxford University Press, 2008, 6. Subsequent references to Anselm's *Monologion* will be cited in parentheses within the main body of the text.

of God's nature as both just and good. In so doing, he is also using themes that we find in Athanasius. Much of what we see in seedling form in Athanasius and in Augustine will be systematically developed by Anselm.

The Divine Dilemma

Anselm frames his argument in *Why God Became Man* by addressing the same divine dilemma that we find in the writing of Athanasius: "the human race, clearly his most precious piece of workmanship, had been completely ruined; it was not fitting that what God had planned for mankind should be utterly nullified, and the plan in question could not be brought into effect unless the human race were set free by its Creator in person" (*WGBM*, I.4). For God's plan to be realized, human beings must be freed from the effects of sin.¹¹⁶

Sin, says Anselm, is nothing other than not to render to God what is due, and what is due to God is that all of our wishes, our entire will, should be subject to him. Anselm writes that, "when any creature whatever maintains...the station in life which belongs to it and has been, as it were, taught to it, this creature is said to be obeying God and honouring him.... But when a rational being does not wish for what is right, he dishonours God, with regard to himself, since he is not willingly subordinating himself to God's governance, and is disturbing, as far as he is able, the order and beauty of the

¹¹⁶ Poettcker notes at this point that "[i]t is rather crucial that the opposition at this point in Anselm's argument (*WGBM*, I: 4) is between a 'ruined' humankind and a humankind that has been 'set free,' because Anselm's insistence on the necessity of satisfaction for sin or sin's punishment (*WGBM*, I: 13)...otherwise sounds strictly retributive" ("Redeeming Wrath", 21).

universe” (I.15). While a human being cannot add or take away from the honour of God, by not bringing herself under God's will, she dishonours God as far as the being herself is concerned (she disturbs the order and beauty of the universe as relates to herself). This is the concept of *justitia* that plays a key role in the thought of Augustine as well as that of Anselm: what we owe to God is obedience, which maintains our proper station in life.

Regarding the relation of justice to divine order, Crouse writes:

Man was created in a state of justice (*justitia originalis*), and sin is the absence or privation of that justice, for which all men (one man in Adam) are responsible. The basis of sin is the free defection of the rational will; the carnal appetites, not in themselves unjust, become so only by the determination of the will. God, who is supreme justice, justly maintains His honour in the ordering of all things, and it is intolerable that man by disobedience should distort God's order of things, and thus rob the Creator of due honour, without making satisfaction.¹¹⁷

In *Virgin Conception and Original Sin*, Anselm writes that “our first parents were created just and entirely sinless” (359),¹¹⁸ and that original sin has its basis in the rational will (362). We will see shortly that Anselm insists that sin must either be punished or the guilty party must make satisfaction, since it is intolerable that anyone should take away the honour due to the Creator. This is based in Anselm’s concept of proper order, i.e. the creature maintaining its proper station in life.

What precisely this order is Anselm identifies when he discusses with his interlocutor, Boso, the fallen angels and the population of the heavenly city. The

¹¹⁷ Robert D. Crouse. “The Augustinian background”, 113-114.

¹¹⁸ Anselm. *Virgin Conception and Original Sin*. Translated by Camilla McNab. In *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*. Edited by Brian Davies and G.R. Evans, Oxford University Press, 2008, 369. Subsequent references to Anselm’s *Virgin Conception and Original Sin* will be cited in parentheses within the main body of the text.

purpose that God had for human beings was to fill up the heavenly city. The number of fallen angels, Anselm insists, is made up (and more) by human beings. For human beings to replace the fallen angels in the heavenly city, however, they must be equal to the good angels (*WGBM*, I.16 – 18). This is why we need atonement: human nature was corrupted in the Fall and in their post-lapsarian state, they are not fit to be received into heaven. Anselm offers us the image of the pearl: we cannot be like a pearl fallen in the mud and restored to its place unwashed:

Let us imagine that some rich man is holding in his hand a precious pearl – one which no dirt has ever touched, and which no one else could remove from his hand without permission – and he is planning to put it into his treasure-chest, which is where his dearest and most precious possessions are.... What if he were to allow this same pearl to be knocked out of his hand into the mud by some malignant person, although it was in his power to prevent this, and afterwards, picking it up from the mud, dirty and unwashed, were to store it away in some clean and costly receptacle of his, intending to keep it there in that state (*WGBM*, I.29).

Would not God be acting in a similar way, asks Anselm, if he were to allow us to enter heaven with the stain of sin? Human beings cannot be restored to their position “unwashed”, but neither can God’s purpose for humans go unfulfilled. What, then, ought God to do?

Human beings cannot be left to their fate of non-being but must be restored to their proper state for entry into the heavenly city and residence among the angels. This requires that satisfaction be made for sin and this satisfaction “should be proportional to the magnitude of the sin” (*WGBM*, I.20). If this were not so, sin would remain to some extent unregulated. Further, Anselm insists that God cannot remit sin by mercy alone, without payment, as then there would be no difference between the guilty and the not guilty: “the position of sinner and non-sinner before God will be similar - and this does

not befit God" (*WGBM* I.12). Moreover, sin would be subject to no law, and injustice would be freer than justice: "if no satisfaction is given, the way to regulate sin correctly is none other than to punish it. If, therefore, it is not punished, it is forgiven without its having been regulated" (*WGBM* I.12).¹¹⁹ Consequently, sin requires either repayment/satisfaction or punishment. Otherwise, God (who is the supreme justice) is either not just or weak: "either the honour which has been taken away should be repaid, or punishment should follow. Otherwise, either God will not be just to himself, or he will be without the power to enforce either of the two options; and it is an abominable sin even to consider this possibility" (*WGBM*, I.13). This is the driving force behind Anselm's thought on the atonement: God's rational creation, which he created just, cannot come to naught (*WGBM*, II.1). God cannot forgive sin and restore humanity to its position of righteousness, however, without either punishment or satisfaction. This is Anselm's version of the divine dilemma: given sin, what ought God to do?

Either Punishment or Satisfaction

Thus far we have seen Anselm describe sin as a disruption of the divine order of the universe (in not rendering God his due, humans robbed God of the honour due to him and disrupted the order of the universe as concerns themselves) and a 'threat', so to speak,

¹¹⁹ Anselm notes that we cannot resort to relying on the freedom of God, claiming that anything is within God's power: "the term 'freedom' relates only to the freedom to perform what is advantageous or fitting, and one should not give the name of 'benevolence' to something which brings about a result unfitting for God" (*WGBM* I: 12). "[I]f it is not fitting for God to do anything in an unjust or unregulated manner, it does not belong to his freedom or benevolence or will to release unpunished a sinner who has not repaid to God what he has taken away from him" (*WGBM* I:12). Regarding the freedom and mercy of God, what is fitting or best is what is proper to the divine character.

to the self-consistency of God: in sinning, human beings took from God the purpose that he had for them. In order to maintain the order of the created universe, sin cannot go unregulated but must either be punished or satisfaction be made. This choice, either punishment or satisfaction, is one that Timothy Gorringer takes issue with in his critique of Anselm in *God's Just Vengeance*.

A quite common critique of the Anselmian understanding of the atonement is that it is too legalistic, relying artificially on a Medieval conception of justice which is hopelessly contextual (i.e. not useful outside of Feudal England).¹²⁰ Timothy Gorringer, in *God's Just Vengeance*, presents an argument for a legalistic reading of Anselm, claiming that Anselm's understanding of the atonement is retributivist and "rationalized vengeance", rooted in the legal order of feudal England under Norman rule.¹²¹ Gorringer suggests that it is against the background of English feudalism that we must understand Anselm's use of the metaphor of "satisfaction" to understand Christ's work.

[T]hat satisfaction can take the place of punishment, is certainly an established part of the legal system of his day, though... Anselm might well take it from the system of penance which the church operated. Both understand the possibility of making 'satisfaction' for offences which have been committed. The alternative 'either punishment or satisfaction' was that which eleventh-century law offered to the

¹²⁰ We will take Timothy Gorringer and Gustav Aulén as examples of this type of reading here. See also Marilyn McCord Adams. "Romancing the Good." In *The Augustinian Tradition*. Edited by Gareth B. Matthews, University of California Press, 1999, 91-109. McCord Adams reads Anselm through a double lens of Christian Platonism and Medieval feudal politics. Like Gorringer, she asserts that Anselm's understanding of the atonement is coloured by his social context, and that he portrays God as a feudal lord requiring honour and deference from his clients. Much of Adams' feudal imagery, however, is forced and does not take into account Anselm's requirement that God must be consistent with himself, which is the foundation for his thought on the atonement.

¹²¹ "In Roman law, just being rediscovered in the schools of Paris and Bologna, *satisfactio* referred to compensation to an injured person other than by direct payment.... It is against this background that we must understand Anselm's introduction of a new metaphor for understanding the work of Christ - satisfaction" (Gorringer, 89).

offender. He might be outlawed, or left to private vengeance, or punished by death or mutilation - or he could make satisfaction.¹²²

Poettcker, in “Redeeming Wrath and Apocalyptic Violence,” calls this understanding of the atonement, that relies on the concept of private vengeance to understand satisfaction,

a more or less pagan image of God, one whose anger can only be appeased through the propitiatory offering of a human sacrifice. This is a God constrained not by his desire that man become righteous, but by his love of his own honour to visit retributive violence upon those slow to worship him. According to this interpretation of *Cur Deus Homo*, only when such divine violence has been vented and this God’s wounded honour restored will he be placated.¹²³

As we examine Anselm’s account, however, we will see that this is not the case. For Anselm, God is not constrained by his love of his own honour and a desire for retributive justice. Instead, the need for satisfaction arises out of God’s desire for human beings to be made righteous and thus to fit into their proper place in the order of creation. This, in turn, is rooted in the nature (and the consistency) of God: that his purposes for creation should be realised.

For Anselm, as we have seen already, we need atonement in order to be cleansed of sin and made worthy of our place in the heavenly city.

The humans in that heavenly city - those who are to be taken up into that city in the place of angels - ought to be of like character to those who were to be there, whose substitutes they are to be, that is, the same in character as the good angels now are. Otherwise, those who have fallen will not be 'replaced', and it will follow either that God will not be able to accomplish the good which he has begun, or he will come to regret that he had initiated such a good undertaking - both of which notions are absurd (*WGBM*, I.19).

¹²² Timothy Gorrige. *God’s Just Vengeance: Crime, Violence, and the Rhetoric of Salvation*. Cambridge University Press, 1996, 95.

¹²³ Grant Poettcker. *Redeeming Wrath*, 15.

Again, we see the emphasis on the consistency of God and what is 'fitting' for the divine nature. Anselm goes on to insist: "It is not fitting, then, for God to receive into heaven, for the replacement of the fallen angels, a human sinner who has not paid recompense" (*WGBM*, I.19).

Human beings, however, cannot rectify their own fallen condition. What we owe to God is an obligation not to sin. This is impossible in our post-lapsarian state (*WGBM*, I.24). Even if we were able to repay this debt, having sinned and having robbed God of the purpose he had for humanity, we owe not just repayment of our debt but extra compensation, since "it is not sufficient merely to repay what has been taken away: rather, he ought to pay back more than he took, in proportion to the insult which he has inflicted" (*WGBM*, I.11). As "[t]here is nothing more intolerable in the universal order than that a creature should take away honour from the creator and not repay what he takes away" (*WGBM*, I.13), the sin against God is infinite and requires an infinite satisfaction (*WGBM*, I.21).

Even if the satisfaction that we owed to God were *not* infinite, still we could not pay it, since all things that we give to God in obedience are already owed to him, since he demands all, even when we do not sin. This means that we cannot give to God anything that is not his already: "the things you are giving are not your property but the property of him whose bondsman you are, and to whom you are making a gift" (*WGBM*, I.20). Consequently, no one but God can make satisfaction for sin, as the one to make satisfaction must be greater than all things but God himself: It is a necessity that "someone who can give to God from his own property something which exceeds

everything which is inferior to God, must himself be superior to everything that exists apart from God” (*WGBM*, II.6).

The consequence of this is that only God *can* make satisfaction. However, no one *ought* to make satisfaction except humanity. The result is that no one but a God-Man should make satisfaction for sin. This person must be perfect God and perfect Man (*WGBM*, II.7).¹²⁴ The two natures cannot alternate, as then he would be only God or only human; they cannot comingle into a third nature, which would be neither God nor human; the two natures must be united entire in one person, who is the same being, both God and human. Further, the one to make satisfaction must be descended from Adam, and not a new human; he must belong to the human family who needs to make atonement (*WGBM*, II.8). Thus, we arrive at Christ, the God-man, who is the only one who can make satisfaction for sin and reconcile human beings to God, allowing God’s purpose for humanity to come to fruition.

It is important to note that, for Anselm, Christ does not give obedience to God as a gift, as this is owed. What Christ does not owe, and therefore what he can give as satisfaction for sin, is his life. This is because the death of Christ, since he is not a sinner, is not owed (since man would not have died if he had not sinned): "No member of the human race except Christ ever gave to God, by dying, anything which that person was not at some time going to lose as a matter of necessity. Nor did anyone ever pay a debt to God which he did not owe. But Christ of his own accord gave to his Father what he was

¹²⁴ I am retaining the gendered term God-Man because it is the term that Anselm used in *Why God Became Man* (e.g. II.7).

never going to lose as a matter of necessity, and he paid, on behalf of sinners, a debt which he did not owe" (*WGBM*, II.18). That Christ does not choose death *necessarily* means that he is not constrained; Christ freely chose death to save human beings and what resembles necessity is the unchangeableness of God's will. It would be weakness to change his disposition where before he had chosen that it should remain unchanged, says Anselm (*WGBM*, II.17). "[T]he reason why he 'ought' then to do what he did was that what he wished ought to be. His action was not something that he owed, because it was not a matter of indebtedness....he received from his divine nature...the circumstance that whatever he had was his own. As a result, there was nothing which he 'ought' to give, except what he wished" (*WGBM*, II.18). Christ's life is so great a good in itself as to pay what is due for all sins. Anselm insists that the value of Christ's life outweighs all sins; it is, in fact, of infinite value: "he [his life] is an incomparably greater good than the sins immeasurably outweighed by his killing are bad" (*WGBM*, II.14). This is important because the question of satisfaction, for Anselm, is a question of when someone has done enough. David Brown, in "Anselm on Atonement", notes that the question of when one has done enough is "a question that remains independent of the specifics of any particular penitential or feudal system".¹²⁵ For Anselm, the question of when we have done enough is a question rooted in the nature of God (in preserving his goodness and his justice) and in the notion of proper order (where we fit into the order of creation, and how we can be re-instated to this place out of which we have fallen). And so, we can see how Anselm's

¹²⁵ David Brown. "Anselm on Atonement." In *The Cambridge Companion to Anselm*. Edited by Brian Davies, Cambridge University Press, 2004, 295.

requirement of satisfaction is primarily driven by logical considerations about the nature of God, not any particular penitential or feudal system.

Now that we have addressed the issue of satisfaction for sin, in Anselm's thought, we can turn to how this satisfaction affects human salvation.

Gift, Reward, and Human Salvation

Regarding human salvation, Anselm says that the Son's death as atonement is a precious gift, which deserves a reward from the Father (*WGBM*, II.19). If Christ's death were to go unrewarded, then the Father would be either unjust (since he will not reward Christ's gift) or weak (if he cannot reward it). A reward gives to someone something he does not have or remits a rightful claim. All things, however, are God's; he needs nothing, and no gift or release can be made. If a reward is not given, then the Son's work is done in vain. Thus, "it is necessary that the Father should compensate the Son. Otherwise, he would seem unjust if he lacked the will, and powerless if he lacked the ability" (*WGBM*, II.19). Since the Son could give away what is his own, he can thus properly bestow the reward accruing from his death upon those for whose salvation he became a man. "On whom is it more appropriate for him to bestow the reward and recompense for his death," asks Anselm, "than on those for whose salvation, as the logic of truth teaches us, he made himself a man, and for whom, as we have said, he set an example, by his death, of dying for the sake of righteousness?" (*WGBM*, II.19). Human beings thus become the heirs of his inheritance. They would imitate him in vain, says Anselm, if they are not also

partakers of this reward. This is how Christ remits the debt incurred by human sin and gives them what their transgression had forfeited.

Both the problem of man's sinfulness and the solution in Christ's atoning sacrifice can be understood within the framework of *justitia*. Regarding the solution, Crouse writes that "sinful man is powerless to restore the order of justice, for 'a sinner cannot justify a sinner'" (113). We saw this in Anselm's insistence that we cannot offer satisfaction for sin. Crouse continues:

so God Himself, in His mercy, intervenes to satisfy His own order of *justitia*, in the work of the God-Man, who alone, true God and perfect man, taking sinless humanity from the Virgin, can offer satisfaction. By their incorporation into Christ's sinless (i.e., just) humanity, the faithful receive the benefits of Christ's atoning sacrifice. Thus creation, sin and redemption are set by St. Anselm within the framework of God's *justitia*, His right ordering of all things, which prescribes man's plan in the hierarchy of created beings, judges his defection, and effects his reconciliation (Crouse, 113-114).

Regarding this reconciliation of humanity to God through Christ, Anselm writes that "the mercy of God which, when we were considering the justice of God and the sin of mankind, seemed to you to be dead, we have found to be so great, and so consonant with justice, that a greater and juster mercy cannot be imagined.... What also could be juster than that the one to whom is given a reward greater than any debt should absolve all debt, if it is presented with the feeling that is due?" (*WGBM*, II.20). It is in this way that Anselm claims to reconcile the justice and the mercy of God, all the while maintaining his self-consistency: the mercy of salvation is rooted in the justice of paying what is due. In offering satisfaction in our place, Christ pays what we owe and in so doing saves us from death and destruction and upholds the consistency of God. This is far from the legalistic reading of Anselm put forward by modern scholars such as Gorringer.

The Wrong Way Around

The reading of Anselm that sees his account as juridical and legalistic, says Poettcker, “has it the wrong way around...interpreters of his argument read Anselm’s argument through the lens of a retributive rather than regulative conception of justice – because all punishment is understood as retributive in character”.¹²⁶

Robert D. Crouse, in "The Augustinian Background of St. Anselm's Concept *Justitia*", argues that the common (mis)reading of Anselm that sees his theory of atonement as legalistic and juridical is rooted in a problem of translation and interpretation of Anselm's key concept, *justitia*: "a serious problem exists in the translation and interpretation of *justitia*, one of the key words of Latin Patristic and Medieval theology".¹²⁷ In English, this term is translated as "justice". For Anselm, this term is primarily theological and philosophical, and bears little resemblance to our legal concept of justice.

A proper understanding of how Anselm uses this term, argues Crouse, is crucial to understanding his theory of atonement. "The concept of *justitia* is clearly a central one in St. Anselm's theologic system. Without a proper understanding of his use of this term one cannot begin to make sense of his important formulation of the theory of Atonement.... It has been the constant complaint of certain modern scholars that St. Anselm's treatment of the Atonement is 'legalistic' or 'juridical'".¹²⁸ We see this most

¹²⁶ Grant Poettcker. *Redeeming Wrath*, 32.

¹²⁷ Robert D. Crouse. "The Augustinian background", 111.

¹²⁸ Robert D. Crouse. "The Augustinian background", 112.

famously in Gustav Aulén, who claims that Anselm's "whole conception of Atonement is juridical in its inmost essence.... The relation of man to God is treated by Anselm as essentially a legal relation for his whole effort is to prove that the atoning work is in accordance with justice".¹²⁹ We have seen this also with Timothy Gorringe, above.

Aulén identifies three “types” of theories or doctrines of the atonement: the classic type, which he identifies with the Patristic period; the Latin type, which he identifies primarily with Anselm; and the subjective type, which he identifies primarily with Abelard. The central theme of the classic type, says Aulén, “is the idea of the Atonement as a Divine conflict and victory; Christ – Christus Victor – fights against and triumphs over the evil powers of the world, the ‘tyrants’ under which mankind is in bondage and suffering, and in Him God reconciles the world to Himself”.¹³⁰ In the Church Fathers, says Aulén, the idea of the incarnation and the atonement are organically connected. “There we find a simple and straightforward connection of thought: God enters into this world of Sin and death that He may overcome the enemies that hold mankind in bondage, and Himself accomplish the redemptive work for which no power but the Divine is adequate”.¹³¹ For Anselm, in contrast, says Aulén,

the whole structure is built on the basis of the penitential system. Anselm’s basic assumption is that the required satisfaction for transgression must be made by man, and the argument proceeds: Men are not able to make the necessary satisfaction, because they are all sinful. If men cannot do it, then God must do it. But, on the other hand, the satisfaction must be made by man, because man is guilty. The only solution is that God becomes man; this is the answer to the question *Cur Deus homo?*¹³²

¹²⁹ Gustav Aulén. *Christus Victor*, 106-107.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 102.

Aulén identifies this theory as essentially juridical, “[t]he relation of man to God is treated by Anselm as essentially a legal relation”,¹³³ and as a theological expression of Anselm’s feudal Medieval context, claiming that “the Latin doctrine of the atonement is closely related to the legalism characteristic of the medieval outlook”.¹³⁴

Although Aulén’s analysis is now largely considered outdated, we can still hear echoes of his classification of Anselm in contemporary theologians and philosophers, and the question of the role of justice in Anselm’s thought is still a live topic of debate. We can see Aulén’s legacy in Gorringe, for instance, when he speaks about sin and satisfaction in Anselm. We will also see that the early Lewis seems to adopt this interpretation of Anselm.

Sin, on Gorringe's reading of Anselm, "is essentially an infringement of honour and a failure to render someone his or her due, as determined by his or her place in the social order".¹³⁵ In feudal England, social status determines punishment as much as does the character of the crime.

The same act, let us say a blow, directed against a peasant, a knight, a nobleman, of the king, is not the same act. A blow exchanged between two peasants might call for nothing but a mutual pardon, but if directed by a peasant against a king would threaten the integrity of the whole social order and demand the death sentence. What, then, of an offence directed against an infinite being, God? Because we owe God our total obedience, even the most trivial offence demands an infinite satisfaction.¹³⁶

Gorringe sees the severity of an offence against God as a reflection of the cosmic order, which for his reading of Anselm, is a reflection of the social order of feudal England. An

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹³⁵ Timothy Gorringe. *God's Just Vengeance*, 93.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

offence against God is like an offence against the king, and yet so much greater, in fact infinite in extent because of our status in relation to God. In not rendering God his due as infinite Creator, we have robbed him of his dignity and imperilled the cosmic order. This offence then requires a suitable satisfaction. This satisfaction, or punishment, however, cannot be given by a sinner as we have nothing to offer God that is not already owed to him.

The incarnation and the death of Christ, notes Gorringe, is "strictly speaking *necessary*" for Anselm, as satisfaction must be offered for this offence against God, and yet no one except God himself can offer such satisfaction. "The necessity springs from the demands of justice - the basis of retributive theory".¹³⁷ We might insist, however, on the contrary, that this necessity *does not* spring from any need for retribution, but rather from *justitia* as right order which preserves the self-consistency of God.

Rationalized Vengeance, Satisfaction, Honour, and Debt

The strength of Anselm's theory, writes Gorringe,

lies in the way it articulates the key questions raised by retributive theory. If we ask why a person ought to be punished, in the wake of wrongdoing, then an essential part of the answer is in terms of seeking to rectify the damage done to the community. What sin or crime does is to deny the values, the bonds of mutual trust and concern, on which the community depends for its existence. It destroys, we can say, the harmony or balance of that society: the analogy with Anselm's understanding of the ordered world is exact.¹³⁸

Punishment, for the retributivist, is thus a just and proper response to a past offence, as it restores the balance of benefits and burdens in society which the crime had disrupted. It

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 99.

is this punitive justice, a "rationalised vengeance", that is given divine sanction, on Gorrings account, in Anselm's theory.

This reading of Anselm's account as "rationalized vengeance" (100) presupposes that punishment is retribution for wrongdoing, i) the severity of which depends on one's place in the social order, and ii) the goal of which is restoration of social (or cosmic) order. To some degree, this is true of Anselm's account: i) the severity of our sin is a result of our position as creatures who have taken away the honour of our Creator; ii) the result of this breach is a disruption of the universal order that must be restored: "There is nothing more intolerable in the universal order than that a creature should take away honour from the creator and not repay what he takes away.... Likewise, if there is nothing greater and nothing better than God, then there is nothing, in the government of the universe, which the supreme justice, which is none other than God himself, preserves more justly than God's honour" (*WGBM*, I.13)..

However, this is far from "rationalized vengeance". God is not some sovereign king who demands vengeance for his insulted honour, on Anselm's account. While he *is* the sovereign Creator, the need for retribution and satisfaction comes not from a desire for vengeance but from logical constraints resulting from the self-consistency of God's nature. Gorrings focuses too strongly on justice and what looks like vengeance: "Whilst it is true that this is not a penal theory of the atonement, since Christ voluntarily offers his life, and does not suffer penalty, nevertheless the need for death arises from the demand

for justice. Like Shylock, God the Father insists on justice and nothing but justice, but there is no Portia to plead the quality of mercy”.¹³⁹

This is perhaps the fundamental problem with seeing Anselm as retributivist: the failure to read justice and mercy together. Anselm clearly does not think this way. In fact, the problem of reconciling justice and mercy, the problem of the apparent absence of mercy in justice, of which Gorringer accuses Anselm, is the very problem that Anselm seeks to address in *Why God Became Man*. We have seen already that, when speaking with his interlocutor Boso, Anselm writes: “the mercy of God which, when we were considering the justice of God and the sin of mankind, seemed to you to be dead, we have found to be so great, and so consonant with justice, that a greater and *juster mercy* cannot be imagined” (*WGBM*, II.20; emphasis added). The mercy of God cannot be a forgiveness of sin without regulation. Regarding a divine mercy that is consistent with justice, David Brown notes that Anselm insists that mercy must be explicated in a way that is made consistent with justice, for God is both merciful and just.

Simply to forgive without recompense would result in a God inconsistent with Himself (I.24); justice would be something external to God which he can choose, now to apply, now to reject. This is unfitting since God is, after all, Justice itself (I.13). So it is not that Anselm is committed to a narrow theory of retribution, what some have called 'rationalized vengeance,' but that for Anselm God cannot be portrayed as acting now in one way, now in another.¹⁴⁰

Brown recognizes further disanalogies between Anselm's account and the feudal system as well: i) "The act is entirely voluntary: it is not part of an established pattern where such conduct is expected, and where satisfaction is in one form or other simply

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁴⁰ David Brown. "Anselm on Atonement", 284.

assumed";¹⁴¹ ii) There is no gain on the part of the person receiving satisfaction. "God, Anselm insists, cannot be benefited in any way because divine impassibility means that God cannot have been hurt or harmed in the first place by human sin, the majesty of God requiring that nothing be outside His power (*WGBM* I: 14-15)".¹⁴² iii) "[H]uman beings, as the recipients of the benefit cannot receive it purely passively as in the feudal situation without any further action required on their part because salvation only becomes activated, as it were, by their actively pleading Christ's act in their own cause".¹⁴³

Consider also Poettcker, who notes the significant difference between the justice of feudal England and the justice of God. Regarding the justice of feudal England, Poettcker writes:

1) a medieval lord possesses his authority and the honour owing to his station due to the confluence of contingent historical factors— typically, his heredity, his particular realm's history, the customs of his age, etc. 2) When a medieval lord pursues the restitution of his honour from an offender, the lord assumes that the factors that grant him sovereignty do so legitimately. 3) Moreover, the medieval lord's pursuit of the restitution of his honour is, like all juridical procedures within the *saeculum*, subject to the vagaries of political jockeying, insufficient evidence, corruptible witnesses, improper procedure, and the fallibility of the sovereign's own judgment both in judging the evidence and in assessing the measure of his own dignity.¹⁴⁴

There are significant disanalogies between this sort of justice and the justice of God.

Regarding the latter, Poettcker writes:

1) divine sovereignty is not at all contingent, but is logically entailed by God's creation of the universe and by God's gracious will to continue sustaining that

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 293.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 293-294.

¹⁴⁴ Grant Poettcker. *Redeeming Wrath*, 32-33.

order despite his creatures' sin. 2) When God pursues the restitution of his honour, this is not so much for the sake of his own inward honour—which is inviolable in any case— but for the sake of the stability of the order he has created and in the beauty of which human beings may participate through obedience. And 3) when it comes time for God to execute justice, it is the Slain Lamb that sits in the divine judgement seat.¹⁴⁵

These disanalogies – that God's sovereignty is not at all contingent, as is the king's; that God's restitution of his honour is not for his own sake but for the sake of the stability of the order he has created; that the Slain Lamb is the one who sits in the divine judgement seat – suggest that any assertion that Anselm's theory is rooted in his feudal Medieval context misses some crucial points.

How are we to understand the terms "satisfaction", "honour", and "debt" in Anselm, then, if not juridically? David Brown notes that, "[w]ith so many readers relying on the English alone, it is all too easy for them to be unaware of how translations can manipulate us into particular ways of perceiving Anselm's position".¹⁴⁶ For example, regarding "debt" (I.11): To sin is nothing other than to fail to render God his due. This "may seem to confirm a very formal view of sin that could easily legitimate some sort of crude payback system".¹⁴⁷ However, Brown notes that the same definition of sin is given in the Lord's Prayer: "forgive us our sins/trespases/debts", "or, more literal still, 'forgive us what is owed'".¹⁴⁸ Anselm is picking up on notions that run deep within the New Testament itself, and not simply relying on the feudal system of medieval society for his conception of debt and recompense. "It is not, then, that God has laid down some rules

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 33-34.

¹⁴⁶ David Brown. "Anselm on Atonement", 291.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 292.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

which inferiors have violated and so needs satisfaction for such infringements, but rather that human beings have been so made that they can only be fulfilled, only realise their capacity for happiness, if they fulfill or satisfy what is owed to God because of how He has made their natures.... [It is] only when their natures are ordered aright in this way that salvation becomes possible for them".¹⁴⁹

We can draw this conclusion ourselves by looking at what Anselm writes in *Why God Became Man*, that “the nature of rational beings was created by God righteous in order that, through rejoicing in him, it might be blessedly happy” (II.1), and that, as long as a human being cannot give back to God what he owes, he cannot be blessedly happy, since either he will be unwilling to repay, and hence he will be a wrongdoer, or he will be unable to repay, and “[f]or the very fact of his incapacity [he] is blameworthy: because it is something he ought not to have” (I.24). Since “blessed happiness is sufficiency in which there is not want and, correspondingly, this state is appropriate for nobody except a person in whom there is such pure righteousness that there is no wrongdoing in him” (I.24), then only the person who can give back to God what is owed can be blessedly happy. In other words, it is within our very nature to be fulfilled by rendering to God what is due. This is not some externally imposed rule, but rather is a result of our very natures, which can only find happiness by rejoicing in God and being reconciled to him.

What is crucial here is that "for Anselm the point is not about externally acquired duties but about the direction in which our natures are already ordered internally".¹⁵⁰ This brings us back to the concept of ‘fittingness’. Poettcker notes that,

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

if sin takes away God's honour and if the punishment of the sinner redounds to God's honour (*WGBM*, I.12), the argument that Anselm's formulation harbours a 'mythological conception of God [that presents God] as the private mighty man...incensed at the injury done to his honour and [who] does not forego his wrath till he has received an at least adequately great equivalent' seems well grounded. This objection only has force, however, if the particular conception of 'fittingness' that Anselm has in mind is not kept in view.¹⁵¹

The concept of "fittingness", for Anselm, is first and foremost about the self-consistency of God. Within this overarching theme we find the place of human beings within the cosmic order; this order is one which must be preserved in order for God's plans to come to fruition. It is not a matter of some externally imposed standard, however, some arbitrary law imposed on human beings by a God incensed at an insult done to his honour, but rather it is a matter of the teleological orientation of all creatures: we are created in such a way that we only find happiness and fulfillment in the proper ordering of desires which puts God first and respects the divine ordering of the world. Sin is thus a matter of self-exclusion from the divine plan.

God the Son did not die to propitiate the wrath of God the Father if this wrath is conceived of as a threatened, fearful vengeance. God's wrath arises out of God's desire that the sinner become righteous. God's wrath is expressed in God's withdrawal from the sinner, which is, for Anselm, always in response to and in perfect proportionality with the sinner's withdrawal from God. The sinning creature experiences the wrath of God—that is, Godforsakenness—precisely in falling out of the beautiful order for which he was created.¹⁵²

We will see this "falling out of the beautiful order for which he was created", expressed as withdrawal from God and as self-exclusion from the divine plan, reappear in Lewis' theological anthropology in chapter four.

¹⁵¹ Grant Poettcker. *Redeeming Wrath*, 27-28.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 46.

Patristic Influences of Medieval Theology

While it would be difficult, if not impossible, to identify exactly what Anselm takes from Augustine and what, if anything, from Athanasius, we can note the indebtedness of Anselm to Patristic thought on the atonement. We might say that Athanasius and Augustine plant the seeds of what will become the classic Latin theology of the atonement set forth by Anselm. While Anselm rejects the formulation of Christ's defeat of the devil as the mechanism of salvation, he retains and develops the concepts of debt, sacrifice, and right order found in Athanasius and Augustine, as well as drawing out more fully the consequences of a divine nature that is both completely just and completely good. For all three of these theologians, the doctrine of the atonement is an outworking of the nature of God, though Anselm is the first to work this out explicitly and systematically. God is both merciful and just; he is unchanging and he is consistent with himself. Given the problem of the Fall, a disruption of the divine order, the atonement is then an outworking of these principles.

Having drawn out these themes in Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm, we can now turn to Lewis and examine what he takes of these thinkers in his own understanding of the atonement.

CHAPTER THREE: Lewis on the Atonement

Thus far we have been addressing the themes of justice and mercy as they relate to the consistency of God's nature, which must be upheld. We have seen that this forms the basis of the inner workings of the atonement, for Anselm. We have also seen elements of justice, mercy, and the self-consistency of God in seedling form in Athanasius and Augustine. We will now be examining Lewis' own understanding of the atonement, and in so doing we will draw out the themes that Lewis uses that are present in Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm. This will allow us to connect Lewis to the tradition that he is drawing on, and it will help us to situate him in the history of thought on the atonement.

In chapter one, we saw that Lewis' self-proclaimed task is to defend and explain a core Christianity, what he calls "mere Christianity". Fundamental to this core that Lewis is defending is a substitutionary understanding of the atonement that relies on concepts of victory-ransom, punishment, debt, and propitiation-sacrifice. While Lewis' depiction of the atonement is somewhat polysemous, we will see that there are certain core elements that underlie his various explanations and dramatizations. Fundamentally, for Lewis, as for Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm, we will see that sin and redemption – the Fall, the atonement, and our salvation – come down to a matter of proper order, of *justitia*, which is grounded in the nature of God. In this chapter I intend to explore the different concepts that Lewis uses to understand the atonement, how his thinking appears to evolve over time, and the conceptual foundation to his various expressions of the atonement.

We will see that, while Lewis claims that multiple ways of understanding the atonement are “all true” (*MC*, 147), it is not the case that *all ways* of understanding the atonement are true. Lewis rejects the moral exemplar theory, for example, in favour of a propitiation-sacrifice theory, and he names sacrifice, ransom, championship over death, and substitution all as images that suggest the reality of the atonement (Letter to Mr Young, 31 Oct. 63).¹⁵³ This places Lewis squarely in line with the tradition of Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm, and it foregrounds the objective reality of the atonement and its foundation in the nature of God. In this chapter, I will take Anselm as representative of the objective tradition, and examine Lewis’ understanding of the atonement as it evolves and matures over time.

How This Chapter Will Proceed

First, since I am arguing that Lewis is working within a framework that is fundamentally Anselmian, I will lay out Anselm’s account of the atonement and Lewis’ account in very broad terms. This is just intended to set the stage for a thorough examination of Lewis. Then, I will treat the concepts of justice and mercy as we find them in Lewis’ work. We will see that, for Lewis, the structure of reality is fundamentally informed by justice, which is expressed in our desire for it, and which is rooted in the nature of God. We find Lewis’ most in-depth discussion of justice in *Mere*

¹⁵³ C.S. Lewis. “Letter to Mr Young, 31 Oct. 63.” In *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis, Volume III: Narnia, Cambridge, and Joy, 1950-1963*. Kindle ed., edited by Walter Hooper, HarperCollins e-books. Subsequent references to Lewis’ letters in *Volume III* will be cited in parentheses, within the main body of the text, citing author and date in the style that Lewis used for each letter.

Christianity, where he insists on the reality of the Moral Law, which is grounded in the nature of God. Our need for atonement comes from the fact that we break this law and put ourselves in the wrong with the Power behind it. God, in his mercy, meets this law on our behalf and thus reconciles us to himself and saves us from destruction. We will also pick up the threads of justice and mercy as we find them in *The Great Divorce*, *Miracles*, *A Grief Observed*, *Letters to Malcolm*, *Reflections on the Psalms*, *The Problem of Pain*, the *Narnia* series, *Perelandra* and *Till We Have Faces*.

We will then examine the content of the moral law, which ultimately comes down to a matter of obedience and submission to the will of our Creator. This will lead naturally into an examination of proper order and our place in creation. As for Anselm, so for Lewis: obedience to God is our proper station in life. The opposite, where a human being tries to set up his or her own will as sovereign, constitutes, for Lewis, “an utter falseness to its true creaturely position” (*PP*, 595). This is what happened in the Fall, and this disruption of proper order is what Christ sets right in his act of atonement.

This will set us up to be able to speak of how Christ fulfills the demand of the law on our behalf and restores proper order. Here we will examine what Lewis says explicitly about the atonement in his letters and his apologetics, as well as his depictions of the atonement in his fiction. We will look at which conceptions of the atonement Lewis rejects, which he accepts, and why. We will examine the victory-ransom model, the substitutionary model as Lewis expresses it through the concepts of debt and of punishment, and the propitiation-sacrifice model as we find them in Lewis’ corpus. While early in his career, in *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis rejects Anselm’s account as

“legal fiction”, we can see that his opinion of Anselm appears to change over time, and by the time of writing *The Lion*, Lewis seems wholly satisfied with the Anselmian picture of the atonement as an innocent person (Christ, the God-Man) suffering a vicarious punishment on behalf of the guilty party (humanity).

This will lead us into an examination of *Narnia* as the culmination of Lewis’ thought on the atonement. While *Till We Have Faces* was one of Lewis’ final works, and it too deals with atonement, though somewhat indirectly, it is *Narnia* that Lewis specifically identifies as a “supposal” of what Christ’s act of atonement would look like in another world.¹⁵⁴ We will see that, in *Narnia*, Lewis combines the images of victory-ransom, debt, punishment, and propitiation-sacrifice into a picture of the atonement that relies upon justice and mercy, and proper order, a picture which is fundamentally Anselmian.

While Lewis is not systematic about his depiction of the atonement, nevertheless by piecing together different parts of Lewis’ fiction, his letters, and his apologetics, we can see that he is working within the same framework as Anselm. How this plays out in Lewis’ texts we will examine presently.

¹⁵⁴ Lewis uses the term “supposal” or “supposition” a few times throughout his letters to refer to stories where the author *supposes* something and demonstrates it dramatically, e.g. in *Perelandra* “Suppose, even now, in some other planet there were a first couple undergoing the same that Adam and Eve underwent here, but successfully” (Lewis, C.S. “Letter to Mrs. Hook, 29 Dec 1958”. Collected Letters. *Volume III: Narnia, Cambridge, and Joy, 1950-1963*. Kindle ed., edited by Walter Hooper, HarperCollins e-books. See also Lewis’ letter to Mary Willis Shelburne about *The Problem of Pain*. (Lewis, C.S. “Letter to Mary Willis Shelburne, 26 Nov. 62”. Collected Letters. *Volume III*.) In a letter to Patricia Mackey, dated 8 June 1960, Lewis writes specifically about the *Narnia* stories as supposals: “Suppose there were a world like Narnia and it needed rescuing and the Son of God (or the “Great Emperor oversea”) went to redeem *it*, as He came to redeem ours, what might it, in that world, all have been like?” (Collected Letters. *Volume III*.)

Justice and Mercy

In chapter two, we saw a direct confrontation of the paradox of justice and mercy in Anselm, and the seeds of this paradox in both Athanasius and Augustine.¹⁵⁵ While the themes of justice and of mercy were present in the writings of Athanasius and Augustine, the desire to preserve *both* God's justice *and* his mercy turned into a systematic doctrine of the atonement in Anselm's thought. While justice and mercy play a somewhat implicit role in Lewis' theology, Lewis does make clear that God is *both* just *and* merciful. Our present task will be to draw out Lewis' thoughts on justice and mercy and to connect them to his understanding of the atonement.

In *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis describes God as "so full of mercy that He becomes man and dies by torture to avert that final ruin from His creatures, and who yet, where that heroic remedy fails, seems unwilling, or even unable, to arrest the ruin by an act of mere power" (621). This comment reveals two things that are fundamental to Lewis' thought: i) God is merciful; ii) he is not willing to overcome evil by an act of mere power. This comment itself is an indirect confrontation of the paradox of justice and mercy. Recall that, for Augustine, Christ would not overcome the devil by sheer force; and so, Christ beat the devil "at the justice game, not the power game," which preserves proper order that puts justice first and power second (*On the Trinity*, XIII.17). So too for Lewis, God will not beat the devil at "the power game", but rather at "the justice game", if we can use Augustine's words. Lewis makes this clear in *The Lion*, when Aslan refuses

¹⁵⁵ That paradox being: How can God be both just and merciful?

to work against the Deep Magic: he will not overcome the White Witch by an act of mere power.¹⁵⁶

In *The Problem of Pain* Lewis explains why God will not arrest the final ruin of his creatures by an act of mere power by noting that, if God were to remove sin by miracle, i.e. by mercy alone, then this would result in a world where nothing of importance depends on human choice (*PP*, 589). This would “decline the problem which God had set for himself, the problem of expressing His goodness through the total drama of a world containing free agents, in spite of, and by means of, their rebellion against Him” (*PP*, 597). For Lewis’ predecessors, as for Lewis himself, God’s plan must be realised, and in order for his plan to be realised, human beings must be freed from the effects of sin. Sin, however, cannot simply be forgiven merely via fiat. Anselm, as we have seen, insists that this would make God unjust (*WGBM*, I.12).¹⁵⁷ Lewis insists that this would result in a world “continually underpropped and corrected by Divine interference” (*PP*, 589), where nothing of importance depends on human choice and, thus, ultimately it would undermine God’s purposes for his creation. Here, I think that Lewis would agree with Anselm in claiming that “it would not be fitting that what God had planned for mankind should be utterly nullified” (*WGBM*, I.4) and that his plan should not be brought to fruition. It would be *unfitting* for God to forgive sin via fiat and to remove its consequences via miracle.

¹⁵⁶ The topic of Deep and Deeper Magic and their relation to justice and mercy is discussed more below.

¹⁵⁷ What Anselm says exactly is that, if sin is forgiven without punishment, “the position of sinner and non-sinner will be similar – and this does not befit God” (*WGBM*, I.12).

Beyond the fact that arresting sin and the ruin of humanity by a mere act of power would be unfitting – or perhaps one of the reasons *why* it would be unfitting – is the fact that such an act of power would be ineffective. For Lewis, God’s removal of sin via miracle would not *really* remove sin, for if he were to remove the results of the first sin, he would have to be prepared “to remove the results of the second sin, and of the third, and so on forever” (*PP*, 589). Forgiving sin via fiat, or removing its consequences via miracle, does not address the corruption of human nature. If God were merely to forgive sin without healing human nature, then we would continue to sin and he would have to continually forgive sin and remove its consequences. Our nature would not have been reformed. This makes sin, and the atonement, more than just a moral issue for Lewis. While it *is* a moral issue, it is *also* an ontological issue: the atonement must address our very being and heal that corruption in our nature.¹⁵⁸ We can recall that Athanasius insisted, similarly, that if sin were only a matter of offence, and not of corruption, then repentance would have sufficed. However, “repentance would neither have preserved the consistency of God, for he again would not have remained true if human beings were not held fast by death, nor does repentance recall human beings from what is natural, but merely halts sins” (*Inc.*, 65). For both Athanasius and for Lewis, mere forgiveness does not address the problem of a corrupt human nature. And so, God could not beat the devil at “the power game” for a number of reasons: i) this act of power would not *really* arrest

¹⁵⁸ We will take up this topic of the corruption of human nature again when we address Lewis’ appraisal of Anselm in *The Problem of Pain*.

the process of sin; ii) it would not solve the problem that God had set for Himself; iii) and it would not address the problem of the corruption of human nature.¹⁵⁹

Lewis makes a similar point in “The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment”, where he insists that mercy cannot be had without justice: “Mercy, detached from justice grows unmerciful”.¹⁶⁰ This is because the framework of justice – i.e. what is deserved – is required to even be able to speak about mercy. “It is only as deserved or undeserved that a sentence can be just or unjust” (288), or, we might add, merciful or unmerciful. For Lewis, “[t]he essential act of mercy was to pardon; and pardon in its very essence involves the recognition of guilt and ill-desert in the recipient” (294). In “The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment”, Lewis uses these claims to defend a retributive theory of punishment against a humanitarian theory of punishment. This is important to note since it is here that Lewis endorses a retributive theory, which involves enduring a punishment for a crime (a punishment deemed to be just), and which, in the atonement, Lewis claims that Christ endured on our behalf. We can also note that in “The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment”, Lewis insists on the marriage between mercy and justice; it is not one without the other, but necessarily both: mercy obtained through justice.

Lewis writes of justice more directly in *The Problem of Pain* as well, when he suggests that, while God is merciful, justice too must be upheld. “[S]o much mercy,” he writes, “yet still there is Hell” (*PP*, 621). Lewis insists that the doctrine of Hell, while not

¹⁵⁹ Of course, we could classify this as two reasons as well, since reason i) is the result of reason iii).

¹⁶⁰ C.S. Lewis, “The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment.” In *God in the Dock*. Edited by Walter Hooper, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970, 294. Subsequent references to “The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment” will be cited in parentheses within the main body of the text.

palatable, is nevertheless moral (*PP*, 621), and he does this by insisting on the reality of, and need for, justice: if a man were so morally twisted that he gained worldly success and wealth at the expense of others, if he gained power through a course of treachery and cruelty, and then lived a life of lust and hatred, not eaten up by guilt but contented at his lot, and finally betrayed his own accomplices and jeered at their loss, would not such a man be deserving of retribution, if he refused to repent and remained steadfast in his selfish exploitation of others, Lewis asks. He does not explicitly say that such a person is deserving of retribution, that justice demands that there be consequences to his actions, but he does play on his readers' implicit belief that such a man could not "continue, for all eternity, to be perfectly convinced that the laugh is on his side" (*PP*, 622). He asks, "if you cannot regard this as tolerable," – that is, that such a man, remaining what he is, should be confirmed forever in his present happiness – "is it only your wickedness – only spite – that prevents you from doing so? Or do you find that conflict between Justice and Mercy, which has sometimes seemed to you such an outmoded piece of theology, now actually at work in your own mind?" (*PP*, 622). We have an implicit sense that justice must prevail, that letting evil and cruelty go unchecked is unjust, and that mercy must be balanced with justice.

In other places too, throughout Lewis' corpus, he writes of justice and of mercy: We might recall Lewis' Nature-song in *The Great Divorce*, where personified Nature promises that "the strengths that once opposed your will shall be obedient fire in your

blood”,¹⁶¹ and concludes her song with, “Master, your Master has appointed you for ever: to be our King of Justice and our high Priest” (*GD*, 526). In this case, we, as human beings, are called to be Kings of Justice. We might suggest that we are such Kings, for Lewis, insofar as we share in the life of Christ,¹⁶² and he is the sovereign King of Justice above us.¹⁶³ In *Miracles*, Lewis writes of “the inflexible Christian demand for chastity, humility, mercy and justice” (*M*, 408), themes that he picks up in *Mere Christianity* when discussing Christian morality. In *Letters to Malcolm*, Lewis mentions justice and mercy in passing, attributing them to God.¹⁶⁴ In *A Grief Observed*, Lewis notes of Calvinism that, according to it, God, for all we know, could have “all the characteristics we regard as bad: unreasonableness, vanity, vindictiveness, injustice, cruelty”,¹⁶⁵ which he calls “filth and nonsense” (*GO*, 670). If God’s “good” really could be so opposite to ours, then the word “good, applied to Him, becomes meaningless” (*GO*, 669). This cannot be the case, for Lewis, who grounds morality in the nature of God, as we will see shortly. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis insists that we can trust our intuitive sense of justice when thinking about the goodness and justice of God. Why this is the case we can surmise from what

¹⁶¹ C.S. Lewis. *The Great Divorce*. In *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*. First Paperback Edition, HarperOne, 2007, 525. Subsequent references to *The Great Divorce* will be cited, using the abbreviation *GD*, in parentheses within the main body of the text.

This promise refers to the fact that our bodies are not now obedient to our wills, but that they will be in the life to come. (Recall Augustine’s assertion that disobedience of our bodies was the consequence of our disobedience in the Fall.)

¹⁶² Lewis writes, in *Mere Christianity*, that the whole purpose of the Christian life is to be drawn into the life of Christ (159).

¹⁶³ We will see this dynamic of earthly kings set under the King of Kings in the *Narnia* series.

¹⁶⁴ C.S. Lewis. *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*. Harcourt, Inc., 1992, 7; 50; 53. Subsequent references to *Letters to Malcolm* will be cited, using the abbreviation *LM*, in parentheses within the main body of the text.

¹⁶⁵ C.S. Lewis. *A Grief Observed*. In *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*. First Paperback Edition, HarperOne, 2007, 669. Subsequent references to *A Grief Observed* will be cited, using the abbreviation *GO*, in parentheses within the main body of the text.

Lewis writes in *The Problem of Pain*: “[t]he Divine ‘goodness’ differs from ours, but it is not sheerly different; it differs from ours not as white from black but as a perfect circle from a child’s first attempt to draw a wheel” (*PP*, 568). We find justice and mercy, too, in the *Narnia* series, in *Perelandra*, and in *Till We Have Faces*. These will be addressed in depth below, as they relate to a substitutionary atonement. For now, we can note that justice and mercy feature throughout Lewis’ corpus, though in a scattered and unsystematic way.

Having pointed to the places where we can see justice and mercy featured in Lewis’ writings, we can now turn to the grounding of justice in the nature of God, which will shed light on our understanding of how it is the God satisfies the moral law on our behalf, and thus upholds mercy while also upholding justice.

Justice Grounded in the Nature of God

When we read *The Problem of Pain* together with *Mere Christianity*, we see that Lewis grounds our implicit sense of justice ultimately in the nature of God. In the opening chapters of *Mere Christianity*, when Lewis makes a case for the existence of God based on our intuitive understanding of justice, he insists on the reality of justice and its foundation in the nature of God. We have all heard people quarrelling, notes Lewis, about what is or isn’t fair, and when one person insists that another’s behaviour is unfair or unjust, or selfish, he “is not merely saying that the other man’s behaviour does not happen to please him. He is appealing to some kind of standard of behaviour which he expects the other man to know about.... It looks, in fact, very much as if both parties had

in mind some kind of Law or Rule of fair play or decent behaviour...about which they really agreed” (*MC*, 15). In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis calls this Law “the doctrine of objective value” (*AM*, 701), and notes that our moral approvals and disapprovals are “responses to an objective order” (*AM*, 701). What this means is that there is a Moral Law,¹⁶⁶ for Lewis, that informs the very structure of reality, one that exists independently of our cultural and individual preferences.

Part of this Moral Law is a sense of justice (which Lewis never rigorously defines). The fullest definition of justice that we find in Lewis’ corpus comes in his discussion of the cardinal virtues. There, he writes that justice “is the old name for everything we should now call ‘fairness’; it includes honesty, give and take, truthfulness, keeping promises, and all that side of life” (*MC*, 72). This Moral Law, for Lewis, is imparted to us by the Lawgiver, i.e. God. This is how Lewis grounds justice in the nature of God. This Moral Law is something which God “has put into our minds” (*MC*, 34) and it is one of the “bits of evidence” that we have about God (*MC*, 34). In fact, Lewis writes: “You can find out more about God from the Moral Law than from the universe in general just as you find out more about a man by listening to his conversation than by looking at a house he has built” (*MC*, 34). For Lewis, the given structure of reality reflects the divine nature: the structure of reality is fundamentally informed by justice, which is expressed in our desire for it, and justice is rooted in the nature of God. If *all* we had were this Moral Law, Lewis writes, this would impart “despair rather than comfort” (Letter to Sister

¹⁶⁶ Lewis uses capitals when referring to the Moral Law.

Penelope, May 15th 1941),¹⁶⁷ since what we know based on our behaviour and our desire for justice is that there is this Law that informs reality and that we break it (*MC*, 24). If the universe is governed by this Lawgiver, this “absolute goodness”, then “we are making ourselves enemies to that goodness every day” (*MC*, 35). We are not left in our despair of having broken the law and put ourselves wrong with the Power behind it,¹⁶⁸ however, since God is also merciful and meets, on our behalf, the demands of this law and saves us from his disapproval (*MC*, 35-36). Thus, although Lewis is not as systematic in discussing the atonement and its relation to justice and mercy as his Patristic and Medieval predecessors, we can see that for Lewis too, the atonement is grounded in the justice and mercy of God, since God has met the demands of the Moral Law on our behalf.

The Demand of the Moral Law

Now that we have addressed justice and mercy as we find them in Lewis’ corpus, and we have seen that the atonement fulfills both justice and mercy by meeting the demands of the Moral Law on our behalf, we can proceed to examine the content of the Moral Law, as Lewis conceives of it.

The closest that Lewis comes to laying out what the demand of the law is that God meets on our behalf is in *Mere Christianity*, where he writes that what we owe to God for our rebellion is repentance, which amounts to a complete surrender of our wills to his

¹⁶⁷ In Lewis’ letter to Sister Penelope, May 15th 1941, he writes that in his broadcast talks he is preparing, he will “attempt to convince people that there is a moral law, that we disobey it, and that the existence of a Lawgiver is at least very probable and also (*unless* you add the Christian doctrine of the Atonement) imparts despair rather than comfort.”

¹⁶⁸ Lewis uses capitals when referring to the Power behind the universe.

(*MC*, 54). If we can say that the demand of the law is what God requires of us, and what he requires of us we fall short of (and need help in meeting the demand), then the core of the law is obedience in the form of submission, suffering, and death (*MC*, 55). This is what Lewis calls repentance, and it is what Christ offers on our behalf.

Of course, to say that the content of the Moral Law is a complete submission of our wills to God's will is to speak quite broadly. Lewis gives us specific examples when he says that we break the Moral Law when we do things like refuse to share, break our promises, inflict injury on another person, take things that aren't ours, and the like (*MC*, 15). In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis identifies certain laws and duties as part of the Moral Law: the law of general beneficence (do not murder, do not slander, do not do to others what you would not like them to do to you, give alms to those who ask, love your neighbour as yourself, love the stranger as yourself); the law of special beneficence (love and take care of your family/your country/your friends); duties to parents, elders, and ancestors; duties to children and posterity; the law of justice (which includes sexual justice, i.e. do not commit adultery, as well as honesty and justice in court); the law of good faith and veracity; the law of mercy (help the poor, the hungry, the sick, widows, orphans); and the law of magnanimity (do not injure others, protect others from injury, death is not the worst thing that can happen). These are real truths, he writes in *Mere Christianity*, which can be identified as those that have a common element across cultures: cowardice is never praised, for example, nor selfishness (17, 21).

While Lewis does not state this outright, his examples of obeying the Moral Law could perhaps be summed up with the Golden Rule: do as you would be done by. In

Mere Christianity, Lewis writes that, “[t]he Golden Rule of the New Testament (Do as you would be done by) is a summing up of what every one, at bottom, had always known to be right” (74). In *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis insists that these laws and duties are axioms, not conclusions, and that they cannot be proven (713; 731). He also describes the Moral Law this way, noting that “[t]his law was called the Law of Nature because people thought that everyone knew it by nature and did not need to be taught it... they thought that the idea of decent behaviour was obvious to everyone” (*MC*, 16). Reading these two statements together, we can say that what everyone knew by nature and did not need to be taught was the Golden Rule. Of course, there are some who deny the reality of this rule, a trend that Lewis comments on in *The Abolition of Man*. Despite occasional denials of the law, however, Lewis insists that this Moral Law, this idea of decent behaviour that can be summed up with the Golden Rule, is an axiom, something that accurately describes the structure of reality and something that cannot be deduced.

The principle of “do as you would be done by”, in turn, is grounded on the dynamic of humility and pride. Pride, writes Lewis, is the “pleasure of being above the rest” (*MC*, 104); it is “essentially competitive” (*MC*, 104). Though Lewis does not say this outright, we can deduce that it is ultimately pride that leads us to put ourselves above others and to break the Moral Law. If we insist on *not* doing as we would be done by, it is because we desire to get ahead in some sense, to put our good above that of another which, for Lewis, comes down to pride.

Lewis confirms this when he insists that pride is at “the center of Christian morals” (*MC*, 103). It is “the complete anti-God state of mind” (103); it is “the essential

vice, the utmost evil” (*MC*, 103). “Pride [is] the chief cause of misery in every nation and every family since the world began” (*MC*, 105). Conversely, obedience is fundamental to social morality: Lewis insists that we will not have a Christian society until we really want it; and we will not really want it until we become fully Christian.¹⁶⁹ Becoming “fully Christian” involves a complete submission of our wills to that of God, since I cannot learn to love my neighbour until I learn to love God, and to love God is to obey him (77).

The Moral Law, then, ultimately comes down to a matter of obedience and submission to the will of our Creator. This is the demand that we cannot meet on our own, and it is the demand that God meets on our behalf. How God meets this demand we will see Lewis describe variously as paying a debt, enduring a punishment, and defeating Death.

Before we address how this demand is met by Christ, we should attend to how this demand of obedience and its fulfillment relates to proper order in Lewis’ thought, since I am claiming that proper order is one of the foundational concepts upon which Lewis’ conception of the atonement is based.

Obedience and Proper Order

¹⁶⁹ Lewis describes a Christian society as one where “there are to be no passengers or parasites,...everyone’s work is to produce something good,...there is to be no ‘swank’ or ‘side’, no ‘putting on airs’” (*MC*, 75). A Christian society would also insist on obedience and courtesy and would be a cheerful society (*MC*, 75).

The demand of obedience and submission of our wills to that of God fulfills our proper place in creation. We know this based on Lewis' comment in *The Problem of Pain* about self-will and the Fall. There, Lewis writes that Adam and Eve, in disobeying God's command, tried to "set up on [their] own, to exist for [themselves]" (PP, 592). "They wanted...to 'call their souls their own'," writes Lewis, and this "constitutes an utter falseness to [their] true creaturely position" (PP, 595). We can note the similarity to Augustine here, who insists that the devil's attempt to wield his own power as though it belonged to him was a denial of reality. For both Lewis and for Augustine, the essential problem in the Fall is that dependent creatures tried to wield power that properly belongs to their Creator, and this attempt to usurp power is a denial of the reality of our true creaturely position.

Our true creaturely position, for Lewis – that place for which we were made – is one of obedience and of submitting our wills to that of God. In *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis writes that, "in obeying a rational creature consciously enacts its creaturely *rôle*, reverses the act by which we fell, treads Adam's dance backwards, and returns" (PP, 608-609). We can recall Anselm here, who writes that what is due to God is that all of our wishes be subject to him: "All the will of a rational creature ought to be subject to the will of God" (WGBM, I.11); and that, "when any creature whatever maintains...the station in life which belongs to it...this creature is said to be obeying God and honouring him.... But when a rational being does not wish for what is right, he dishonours God, with regard to himself, since he is not willingly subordinating himself to God's governance, and is disturbing, as far as he is able, the order and beauty of the universe" (WGBM, I.15). For

Lewis, as for Anselm (and for Augustine), we maintain our proper station in life when we submit ourselves to the will of God: he is sovereign Creator; we are dependent creatures. Our wills are *not* in fact our own, and to pretend that they are is to try to do something that is entirely contrary to our true creaturely position. Again, in *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis writes that “the proper good of a creature is to surrender itself to its Creator...which is given in the mere fact of its being a creature” (*PP*, 602). Lewis writes something similar in *Surprised by Joy* as well, when he insists that “[t]o know God is to know that our obedience is due to Him. In his nature His sovereignty *de jure* is revealed”.¹⁷⁰ There, Lewis goes on to discuss God’s sovereignty *de jure* and *de facto*, or, as he puts it, God’s right and his might. He insists that right must come before might, thus essentially agreeing with Augustine that proper order, as grounded in the nature of God, puts justice first and power second. This is rooted, for Lewis, in the very nature of God.

Lewis writes of our true creaturely position slightly differently in *Mere Christianity*, though there too he insists on obedience and proper order. Lewis insists, in *Mere Christianity*, that the human being’s purpose is to be drawn into the life of Christ (*MC*, 159),¹⁷¹ and to share in the life of Christ, he notes, is to participate in the love of God (*MC*, 144). “To experience the love of God in a true, and not illusory form, is...to experience it as our surrender to His demand”; to experience it in the opposite way would be a “solecism against the grammar of being” (*PP*, 576). For Lewis, we were made to know and to love God, to participate in his love, and to be drawn into the life of Christ.

¹⁷⁰ C.S. Lewis. *Surprised by Joy*. Harper Collins Publishers, 2002, 269.

¹⁷¹ Lewis also writes that God designed human beings to run on Himself (*MC*, 49).

To do so is necessarily to surrender our wills to his, and in doing this we are enacting our creaturely role and “treading Adam’s dance backward” (*PP*, 609). By obeying the will of God, we are conforming to the very structure of reality.

We cannot do this on our own, however. Lewis notes that only a perfect person could repent (could surrender his will to God’s, could undergo a death of self-will and self-conceit) perfectly, and he would not need it. This surrender is enacted perfectly in the death of Christ. This is what Christ pays in our place: the complete death of self-will. In *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis notes that Christ’s death is “the very nerve of redemption” (*PP*, 610), and that “martyrdom always remains the supreme enacting and perfecting of Christianity” (*PP*, 610). The very nerve of redemption is surrender and death, the death of pride and of self-will; and, Lewis notes, physical death is also “an important part of the treatment” (*MC*, 164).

This is, at bottom, how Christ meets the demand of the Moral Law on our behalf. This is also, however, just a skeleton, so to speak: it is the bare bones of the atonement stripped to the core. While this gives us the framework within which Lewis is working, we can see this notion of the atonement through surrender, suffering, and death fleshed out in terms of victory, ransom, debt, punishment, and propitiation in Lewis’ works. Also, in examining Lewis’ various depictions of the atonement, we will see that the demand for obedience and the fulfillment of the Moral Law on our behalf necessarily involves an element of substitution, which rules out certain expressions of the atonement as adequate pictures of its reality.

Lewis’ Various Depictions of the Atonement

We have seen thus far that justice and mercy, while somewhat implicit, are foundational to Lewis' conception of the atonement: God is "so full of mercy that He becomes man and dies by torture to avert the final ruin of His creatures", (*PP*, 621) and yet he will not arrest the ruin by a mere act of power; the demand of the law is fulfilled in Christ's death, on our behalf, thus upholding both mercy and justice. This is the foundation of Lewis' conception of the atonement. How this gets accomplished, how the demand is met, how Christ's death reconciles us to God, Lewis describes variously in terms of victory-ransom, debt, punishment, and propitiation-sacrifice. Thus, while Lewis does not ascribe to any one particular conception of the atonement,¹⁷² the theories that Lewis accepts, and the ones that he uses, are theories that emphasize Christ's having satisfied a demand on our behalf (not where he is an example to be followed) and where this satisfaction is not just a matter of forgiveness but of renewal of human nature. We will look at the theories that Lewis accepts and the ones that he rejects, and why, presently.

No *One* Formula (Lewis' 'Hedgings' In *Mere Christianity*)

In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis acknowledges different ways of understanding the atonement.

You can say that Christ died for our sins. You may say that the Father has forgiven us because Christ has done for us what we ought to have done. You may say that

¹⁷² By which I mean that he does not take any one of the theories put forward throughout the history of the church to be the *one* theory that captures the whole reality of the atonement. Of course, I am arguing that he ascribes to one particular conception if we look at the atonement in terms of proper order and the nature of God. While this is the framework that Lewis uses, he seems to think that it can be expressed with various theories that all have certain commonalities.

we are washed in the blood of the Lamb. You may say that Christ has defeated death. They are all true. If any of them do not appeal to you, leave it alone and get on with the formula that does. And, whatever you do, do not start quarrelling with other people because they use a different formula from yours (147).

Despite the fact that Lewis would acknowledge different depictions of the atonement as being true, it is not the case that *all* depictions of the atonement are equally true: for Lewis, there are acceptable and unacceptable ways of describing and explaining Christ's death. In a letter to Arthur Greeves on October 18, 1931, for example, Lewis rejects the moral exemplar view as unbiblical. While it is not the case, for Lewis, that *all* ways of explaining Christ's death are true, he does insist that there are *multiple* pictures or formulas that help us to understand the event of Christ's death and its impact on our salvation. For Lewis, this is because no one doctrine or formula is adequate to express the reality of Christ's death and resurrection. In a letter to Mr Young, 31 Oct. 63, Lewis insists on the truth of multiple formulas, but also on the inadequacy of any *one* formula: "When Scripture says that Christ died 'for us', I think the word is usually ὑπέρ (on behalf of), not ἀντί (instead of). I think the ideas of sacrifice, Ransom, Championship (over Death), Substitution etc. are all images to *suggest* the reality (not otherwise comprehensible to us) of the Atonement. To fix on any *one* of them as if it contained and limited the truth like a scientific definition wd. in my opinion be a mistake" (italics, capitals, and abbreviation in the original). Lewis also refers to God's "wrath" in this same letter. And in a letter to Clyde S. Kilby on 7/5/59, he refers to "the divine sacrifice". All of these ways of speaking of the atonement are true, for Lewis, though they are also insufficient to express the whole reality of the atonement on their own.

We should not be surprised that our formulas do not measure up to the reality, since “[w]e believe that the death of Christ is just that point in history at which something absolutely unimaginable from outside shows through into our own world” (MC, 53). Any doctrines that we build up about Christ’s incarnation, death, and resurrection are simply “translations into our concepts and ideas of that which God has already expressed in a language more adequate, namely the actual incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection” (Letter to Arthur Greeves, Oct. 18, 1931).

While Lewis insists that our doctrines are insufficient to express the whole reality of the atonement, and that multiple formulas or theories are all true, this is not where Lewis ends. Throughout his corpus we see him endorse and use certain theories and reject others. What we will see is that the core element in each of the theories that Lewis accepts is substitution: that Christ has done something *in our place* (on our behalf) that we could not have done ourselves.

If we recall what we have already said about justice and mercy, we can say that Christ has met the demand of the Moral Law on our behalf. However, that is not all. It is not just that Christ has paid a debt that we owe and that accounts are now clear, so to speak. As we examine what Lewis says about the atonement in depth, we will see that Lewis presents a much broader, richer picture, drawing on images of victory-ransom, debt, punishment, and propitiation-sacrifice. While each of the theories he draw on have a common foundation in the proper order of the universe and the justice and mercy of God, they each depict something unique about the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. We will also see, as we examine Lewis on the atonement and move into his theological

anthropology, that the atonement is about the renewal of a corrupt human nature and not just a clearing of accounts. Thus, to say that Christ meets the demand of the Moral Law on our behalf and leave it at that would be too simple. That said, we can now examine exactly what Lewis says about the different models of the atonement and how this illuminates Lewis' own understanding.

Rejection of Moral Exemplar Theory

In his letter to Arthur Greeves, dated Oct. 18, 1931, Lewis rejects the moral exemplar theory as unbiblical and insists that, instead of an exemplar theory, we find a propitiation-sacrifice theory at the core of Christianity.

My puzzle was the whole doctrine of Redemption: in what sense the life and death of Christ "saved" or "opened salvation to" the world. I could see how miraculous salvation might be necessary.... I could well imagine a whole world being in the same state and similarly in need of a miracle. What I couldn't see was how the life and death of someone else (whoever he was) 2000 years ago could help us here and now – except in so far as his example helped us. And the example business, tho' true and important, is not Christianity: right in the center of Christianity, in the Gospels and St Paul, you keep on getting something quite different and very mysterious in those phrases I have so often ridiculed (propitiation-sacrifice-the blood of the Lamb) – expressions which I could only interpret in senses that seemed to me either silly or shocking.

There is an important sense in which, for Lewis, the purpose of Christ's death on the cross was to transform human beings. While Lewis writes that the "example business" is "true and important," any moral reform on our part – any way in which we might follow Christ's example – must first be grounded in an objective understanding of the atonement, for Lewis. This is because the purpose of the atonement was not to kindle in us a greater love of God, but rather it was to set right the order of the universe that was disrupted by

humanity in the Fall. While moral reform and following Christ's example are crucial, they must be understood within the context of a substitutionary and a ransom theory of the atonement.

Expressions which...seemed to me either silly or shocking

In his letter of Arthur Greeves, as we have just seen, Lewis notes that he found the expression of the atonement in terms of propitiation-sacrifice-the blood of the Lamb "either silly or shocking". He reiterates this point in *Mere Christianity*, where he writes that the theory of the atonement that most people have heard is that of our being let off because Christ has volunteered to bear a punishment instead of us. Lewis notes that, "on the face of it that is a very silly theory. If God was prepared to let us off, why on earth did He not do so? And what possible point could there be in punishing an innocent person instead?" (*MC*, 54). Lewis' objection to this notion of vicarious punishment is a moral one: what point could there be in punishing an innocent person in place of a guilty one? Over the course of his career, Lewis comes to see the logic in a vicarious punishment model. Even at the time of writing *Mere Christianity* – which was originally given as a series of lectures between 1941 and 1944 – Lewis writes that, "I admit that even this theory does not seem to me quite so immoral and so silly as it used to" (*MC*, 42).

What we can see here is that Lewis is reacting to the vicarious punishment model of the atonement based on an implicit understanding of justice: he had found this theory, at one point, "silly" and "immoral". This is significant, for our purposes, because it shows that Lewis is operating from within a framework of justice. The justice or injustice

of a theory, based on our implicit sense of right and wrong, could be grounds for rejecting or accepting a theory. If we are to classify Lewis' understanding of the atonement as fundamentally Anselmian, then this foregrounding of justice fits with our characterization of Lewis. We have already seen that both Lewis and Anselm are concerned with preserving both the justice and the mercy of God. If we are to preserve the justice of God, then adhering to a model of the atonement that is "immoral" would hardly do. Perhaps, if the atonement were just about the clearing of accounts, then punishing an innocent party on behalf of a guilty party would indeed be immoral. However, if the innocent party is the only one who could offer repentance (*Miracles*, 417) and if there were an ontological link between the innocent and the guilty party (*MC*, 147) such that the guilty could be *re-formed* through the process (*MC*, 147), then we may not think the vicarious punishment model so silly or immoral. We will see this development in Lewis' thought, such that in *Miracles* and *Narnia*, we will see Lewis come to accept and fruitfully use a vicarious punishment model of the atonement within the framework of justice. Before we look at the dynamics of how an innocent party might be punished on behalf of a guilty one, however, it will be fruitful to examine another theory that Lewis rejects early in his career.

"Legal Fiction" in *The Problem of Pain*

The Problem of Pain is one of Lewis' earliest theological works, originally published in 1940. In it he deals with theodicy and the Fall, and in so doing he pits the "Church Fathers" – who thought that we are really involved in Adam's sin – against

Anselm – who thought our involvement, writes Lewis, to be only by “legal fiction” (599). Referring to 1 Cor. 15:22, “As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive”, Lewis writes that “[i]t is this passage which lies behind the Patristic doctrine of our physical presence in Adam’s loins and Anselm’s doctrine of our inclusion, by legal fiction, in the suffering of Christ” (*PP*, 599). At this point in his theological career, Lewis clearly does not think much of Anselm. He writes that “[l]egal fiction, adoption, and transference or imputation of merit and guilt, could never have played the part they did in theology if they had always been felt to be so artificial as we now find them to be” (*PP*, 600). Lewis also writes that he finds unhelpful the Patristic way of speaking of the Fall in terms of our physical presence in Adam’s loins. “These theories may have done good in their day,” Lewis writes of Anselm’s “legal fiction” and the Patristic formula that says that we were “in” Adam in a physical sense, “but they do no good to me, and I am not going to invent others” (*PP*, 599).

At first glance, Lewis’ characterization of Anselm’s theory as “legal fiction” may seem to hurt my case that Lewis’ understanding of the atonement is fundamentally Anselmian. However, when we look at why he classifies Anselm this way, we will see that what he rejects is a theory of the atonement that is superficial, i.e., one that does not understand the atonement to affect us at a deep level, in fact to reform our very nature. We will also see that Lewis’ opinion of Anselm appears to change over time, and by the time of writing *The Lion*, Lewis is wholly satisfied with the Anselmian picture of the atonement as an innocent person (Christ, the God-Man) suffering a vicarious punishment on behalf of the guilty party (humanity).

Regarding *why* he finds Anselm's "legal fiction" theory and the Patristic formula that says that we were physically "in" Adam unhelpful, Lewis writes: "It may be that the acts and sufferings of great archetypal individuals such as Adam and Christ are ours not by legal fiction, metaphor, or causality, but in some much deeper fashion" (*PP*, 599). It seems as though "man, as he really is," writes Lewis, "differs a good deal from man as our categories of thought and our three-dimensional imaginations represent him; that the separateness – modified only by causal relations – which we discern between individuals, is balanced, in absolute reality, by some kind of 'inter-animation' of which we have no conception at all" (*PP*, 599). Lewis will go on to speculate about this "inter-animation" in *Mere Christianity*, when he uses the image of the toy soldiers to explain the process of sanctification. However, he admits that this picture is inadequate to the reality (*MC*, 146). While we cannot say exactly how we might be involved in the Fall of Adam and in Christ's atonement, what we can say for certain is that for Lewis, our redemption cannot be a matter of "fiction", that we subjectively understand ourselves to be involved in Adam's action, but that we were not *really* so involved: for Lewis, Christ's action was not merely attributed to us without it affecting our very natures in some deep manner. Thus, it seems to be that Lewis classifies Anselm's theory as "legal fiction", because it does not adequately address the reality of our sin and our redemption. "Legal fiction" implies a legal transaction, the imputation of innocence to a guilty party, that is superficial, that is "fiction", i.e. that is not *really* the case, but that we will count as such.

Why Lewis Reads Anselm This Way

While we cannot say for sure how and by whom Lewis was influenced in his reading of Anselm, we can note that Lewis was reading Gustav Aulén as early as 1942, that he held Aulén in high enough regard to recommend him to others,¹⁷³ and that a high opinion of Aulén fits with a low one of Anselm. Likely, Lewis was reading Aulén even earlier, since in 1942, in a letter to Mr. H. Morland (dated Aug 19th 1942) he recommends Aulén's *Christus Victor* as a correction to Moberley's *Atonement & Personality*, suggesting that Lewis had already read Aulén's *Christus Victor*, though at what date we do not know.

In *Christus Victor*, Aulén writes that the "Latin theory of the Atonement", of which he holds that Anselm is an adherent, is "juridical in its inmost essence" (*Christus Victor*, 90). This is the crux of Aulén's rejection of Anselm. The fact that Lewis calls Anselm's account "legal fiction" suggests that he reads it similarly. For Aulén, the primary problem is that Anselm is too legalistic, relying on analogies taken from medieval law courts and legalistic relations between man and God. According to Aulén, this is because the focus of the Latin theory of the atonement is the debt repaid from humanity's side: there is an emphasis on what is owed to God and what is paid by Christ as human. The focus on divinity, however, disappears into the background (*Christus Victor*, 88-89). While Lewis may or may not agree with Aulén that Anselm's account focuses too much on Christ's humanity, and that this makes his account lopsided,¹⁷⁴ so to speak, he does focus on the *legal* part of Anselm's account, suggesting that he would read

¹⁷³ E.g. C.S. Lewis. "Letter to Mr. H. Morland, Aug 19th 1942". In *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis, Volume II: Books, Broadcasts, and the War, 1931-1949*. Kindle ed., edited by Walter Hooper, HarperCollins e-books.

¹⁷⁴ See *Christus Victor*, 86-88 for Aulén's argument that Anselm focuses too much on the humanity of Christ, to the exclusion of his divinity.

Anselm's treatment of the atonement in terms of a legal transaction between God and humanity. Such a legalistic relationship does not go deep enough, for Lewis.

We can perhaps gain more insight into this legalistic reading of Anselm by looking deeper at Aulén's account. According to the Latin theory of the atonement, as Aulén recounts it, Christ earns an excess of merit by the performance of that which is commanded, plus a "supererogatoria".¹⁷⁵ That which is commanded, writes Aulén, is the observance of Law, which Christ fulfills. Christ earns merit by observing the Law, and he earns an "overplus" of merit through his supererogatory act of submission unto death. Since his death was not owed, as he was sinless, he thus earns an excess of merit that can be transferred to humanity (the guilty parties). It is thus that Christ pays our debt, a debt that we cannot repay as we already owe everything to God. "We have here the whole essence of the Latin idea of the Atonement",¹⁷⁶ writes Aulén, a theory that is built, on his reading, on a Medieval penitential system and one that is legalistic to its core.

We can see how Aulén's reading of Anselm gives us an artificial account, explaining the atonement in terms that do not *really* affect our human nature: on this account, Christ earned excess merit for an act that was not owed, and this excess was transferred to humanity in a legal exchange. This was Lewis' primary critique of Anselm in *The Problem of Pain*: the atonement cannot simply be a matter of an exchange of merit, something earned by Christ and transferred to us in a legalistic manner that does not affect any real change in us. This is what I had suggested earlier: that while Christ does pay a debt on our behalf, by meeting the demand of the Moral Law, this process, for

¹⁷⁵ Gustav Aulén. *Christus Victor*, 82.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

Lewis, is not just a clearing of accounts, or a legal exchange. To see why this is we can examine Lewis' thoughts on the corruption of human nature.

Corruption of Human Nature

Lewis' rejection of the moral exemplar theory and his casting of Anselm's substitutionary theory as "legal fiction" seem to have their roots in the same problem: the corruption of human nature. In *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis writes that "we are members of a spoiled species" (598): it is not just that our actions are sinful, but that our very natures have been corrupted. Lewis confirms this when he writes that "[w]hat man lost by the Fall was his original specific nature.... The total organism which had been taken up into his spiritual life was allowed to fall back into the merely natural condition from which, at his making, it had been raised" (*PP*, 597). We have seen the same problem addressed by Athanasius: if sin were merely a matter of offence, and not of corruption, then repentance would have sufficed. However, for Athanasius, "repentance would neither have preserved the consistency of God, for he again would not have remained true if human beings were not held fast by death, nor does repentance recall human beings from what is natural, but merely halts sins" (*Inc.*, 65). So too for Lewis: repentance would not have preserved the consistency of God, for the problem that he had set for himself was "of expressing His goodness through the total drama of a world containing free agents, in spite of, and by means of, their rebellion against Him" (*PP*, 597). We have already seen, in *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis note that if God were to remove the effects of sin via miracle, it would not truly arrest sin, since we would keep sinning. Sin is not

just a matter of offence, for Lewis, as for Athanasius, but of corruption of our natures.

Repentance without renewal does not address the fundamental problem of corruption.

Since human beings are now held fast in natural corruption, it is necessary that human nature be recreated in the image of God. And so, this is one of the effects of the atonement: we are given new selves (*MC*, 157); we are not just improved or pardoned, but re-made (*MC*, 170). We are able to resist this remaking, writes Lewis, but when we do so, “what I so proudly call ‘Myself’ becomes merely the meeting place for trains of events which I never started and which I cannot stop. What I call ‘My wishes’ become merely the desires thrown up by my physical organism or pumped into me by other men’s thoughts or even suggested to me by devils.... I am not, in my natural state, nearly so much of a person as I like to believe” (*MC*, 176). We need to be recalled from this natural state and remade in the image of God.

This explains why the moral exemplar theory is inadequate, and why Anselm’s theory, if we understand it as God simply attributing salvation to us in a way that does not affect our very nature, is also inadequate: our very selves need to be remade; sin is so overwhelming that we cannot will our own reform, nor would anything less than a complete remodeling (*MC*, 163) and transformation (*MC*, 170) suffice for salvation. Thus, Lewis notes in *Mere Christianity* that, “[i]f 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” (129).

This is likely the reason why Lewis says that the acts and sufferings of Adam and Christ may be ours “in some much deeper fashion” (*PP*, 599): legal fiction, metaphor,

and causality¹⁷⁷ do not go deep enough to remedy the corruption of human nature. We will address the transformation of corrupt human nature more fully in chapter four, when we look at Lewis' concept of "good infection" (*MC*, 141). For now, we can note that any theory of the atonement that Lewis will accept as true must go beyond "one more bit of good advice" (*MC*, 129), and beyond "legal fiction" (*PP*, 599) that it merely attributed to us, but does not affect us on a deeper level, and it must uphold both the justice and the mercy of God. We will now turn to Lewis' concrete expressions of the atonement and the various theories that he accepts as true.

Victory and Ransom: The Christus Victor Theory

We find images of victory and of ransom in Lewis' fiction, rather than in his apologetics.¹⁷⁸ Lewis never writes about why this is and all that we can do is speculate. Perhaps Lewis felt that these motifs were particularly suited to story. Whatever the reason, the motifs of victory over death and a ransom paid on our behalf are two related ways in which Lewis believed we could rightly understand the atonement. Before we delve into Lewis' use of the concepts of victory and ransom, it will be useful to examine briefly these images as we find them in the early church, when the so-called Christus Victor theory was the dominant way of understanding the atonement.

¹⁷⁷ Lewis seems to mean by causality that we were literally in Adam and so subject to the effects of the Fall.

¹⁷⁸ In *Mere Christianity* (147) Lewis identifies Christ's death as a victory over death as one of the ways that we can truthfully describe the atonement. He does not delve into the details of a victory account in *Mere Christianity*, however, beyond insisting that it is one of the ways that we may rightly understand the atonement. In his fiction, Lewis introduces the element of ransom into this victory motif and fleshes the two elements out into a rich picture of the atonement.

Gustav Aulén rightly notes that “[t]he early church had...no developed doctrine of the Atonement, properly so called. The contributions of the patristic period to theology lie in another direction, being chiefly concerned with Christology and the doctrine of the Trinity; in regard to the Atonement, only hesitating efforts were made along a variety of lines, and the ideas which found expression were usually clothed in a fantastic mythological dress”.¹⁷⁹ It is not until Anselm, in the middle ages, that we have a systematic account of the atonement. However, while not systematic, we do find an understanding of the atonement in the early Church Fathers that can be broadly classified as the Christus Victor theory, or the ransom theory, of the atonement. While we have already examined Athanasius’ and Augustine’s accounts of the atonement in chapter two, we will now focus specifically on the victory and ransom motifs that we find in these two thinkers and draw out the connections that can be made to Lewis’ own thought on the atonement.

Regarding the Christus Victor theory, Eddy and Beilby, in *The Nature of the Atonement*, note that, “[i]n one form or another, this view seems to have dominated the atonement theology of the early church for the first millennium,”¹⁸⁰ and that this general approach crystallized into the so-called ransom theory of the atonement, where “the conflict-victory theme was conjoined with the redemption-ransom motif to produce an explanatory model in which Jesus became the ransom, by which God redeemed humanity from Satan’s power”.¹⁸¹ The conflict-victory theme describes the atonement in terms of a

¹⁷⁹ Gustav Aulén. *Christus Victor*, 1.

¹⁸⁰ Paul R. Eddy and James Beilby. *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*. IVP Academic, 2006, 12.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

conflict between God and the devil, or between God and death itself. The redemption-ransom motif depicts Christ's death as a price paid to the devil for the redemption of humanity. We find the conflict-victory motif combined with the redemption-ransom motif, for instance, in Augustine, whom we know that Lewis held in high regard.¹⁸² The general conflict-victory theme is also present in Athanasius, whom Lewis also held in high regard.¹⁸³

Regarding the Christus Victor theory, Aulén notes: "Its central theme is the idea of the Atonement as a Divine conflict and victory; Christ – Christus Victor – fights against and triumphs over the evil powers of the world, the 'tyrants' under which mankind is in bondage and suffering, and in Him God reconciles the world to Himself" (Aulén, 4). There are four broad characteristics of the Christus Victor theory, each of which we will see depicted by Lewis in *The Lion*, which is the work that gives us Lewis' fullest and richest picture of the victory and ransom motifs:¹⁸⁴ i) the devil has certain rights over mankind; ii) Christ becomes incarnate and dies on the cross in order to defeat the devil and reconcile humanity to Himself; iii) Christ's defeat of the devil is sometimes expressed in terms of the payment of a ransom, where Christ's life is the ransom, commonly regarded as paid to the devil or to death itself, for humanity; iv) the defeat of the devil is depicted in terms of deception, i.e. Christ's outwitting the devil, instead of in terms of brute force.

¹⁸² In *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis cites Augustine's account of pride as the original sin approvingly and uses it in his own discussion of the Fall (592). In *Preface to Paradise Lost*, he identifies Augustine's account of the Fall as that which is held by the church as a whole (69).

¹⁸³ In his preface to *On The Incarnation*, for example, Lewis states that Athanasius "stood for the Trinitarian doctrine 'whole and undefiled' when the civilised world seemed to be slipping into Arianism" (16).

¹⁸⁴ The victory-ransom motif also appears in *Perelandra*, and we will consider this work below.

Underlying this narrative of the devil's defeat are certain theological tenets.

Aulén identifies four central theological implications of the Christus Victor theory that are relevant to our consideration of Lewis. First, “this whole group of ideas, including the semi-legal transaction with the devil, the payment of the ransom-price, and the deception, is presented, often explicitly, in order to deny that God proceeds by way of brute force to accomplish His purpose by compulsion”.¹⁸⁵ This aligns the Christus Victor theory with the concept of justice: God would not take back his property, so to speak, by force. To use a somewhat irreverent metaphor, this would be akin to breaking a promise, something that Lewis specifically identifies as contrary to justice (*MC*, 72): because of the Fall, the devil has certain rights over humanity. God would not go against his own rules, or his own promises, but rather must redeem humanity by upholding justice (thereby upholding his own rules and maintaining his own self-consistency).

Second, “God's dealings even with the powers of evil have the character of ‘fair play’.... Evil is not overcome by an external use of force, but by internal methods of self-offering”.¹⁸⁶ Again, this foregrounds the concept of justice, which Lewis directly identifies with fairness (*MC*, 72). Even with the powers of evil, God is not unjust.

Third, Aulén notes that, “on the one hand, the devil is an enemy, a beguiler, a usurper; on the other, he has won certain rights over man”.¹⁸⁷ Augustine writes that human beings were *justly* handed over to the devil (*On the Trinity*, XIII.16). For Lewis, this winning of certain rights over humanity is especially evident in *The Lion* when we

¹⁸⁵ Gustav Aulén. *Christus Victor*, 53.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

learn that the White Witch *holds certain rights over traitors*, and that this Deep Magic is written on the sceptre of the Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea.¹⁸⁸

Finally, regarding the deception of the devil, “the power of evil ultimately overreaches itself when it comes in conflict with the power of good, with God Himself”.¹⁸⁹ The deception of the devil is less about divine trickery, we might say, and more about the hubris of the devil and the blindness of evil, a theme that is important in Lewis’ writings.¹⁹⁰ We might even say that it would not be hard to deceive the devil, since he does not even recognize goodness when he sees it. Trickery may not even be needed if the devil is blind to justice and to mercy. This is the case for Lewis in *The Lion: the Witch is completely blind to the Deeper Magic*, and hence any ‘deception’ is more about her blindness than about actual deception. In *The Magician’s Nephew*, too, we see Digory overcome the temptations of the Witch not through deception, but because she is so blind to the good that she overplays her hand and loses her potential captive.¹⁹¹

What is crucial for our present analysis, is that justice is the underlying theme that runs throughout the Christus Victor theory and its theological implications: the devil, though a deceiver and an enemy, justly holds rights over human beings. God defeats the devil and redeems fallen humanity, thus bringing his purposes to fulfillment, through

¹⁸⁸ C.S. Lewis. *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*. First American edition, Harper Collins Publishers, 2001, 175. Subsequent references to *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* will be cited, using the abbreviation *LWW*, in parentheses within the main body of the text.

¹⁸⁹ Gustav Aulen, *Christus Victor*, 55.

¹⁹⁰ Lewis displays the blindness of evil in *The Screwtape Letters* when the demons cannot conceive of an unselfish love. He does this again *The Horse and His Boy* in the case of the Caloremenes (specifically the Tisroc and Prince Rabadash) and in Shasta. In *The Magician’s Nephew* we also see the blindness of the Witch towards the good in her attempt to entrap Digory. These cases will be examined in depth in chapters four and five.

¹⁹¹ This episode is discussed in more depth in chapter four.

justice, not through force.¹⁹² We can also note that sins are not forgiven, on this account, simply via fiat; justice is fulfilled through the death of Christ, whose life is a ransom paid to the devil (or to death itself) for the release of humanity. Having addressed the common characteristics of the Christus Victor theory, we can now look at the conflict-victory and the redemption-ransom motifs concretely in Athanasius, Augustine, and Lewis.

The Christus Victor/Ransom Theory in Athanasius

While we do not find a fully developed Christus Victor theory of the atonement in Athanasius' works, we can see some seeds of such a theory that may have informed Lewis' use of the concept of victory to describe the atonement. While Athanasius does not use the concept of ransom, he does depict the atonement in terms of Christ's defeat of the devil and, more often, his defeat of death itself, and thus as a victory over death and corruptibility (*Inc.*, 67). Of Athanasius, Aulén notes that "through the transgression sin has subjected the race of men to death's power, and on this account death has legal rights over men. But God's purpose cannot come to naught.... Therefore the Word becomes man, that He may restore the life which had been lost".¹⁹³ This notion that death (or in Lewis' case, the devil) has legal rights over humanity will play a central role in Lewis' conception of the atonement in *The Lion*, as does the image of atonement as victory over death and corruptibility.

¹⁹² See, e.g. Augustine in *On the Trinity* where he writes that, having killed Christ, who owed nothing, it was then "perfectly just that [the devil] should let the debtors go free" (*On the Trinity*, XIII.17).

¹⁹³ Gustav Aulén. *Christus Victor*, 42.

The Christus Victor/Ransom Theory in Augustine

Like Athanasius, Augustine does not have a systematically-worked-out theory of the atonement. However, we do find the concepts of victory and ransom in Augustine's depiction of Christ's defeat of the Devil, which frees humankind from death and destruction. Augustine's theory displays each of the four broad characteristics of the classic Christus Victor theory. First, the devil has won certain rights over mankind. At the time of the Fall, writes Augustine, God told the serpent, *you shall eat earth*.¹⁹⁴ He told human beings, *into earth you shall go* (signifying bodily death), and *earth you are* (signifying a change for the worse).¹⁹⁵ This was a just sentence: because the spirit willfully forsook God, it has to forsake the body against its will (*City of God*, XIII.15). Humanity is thus handed over to the devil, the one who "eats earth". Augustine insists that God did not order this but (justly) permitted it, for when he withdrew from the sinner, the author of sin marched in (*On the Trinity*, XIII.16).

Second, Christ becomes incarnate and dies on the cross in order to defeat the devil and reconcile humanity to himself. In *On the Trinity*, Augustine writes that Christ, "who was the true mediator of life and is alive in the spirit, raised up His own flesh that was dead, and drove out that one, who is dead in the spirit and the mediator of death, outside the spirits of those who believe in Him" (IX.17). Christ defeated the devil, we have seen already, in order to lift the judgement on humanity and restore immortality to fallen human beings. Augustine describes this process as Christ's having liberated us from captivity (*On the Trinity*, XIII. 17-18).

¹⁹⁴ Augustine, *On the Trinity*, XIII.12, citing Genesis 3.14.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, citing Genesis 3.19.

Third, we can describe Christ's death as a ransom paid to the devil, for Augustine, because it is the price paid for the release of the captives. The ransom itself is the devil's undoing, for the devil takes what does not belong to him. Since the devil killed Christ, "without him being in his debt" (death, for Augustine, is the punishment for sin, and since Christ was sinless, he owed the devil nothing – i.e. he did not 'owe' death), it was "perfectly just that he should let the debtors go free" (*On the Trinity*, XIII 13:17).

Fourth, Christ defeats the devil by outwitting him, instead of using force. This element of the deception of the devil and the motif of evil overreaching itself (the devil taking what is not his) is most prominent in Augustine's *Sermon 392*, where Augustine uses the metaphor of a mouse-trap.

If Christ had not been put to death, death would not have died. The devil was conquered by his own trophy of victory. The devil jumped for joy, when he seduced the first man and cast him down to death. By seducing the first man, he slew him: by slaying the last man, he lost the first from his snare.... The devil jumped for joy when Christ died; and by the very death of Christ the devil was overcome: he took, as it were, the bait in the mousetrap. He rejoiced at the death, thinking himself death's commander. But that which cause him joy dangled the bait before him. The Lord's cross was the devil's mousetrap: the bait which caught him was the death of the Lord (*Muscipula diabolic, crux Domini: esca qua caperetur, more Domini*).¹⁹⁶

Picturing the cross as a mousetrap plays into this element of the deception of the devil: God outwitted the devil by offering Christ as a ransom. The devil did not know that, in slaying Christ, he would have to let humanity go free, an element that Lewis turns into the blindness of evil. But setting humanity free, after his slaying of Christ, is just, since the devil had rights over sinful humanity, but he had no rights over Christ, who was sinless.

¹⁹⁶ Cited in Linda Munk. *The Devil's Mousetrap: Redemption and Colonial American Literature*. Oxford University Press, 1997, 19.

The devil thus overstepped his jurisdiction in killing Christ, and Christ's unjust death "cancelled the I.O.U. (Col 2:14) of death, and justified and redeemed sinners" (*On the Trinity*, IV.17).¹⁹⁷

The Christus Victor/Ransom Theory in Lewis' *Narnia*

The Christus Victor theory is most prominent in Lewis' fiction, rather than in his apologetics. Since we are dealing primarily with the *Narnia* series here, I will begin with the victory and ransom motifs as we find them in *The Lion*, and then briefly address these themes as we find them in *Perelandra* and *Till We Have Faces*.

Lewis' clearest and most robust use of the victory and ransom motifs comes in the *Narnia* series, specifically in the episode of Aslan's sacrifice, which displays all the elements of a classic Christus Victor theory. The Deep Magic, written on the sceptre of the Emperor-beyond-the-Sea, tells us that the Witch, though an enemy and a usurper, has certain rights over traitors: all traitors belong to her as her "lawful prey", and their lives are forfeit (*LWW*, 175). In the Deeper Magic, however, we see the motif of Christ's defeat of the devil. Aslan defeats the Witch by outwitting her: while the Witch had rights to Edmund's life, she was unaware that there was a more ancient law still that stated that when an innocent victim was sacrificed in place of the guilty, the law concerning death (and the Witch's rights over the guilty) would be undone, and death itself would work backwards (*LWW*, 185). The Deeper Magic also has elements of ransom insofar as

¹⁹⁷ *The Trinity: The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*. Translated by Edmund Hill, New City Press, 1991. [Stephen McKenna's translation reads, "cancelling the handwriting of death and redeeming us who, though sinners, were to be justified through His just blood" (IV.17)].

Aslan's death is the price paid for Edmund's freedom, and, unbeknownst to the Witch, the price paid for the release of all Narnia from her grip.

In fulfilling both the Deep and Deeper Magic, Aslan does not overcome the Witch by force, but by justice. When the Bull with the man's head challenges the Witch when she demands Edmund's life, she responds, "Fool...do you really think your master can rob me of my rights by mere force? He knows the Deep Magic better than that. He knows that unless I have blood as the Law says, all Narnia will be overturned and perish in fire and water" (*LWW*, 176). Aslan cannot act against the Deep Magic. He cannot take the captive (Edmund) by force. The Witch has, as it were, legal rights over her captive. Aslan can, however, offer himself in Edmund's place.¹⁹⁸ This fulfills justice insofar as the Law (the Deep Magic) is not broken; the Witch gets blood for Edmund's treachery.

When Aslan offers himself in place of Edmund, he pays a ransom, a price for the release of Edmund which the Witch accepts (*LWW*, 176). The ransom (Aslan's life) is paid to the Witch, but because Aslan is sinless (he has committed no treachery), his death undoes the power that the Witch holds over Narnia. Death now works backwards. Aslan is resurrected, and the law's demand is defeated (*LWW*, 185). As we saw with Augustine, so with Lewis: right order must put justice first and power second: Christ (Aslan) beats the Devil (the Witch) at the *justice* game, and does not merely overpower him (her).

We also see in this episode Aslan's victory over death and corruptibility. After Aslan defeats death by fulfilling the Deeper Magic, he takes the good Narnian creatures

¹⁹⁸ The element of substitution is clear here. We will address substitution in depth later in this chapter and see how Lewis combines the victory and ransom motifs with the substitution and punishment motifs in *Narnia*.

with him and raids the Witch's castle, bringing the creatures previously captured by the Witch and turned to stone back to life. This episode has broad parallels to Athanasius' conception of the atonement in *On the Incarnation*, as well as depicting Christ's (Aslan's) victory over death and corruptibility more generally. Athanasius writes of Christ, "[c]oming himself into our realm, and dwelling in a body like the others, every design of the enemy against human beings has henceforth ceased, and the corruption of death, which had prevailed formerly against them, perished. For the race of human beings would have been utterly destroyed had not the Master and Savior of all, the Son of God, come for the completion of death" (*Inc.*, 69). We see two significant parallels to this Athanasian passage in *The Lion*: in Aslan's ransacking of the Witch's castle and his defeat of her and her hordes, we see the corruption of death perishing. Aslan, having faced death and come back to life, through the Deeper Magic, now brings life to all those who were turned to stone through the Witch's magic. We also see, in *Narnia*, that the whole world would perish in water and fire if the Deep Magic were not satisfied, that is, if the law concerning death were not fulfilled (*LLW*, 176). Thus, in both Athanasius' theology and Lewis' *Narnia*, we see the law concerning death fulfilled in Christ (Aslan) who subsequently clothes all in incorruptibility.

Elsewhere in Lewis' fiction we also see the victory and the ransom motifs. While we do not have the space here to give a full treatment to the rich and varied worlds that Lewis constructs in his *Space Trilogy* and *Till We Have Faces*, we can briefly note the presence of the victory and ransom themes that appear in these works.

Victory and Ransom in *Perelandra*

In *Perelandra*, the second book in Lewis' Space Trilogy, Dr. Elwin Ransom, the hero of the series and something of a Christ figure, does battle with Weston, the story's villain who is possessed by the devil. Before the battle begins, as Ransom is facing his fears of going toe to toe with "the Un-man",¹⁹⁹ the divine Voice assures him: "It is not for nothing that you are named Ransom" (*Perelandra*, 275). The narrator explains,

[t]he whole distinction between things accidental and things designed, like the distinction between fact and myth, was purely terrestrial. The pattern is so large that within the little frame of earthly experience there appear pieces of it between which we can see no connection, and other pieces between which we can. Hence we rightly, for our use, distinguish the accidental from the essential. But step outside that frame and the distinction drops down into the void, fluttering useless wings. He had been forced out of the frame, caught up into the larger pattern (*Perelandra*, 275).

Although Ransom seemed to have gotten his name by coincidence (it evolved from the original Randolph's son), according to the narrator, there was divine design behind it. And then we hear the Voice again, saying, "My name also is Ransom" (*Perelandra*, 275).

Ransom then defeats Weston, whom the narrator also calls the Un-man and the Enemy, during a descent into the fiery underworld of *Perelandra*, but not before suffering a bite to his heel. The theological undertones of this story are too rich and varied to treat extensively here, but suffice it to say that in *Perelandra* we find a depiction of victory over the devil by a character named Ransom, and a confirmation from the God of that world that his name is also Ransom.

¹⁹⁹ C. S. Lewis. *Perelandra*. In *The Space Trilogy*. 75th Anniversary Collector's Edition. Harper Collins Publishers, 2013, 274. Subsequent references to *Perelandra* will be cited in parentheses within the main body of the text.

The Victory Motif in *Till We Have Faces*

While *Till We Have Faces* is too complex and subtle to be given a full treatment here, we can note briefly that we find two Christ figures in this story, depicting atonement by sacrifice and atonement by victory. We will treat the victory element here and return to *Till We Have Faces* again when we consider sacrifice and substitution.

Lewis wrote that *Till We Have Faces* was a “myth retold”, and that the governing framework of the story is the ancient Greek myth of Cupid and Psyche (*TWHF* 311-313). We must note, then, that *Till We Have Faces* cannot be read in the same way that we read the *Narnia* series, which is a “supposal”. *Till We Have Faces* has a different dynamic: it is meant to be the retelling of an ancient Greek myth, and not a supposal of what the Christ event would have looked like in a different world. However, Edith M. Humphrey, in *Further Up and Further In*, comments that what Lewis does for children in *Narnia*, he does for adults in *Till We Have Faces*,²⁰⁰ suggesting that the parallels drawn by the reader to the Christ story are warranted. And so, we can see some theological elements in *Till We Have Faces*, but we can only comment on them here tentatively.

Humphrey notes that Lewis offers two different accounts of the atonement side by side in *Till We Have Faces*: one centering on sacrifice, “that the flawless girl Psyche must be offered to the god of the mountain”,²⁰¹ and one centering on victory, where “[t]he Queen’s triumph not only frees the young prince, but delivers her nation from ongoing

²⁰⁰ Edith M. Humphrey. *Further Up and Further In: Orthodox Conversations with C.S. Lewis on Scripture & Theology*. St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, NY: 2017, 156.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 149-150.

turmoil and serfdom”.²⁰² Humphrey argues that the victory model of atonement is a central motif in *Till We Have Faces*, offering a counterbalance to the understanding of atonement by sacrifice.²⁰³ We will examine both Psyche and Orual as Christ figures in more depth when we consider sacrifice and substitution. For now, we can note that one of the ways in which Lewis depicts atonement in *Till We Have Faces* is through victory: after her father (the King)’s death, Orual leads the nation of Glome out of slavery in battle. Lewis is here content to use victory as a way of depicting atonement, although he combines victory with other motifs to give a fuller and more complex picture.

Having addressed the places in Lewis’ work where we find a victory-ransom model of the atonement, we can now turn to another model that Lewis counts among the list of those that are true, and one that is central to Lewis’ own understanding: the substitutionary model, as we find it expressed in Lewis’ corpus in terms of both debt and punishment.

Substitutionary Atonement

For Lewis, an element of substitution is fundamental to the atonement. As we have already noted, in *Mere Christianity*, Lewis writes that “[w]e are told that Christ was killed *for us*, that *His death* has washed out our sins, and that by dying He disabled death itself. This is the formula. This is Christianity. That is what has to be believed” (*MC*, 54; emphasis added). This is the core Christianity that Lewis takes to be common to all denominations. Lewis describes the substitutionary model in terms of debt in *Mere*

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 166.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 165.

Christianity, and in terms of punishment in *Miracles*. We can see that even where Lewis uses the victory-ransom model (which is not necessarily substitutionary), it is combined with an element of substitution. We see an example of this in *The Lion* where Lewis draws on elements of debt, punishment, propitiation-sacrifice, and victory-ransom to depict a model of the atonement where an innocent victim (who is also the Creator of the world) endures a punishment in place of a guilty party, thus fulfilling the demand of the law (the Deep and Deeper Magic) and defeating the White Witch and death itself. We also see a substitutionary model combined with a victory model in *Till We Have Faces*, with the sacrifice of Psyche which reconciles the nation of Glome to their goddess, Orual's victory which delivers her nation from slavery, and her vicarious suffering on behalf of her sister, Psyche. What is crucial in all of Lewis' various depictions of the atonement is that Christ's act of atonement accomplishes something *in our place*, something that we cannot do on our own. This is fundamentally what distinguishes it from an exemplar model and "another piece of good advice" (*MC*, 129). We will now examine how this works out concretely in each of Lewis' works.

The Debt Model

In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis describes the substitutionary model in terms of paying off a debt, rather than enduring a punishment, and notes that this gets around the trouble of having to explain how the punishment of an innocent party can exonerate a guilty party (presumably the reason that the early Lewis found the vicarious punishment model to be "immoral"). "If you think of a debt, there is plenty of point in a person who has some

assets paying it on behalf of someone who has not” (*MC*, 54). Lewis gives the example of the person who “has got himself into a hole”: the job of getting him out sometimes “falls on a kind friend” (*MC*, 54). Lewis explains that the “hole” that man has got himself into is that he has tried to set up on his own, to “behave as if he belonged to himself”, and as a consequence now suffers the disobedience of his will and of his body, i.e., bodily death (*MC*, 54). According to Lewis, we have tried to set up on our own, to make our own wills the measure of truth and goodness, when what we really owe to God is not rebellion but submission and humility. Hence, we owe to God repentance, which involves a complete self-surrender. The result is that “fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement: he is a rebel who must lay down his arms” (*MC*, 54). Humanity has tried to usurp the position of the Creator and to act as though they have created themselves. This is what Lewis means when he writes that man has tried to “behave as if he belonged to himself” (*MC*, 54). It is the same problem that Augustine wrote of with respect to the Fall of the devil: the devil tried to wield his own power as though it belonged to him (*City of God*, 445). Because of this rebellion, the solution to the problem of the Fall is not mere moral improvement. Rather, it is complete self-surrender, what Lewis characterizes as laying down our arms, which involves “unlearning all the self-conceit and self-will that we have been training ourselves into for thousands of years. It means killing part of yourself, undergoing a kind of death” (*MC*, 54). This process is what Lewis will call “mystical death” in *Miracles*. The solution to the problem of the Fall and its consequences is the complete death of the self, which involves both bodily death and the death of all of our self-conceit and self-will.

“This process of surrender,” writes Lewis, “is what Christians call repentance” (*MC*, 54-55). The catch, however, is that only a bad person needs to repent, but only a good person can repent perfectly. “The only person who could do it perfectly would be a perfect person – and he would not need it” (*MC*, 55). Since the same badness which makes us need repentance, makes us unable to do it, we need God to do it for us, and *in* us. We can undergo this process of surrender with God’s help, if he puts into us a bit of himself. But since we need God’s help in order to do something which God, in his own nature, never does – to surrender, to submit, to suffer, to die – and since God can only share what he has, he became a man so that he *could* surrender his will, suffer, and die; and, being God, he could do it perfectly. This is how Christ pays our debt, according to Lewis:

[S]upposing God became a man – suppose our human nature which can suffer and die was amalgamated with God’s nature in one person – then that person could help us. He could surrender His will, and suffer and die, because He was man; and He could do it perfectly because He was God. You and I can go through this process only if God does it in us; but God can only do it if He becomes man. Our attempts at this dying will succeed only if we share in God’s dying...but we cannot share God’s dying unless God dies; and He cannot die except by being a man. That is the sense in which He pays our debt, and suffers for us what He Himself need not suffer at all (*MC*, 55).

We can note that Christ’s death is efficacious because, i) being a man, he is a member of the species who ought to repent, and ii) being God, he is the only one who could accomplish this feat, since only he could offer repentance perfectly. We can note the substantial similarity between Lewis and Anselm here: it is Christ’s death, offered vicariously in our place, that cleanses us of sin. In his death, Christ offers something to

God, which Anselm terms repayment plus extra compensation, and Lewis characterizes as self-surrender, that pays a debt owed to God. Christ is the only one who can offer such repayment, since, according to Anselm, as a man, he is a member of the species who ought to pay this debt, and according to Lewis, as man he is able to suffer, surrender, and die. Both Anselm and Lewis agree that as God, he is the only one capable of paying it.

For both Anselm and for Lewis, the repayment of this debt is also linked to proper order: the creature's proper station in life is one of obedience to its Creator. In the Fall, we disrupted the divine ordering of the universe by trying to wield our own power, by trying to act as if we belonged to ourselves. The atonement then necessarily involves a restoration of this order, which Lewis conceives of in terms of a complete death of self-will, which "treads Adam's dance backwards" (*PP*, 609).

And so, we can perhaps summarize Lewis' thoughts on the debt model with three crucial points about his conception of sin and the atonement: i) we owe to God a debt that we cannot pay; ii) death – Jesus' death and ours, a literal death and a metaphorical one – is the crucial element in setting us right with God; iii) pride goeth before the Fall: a desire to be self-sufficient, to set up on our own, is what has put us at odds with our Creator, and a restoration of proper order requires an unlearning of the self-conceit and self-will that got us into this "hole" in the first place. This is why Christ died in our place: We owe to God a debt that we cannot repay, and this debt involves a kind of death, a death of self-will, a total self-surrender. Considering Lewis' notion of vicariousness at this point will allow us to deepen our understanding of the efficacy of Christ's death, on Lewis' account,

and also to consider how he is beginning to see vicarious suffering differently than he had previously.

Substitution and Vicariousness

By the time of writing *Miracles*, in 1947, Lewis is thinking differently about vicarious suffering than he was in 1931 and earlier.²⁰⁴ In *Miracles*, Lewis writes that Christ can offer repentance in place of us, that he can pay the debt that we owe, because God has built the principle of vicariousness into the very nature of the cosmos: “[b]ecause Vicariousness is the very idiom of the reality He has created, His death can become ours” (*M*, 418). Lewis notes that this vicariousness is also characteristic of nature: “Self-sufficiency, living on one’s own resources, is a thing impossible in her realm” (*M*, 407). Everything is dependent on everything else: the cat lives on the mouse, the bees and the flowers live on each other, the parasite lives on its host, and the unborn child lives on (literally, in) its mother. Everything is indebted to everything else, and everything is dependent on everything else. This is the reason why the Sinless Man (Christ) can suffer for the sinful, and why his death can become ours (*M*, 407).²⁰⁵ The idea that vicariousness is the very idiom of reality reinforces Lewis’ use of a substitutionary model of the atonement: Christ can vicariously suffer and die *for us* because this principle is part of the very nature of reality. If we consider Lewis’ notion of vicariousness alongside his

²⁰⁴ It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when Lewis had found the propitiation model “silly and shocking” since he is speaking of himself in the past tense in his letter to Arthur Greeves. However, what we can confidently conclude is that Lewis has undergone a change of opinion regarding the vicarious suffering model and that the later Lewis uses it fruitfully.

²⁰⁵ Lewis capitalizes Sinless Man in the original.

images of the family tree, the tin soldier, and good infection, we can see why Christ's vicarious suffering and death is effective:²⁰⁶ from God's point of view, humanity is not made up of separate individuals, but is more like one single growing organism. Christ, having taken on humanity (i.e. being fully human) and submitting to death on our behalf, can then spread new life to all humanity. Lewis may have had John 15:1-6 in mind here, where Jesus compares himself to the vine and human beings to the branches: new life can spread to each human being, since they are part of one single, life-giving organism. One tin soldier came really, fully to life and, because the others are not totally separate from him, they can share in this new life through the process of good infection.

This idea that Christ's vicarious suffering and death can be an effective vehicle of new life combines elements that we find in Athanasius and in Anselm. For Athanasius, the atonement is primarily about the incarnation and death of Christ abolishing the law concerning death by fulfilling it in his own body: the corruption of human nature by death is done away with by the injection of immortality, by Christ, into human nature. This is because Christ, being human, *could* die in our place (*Inc.*, 67). And yet, being the immortal Son of the Father, "the Word was not able to die" (*Inc.*, 69). So, through the indwelling Word, the human body remains incorruptible, and the law concerning death ceases (*Inc.*, 69). Lewis writes similarly, in *Mere Christianity*, that "after being thus killed...the human creature in Him, because it was united to the divine Son, came to life

²⁰⁶ Lewis uses each of these images in *Mere Christianity*. He compares humanity to a family tree, to illustrate his point that human beings, from God's point of view, are more like one single, growing organism than like separate individuals (147). He uses the image of a tin soldier being turned into a real person to illustrate the new life that we gain through Christ (146). And he terms this transmission of new life "good infection" (141). We will consider Lewis' use of these images in depth in chapter four.

again” (*MC*, 146). Christ had to be both man and God in order to be able to suffer and die vicariously for us, and to thereby defeat death and make eternal life available to all.

Anselm makes this principle more explicit and systematic: that Christ must be both God and man in order for his vicarious death to be effective. Anselm insists that Christ must be fully human, so that he is a member of the species who ought to repent (i.e. make satisfaction for sin), and he must be fully God so that he is able to accomplish this feat, since only God *can* offer satisfaction. We have seen this same dynamic already in Lewis’ thought. And while Lewis does not explicitly say that Christ must be a member of the species who *ought* to make atonement, he does say that only if he is a human being can he suffer and die. Lewis’ images of the tin soldiers, the family tree, and “good infection” suggest to us why Christ must be fully human (and a member of the species who owes repentance): in order for corrupt human nature to be reformed, restored, and healed, one member introduces the “good infection” into the entire species. Thus, Christ is both the “‘first instance’ of the new men” and also “the origin and center and life of all the new men” (*MC*, 173). He becomes fully human and dies on the cross in order to pay our debt and to begin the transformation of human nature.

The notion of debt introduced by Lewis (that we owe something to God which we cannot give) perhaps makes the model of the atonement based on vicarious suffering more palatable to him: Christ is able to offer what we owe to God in our place. Because what we owe is a complete surrender and submission, a death of our selves, then Christ’s death can be offered in our place. This makes a vicarious suffering model more about restorative justice (the transformation of human nature) than about retributive justice. Of

course, we will see that Lewis *does* describe the atonement in terms of vicarious punishment, and he recognizes the legitimacy of terms like “propitiation” and God’s “wrath” to describe the atonement, which suggest some element of retribution.²⁰⁷

However, that vicarious suffering is linked to transformation through good infection, for Lewis, means that the good that comes out of enduring a punishment goes much deeper than simply counting for us on a superficial level. It connects vicarious suffering to a healing of corruption rather than just the forgiveness of sins.

Vicarious Punishment: Penal Death and Mystical Death in *Miracles*

By the time of his writing *Miracles*, Lewis was thinking about a substitutionary theory of the atonement in terms of punishment, where Christ converts our “penal death” into a “mystical death”, which is the means of eternal life. Lewis describes death, in *Miracles*, as: i) a punishment; ii) a mercy; iii) a safety device (*M*, 417). First, it is a punishment because it “is horror and ignominy” (*M*, 417). It is also a *fitting* punishment: “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 psychical and physical) against Man’s spirit: just as his organism, in its turn, loses power to maintain itself against the rebellion of the inorganic” (*M*, 416-17). The consequences of the Fall are that human beings, having rebelled against God, now face rebellion within their own organisms. They are subject to death and to disobedient and disordered desires. These consequences are in line with human nature. It is not a matter of some arbitrary

²⁰⁷ We will discuss propitiation and wrath in more depth below.

punishment imposed from outside, but rather of things playing out according to their nature, for “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” (*M*, 417). We can note that this theme of rebellion as punishment for rebellion is reminiscent of Augustine, who insists that the disobedience of our own bodies and our wills was fitting punishment for our disobedience to our Creator. We can also see parallels to Anselm in this passage: Recall David Brown who wrote that, “for Anselm the point is not about externally acquired duties but about the direction in which our natures are already ordered internally”.²⁰⁸ God created us in such a way that we can only be fulfilled through having a relationship with God, by “rejoicing in Him” (*WGBM*, II:1). Lewis, too, notes that the human being’s purpose is to be drawn into the life of God (*MC*, 159). God created humanity in such a way that a human being could only find fulfillment, her “real self” (*MC*, 176) in God, and also in such a way that a rebellion against God would result in a rebellion within the person herself (i.e. disordered desires and bodily death). This is perhaps what allows Lewis to think about vicarious punishment in terms of the healing of a corrupt human nature: Christ’s suffering and defeating death reverses “the rebellion of the inorganic” in his own person. The punishment is not an arbitrary one imposed from outside (it is not like having a whipping boy, who was punished in the place of a guilty party), but rather it is an outworking of the corrupt human nature, which Christ will reverse by walking “Adam’s dance backward”

²⁰⁸ David Brown. “Anselm on atonement”, 292.

(*PP*, 609).²⁰⁹ By accepting this punishment on our behalf, Christ can use it to heal corrupt human nature and restore proper order. How Lewis envisions this process, we will see presently in considering death as a mercy.

Death is, secondly, a mercy, for Lewis, 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” (*M*, 417). Lewis does not often use the term mercy, but its use here might signal a connection to the Anselmian task of upholding both God’s justice and his mercy. Of course, Lewis is not systematic in discussing either the atonement or its connection to the nature of God. However, we have seen Lewis ground justice in the nature of God and insist that justice is one of the principles of the Moral Law that holds for all people at all times, and that God, in his mercy, meets the demand of that Law on our behalf and saves us from ruin. That Lewis describes death as a mercy in *Miracles*, because by willing and humble surrender to it humanity can undo its act of rebellion and attain eternal life, suggests that this dynamic of justice and mercy may be at the back of Lewis’ mind.

In *Miracles*, Lewis’ description of death both as a punishment and as a mercy seems to signal that he now sees Anselm in a new light. For Lewis at this point in his theological career, to see death as a punishment accepted by Christ on our behalf is not to be involved in Adam’s and in Jesus’ acts by mere *legal fiction*, but to be *really involved*

²⁰⁹ Of course, we have to be careful not to emphasize restoration at the expense of glorification. Lewis notes, in *Miracles*, that “[r]edeemed humanity is to be something more glorious than unfallen humanity would have been” (411).

in them in such a way that both Adam's Fall and Christ's atonement make *real differences* in our relation to our Creator. What Christ accomplished in his incarnation, death, and resurrection, permanently changes our relationship to God and makes us able to return to him in submission and humility. And so, the result of Christ's death and resurrection is that he has effected a fundamental change in human nature. He has converted our penal death into a mystical death, one that brings about reconciliation and eternal life. If we participate in his dying, we too are able to convert our death, both physical death and the death of self-will, into eternal life.

What Lewis means by "mystical death" when he writes of Christ converting our penal death into a mystical death, is that "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" (*M*, 417). You can say that our bodily death was accepted by Christ, who – since the human creature in him was united to the divine Son – died and came back to life again, and since humanity is like one single growing organism, this new life was made available to the whole human race (*MC*, 146). You can say that in his death, Christ paid a debt that we owe – that our entire wills be subject to God – and that we can now share in his dying (*MC*, 55). In both cases, bodily death is converted into a blessed spiritual death to self: Christ accepted a life in which his own self-will was killed, even to the point of bodily death by torture, and our sharing in his death looks like the death of our own self-will, the humble obedience and submission to the will of God, which puts right the proper order of the universe.

What Lewis highlights in *Miracles* that is absent in *Mere Christianity* is the idea that Christ, in his act of atonement, accepts a punishment on our behalf. Recall that our death is a penal death, a punishment for the rebellion of the Fall. It is with this in mind that Lewis writes that,

to convert this penal death into the means of eternal life...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 others. He is the representative 'Die-er' of the universe: and for that very reason the Resurrection and the Life (*M*, 417-18; emphasis added).

In this quotation, we see elements of substitution and vicariousness: Christ is the representative die-er; he tasted death on behalf of others. We also see an element that is distinctly Anselmian: only a human being who need not have been a human at all could perform this perfect dying that converts our penal death into the means of eternal life. We can recall that Anselm wrote that the death of Christ, since he is not a sinner, is not owed. He tasted death on behalf of others voluntarily: "Christ of his own accord gave to his Father what he was never going to lose as a matter of necessity, and he paid, on behalf of sinners, a debt which he did not owe" (*WGBM*, I:8). It is because he owes nothing that he can perform this perfect dying in our place. We could hardly expect that one who *must* die could embrace death freely. Death could only be freely accepted were it not to come as a matter of course anyway.

To illustrate Christ's tasting death on our behalf and redeeming (or defeating) it, Lewis uses the image of the diver who leaves the sunlight above, dives deep into the darkness below, and then returns to the surface, "holding in his hand the dripping, precious thing that he went down to recover" (*M*, 401). Christ "goes down to come up again and bring the whole ruined world up with Him" (*M*, 401). Christ is not our example, but rather our substitute. He descends to the lowest depths of the human condition and lifts us up. Because of the principle of vicariousness, "[b]ecause Vicariousness is the very idiom of the reality He has created, His death can become ours" (*M*, 418). Because of the principle of Vicariousness, and because – from God's point of view – humanity is more like one big family tree than like separate individuals, Christ can offer satisfaction; he can pay the penalty and undergo the punishment that is rightfully ours and in so doing he can redeem us; he can offer us new life. He descends to the lowest depths of the human condition and reascends, conquering death and thereby doing away with death itself and transforming it from a punishment into a means of eternal life. Here we can see Lewis blending elements of victory/ransom, debt, punishment, and substitution: Christ pays a debt on our behalf by undergoing a punishment that he need not have endured, and in so doing he defeats death and turns our punishment, our "penal death", into a means of eternal life.

Finally, for Lewis, death is a safety-device because "once Man has fallen, natural immortality would be the one utterly hopeless destiny for him" (*M*, 417), as he would be subject to unending centuries of his own pride and lust "and of the nightmare civilizations which these build up in his own ever-increasing power and complication, he would

progress from being merely a fallen man to being a fiend” (*M*, 417). We see this demonstrated in *The Magician’s Nephew*, when the Witch eats a stolen apple, which bestows immortality on her. Aslan explains that while the fruit will give her youth because “[t]hings always work according to their nature,” this is not a good thing for the Witch. “She has won her heart’s desire; she has unwearying strength and endless days like a goddess. But length of days with an evil heart is only length of misery and already she begins to know it. All get what they want; they do not always like it”.²¹⁰

Thus, in *Miracles* we see Lewis engage with the concepts of death and of vicarious punishment in a way that goes much deeper than mere legalism and much deeper than simply “good advice”. We can see that in dealing with the atonement, Lewis is dealing with the nature of God (his justice and his mercy) and the transformation of human nature that respects the proper order of creation. In *Miracles*, he fits the concepts of vicarious punishment and of penal and mystical death into this framework.

Punishment and Satisfaction in *Narnia*

By the time of *Narnia*, which was published between 1950 and 1956, we can see Lewis working within an understanding of the atonement whereby Christ accepts a punishment on our behalf and thereby satisfies justice while simultaneously upholding mercy. This is arguably Lewis’ richest depiction of the atonement, and one that combines the various models that Lewis holds to be true while foregrounding the notions of proper

²¹⁰ C.S. Lewis, *The Magician’s Nephew*. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*. First American edition, Harper Collins Publishers, 2001, 100. Subsequent references to *The Magician’s Nephew* will be cited, using the abbreviation *MN*, in parentheses within the main body of the text.

order and the justice and mercy of God. We will see how Lewis does this in the *Narnia* series presently.

Regarding the atonement in *Narnia*, P.H. Brazier notes that, “[a]s with the Anselmian model, the emphasis is on *satisfaction*: justice through punishment. Forgiveness flows from this act, the barrier between God and humanity is removed through Jesus’ punishment because it assuages God’s need for justice”.²¹¹ According to the Deep Magic of Narnia, Edmund’s life is forfeit because of his treachery. Aslan’s sacrifice, however, satisfies this requirement while also invoking a deeper law. In Aslan’s death and resurrection, we see this dynamic of justice achieved through punishment, and forgiveness flowing from this act.

With respect to the punishment that Christ endures on our behalf, Brazier insists that, as Lewis depicts it in *Narnia*, it is split away from God and given to the powers of evil and darkness. Brazier claims that the punishment element is demanded by and given by the devil, but not necessarily sanctioned by God. “It is the White Witch [personified evil] who consciously and deliberately punishes Aslan [the triune God] in Edmund’s stead, the triune God does not: God seeks justice and reconciliation through defeating...personified evil.... The White Witch seeks justice through punishment and execution, the Aslan-Christ seeks peace and reconciliation”.²¹²

We might wonder if the punishment-reconciliation divide is really that simple, for Lewis. We have seen, in *Miracles*, Lewis describe death as a penal death, as a punishment for sin that Christ endures on our behalf. In that case, the punishment does

²¹¹ P.H. Brazier. *C.S. Lewis: On the Christ of a Religious Economy*, 169.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 184.

not come from the powers of evil but from God himself, since the punishment is death, which is a result of disobedience, and it is part of the way in which God created human beings. We can also note that Lewis recognizes the legitimacy, and necessity, of using terms like “propitiation” and the “wrath” of God, which he defends in his letter to Arthur Greeves, Oct. 18, 1931, and in *Letters to Malcolm* (96-97). In *Narnia*, we can also note that the Deep Magic that requires blood for treachery is written on the sceptre of the Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea, suggesting that it is not “split away” from God but rather part of the Moral Law (to use the terms that Lewis uses in *Mere Christianity*), part of the fabric of creation that reflects the nature of its Creator. For Lewis, God seeks reconciliation by upholding justice, which requires Christ accepting death, a penal death, a punishment for sin, and by embracing it freely, converting it into the means of eternal life. In doing so, Christ invokes a deeper law, if we may borrow these terms from *The Lion*, of substitution, vicariousness, and mercy.

Punishment and Substitution in *Till We Have Faces*

The themes of punishment and substitution are central as well in *Till We Have Faces*. We have already noted that *Till We Have Faces* is not as straightforward a picture of the atonement as is *Narnia*, since its governing framework is that of the Greek myth of Cupid and Psyche instead of the “supposal” that Lewis calls *Narnia*. However, within

this story, we can see a picture of atonement that draws on elements of punishment and substitution (as well as elements of victory, which we have discussed above).²¹³

Both Psyche and Orual are presented as Christ figures within this myth. Psyche is described as both the Blessed and the Accursed;²¹⁴ she is the innocent victim who is sacrificed to the Brute in order to save her country (61), the Brute who is described, “in a mystery”, as “Ungit herself or Ungit’s son, the god of the Mountain; or both” (48);²¹⁵ Psyche heals people of their disease (39),²¹⁶ and even heals at the mere touch of her robe (32);²¹⁷ at the moment of her sacrifice, she forgives Redival (who betrayed her to the Priest) for “she also does what she doesn’t know” (69);²¹⁸ the narrator notes that “In the Great Offering, the victim must be perfect” (49); and we see the concepts of the best person being sacrificed and of the Accursed being punished juxtaposed in the same event of Psyche’s death (49). In Psyche’s death, the nation of Glome is reconciled to Ungit, their goddess. Lewis describes this sacrifice in terms of expiation: “[Ungit’s] anger never comes upon us without cause, and it never ceases without expiation” (45). The image of sacrifice that we find in Psyche is combined with images of victory and of substitution in

²¹³ Edith M. Humphrey, in *Further Up and Further In*, discusses the elements of punishment and substitution in Lewis’ *Till We Have Faces*. My present analysis of Lewis’ text, and how he pictures the atonement, is based on a reading of Humphrey.

²¹⁴ C.S. Lewis. *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, First Mariner Books edition, 2012, 39. Subsequent references to *Till We Have Faces* will be cited, using the abbreviation *TWHF*, in parentheses within the main body of the text.

This is suggestive of the principle that only a God-man can offer atonement: only God *can* offer atonement, but only man *ought* to; only the perfect person, the Blessed, can offer repentance, but it is the Accursed who *needs* to offer repentance.

²¹⁵ This comment is suggestive of Christ’s full divinity and full humanity: both God and Son.

²¹⁶ Matthew 9:20.

²¹⁷ Luke 8:44.

²¹⁸ Luke 23:34.

Orual. We already addressed victory above. We will now turn to substitution as we find it in Psyche's sister, Orual.

Upon Psyche's banishment from her mountain palace, Orual is told that she too will be Psyche (174). By the end of the story, we might conclude that this means that Orual too is a Christ figure, depicting victory (having led her country out of slavery in battle) where Psyche depicts sacrifice. By the end of the story, we learn that Orual also bears Psyche's punishment for betraying the god of the Mountain, taking "nearly all the anguish" (300) on behalf of her sister. This introduces an element of substitution into the story: while Psyche suffered punishment for betraying the god of the Mountain, it was Orual who bore "nearly all the anguish" of Psyche's punishment. This is also, perhaps, what the Fox is referring to when he says that the gods are not just (297): Justice would have Psyche bear her own load, where in fact Orual was able to bear it for her. Thus, we could say that mercy balances justice insofar as Orual is able to bear part of Psyche's punishment. This ties the concepts of mercy and justice back into the atonement and draws our attention to the nature of God: the Fox, at the end of the story, insists that we do *not*, in fact, want justice from the gods, but instead we want mercy. When we look at *Till We Have Faces* side by side with *Narnia*, we can see that we have a picture of the atonement that offers us *both* justice and mercy: mercy upheld by upholding justice. While complex and not entirely straightforward, in *Till We Have Faces* we do see atonement pictured as sacrifice, as victory, and as bearing a punishment on behalf of another. We also see the nature of God hinted at in Lewis' comments about justice and mercy.

Propitiation and Wrath

Having addressed the elements of victory, sacrifice, debt, and punishment, we can now turn to two concepts that appear in Lewis' works in a more minor fashion, but are equally important, for Lewis, in describing the atonement: propitiation and wrath. While I have been arguing that the atonement, for Lewis, is about God meeting the demand of the Moral Law on our behalf, which fundamentally comes down to an obedience expressed in submission, suffering, and death, that our "penal death" is a fitting punishment, and that the problem of sin was that it disrupted the proper order of the universe, which was rectified in the atonement, we must be careful not to characterise our experience of God's anger as what inevitably happens to us "if we behave improperly towards a reality of immense power" (*LM*, 96). The situation of the penitent before God is not like blundering up against a live wire and getting a shock (*LM*, 96). To speak of God's wrath, Lewis insists, is a much better analogy than to speak of the inevitable outcome of sin. "Anger...passes (not necessarily at once) into embracing, exultant, re-welcoming love. That is how friends and lovers are truly reconciled. Hot wrath, hot love.... Wrath and pardon are both, as applied to God, analogies; but they belong together to the same circle of analogy – the circle of life, and love, and deeply personal relationships. All the liberalising and 'civilising' analogies only lead us astray" (*LM*, 97). We cannot jettison the concept of wrath without losing the depth of the concepts of pardon and forgiveness, "for the angry can forgive," writes Lewis, "and electricity cannot" (*LM*, 96). What this tells us is that we may speak of the atonement in terms of

God's justice and mercy, in terms of a disruption and a restitution of proper order, but we must not make the process mechanical and lose the element of God's anger and his wrath.

We can see inklings of God's anger and his wrath, perhaps, in episodes in *Narnia* like Aslan's physical rebuke of Aravis in *The Horse and His Boy* (Aslan claws Aravis' back, leaving the same number of painful cuts as her servant suffered when she was whipped as a result of her implication in Aravis' desertion of her family and her arranged marriage),²¹⁹ and in Aslan's response to Susan when she asks if there is anything he can do against the Deep Magic: "'Work against the Emperor's Magic?' said Aslan, turning to her with something like a frown on his face. And nobody ever made that suggestion to him again" (*LWW*, 176). In these cases, we see a God who is not safe, but good (*LWW*, 146). While his anger and his wrath may only be analogies, they are adequate and necessary analogies that we must not leave behind for a cleaner and more "high-minded" Christianity.²²⁰

The Atonement and The Justice and Mercy of God

We have seen that the atonement, for Lewis, is fundamentally about the justice and mercy of God, and the proper order of creation, where God is sovereign Creator and we, as dependent creatures, submit our wills to his. Lewis expresses this overarching

²¹⁹ *The Horse and His Boy*, 271.

²²⁰ In *Till We Have Faces*, the cleaner and more realistic Ungit is rejected by the people in favour of the darker, bloodier Ungit. In *Letters to Malcolm*, Lewis makes this same objection against liberalising tendencies and the desire to be "high-minded" (97).

framework in terms of sacrifice, ransom, championship over death, and substitution (both in terms of debt and punishment). Examining Lewis' direct statements about the atonement, as well as his depictions of the atonement in his fiction, we can see that he does in fact have a rich and coherent doctrine of the atonement that is rooted in the classical understanding and is, by the time of *Narnia*, fundamentally Anselmian, insofar as an innocent party endures a punishment on behalf of the guilty and thereby satisfies the law, upholding mercy by fulfilling justice. Since this understanding is rooted in the nature of God as both just and merciful, Lewis' understanding of the atonement can thus be described as the soteriological expression of his doctrine of God.

In chapter four, we will examine Lewis' theological anthropology and his soteriology. As his understanding of the atonement is undergirded by the notion of proper order, so too, I will argue, is his understanding of sanctification an outworking of this proper order. In the atonement, Christ has saved humanity by being the expression of both God's justice and his mercy. The question now is: how do individual human beings come to participate in salvation and gain the new life made available in principle in Christ's act of atonement?

CHAPTER FOUR: Lewis' Theological Anthropology

Having examined Lewis' understanding of the atonement, we can now turn to his understanding of sanctification and his theological anthropology. I am addressing sanctification and theological anthropology together here because the bulk of what Lewis writes throughout his corpus might be termed theological anthropology, insofar as he is looking at the human being's relationship with God and her place in the created order. The term theological anthropology includes sanctification, since the processes of salvation and of becoming more like Christ are part of the broader topic of our relationship with God. In this chapter, we will explore the process of sanctification as we find it in Lewis' corpus. We will see that Lewis' understanding of sanctification is an outworking of his understanding of the atonement: as the atonement is first and foremost about proper order and the human being's place in the divinely ordered universe, which is itself an outworking of the nature of God, so too is sanctification about our taking our place in this divine order. We will see that, in his theological anthropology and his understanding of sanctification, Lewis foregrounds the sovereignty of God and places great emphasis on humility as our proper response to our Creator. We will explore Lewis' understanding of human nature as it was intended by God, as it is post-Fall, and as it could be upon reconciliation to God. This will involve an in-depth look at self-sovereignty and the distortion of reality that a focus on the self brings about, as well as Lewis' envisioned solution to this problem which comes in the form of a healing of the will through moral transformation, which Lewis terms "good infection". Examining Lewis' fiction as well as his non-fiction, we can see how he envisions good infection

working, and how we can work together with God to re-establish the order that we disrupted in the Fall. We will see that humility is crucial to this re-establishing of order. Throughout Lewis' corpus, we can see that the bulk of what he is engaged in is a practical working out, in terms of humility, of what the lived Christian life looks like. *Humility*, we might say, is the defining concept for Lewis in his theological anthropology and his understanding of sanctification. How humility is linked to proper order we will see as we examine Lewis' writings on sanctification and his theological anthropology.

How this chapter will proceed

First, we will examine what Lewis has to say about creation and the proper good of the creature, which he characterizes as a voluntary submission to our Creator. We will then address the problem that was introduced in the Fall: the desire for self-sovereignty on the part of the creature. We will look at Uncle Andrew, Jadis, and the Dwarfs in *Narnia* as portraits of unrepentant pride and a desire to be self-sovereign. In these characters, we find Lewis' fullest pictures of such a desire for self-sovereignty. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis calls this self-centeredness the "natural life", *Bios*, and contrasts it with *Zoe*, the spiritual life, the Christ-life. He writes of sanctification in terms of a transformation of *Bios* into *Zoe* and calls this process "good infection" (*MC*, 141). For Lewis, this is how we come to share in the life of Christ; this is how we appropriate that salvation which was made available to us in principle (*MC*, 147) in the atonement. Lewis uses the images of the tin soldiers and of the family tree to describe how good infection works. We will look at each of these images and what they can tell us about Lewis'

theology. We will also look at how Lewis imagines good infection to normally work, namely through prayer, sacrament, and community. We will then examine what the reversal of self-sovereignty looks like in terms of mystical death as we see it pictured in *The Pilgrim's Regress*. In *Miracles*, Lewis wrote of Christ converting our penal death into a mystical death. Here, we will examine this mystical death in more depth in terms of sanctification. We will then examine Lewis' two most robust examples of moral reform: Edmund and Eustace in *Narnia*. The cases of Edmund and Eustace offer something of a counterbalance to those of Andrew, Jadis, and the Dwarfs. Edmund and Eustace illustrate the principle of humility and show us two dramatic examples of individuals being remade by God, of turning *Bios* into *Zoe*. Following this, we will examine the Calormene soldier in *Narnia* and Mr. Neo-Angular in *The Pilgrim's Regress*, as they speak to the centrality of character formation over following a set of rules in Lewis' theology. Finally, we will look briefly at Lewis' conception of purgatory, since it reinforces Lewis' views of character formation and sanctification. We will see that, overall, Lewis' theological anthropology is an outworking of his understanding of the atonement, which is an outworking of his doctrine of God. Humility is crucial for Lewis, because humility respects the proper order of creation where the creature willingly submits to the will of their Creator. Ultimately, what Lewis is doing in his theological corpus is examining and bringing to life traditional Christian doctrines that are grounded in the self-consistency of God and proper order. This was the case with the atonement and, as I will show in this chapter, it is also the case with his understanding of sanctification and his theological anthropology.

Creation: The Proper Good of the Creature

For Lewis, the whole of the Christian story, from the Fall through the atonement, through soteriology and eschatology, is about proper order. God created us to fit into a certain place in the created order. After the Fall, we are out of joint, displaced. Lewis cites the phenomenon of joy as evidence that we were made for a place other than where we now find ourselves.²²¹ In *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis likens our situation to a broken bone in the universe that must be set (577). This disjointedness is nothing other than our estrangement from God. “God is the only good of all creatures,” writes Lewis in *The Problem of Pain*, “and by necessity, each must find its good in that kind and degree of the fruition of God which is proper to its nature” (PP, 578). God *is* goodness. There is no goodness apart from him.

Our Fall from the Garden into disorder and death was a result of our turning away from God, our rejection of our proper place. In the Garden of Eden, writes Lewis,

[w]hat Satan put into the heads of our remote ancestors was the idea that they could ‘be like gods’ – could set up on their own as if they had created themselves – be their own masters – invent some sort of happiness for themselves outside God, apart from God.... The reason why it can never succeed is this. God made us: invented us as a man invents an engine. A car is made to run on petrol, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn.... There is no other.... God cannot give us happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing (MC, 49).

²²¹ Joy, for Lewis, is perhaps best described as a happiness that goes unfulfilled in this life. We have a longing for something that is not fulfilled here in this life, but that Lewis suggests points towards its fulfillment in God. See, e.g. *Surprised by Joy*, where Lewis writes of this phenomenon that it is “an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction” (18). C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*. C.S. Lewis Classics Edition. HarperCollins Publishers, 2002.

For Lewis, there is a given structure of reality, which reflects the given structure of God, and our job as human beings is to properly orient ourselves within the created order.

Lewis explains what this proper orientation is in *The Problem of Pain*, when he writes that the proper good of a creature is to surrender itself to its Creator: “to enact intellectually, volitionally, and emotionally, that relationship which is given in the mere fact of its being a creature. When it does so, it is good and happy” (602). Our fulfillment is found in a loving relationship with our Creator, and with our voluntary submission of our wills to his. This is the proper good of the creature, and it is rooted in the nature of God himself. Lewis explains how this pattern of voluntary submission is found in the nature of God, and how we are made to imitate it, in *The Problem of Pain*. Referring to the good of the creature, which is voluntary submission to the will of the Creator, Lewis writes:

[T]his kind of good begins on a level far above the creatures, for God Himself, as Son, from all eternity renders back to God as Father by filial obedience the being which the Father by paternal love eternally generates in the Son. This is the pattern which man was made to imitate – and wherever the will conferred by the Creator is thus perfectly offered back in delighted and delighting obedience by the creature, there, most undoubtedly, is Heaven, and there the Holy Ghost proceeds. In the world as we now know it, the problem is how to recover this self-surrender (*PP*, 602).

If our purpose is to exist in loving relationship with God, to surrender ourselves to our Creator, then we must be able to do this voluntarily. “To experience the love of God in a true, and not an illusory form,” writes Lewis, “is therefore to experience it as our surrender to His demand, our conformity to His desire” (*PP*, 576). God gives us the

freedom to choose between ourselves and him. While it is God, and not we, who initiates this relationship, we are still granted the freedom to refuse: “our freedom is a freedom of better or worse response” (*PP*, 577).

This freedom is a requirement if we are to have even the possibility of a loving relationship with God. God gave us free will, writes Lewis, “[b]ecause free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. A world of automata – of creatures that worked like machines – would hardly be worth creating. The happiness which God designs for His higher creatures is the happiness of being freely, voluntarily united to Him and to each other in an ecstasy of love and delight” (*MC*, 47-48). Of course, free will also makes evil possible. Once we are given the ability to choose between self and God, between obedience and disobedience, we are able to put ourselves above God. “The moment you have a self at all,” Lewis notes, “there is the possibility of putting yourself first – wanting to be the centre – wanting to be God, in fact” (*MC*, 48). That was the sin of Satan, and it is the sin of humanity.

An attempt at self-sovereignty, however, is an attempt to go against the very nature of the universe. A disordered desire – one that puts money, power, even friendship or family, above God – is doomed to failure because in trying to find happiness and fulfillment in something other than God, we are going against the very nature of our being.²²² Of course, God knew what would happen if we used our freedom the wrong

²²² Lewis goes into great depth on the proper ordering of desires and the trouble with setting any love, even a noble one, above the love of God, in *Four Loves*. We do not have the space to go into detail here on the topic of disordered loves. For our purposes, it is sufficient to note that, for Lewis, placing any

way, writes Lewis, and “apparently He thought it worth the risk” (*MC*, 48). Thus, free will, the source of the problem of disorder and death, is also the solution to it, and it is ultimately rooted in Lewis’ doctrine of creation, the good of the creature, and the nature of God.

The Problem: Pride, Humility, and Our Place as Creatures

In *The Screwtape Letters*, Lewis associates Heaven with love, selflessness, and humility, and Hell with competition, selfishness, pride, and a sense of ownership (239). “The whole philosophy of Hell”, he writes in the voice of Screwtape, “rests on recognition of the axiom that one thing is not another thing, and, specially, that one self is not another self. My good is my good and your good is yours. What one gains another loses” (236). Thus, pride is essentially competitive, Lewis writes in *Mere Christianity*. It is “the pleasure of being above the rest” (*MC*, 104).

Screwtape, speaking to the junior devil, says that “[t]he sense of ownership in general is always to be encouraged. The humans are always putting up claims to ownership which sound equally funny in Heaven and in Hell and we must keep them doing so” (246). The devils put in charge of human beings’ damnation would have us set up claims of ownership and self-sovereignty, as this pulls us further away from God: In *The Screwtape Letters*, Lewis writes that the mark of Hell is a “ruthless, sleepless,

desire above the desire for relationship with God (and obedience to him) goes against the very nature of our being.

unsmiling concentration on the self”.²²³ It is this single-minded concentration on the self that puts us at odds with our fellow creatures and with God. This concentration on the self, this desire for self-sovereignty, disrupts the proper order of the universe and results in our estrangement from ourselves,²²⁴ from each other, and from God. We see dramatic depictions of this in Uncle Andrew in *Narnia*, for example, who exploits others for personal gain, in Weston in *Out of the Silent Planet*, who is willing to exploit and kill for personal gain and for the continuation of the human species, and in Eustace, in *Narnia* who is selfish, greedy, and mean to all those around him.

Lewis confirms that pride and selfishness lead to estrangement from God in *Mere Christianity*, where he writes that pride is “the essential vice, the utmost evil...it is the complete anti-God state of mind” (103). This is because in pride, our wills are out of synchronization with God’s will, and out of synchronization with reality: i.e. we are not, in fact, sovereign; we do not wield our own power. Everything that we have and everything that we are, we owe to God: “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” (*MC*, 118).²²⁵ Pride is a denial of this reality. In *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis, citing Augustine, writes that pride is “the movement whereby a creature (that is, an essentially dependent being whose principle of

²²³ Cited in David C. Downing. *Into The Wardrobe: C.S. Lewis and the Chronicles of Narnia*. Jossey-Bass, 2005, 100. From *The Screwtape Letters*. MacMillan, 1960, ix.

²²⁴ Lewis, in *The Problem of Pain* (596), insists that physical death and rebellious wills are part of the consequences of the Fall (i.e. we are estranged even from ourselves insofar as neither our bodies nor our wills do what we want them to do).

²²⁵ Note the parallel to Anselm here, who insisted that we cannot repay a debt that we owe to God, because everything that we have belongs to God already.

existence lies not in itself but in another) tries to set up on its own, to exist for itself” (*PP*, 592 – citing *City of God*, xiv, xiii). This is the source of our being out of joint, so to speak, with the universe.

The fundamental problem is that we do not in fact belong to ourselves, and our pretending to do so goes against what is actually the case. To set up claims of ownership and self-sovereignty is to seek goodness in a place where it simply does not exist. Lewis notes, in *The Problem of Pain*, (576) that there is no goodness apart from God; God *is* goodness. Thus, when we seek the good outside of him – outside of obedience to his will – we are seeking something that doesn’t exist. We are trying to go against the very order of reality; we are trying to wield our own power, when it is not, in fact, our own. Simply put: we are focused on ourselves and away from God.

Lewis gives us clear examples of what happens when we are thus out of synchronization with reality, when we attempt to make ourselves sovereign and act as though we had created ourselves. The *Narnia* series provides us with the richest source of these examples. We find Lewis’ most in-depth portrayals of the consequences of pride in the case of Uncle Andrew and Jadis in *The Magician’s Nephew*, and the Dwarfs in *The Last Battle*. We will examine these three characters here, and then turn to the solution to the problem of self-will which we find in the atonement and sanctification.

The Case of Uncle Andrew in *The Magician’s Nephew*

Uncle Andrew, in *The Magician’s Nephew*, is fueled by greed and pride, and wishes to exploit Narnia for commercial gain (68). He compares the discovery of Narnia

to Columbus' discovery of America and, of course, he credits himself with this discovery (*MN*, 67). Andrew's inflated sense of self-importance also makes him mistreat his fellow creatures. He treats his "scientific subjects" (guinea-pigs) like property: when Digory proclaims that allowing guinea pigs to be killed for the sake of his experiments was a cruel thing to do, Andrew responds, "That's what the creatures were for. I'd bought them myself" (*MN*, 21). He also tricks Polly into taking a magic ring and expresses no concern for her at all when she disappears. Digory comments that Uncle Andrew "thinks he can do anything he likes to get anything he wants" (*MN*, 20); he sees himself as being above morality and rules. This is ultimately the same problem that Lewis portrays in the Fall: an attempt at self-sovereignty, a desire to put our own wills above that of God's and to determine for ourselves what is right and wrong, instead of obedience to the Moral Law, which we can perhaps broadly characterize as obedience to the will of God.

The result of Andrew's attitude and behaviour is not only harm to other creatures but also a blindness to the divine and to the way things actually are. At the founding of Narnia, when Aslan begins to sing all things into existence, Lewis writes that Uncle Andrew "disliked the song very much. It made him think and feel things he did not want to think and feel. Then, when the sun rose and he saw that the singer was a lion ("*only* a lion", as he said to himself) he tried his hardest to make believe that it wasn't singing and never had been singing – only roaring as any lion might in a zoo in our own world" (*MN*, 75). Andrew succeeds in making himself deaf to Aslan's song, and soon hears only roaring.

This episode illustrates a principle that we find across Lewis' fiction: because of the power that human beings have, the power of being able to choose, we can make ourselves unable to see or hear God, and in so doing we can exclude ourselves from a loving relationship with God and exclude ourselves from heaven.

The Case of Jadis in *The Magician's Nephew*

In Jadis, as well, we see an in-depth portrayal of pride. Jadis, in *The Magician's Nephew*, displays the competitiveness and the unruliness of pride. When Digory and Polly first meet Jadis, she acknowledges that she destroyed Charn, the planet of which she claims to be Queen, but she blames her sister for its destruction: "She drove me to it.... Her pride has destroyed the whole world" (MN, 41). Jadis and her sister were engaged in a war. Both had agreed not to use Magic,²²⁶ but when her sister broke her promise, Jadis used her greater strength to destroy the whole world.

Jadis displays the same attitude of being set apart as does Uncle Andrew: "what would be wrong for you or for any common people," she explains to Digory and Polly, "is not wrong in a great Queen such as I" (MN, 42). As the story progresses, we learn that she desires to take over another world, and she is convinced that she would have the whole Earth at her feet should she be taken there with Polly and Digory. When faced with Aslan and Narnia, Jadis reacts with hostility: "this whole world was filled with a Magic different from hers and stronger", remarks the narrator. "She hated it" (MN, 62). Jadis desires to smash the new world to bits, and in her anger she throws an iron bar at

²²⁶ Lewis capitalizes the word Magic in *The Magician's Nephew*.

Aslan's head (62, 66). She sneaks into the garden to steal an apple of youth, despite clear rules that forbid doing this. She tries to tempt Digory to disobey Aslan by telling him that he can take an apple to his mother to cure her (appealing to his love for his mother), and that he can leave Polly here, betraying her selfishness, greed, and disregard for other people (*MN*, 93-94). Jadis thus betrays the literal *unruliness* of pride: her rejection of common moral rules and her conviction that her greatness puts her above common people. But pride wreaks havoc not only on one's relation with other human beings. It also destroys one's relationship with God. We have seen this in the case of Uncle Andrew, and we will see this in the Dwarfs as well.

The Case of the Dwarfs in *The Last Battle*

The principle that we can exclude ourselves from the divine reality (from heaven) is demonstrated as well in the case of the Dwarfs in *The Last Battle*, who make themselves blind to the goodness that Aslan offers. When Lucy, Peter, Eustace, Jill, Edmund, and King Tirian come through the stable door, in *The Last Battle*, they spot the Dwarfs sitting very close together in a circle facing each other. "They never looked round or took any notice of the humans till Lucy and Tirian were almost near enough to touch them. Then the Dwarfs all cocked their heads as if they couldn't see anyone but were listening hard and trying to guess by the sound what was happening".²²⁷ While the Pevensies, Jill, Eustace, and Tirian all find themselves in a beautiful sunlit meadow, the

²²⁷ C.S. Lewis. *The Last Battle*. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*. First American edition, Harper Collins Publishers, 2001, 746. Subsequent references to *The Last Battle* will be cited, using the abbreviation *LB*, in parentheses within the main body of the text.

Dwarfs insist that they are in a dark, dirty stable. Lucy tries to convince them otherwise and even offers them flowers to smell, but the Dwarfs smell only filthy stable litter.

When Aslan appears, Lucy begs him to do something for the Dwarfs. Aslan offers a low growl, which the Dwarfs take to be “the gang at the other end of the Stable” trying to frighten them (*LB*, 747). He places a glorious feast in front of them, and they gobble it up quickly, “but it was clear they couldn’t taste it properly. They thought they were eating and drinking only the sort of things you might find in a Stable” (*LB*, 748). Soon, the feast turned into brawl as each Dwarf became suspicious that the other had something better. When they finally calmed and sat down, they all said, “Well, at any rate there’s no Humbug here. We haven’t let anyone take us in. The Dwarfs are for the Dwarfs” (*LB*, 748). Aslan then responds to the children, saying, “They will not let us help them. They have chosen cunning instead of belief. Their prison is only in their own minds, yet they are in that prison; and so afraid of being taken in that they cannot be taken out” (*LB*, 748).

“The Dwarfs are for the Dwarfs.” This refrain sums up the attitude of the Dwarfs and shows us why they cannot be helped. While Trumpkin is an admirable exception, the Dwarfs are generally distrustful and rebellious.²²⁸ When a battle breaks out between the Narnian creatures and the Calormene invaders in *The Last Battle*, the Dwarfs stubbornly shoot arrows at both sides, and when questioned about their behaviour, they tell Jill and Eustace that “[w]e don’t want you to win any more than the other gang. You can’t take *us*

²²⁸ E.g. *The Voyage of The Dawn Treader*, Trumpkin is left in charge of Narnia when Caspian sets sail to find the lost friends of his father (537). In *Prince Caspian*, Trumpkin displays qualities of loyalty, bravery, and selflessness (e.g., 346, 360).

in. The Dwarfs are for the Dwarfs” (*LB*, 733). Earlier in the story, when they discover that Puzzle the Donkey was dressed up as a false Aslan, they rebel against the whole show, insisting that, “[w]e’re on our own now. No more Aslan, no more Kings.... The Dwarfs are for the Dwarfs” (*LB*, 707). What this demonstrates is that, for Lewis, the door to Hell is locked from the inside. The Dwarfs rely on themselves and they are concerned only for themselves. This is what Lewis means when he writes, in *The Great Divorce*, that “every state of mind, left to itself, every shutting up of the creature within the dungeon of its own mind – is, in the end, Hell. But Heaven is not a state of mind. Heaven is reality itself” (504). Hell is not a place where God casts the sinful; it is rather the result of self-exclusion from the divine reality. We see clearly this in the case of the Dwarfs, who are so self-centered that they literally make themselves unable to see the divine reality (heaven) that is right in front of them.

Like Andrew in *The Magician’s Nephew*, the Dwarfs have an attitude of independence from their Creator. The result is not God’s withdrawal from the sinner (Aslan’s withdrawal from the Dwarfs) but the sinner’s (the Dwarfs’) withdrawal from God (Aslan). It is thus that the Dwarfs have fallen out of the beautiful order for which they were created. Aslan will not force them to be “taken in”. Their attempt at self-sovereignty goes against the created order and the way things actually are, but they are given the freedom to refuse God’s grace, to turn away from God and toward themselves.

The Solution: The Reversal of Self-Sovereignty and The Proper

Ordering of Loves

The result, when we try to set up on our own, Lewis compares to a fleet of ships that are broken and have gotten off course: we end up crashing into each other and ultimately we do not reach our intended destination, which is to become adopted sons (and daughters) and take up our place in Heaven (*MC*, 66). Uncle Andrew shows us how pride can result in a blindness to the divine and to the way things actually are. Jadis earns immortality when she steals an apple at the end of *The Magician's Nephew*, but Aslan notes that “length of days with an evil heart is only length of misery” (*MN*, 100). The Dwarfs, in *The Last Battle*, show us what Lewis envisions as the end result of such an “unsmiling concentration on the self” (*Screwtape*; cited in Downing, 100):²²⁹ they have not been cast into Hell by God, but have so formed themselves that no possible conditions could make a Heaven for them. In the case of each of these characters, we can say that they have excluded themselves from the divine reality through their selfishness, pride, and competition.

For Lewis, the solution to the problem of disorder and death, the problem of our estrangement from each other and from God, is a reversal of self-sovereignty, a laying down our arms (*MC*, 54), which amounts to a re-ordering – a proper ordering – of loves that takes into account our proper place in the created order and our proper good. Recall that Lewis, following Anselm, is concerned with the justice and mercy of God: how can

²²⁹ David C. Downing. *Into The Wardrobe*, 100. This quotation from *The Screwtape Letters* appears in some editions of *Screwtape* and not others, since it is contained in the original preface that is not included in later editions of the book. Since it is not included in the edition that I am using, I am citing it through Downing, who references the original preface in the 1960 MacMillan edition of *Screwtape*.

God be both just *and* good? He could not let his good, rational creation, after the Fall, come to naught. And yet, he could not forgive sin and rectify the rift that we created (the disorder that we introduced into the created order) simply by fiat. The solution to this problem is found – for both Anselm and for Lewis – in Christ, in his incarnation, death, and resurrection. Jesus pays the debt that we owe. Lewis says that Christ introduces a “good infection” into human nature. This is ultimately the source of the reversal of sin and disorder. The “problem” was that we disrupted the order of the universe in the Fall, in our rebellion against God, and we had suffered death as a consequence. The “solution” is repentance, which amounts to a laying down of self-will. Since we could not do this on our own, Christ did it in our place. He took our penal death and converted it into the means of eternal life, into a mystical death, and he did this through his perfect dying, his perfect act of repentance. Our job is now to appropriate the salvation that has been made available to us “in principle” (*MC*, 147). In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis writes that the difference that Christ has made for “the whole human mass” is this:

that the business of becoming a son of God, of being turned from a created thing into a begotten thing, of passing over from the temporary biological life into timeless ‘spiritual’ life, has been done for us. Humanity is already ‘saved’; in principle. We individuals have to appropriate that salvation. But the really tough work – the bit we could not have done for ourselves – has been done for us. We have not got to try to climb up into spiritual life by our own efforts; it has already come down into the human race. If we lay ourselves open to the one Man in whom it was fully present, and who, in spite of being God, is also a real man, He will do it in us and for us. Remember what I said about ‘good infection’. One of our own race has this new life: it we get close to Him we shall catch it from Him (*MC*, 147). In addition to the Anselmian substitutionary element, we can hear echoes of

Athanasius here, in the notion of “good infection”, suggesting that Christ injects

immortality into human nature. Recall, from *On the Incarnation*, that Athanasius writes that Christ takes a human body and delivers it over to death on our behalf, “taking from ours that which is like, since all were liable to the corruption of death, delivering it over to death on behalf of all” (67). As Christ is transcendent over creation, he is above all; thus all die in him and the law concerning death is undone, “its power being fully expended in the lordly body and no longer having any ground against similar human beings” (67). And yet, being the immortal Son of the Father, “the Word was not able to die” (69). So, through the indwelling Word, the human body remains incorruptible, and corruption henceforth ceases. For this reason “he takes to himself a body capable of death, in order that it, participating in the Word who is above all, might be sufficient for death on behalf of all, and through the indwelling Word would remain incorruptible, and so corruption might henceforth cease from all by the grace of the resurrection” (69). The corruption of human nature by death is done away with by the injection of immortality, by Jesus Christ, into human nature. Lewis, similarly, describes our salvation in terms of inoculation, literally in terms of “good infection”, which involves our “catching” the Christ-life, so to speak, and being transformed from merely natural creatures destined for death and destruction into adopted sons and daughters of God. The corruption of human nature, for Lewis, is done away with by the injection of the Christ-life into human nature. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis summarizes this as follows:

The perfect surrender and humiliation were undergone by Christ: perfect because He was God, surrender and humiliation because He was man. Now the Christian belief is that if we somehow share the humility and suffering of Christ we shall also share in His conquest of death and find a new life after we have died and in it become perfect, and perfectly happy, creatures. This means something much more

than our trying to follow His teaching.... In Christ a new kind of man appeared: and the new kind of life which began in Him is to be put into us (57).

What this injection of new life looks like we will examine presently.

Good Infection, *Bios* and *Zoe*, and The New Men

Lewis writes of moral transformation and sanctification in terms of “good infection”.

In *Mere Christianity*, he asserts:

[T]he whole offer which Christianity makes is this: that we can, if we let God have His way, come to share in the life of Christ. If we do, we shall then be sharing a life which was begotten, not made, which always existed and always will exist. Christ is the Son of God. If we share in this kind of life we also shall be sons of God... He came to this world and became a man in order to spread to other men the kind of life He has – by what I call ‘good infection’. Every Christian is to become a little Christ. The whole purpose of Christianity is simply nothing else (144).

The life of Christ, the spiritual life which is begotten and not made, Lewis calls *Zoe*. He contrasts this to the natural life, *Bios*, in each of us that is self-centered, wants to be admired, and wants to take advantage of others and exploit the whole universe. Our goal as Christians is to die to the natural self and through that death gain real, eternal life, spiritual life or *Zoe*, and become sons and daughters of God. This is another way of saying that we need to lay down our pride and self-will in order to fulfill our purpose, take our place in Heaven, and gain eternal life. How we do this is by “catching” the good infection, the new life, introduced by Christ. Lewis uses two images to illustrate this process: the tin soldiers and the family tree.

In the image of the tin soldiers, Lewis asks us to image that one tin soldier – “real tin, just like the rest – had come fully and splendidly alive” (MC, 146). This one tin

soldier is Christ, really and fully human just like the rest of us but bringing with him a new life. In this one tin soldier,

the created life, derived from His Mother, allowed itself to be completely and perfectly turned into begotten life. The natural human creature in Him was taken up fully into the divine Son. Thus in one instance humanity had, so to speak, arrived: had passed into the life of Christ. And because the whole difficulty for us is that the natural life has to be, in a sense, 'killed', He chose an earthly career which involved the killing of His human desires at every turn.... And then, after being thus killed...the human creature in Him, because it was united to the divine Son, came to life again. The Man in Christ rose again: not only the God. That is the whole point. For the first time we saw a real man (*MC*, 146).

Having allowed the natural life in him to be thus killed, Christ allows the tin to be turned into flesh (or *Bios*, the natural life, to be turned into *Zoe*, the spiritual life). In this one instance, a real human being, united to God in the Person of Christ, became what all human beings were really intended to be. One tin soldier came really and fully alive.

The image of the tin soldier, however, has its limitations. That is why Lewis adds to it the image of the family tree. The image of the family tree captures something about humanity that the image of the tin soldiers does not. "In the case of real toy soldiers or statues," writes Lewis, "if one came to life, it would make no difference to the rest" (*MC*, 146). But humanity is not like that. From God's point of view, human beings are not separate beings.

They look separate because you see them walking about separately. But then, we are so made that we can see only the present moment. If we could see the past, then of course it would look different. For there was a time when every man was part of his mother, and (earlier still) part of his father as well: and when they were part of his grandparents. If you could see humanity spread out in time, as God sees it, it would not look like a lot of separate things dotted about. It would look like one single growing thing – rather like a very complicated tree. Every individual would

appear connected with every other. And not only that. Individuals are not really separate from God any more than from one another. Every man, woman, and child all over the world is feeling and breathing at this moment only because God, so to speak, is 'keeping him going' (*MC*, 146-147).

What this means for our reading of Lewis is that Christ, in the atonement, introduced a change into all humanity. He introduced new life, or *Zoe*, into that one single growing thing. When God enters human nature,

[i]t is as if something which is always affecting the whole human mass begins, at one point, to affect the whole human mass in a new way. From that point the effect spreads through all mankind. It makes a difference to people who lived before Christ as well as to people who lived after Him. It makes a difference to people who have never heard of Him. It is like dropping into a glass of water one drop of something which gives a new taste or a new colour to the whole lot (*MC*, 147).

Our task is now to lay ourselves open to God and allow him to transform us into heavenly creatures, to turn our *Bios* life into *Zoe* life.

Regarding this process of transformation, David C. Downing writes in *Into The Wardrobe* that "Lewis took the Christian doctrine of salvation and applied it to each person's spiritual journey as a whole. In this view, heaven and hell are not just two possible destinations at the end of a lifetime; they are a soul's ongoing orientation throughout one's lifetime".²³⁰ For Lewis, Heaven and Hell are two possible destinations, but they are also part of one's soul's ongoing orientation: every moral choice that we make reorients the central part of ourselves either towards God or away from God, thus turning us into either heavenly creatures in harmony with God and with others, or hellish creatures at perpetual war to defend the sovereignty of the self:

²³⁰ David C. Downing. *Into The Wardrobe*, 83.

[E]very time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you...either into a heavenly creature or into a hellish creature: either into a creature that is in harmony with God, and with other creatures, and with itself, or else into one that is in a state of war and hatred with God, and with its fellow-creatures, and with itself. To be one kind of creature is heaven: that is, it is joy and peace and knowledge and power. To be the other means madness, horror, rage, impotence, and eternal loneliness (*MC*, 81).

In *The Great Divorce*, Lewis reiterates this point when he writes that “[t]here are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘*Thy* will be done’” (506).

Uncle Andrew, Jadis, and the Dwarfs all insisted on their own wills. We have already seen the end result of this process in the Dwarfs, who turned themselves into creatures for whom no conditions could make a heaven. As we examine more deeply the process of sanctification and the solution to the problem of pride and self-will, we will see examples of characters who say to God, ‘*thy* will be done’, and who undergo the kind of death of self-will that is the key to eternal life. Before we look at Lewis’ character sketches, however, we can first address why character formation (this process of transformation of *Bios* into *Zoe*) is so important in his theology.

The Importance of Character Formation

In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis uses the image of a fleet of ships to illustrate the importance of character formation. When sailing in formation on the ocean, Lewis writes that the voyage will only be successful if three conditions are met: i) the ships do not collide and get in one another’s way; ii) each ship’s engines are in proper working order; iii) the whole fleet knows where it is headed (66). “What is the good of telling the ships

how to steer so as to avoid collisions”, Lewis asks, “if, in fact, they are such crazy old tubs that they cannot be steered at all?” (67-68). You cannot remove theft and bullying, for instance, simply by implementing certain rules; it requires a cleaning up of character. “You cannot make men good by laws,” writes Lewis, “and without good men you cannot have a good society” (*MC*, 68). And so, we need a healing of our wills, not just control of our wills. This is what Lewis means, when he writes in *Mere Christianity*, that “what we are matters even more than what we do” (155). Morality and duties are like schoolmasters, for Lewis: their purpose is to shape us, to give us the foundation to be able to have our will one with God’s will (*LM*, 115).

Why character formation is so important, Lewis illustrates in *Mere Christianity* when he notes that Christianity asserts that every individual is going to live forever. Lewis notes that “[p]erhaps my bad temper or my jealousy are gradually getting worse – so gradually that the increases in seventy years will not be very noticeable. But it might be absolute hell in a million years: in fact, if Christianity is true, Hell is the precisely correct technical term for what it would be” (68-69). Lewis demonstrates this principle in *The Great Divorce*, when speaking of “a silly, garrulous old woman who has got into a habit of grumbling” (507). There, he writes that, “[i]f there is a real woman...still there inside the grumbling, it can be brought to life again.” But because human beings are eternal creatures, this habit, left to run its course, may over an eternity totally consume the woman. With respect to a grumbling mood, as with any habit or sin, you have the ability to repent and come out of it. “But there may come a day when you can do that no longer.

Then there will be no *you* left to criticise the mood, nor even to enjoy it, but just the grumble itself going on forever like a machine” (507).

What remains after death, writes Lewis, is the central, core self, once our bodies fall away. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis writes: “Most of the man’s psychological makeup is probably due to his body: when his body dies all that will fall off him, and the real central man, the thing that chose, that made the best or the worst out of this material, will stand naked” (80). If we are following a set of rules, but we are doing so begrudgingly, and we are still full of pride and greed and whatever other vices, but have reined them in, then we are not cultivating characters that will feel at home in Heaven.

We can see this when we think about the difference between doing some particular just or temperate action and being a just or temperate man. A just or temperate person can be compared to a good tennis player, notes Lewis in *Mere Christianity*. One good action doesn’t make a good player. The point is to cultivate certain habits, certain actions, so that they come naturally. The good tennis player has trained his eyes, his nerves, and his muscles by making innumerable good shots so that they can now be relied upon. “They have a certain tone or quality which is there even when he is not playing.... In the same way a man who perseveres in doing just actions gets in the end a certain quality of character” (*MC*, 72-73). If we think only of particular actions, then we lose track of the internal quality of character.

Thus, the purpose of the virtues, says Lewis, is to shape us into certain kinds of people, “the sort of people that we can become only as the result of doing such acts here” in this lifetime (*MC*, 73). Virtuous actions shape our characters in such a way that

salvation becomes possible. “The point is not that God will refuse you admission to his eternal world if you have not got certain qualities of character: the point is that if people have not got at least the beginnings of those qualities inside them, then no possible external conditions could make a ‘Heaven’ for them – that is, could make them happy with the deep, strong, unshakeable kind of happiness God intends for us” (*MC*, 73). We saw this already in the case of the Dwarfs in *Narnia*. Before we look at some examples of characters who submit to being remade by God (to having *Bios* turned into *Zoe*), we will first examine how we catch this good infection.

How We Catch Good Infection: Prayer, Sacrament, and Community

Lewis’ overall picture of sanctification, as we have already seen, is one in which we catch a good infection and are transformed into Heavenly creatures in the process. Throughout his work, Lewis suggests that prayer, sacrament, and community are normally the vehicles of sanctification; and in *Mere Christianity* he speaks of baptism, belief, and Holy Communion as three things that spread new life (57). Since Holy Communion and baptism fall under the broader category of ‘sacrament’, and prayer at least, if not prayer, sacrament *and* community, presuppose belief, I will examine prayer, sacrament, and community as Lewis’ typical vehicles of sanctification, i.e. the typical ways in which good infection is spread. Each of these aspects, we will see, have a common core that relates back to pride, humility, and our proper place as creatures.

Prayer, for Lewis, is one way in which we can enter into the threefold life of God and be caught up in *Zoe*. In prayer, writes Lewis,

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 kinds of life – what I call *Zoe* or spiritual life: he is being pulled into God, by God, while still remaining himself (*MC*, 134).

If our goal, our purpose, is to participate in the life of God (*MC*, 144; 159), then prayer is one way in which we can do that. Lewis writes, “[t]he thing that matters is being actually drawn into that three-personal life” (*MC*, 134).

Lewis also notes that in prayer, the real, core you addresses God (*MC*, 81): “[I]n prayer this real I struggles to speak, for once, from his real being, and to address, for once...the Author”. Recall that, for Lewis, we find our real selves in God (*MC*, 176). In prayer, then, we are able to enter into the threefold life of God and experience a glimpse of new life, of *Zoe*, that reveals the true self, the selves that we have in God.

Not only do we find our real selves in prayer, but there we also encounter the real presence of God. “Whenever there is prayer,” writes Lewis in *The Screwtape Letters*, in the voice of the senior devil, “there is danger of [God’s] own immediate action” (195). Also in *Screwtape*, Lewis notes that it is in the devotional life that the real presence of God is experienced by men (252). We see a similar idea in *Letters to Malcolm* as well, where Lewis writes of prayer as soliloquy, not man speaking to himself, but rather, “[I]f the Holy Spirit speaks in man, then in prayer God speaks to God” (68). We catch the Christ life, remember, by getting close to Christ, and for Lewis, we can encounter him in prayer.

Prayer also helps us to align our wills with God's will. In *Letters to Malcolm*, Lewis describes prayer as a union of wills between Creator and creature. He writes that there is an "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" (69). Fundamentally, for Lewis, salvation is about laying down our own wills and 'dying' to the self-will that denies our dependent position as creatures in relation to our Creator. In prayer we get a glimpse of the new life, or *Zoe*, promised to us, where our wills are not at odds with our Creator's will.

Lewis' thoughts on this unity of wills gives us some insight into his thoughts on causality when it comes to sanctification. Regarding our wills and God's will in prayer, Lewis writes that "I am going to suggest that strictly causal thinking is even more inadequate when applied to the relation between God and man" (49). In prayer, we cannot disentangle "God did (or said) it" and "I did (or said) it" completely; both can be true at once. This is because we are not separate from God in the same way that we are separate from other human beings where our existence excludes theirs (there are clear boundaries, and you know for certain who did what and who said what because we are "enised" from each other).²³¹ With God, "He is the ground of our being. He is always both within us and over against us.... Arnold speaks of us as 'enised' from one another in 'the sea of life.' But we can't be similarly 'enised' from God" (*LM*, 68-69).

While we cannot effect our own salvation – in *Mere Christianity*, Lewis writes that "[a]fter the first few steps in the Christian life we realise that everything which really

²³¹ Lewis uses the term "enised" to paint the picture of individual as separate islands, clearly distinguished from each other.

needs to be done in our souls can only be done by God” (*MC*, 155) – he also insists on the centrality of human agency. God gives us the ability to refuse the moral transformation required for salvation. We must take part in our own transformation. To be simple automata without the freedom to choose and to freely participate, we could not fulfill the purpose for which we were created: to exist in loving relationship with God.

Our freedom is thus a freedom of response: God acts and we respond. We might call this dynamic one of prevenient grace. Oliver O’Donovan, in *On the 39 Articles*, writes of prevenient grace that “[i]t acts on us first, producing in us a good will; and then it goes on working with us, because there is never a time when we can become independent of God for our response to him. Thus the grace is (to use the technical terms associated with scholasticism) ‘prevenient’ and cooperative”.²³² This cooperative element we see especially in prayer, in Lewis’ work: in prayer, as in the life of sanctity generally, there is a union of our wills and God’s, and yet it is a union that respects human agency while also recognizing that we can do nothing without God. Prayer, therefore, for Lewis, is a way of entering into the threefold life of God, and of training our wills to be more in line with our Creator’s will. We cannot do this under our own steam, though. It is God working in us that allows us to seek him and to submit to his will.

The reason that Lewis gives for why we pray also emphasizes these same characteristics of humility and a union of our wills and God’s will. In *Letters to Malcolm*, Lewis notes that “we are taught, both by precept and example, to pray” (55). And in a lengthy examination of petitionary prayer, Lewis insists that “[w]hatever the theoretical

²³² Oliver O’Donovan. *On the 39 Articles: A conversation with Tudor Christianity*. Second edition. Kindle ed., SCM Press, 2011, chapter 5.

difficulties are, we must continue to make requests of God” (*LM*, 36). Even if we cannot understand exactly how prayer works, we are taught by Christ in the New Testament to pray. If our proper place as creature is one of obedience to our Creator, then we would be well-advised to keep praying and making requests of God.

In the sacraments, also, Lewis insists that we have real contact with the divine. While Lewis does not speak at length about the sacraments, he does make clear his belief that God is really present in the sacraments. Regarding Holy Communion specifically, Lewis writes in *Letters to Malcolm* that “I find no difficulty in believing that the veil between the worlds, nowhere else (for me) so opaque to the intellect, is nowhere else so thin and permeable to divine operation” (103). If we catch the Christ-life by getting close to God, then participating in the sacraments is one way in which we can do this.

Participating in the sacraments also has an element of humility and obedience. In his letters, Lewis writes, “The only rite which we know to have been instituted by Our Lord Himself is the Holy Communion....This is an order and must be obeyed” (Letter to Mary Van Duesen, 7/12/50). Like prayer, we participate in Holy Communion because we are commanded to do so by Jesus Christ in the gospels. Again, we see the emphasis on humility and following God’s will. “[O]bedience is worship of a far more important sort than what I’ve been describing (to obey is better than sacrifice),” writes Lewis in *Letters to Malcolm* (91). And in the same letter to Mary Van Duesen of 7/12/50: “Obedience is the key to all doors”.

Community is another way in which we can catch this good infection. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis writes that God “works on us in all sorts of ways: not only through

what we think our 'religious life'. He works through Nature, through our own bodies, through books, sometimes through experiences.... But above all, He works on us through each other" (MC, 153). This is the element of community in Lewis' thought. Community affects how we see God, and it is also a source of good infection; it is one way in which the Christ-life is spread.

In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis writes that the lens through which we see God is the self and the community to which we belong (MC, 135). This is why, in *Narnia*, the city of Calormen has Tash as its god: "horrible nations have horrible religions: they have been looking at God through a dirty lens" (MC, 135). But belonging to a community is not just a matter of how we see God. It is a necessary element of the Christian life. In "Answers to Questions on Christianity", Lewis writes, "If there is anything in the teaching of the New Testament which is in the nature of a command, it is that you are obliged to take the Sacrament, and you can't do it without going to Church".²³³ The church is the community to which we belong; it is the body of Christ in which we are all organs (MC, 149); it is there that the sacraments are administered. Human beings are not separate individuals as mere members of a group, but more properly are like different organs united in one body.

Also in Lewis' letter to Mary Van Duesen of 7/12/50, he writes that "the New Testament does not envisage solitary religion: some kind of regular assembly for worship and instruction is everywhere taken for granted in the Epistles. So we must be regular practising members of the Church." In *The Screwtape Letters* as well, we see the Senior

²³³ C.S. Lewis. "Answers to Questions on Christianity." In *God in the Dock*. Edited by Walter Hooper, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970, 61.

Devil speaking of churchgoing, suggesting that, “if a man can’t be cured of churchgoing, the next best thing is to send him all over the neighbourhood looking for the church that ‘suits’ him until he becomes a taster or connoisseur of churches.... the search for a ‘suitable’ church makes the man a critic where the Enemy wants him to be a pupil” (*Screwtape*, 230). Church-going, for Lewis, is crucial for the Christian life. If we are to join in the Christ-life, we cannot do this by ourselves; we must belong to a community. Lewis’ comment in *Screwtape* also reinforces the qualities of humility and obedience: we are not to use our own standards when seeking and attending a church, but rather to display loyalty to a church (*Screwtape*, 230) and a “humble receptivity” to the “nourishment” that we find there (230).

In community, as in prayer and sacrament, the emphasis is on humility and obedience to God. In each case, the goal is that we lay down our self-will and turn our attention outwards, away from ourselves and towards God. In *Letters to Malcolm*, Lewis writes on the purpose of church service: “Every service is a structure of acts and words through which we receive a sacrament, or repent, or supplicate, or adore.... The perfect church service would be one we were almost unaware of; our attention would have been on God” (*LM*, 4).

What prayer, sacrament, and community all further have in common is that the emphasis is placed on character formation rather than simply following a set of rules. The purpose of prayer is not simply to pray because God commanded us to pray, but to pray in order to have our will come into union with God’s will. With sacrament as well, and belonging to a community, it is not simply enough to go to church, say one’s prayers,

and participate in the sacraments if one's character is self-centered, greedy, and prideful.

In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis notes that those who are eaten up with pride and say that they believe in God

are worshipping an imaginary God. They theoretically admit to themselves to be nothing in the presence of this phantom God, but are really all the time imagining how He approves of them and thinks them far better than ordinary people.... I suppose it was of those people Christ was thinking when He said that some would preach about Him and cast out devils in His name, only to be told at the end of the world that He had never known them (105).

We will see an example of this surface-level belief that does not transform one's character shortly, in Mr. Neo-Angular. What prayer, sacrament, and community are all intended to do, for Lewis, is to shape us into heavenly creatures, into creatures whose wills are in unity with our Creator's, into creatures who are beginning to take our proper place in the created order and to fulfill the purpose for which we were made.

Prayer, sacrament, and community are elements of our remaking; they help to transform *Bios* into *Zoe*, by helping to align our wills more with God's. Before we can be remade, however, we must recognize our need for remaking. This recognition comes from continual attempts (and failures) at doing good deeds.

Good Deeds and Moral Bankruptcy

The recognition of God as sovereign Creator and ourselves as dependent creatures is what doing good deeds and trying to be virtuous is really about, for Lewis. We cannot *earn* our way into Heaven, and yet attempting to live a virtuous life is crucial for our salvation: "a Christian is not a man who never goes wrong, but a man who is enabled to

repent and pick himself up and begin over again after each stumble – because the Christ-life is inside him, repairing him all the time, enabling him to repeat (in some degree) the kind of voluntary death which Christ Himself carried out” (*MC*, 59). The road back to God, for Lewis, “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” (*MC*, 120).

This voluntary death is the “mystical death”, the death of self-will, that is the key to eternal life, and at its heart is a humility and an obedience that must be practiced over time. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis notes that the first step in humility is to realize that one is proud, and then make a serious attempt to practise the Christian virtues over a long period of time – “A week is not enough” (*MC*, 117). But a serious attempt to practise the Christian virtues is not a lesson in controlling the will and following the rules despite one’s desire to do otherwise. This serious attempt is first and foremost a lesson in humility. The main thing that we learn from a serious attempt to practise the Christian virtues, notes Lewis, 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 debt so that it was up to Him, in mere justice, to perform His side – that has to be wiped out” (*MC*, 118). He insists that “there is no question of earning a passing mark in this exam, or putting Him in your debt” (*MC*, 118). We cannot put God in our debt because everything we have is his already. Lewis gives the example of the child who asks his father for some money to buy him (the father) 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” (MC, 118). Once a man has made these two discoveries – i) that he is proud, and ii) that he cannot earn God’s favour – then “God can really get to work. It is after this that real life begins” (MC, 118).

This serious attempt to practise the Christian virtues helps us to realise our moral bankruptcy. Lewis associates this serious attempt with “faith in the second sense”,²³⁴ and notes that “[f]aith in the second 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” (MC, 119-120). We can offer to God nothing that is not his already. We cannot *earn* our way into Heaven. Salvation is not some sort of bargain or exam. It is pure grace. We must get to the point where we “throw up the sponge” (MC, 121), like Eustace in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, who surrenders completely to God, and say, “You must do this. I can’t” (MC, 120).²³⁵

After each failure, notes Lewis, you must ask forgiveness, pick yourself up, and try again. “Very often what God first helps us towards is not the virtue itself but just this power of always trying again. For however important chastity (or courage, or truthfulness, or any other virtue) may be, this process trains us in habits of the soul which are more important still. It cures our illusions about ourselves and teaches us to depend on God” (MC, 88). This trying and failing, this “throwing up the sponge” is a process

²³⁴ Lewis writes of faith in the first sense as belief, i.e. assent to the propositions that Christianity puts forward. Faith in the second sense is a faith in Christ, that he “will somehow share with him the perfect human obedience” (MC, 121) and will help him to gain new life.

²³⁵ We will examine the case of Eustace in depth below.

that allows us to cultivate a deeper and more important transformation: a re-ordering of desires and a recognition of the sovereignty of God. For Lewis, this is essentially what salvation is about. Attempting to live a virtuous life is like *practice*; it is the practice of re-ordering our desires and fundamentally it is the practice of humility.

This practice of reordering our desires, which involves humility and obedience to the will of God, is fundamentally what makes up that “mystical death” which is the key to eternal life. Lewis pictures this mystical death as early as *The Pilgrim’s Regress*,²³⁶ and this idea that our selfish desires, even our noble desires, must submit to death runs throughout Lewis’ corpus.

Mystical Death in *The Pilgrim’s Regress*

In *The Great Divorce*, Lewis writes, “Nothing, not even the best and noblest, can go on as it now is. Nothing, not even what is lowest and most bestial, will not be raised again if it submits to death” (526). Not only our self-will, but *all* of our natural desires, even the good and noble ones, must submit to death if they are to be reborn. When we realise our bankruptcy and begin to let God work in us, then we can begin the healing process, a process of dying to the self, undergoing what Lewis calls a mystical death, a death of self-will that is required if we are to return to God and achieve reconciliation. In “The Weight of Glory”, Lewis writes that “[s]ome day, God willing, we shall get *in*. When human souls have become as perfect in voluntary obedience as the inanimate creation is in its lifeless obedience, then they will put on its glory, or rather that greater

²³⁶ *The Pilgrim’s Regress* was first published in 1933.

glory of which Nature is only the first sketch”.²³⁷ Getting in, for Lewis, involves a perfect obedience that respects our proper position as creatures.

We see the centrality of this mystical death in Lewis’ soteriology as early as *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, which was published in 1933. When John crosses the canyon at the end of his journey and encounters Mother Kirk, John approaches her and says, “I have come to give myself up”.²³⁸ Here culminates John’s pilgrimage, his searching for the island that he so desires, on the floor of the canyon that separates this world from the next, the place that Lewis calls *Peccatum Adae* (*PR*, 192). He is called by Mother Kirk to dive into a large pool of water. John resists, saying that he has never learned to dive and asking if he couldn’t rather jump. “The art of diving”, responds Mother Kirk, “is not to do anything new but simply to cease to do something. You have only to let yourself go.... If you jump, you will be trying to save yourself and you may be hurt. As well, you would not go deep enough. You must dive so that you can go right down to the bottom of the pool: for you are not to come up again on this side” (*PR*, 193). Vertue (John’s guide) adds with a smile, “It is only necessary...to abandon all efforts at self-preservation” (*PR*, 193).

We can see, in this passage, the core ideas and images that Lewis will go on to develop in his later works. While the submersion in water suggests baptism, we also have the image of death and the idea of a death of self-will as the means of salvation that will play a crucial role in Lewis’ later works. In *The Pilgrim’s Regress* the character Death

²³⁷ Lewis, C.S. “The Weight of Glory.” In *The Weight of Glory: And Other Addresses*. Harper One, 1980, 43.

²³⁸ C.S. Lewis, *The Pilgrim’s Regress*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014, 193. Subsequent references to *The Pilgrim’s Regress* will be cited, using the abbreviation *PR*, in parentheses within the main body of the text.

speaks these words to John, just before his encounter with Mother Kirk: “The cure of death is dying. He who lays down his liberty in that act receives it back” (192).

Lewis returns to this theme throughout his corpus. In *The Screwtape Letters*, he insists that you must lose yourself in order to find it again in God. Speaking in the voice of Screwtape, Lewis writes that, “[w]hen [God] talks of their losing their selves, He only means abandoning the clamour of self-will; once they have done that, He really gives them back all their personality, and...when they are wholly His they will be more themselves than ever” (222). Screwtape notes that God is “delighted to see them sacrificing even their innocent wills to His, He hates to see them drifting away from their own nature for any other reason” (222). This is the core of Lewis’ soteriology; this is what is at the heart of sanctification: we must sacrifice even our innocent wills to God’s.

Once we submit to this type of death, to the death of our own self-will, we will receive our *selves* back; we will be changed from tin into real flesh. Again, in *The Screwtape Letters*, Lewis writes: “He wants to kill their animal self-love as soon as possible; but it is His long-term policy, I fear, to restore to them a new kind of self-love – a charity and gratitude for all selves, including their own; when they have really learned to love their neighbours as themselves, they will be allowed to love themselves as their neighbours” (*Screwtape*, 224). In *Miracles*, as we have already seen, Lewis notes that death is both the enemy and the remedy. In *Mere Christianity* as well, Lewis notes that “death is an important part of the treatment” (164). Through death comes eternal life. “Submit to death, death of your ambitions and favourite wishes every day and death of your whole body in the end: submit with every fibre of your being, and you will find

eternal life. Keep back nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will be really yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead” (*MC*, 177). In fact, Lewis goes so far as to insist that “[t]here are no real personalities anywhere else. Until you have given up your self to Him you will not have a real self” (*MC*, 176). In order to become the creatures that God intended us to be, to take up our proper place in the created order, “there must be a real giving up of the self” (176).

We will see what this giving up of the self looks like concretely in the lives of two of Lewis’ characters. Lewis’ two most in-depth character sketches, when it comes to moral transformation and sanctification, are Edmund and Eustace in *Narnia*. We will examine each of these characters presently.

Edmund’s Moral Reform: Admission of Guilt, Asking Forgiveness, and Being Remade by God

Edmund offers us one of Lewis’ richest examples of moral transformation in *Narnia*, and he illustrates the principle that, for Lewis, sin and evil are not, in the first place, just matters of wrong actions. Rather, sin is primarily an attitude of rebellion, of self-will, that says “no” to God.

When we first meet Edmund in *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*, he goes from just being spiteful towards his sister Lucy to betraying his siblings to the White Witch. Downing calls this “Edmund’s moral descent”.²³⁹ “Lewis’ concept of the central self...affected one way or another by every moral choice,” he writes, “implies a kind of

²³⁹ David C. Downing, *Into the Wardrobe*, 92.

momentum. Every good choice strengthens one's inner resolve to make another good choice next time, while every bad choice leaves one inclined to further bad choices down the road".²⁴⁰ This is what happens with Edmund: his first lie will lead to a whole series of selfish and harmful decisions.

We can relate this idea of momentum back to what Lewis writes in *The Four Loves* about natural loves. There Lewis notes that if we make a natural love into a god, it will turn into a demon. No natural love, unless it has allowed itself to be taken into the eternity of Charity, gives what it promises. "Natural loves can hope for eternity," writes Lewis, "only in so far as they have allowed themselves to be taken into the eternity of Charity; have at least allowed this process to begin here on earth.... And the process will always involve a kind of death" (*FL*, 165).²⁴¹ The condition that our natural loves need to be converted into Charity, moreover, is "not a condition arbitrarily laid down by God, but one necessarily inherent in the character of Heaven: nothing can enter there which cannot become heavenly" (*FL*, 165). For Edmund, an inordinate love for Turkish Delight (a sub-human love, as categorised by Lewis in *The Four Loves*) and for worldly power, led to his own downfall and the consequent sacrifice of Aslan. This desire, we might say, was turned into a god; it was given supreme reign over Edmund's other desires, and it consequently led to his downfall.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 93.

²⁴¹ In *The Great Divorce*, Lewis reiterates this point when he writes that "no natural feelings are high or low, holy or unholy, in themselves. They are all holy when God's hand is on the rein. They all go bad when they set up on their own and make themselves into false gods" (519).

Edmund's Fall: An Attitude that Says "No" to God

The underlying problem, for Edmund, is one of pride and of an attitude that says "no" to God. Edmund's fatal mistake – the one that leads to Aslan's death in a Christ-like sacrifice that defeats the Witch, robs her of her power, and reverses the curse of death – is in betraying his siblings to the Witch. The White Witch tempts Edmund into this betrayal by offering him enchanted and addictive Turkish Delight and then, after appealing to his greed, she appeals to his pride and his desire to be placed above the rest. She tells him that she is looking for a boy to make her heir and to take over the ruling of Narnia after her death. "While he was Prince he would wear a gold crown and eat Turkish Delight all day long: and you are much the cleverest and handsomest young man I've ever met" (*LWW*, 126). All he has to do, she tells him, is to bring his brother and sisters to her castle. Ultimately, it is pride, a desire to be above the rest, that leads Edmund to say "yes" to the Witch and "no" to Aslan.

John Bowen, in *The Spirituality of Narnia*, describes Edmund's Fall in a similar fashion, as a problem fundamentally involving an improper ordering of desires. "What is important about Edmund's actions", notes Bowen, "is not in the first place the specific things he has done wrong – that he has been greedy for Turkish Delight and wanted to be a prince in Narnia – but that he has become the servant of the White Witch. In effect, he has said 'No' to Aslan, even before he is conscious that Aslan exists".²⁴² He continues, "[w]ho we give our ultimate loyalty to, however, affects every other loyalty and every other relationship. Whatever that commitment is acts like a powerful magnet that turns

²⁴² John Bowen. *The Spirituality of Narnia: The Deeper Magic of C.S. Lewis*. Regent College Publishers, 2007, 65.

everything in its direction”.²⁴³ Like Downing, who writes that Edmund’s moral descent has a momentum to it, Bowen too identifies this tendency of one’s desires to attract similar desires like a magnet. For Bowen, the magnet, in fact, is not each desire or action but more fundamentally one’s allegiance to the Witch or to Aslan, to the devil or to God, to selfishness or to selfless love.

We see this demonstrated dramatically in the case of Edmund whose actions become more selfish, with a growing disregard for others, until he reaches his turning point and begins to think of others instead of himself. When the children first hear Aslan’s name mentioned in *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*, “Edmund is the only one of the four who reacts negatively to the name. The reason is obvious: he has a different perspective because he has already turned away from Aslan and given his allegiance to the Witch – and it has affected him deeply”.²⁴⁴ The reaction of each child to the name of Aslan reveals whose side each is on, whom they are serving. For Edmund, when he returns from his first trip into Narnia and denies being there with Lucy, he is “already more than half on the side of the Witch” (*LWW*, 128). The problem, for Edmund, is fundamentally one of self-will and pride: he desires his own good over that of others (recall the Dwarfs’ refrain: “The Dwarfs are for the Dwarfs”), and his actions become increasingly selfish. We could describe this as Edmund’s own falling out of the beautiful order for which he was created. In order to rectify the rift between himself and Aslan, and between himself and his siblings, Edmund must offer repentance and submit to being re-formed. What that looks like we will examine presently.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Edmund's Turning Point: Guilt & Forgiveness

In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis notes that the most important things we must do in order to appropriate the salvation offered to us by Christ are to acknowledge our guilt, ask for forgiveness, and submit to being remade by God (120)²⁴⁵. This remaking involves turning *Bios* into *Zoe*, i.e. catching the good infection, which most commonly involves prayer, sacrament, and community. Before we can be remade by God, however, we must acknowledge our guilt and ask forgiveness. Only after this can we experience the moral transformation that comes with entering into the life of God and turning *Bios* and *Zoe*. We will see a dramatic image of the remaking in Eustace shortly, but first we can examine the elements of guilt and forgiveness, which are given special attention in the case of Edmund.

Edmund's turning point from a moral descent towards forgiveness and redemption occurs after he realizes that the Witch intends to keep him as a prisoner, not make of him a prince. The Witch drags Edmund along with her on the sledge. They encounter a family of squirrels enjoying a feast and celebrating a visit from Father Christmas. The Witch is enraged at this sign that her power is slipping away and raises her wand to turn them all into stone. Edmund, instead of feeling sorry for himself, pleads with the Witch to spare them. Here, Lewis writes, "Edmund for the first time in this story felt sorry for someone besides himself" (*LWW*, 163).

"This is the first clear sign that Edmund's moral regeneration has begun", notes Downing. "Miserable as he is himself, Edmund feels compassion for others. Apart from

²⁴⁵See also Lewis' letter to Harvey Karlsen, 13 Oct. 1961 (*Collected Letters: Vol. III*).

their direct response to Aslan himself, the clearest way to discern the moral health of a character in Narnia is to note which ones think of others and which ones think only of themselves”.²⁴⁶ Of course, this falls in line with Lewis’ characterization of pride as an unsmiling emphasis on the self, in *The Screwtape Letters*, and Screwtape’s remark that anything that turns a person’s attention outward works in favour of God.

Over the course of the story, Edmund is saved from the Witch by the army of Aslan, and Aslan returns with him to the other Pevensies. “Here is your brother,” he says, “and – there is no need to talk to him about what is past” (*LWW*, 174). Edmund apologizes to each of his siblings, and they accept, at which point they all become friends again and carry on with the business of defeating the Witch. In one way, this illustrates the simplicity of moral reform and taking our proper place (in Aslan’s kingdom.) It is primarily about acknowledging our guilt, asking forgiveness, and submitting to being remade by God. Forgiveness, for Lewis, is paramount, both asking forgiveness for our sins, and forgiving others for their sins against us. In *The Weight of Glory*, Lewis insists that we are offered forgiveness for our own sins on no other terms than that we forgive the sins of others against us: “We believe that God forgives us our sins; but also that He will not do so unless we forgive other people their sins against us. There is no doubt about the second part of this statement. It is in the Lord’s Prayer; it was emphatically stated by our Lord” (178). Note here that we are required to forgive because we are commanded to do so by Christ. We are to submit our wills to his in humble obedience. Lewis makes this clear in *Letters to Malcolm*, when he writes that “if forgiveness, in the

²⁴⁶ David C. Downing. *Into the Wardrobe*, 100.

‘crude’ sense of remission of penalty, comes in, this is valued chiefly as a symptom or seal or even by-product of the reconciliation” (95).

Salvation, for Lewis, is also about shifting our focus outwards. In *The Screwtape Letters*, Lewis notes, in the voice of Screwtape, that “[e]ven of his sins the Enemy does not want him to think too much: once they are repented, the sooner the man turns his attention outward the better the Enemy is pleased” (*Screwtape*, 226). After Edmund’s admission of guilt and forgiveness (by Aslan and by his siblings), he begins to return to his old self again (*LWW*, 193). He also begins to think more of others and puts more faith in God’s will. In *Prince Caspian*, for instance, Edmund takes the lead in being the first to believe Lucy and follow her when she says that she sees Aslan and he is telling her to go precisely the opposite way that Peter, who is leading the party, wishes to go (and the opposite way from the shorter, more direct route). Edmund’s moral reform has begun. He is beginning to think of others over himself, and his allegiance now lies with Aslan instead of with the Witch.

Eustace Becomes a Dragon: Moral Transformation and Finding One’s Real Self

Lewis gives us another dramatic depiction of the process of sanctification in Eustace, whose story demonstrates the centrality of character formation and the principle that we turn ourselves into heavenly or hellish creatures. In fact, in Eustace we see a literal depiction of what happens when we are greedy, selfish, and mean: we turn into the monsters like which we are acting; we become less than human.

When we first meet Eustace in *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, he is self-centered, deliberately mean-spirited, demanding, and greedy, not to mention overly practical and unimaginative. He likes only the “wrong sort of books”²⁴⁷ – books of information – and he likes animals, “especially beetles, if they were dead and pinned on a card” (*VTD*, 425). Lewis also writes of Edmund that “deep down inside him he liked bossing and bullying” (*VTD*, 425). When Eustace gets pulled into Narnia by magic, he finds himself on a ship with Lucy, Edmund, Reepicheep, and Prince Caspian, having been pulled into the adventure against his will. Eustace immediately starts complaining and making demands to be put ashore, and he threatens “that at the first port he would ‘lodge a disposition’ against them all with the British Consul” (*VTD*, 436).

Eustace complains through the whole trip until they come to an island where they can have dinner and a rest and repair the ship. As the others are preparing for dinner, Eustace wanders off on his own and gets lost in the forest. He stumbles upon a clearing and a cave where a dragon resides. When he spots the dragon, he freezes out of fear and watches as it makes its way to the pond, lies down, and dies. Eustace waits a while, to see if the dragon is really dead, and when he is convinced that he is so, he goes to the pool for a drink. A storm erupts and Eustace takes shelter in the dragon’s lair. Upon finding the dragon’s treasure, his thoughts immediately turn to personal gain and he slips a gold bracelet over his arm and falls asleep. Upon waking, Eustace discovers that he himself

²⁴⁷ C.S. Lewis. *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*. First American edition, Harper Collins Publishers, 2001, 464. Subsequent references to *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* will be cited, using the abbreviation *VTD*, in parentheses within the main body of the text.

has been turned into a dragon. “Sleeping on a dragon’s hoard with greedy, dragonish thoughts in his heart,” writes Lewis, “he had become a dragon himself” (*VTD*, 466).

In *The Spirituality of Narnia*, Bowen notes: “There is something about sin – being out of harmony with our Creator – which has a tendency to make us less than we are meant to be, even less human. Sin may tempt us to try and become more than we were made to be, but its effect is ultimately to make us less than we were made to be”.²⁴⁸ This is what happens when we fall out of the proper order for which we were created. To exist in a loving relationship with God is the fulfillment of our humanity; it is the purpose for which we were created. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis writes that we find our full humanity in God. Our *real selves*, he says, are waiting for us in him. It is no good trying to be ourselves without him, as the more we resist him, the more we become dominated by heredity, upbringing, our surroundings, and our natural desires. “Until you have given your self to Him you will not have a real self” (*MC*, 176). This is dramatically illustrated in the case of Eustace. Sin literally makes him less than human.

We see this principle demonstrated throughout Lewis’ corpus. In *The Horse and His Boy*, we also see this principle at work in Rabadash, who is vengeful, angry, and proud and gets turned into a donkey. In *The Screwtape Letters*, the senior devil, Screwtape, is turned into a centipede in a fit of anger (250). In *Narnia*, wrongdoers are frequently called “beasts” or “beastly”, and in *The Magician’s Nephew*, at the creation of Narnia, Aslan warns the Talking Beasts not to fall back into the ways of the Dumb Beasts,

²⁴⁸ John Bowen. *The Spirituality of Narnia*, 70.

“lest you cease to be Talking Beasts” (71). It is a recurring theme in Lewis’ fiction that sin makes us less than human.

Eustace’s Undragoning: Being Remade by God

While sin might make us less than human, submitting our wills to God’s and allowing him to remake us (to turn our *Bios* into *Zoe*) restores our full humanity. Lewis gives us a dramatic depiction of the process of remaking in Eustace’s undragoning. Eustace’s dragoning represents a turning point in his story. When Eustace first realizes that he is a dragon, he thinks how he could get even with Caspian and Edmund now. “But the moment he thought this,” writes Lewis, “he realized that he didn’t want to. He wanted to be friends. He wanted to get back among humans and talk and laugh and share things. He realized that he was a monster cut off from the whole human race” (*VTD*, 466). This is the beginning of Eustace’s moral reform: Eustace’s turning point, like Edmund’s, comes when he begins to think of others instead of just himself.

After realizing his dragonish state and beginning to think of others rather than himself, he returns to the ship, successfully informs the others about what has happened to him, and begins to help with provisioning the ship. At this point, Eustace’s character is much improved. He is helpful, and he discovers “the pleasure (quite new to him) of being liked and, still more, of liking other people” (*VTD*, 471). After six days pass, Edmund finds Eustace returned to his human state and Eustace recounts to him how he became undragoned.

Late one night, Eustace met Aslan who led him to a well in a garden on a mountain top. The well is big and round, with marble steps going down to it. There Eustace wanted to bathe, but Aslan told him that he “must undress first” (*VTD*, 474). “So I started scratching myself and my scales began coming off all over the place”, recounts Eustace. (*VTD*, 474). But as he scratched and scratched, he found that he could not remove the dragon skin. Aslan, speaking to Eustace, said, “You will have to let me undress you” (*VTD*, 474). So, Eustace laid himself open to Aslan, lying flat on his back, and allowed him to tear through the dragon skin; the “very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart” (*VTD*, 474). As Aslan peeled off the dragon skin and revealed the human Eustace underneath, he then caught hold of him and threw him into the water. After Eustace had swum in the water a bit, Aslan took him out and dressed him in new clothes.

We have seen elsewhere that Lewis insists that we must have freedom to choose between God and self, and the ability to participate in our own moral transformation. And yet, we cannot return to God (and effect our transformation) completely on our own steam. Salvation, we might say, is cooperative. We must lay ourselves open and submit to being remade by God. Eustace’s undragoning dramatically illustrates this cooperative element: Eustace must lay himself open to Aslan and submit to being remade, though it is Aslan who does the remaking. We also see, in the case of Eustace, that sanctification is a matter of restoring our full humanity. Aslan peels off Edmund’s dragon skin and reveals the human Eustace underneath. We see an image of sacrament (of baptism) here as well, when Aslan throws him into a pool of water during his remaking.

In Eustace, we also see that new life is a gradual process. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis writes of this new life that “[w]e can only do it for moments at first. But from those moments the new sort of life will be spreading through our system: because now we are letting Him work at the right part of us” (MC, 158). In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, after Eustace’s transformation, Lewis tells us that he “*began* to be a different boy” (476; emphasis added). The process of sanctification takes time.

The case of Eustace also illustrates Lewis’ point that new life is not an improvement, but a transformation: “God became man to turn creatures into sons: not simply to produce better men of the old kind but to produce a new kind of man” (MC, 170). Eustace’s undragoning gives us a dramatic image of this kind of transformation.

The Calormene Solider and Mr. Neo-Angular: Character Formation versus Following a Set of Rules

The principle of character formation (versus following a set of rules), i.e. that sanctification is about healing of the will and about shaping ourselves into Heavenly creatures, not about control of the will – is illustrated in two of Lewis’ more minor characters: Emeth, the Calormene soldier in *The Last Battle*, and Mr. Neo-Angular in *The Pilgrim’s Regress*. In these characters, we see Lewis demonstrate a principle that he puts forward in *Mere Christianity*: “[W]hat 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” (MC, 120).

This is part and parcel of good infection, of turning *Bios* into *Zoe* and catching the Christ-life.

In *The Last Battle* Emeth, the Calormene soldier, finds his home in Aslan's country after the end of the world (the end of Narnia), despite being a follower of Tash. This is a clear exception to the general rule that prayer, sacrament, and belonging to a community (the *right* community, i.e. the church) are requirements for salvation, and this exception tells us a lot about Lewis' soteriology and the role that character formation plays.

The explanation that Lewis gives for Emeth's salvation in *The Last Battle* is that "all the service thou hast done to Tash, I account as service done to me", as "no service which is vile can be done to me, and none which is not vile can be done to him" (*LB*, 757). While this seems to contradict what Lewis earlier wrote, that God cares less about what we do than he does about the sort of creatures that we are, if we keep in mind that, for Lewis, morality and duties are like schoolmasters, we can see that Emeth has shaped himself into the sort of person who welcomes God into his life in humble obedience, instead of a person who turns further inward and rejects the grace of God.

Emeth, though worshipping the wrong god, and in fact an *evil* god, had been cultivating courage, honesty, and piety. Lewis notes that Emeth had been seeking God his whole life, though he did not know exactly what or whom he was seeking: "unless thy desire had been for me thou wouldst not have sought so long and so truly. For all find what they truly seek" (*LB*, 757).

We get some hints of Emeth's character when he tells the children, upon meeting them in Aslan's country, that he came to Narnia under the command of Rishda Tarkaan. "Now when I first heard that we should march upon Narnia I rejoiced, for I had heard many things of your Land and desired greatly to meet you in battle. But when I found that we were to go in disguised as merchants...and to work by lies and trickery, then my joy departed from me" (*LB*, 755). As he continues his story, we see Emeth display qualities of courage, honesty, and piety (he has great respect for and desire to meet Tash face to face). He mentions to the children that he had been raised to worship Tash and to hate Aslan.

When Emeth meets Aslan face to face, however, he falls at his feet. "Surely," he thinks, "this is the hour of death, for the Lion (who is worthy of all honour) will know that I have served Tash all my days and not him. Nevertheless, it is better to see the Lion and die than to be Tisroc of the world and not to have seen him" (*LB*, 756). This reinforces Lewis' emphasis on character development and the direction in which our loves (our desires) are oriented. Emeth, although not explicitly knowing God, was offering his good deeds to him, through charity (through Christian love), and was thus shaping himself in such a way that he would be receptive to God's love (Aslan in *Narnia*) when he met him face to face. Importantly, Emeth acknowledges that it would be better to see Aslan and die than to be Tisroc of the world and not to have seen him: knowledge of God is a greater good, for Emeth, than is material prosperity. His desire is fundamentally for a relationship with his Creator, not for selfish gain.

We can compare the case of Emeth in *The Last Battle* with that of Mr. Neo-Angular in *The Pilgrim's Regress*. Mr. Neo-Angular, while following the rules on the surface of things, is filled with pride and hatred deep down. Mr. Neo-Angular is one of three pale men who reside in a "little shanty" (102) in the barren northern tableland. As a Steward, Mr. Neo-Angular is a representative of God (called The Landlord in Lewis' allegory). He acts only out of a sense of *duty*, not out of love. When John (the protagonist) and Vertue (his guide) approach the shanty, he greets them by saying, "You will fare badly here.... But I am a Steward and it is my duty according to my office to share my supper with you. You may come in" (*PR*, 102). When John and Vertue thank Mr. Neo-Angular for his hospitality, he answers, "I am not kind at all.... I am doing my duty. My ethics are based on dogma, not on feeling" (*PR*, 103). Mr. Neo-Angular is not acting out of love but out of a sense of duty. While acting out of a sense of duty is not inherently bad, the problem is that one can do the right thing out of a sense of duty while still having a mean and selfish character. We see this in Mr. Neo-Angular when we learn that he is united with Mr. Humanist and Mr. Neo-Classical not out of any shared values, but out of *hatred*: "Our common hatred therefore links us together again the giant, against Eschropolis, and against Mr. Halfways" (*PR*, 105). This is damning, within the scope of Lewis' theological anthropology. While Mr. Neo-Angular appears to be doing good deeds and acting out of love, in fact he is acting only out of duty and hatred. If sanctification is about character formation, for Lewis, then Mr. Neo-Angular is turning himself away from God, who wants repentance, forgiveness, and charity towards one's neighbours.

Character Formation, Salvation, and the Afterlife: Purgatory

This process of character formation is not complete in this life, for Lewis. His comments on purgatory in *The Great Divorce* and in *Letters to Malcolm* show the importance of character development which is continued into the afterlife.

For Lewis, purgatory is a continuation of the moral transformation that begins in this life. Just as someone may in fact be cultivating a character of humility and obedience of God without explicitly knowing God – like Emeth in *The Last Battle* – so in purgatory we find that the emphasis is on character formation and humility, rather than on faith “in the first sense” for Lewis (propositional knowledge of Christian doctrine) and rather than on following a set of rules.²⁴⁹

In *Into the Wardrobe*, Downing writes, “Lewis rejected both universalism and predestination as negations of free will. His position is better described as ‘inclusivism,’ the idea that Christ’s reconciling work may sometimes apply even to those who are not aware of it”.²⁵⁰ We have seen already how this works in the case of Emeth, the Calormene soldier. Downing notes that Lewis did not feel that he was being unorthodox in this matter, as he referred several times in his letters to the passage in the Bible where Christ welcomes those who fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and visited the sick, saying that “as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40).²⁵¹

²⁴⁹ See page 226 for a discussion of faith in the first sense and in the second sense.

²⁵⁰ David C. Downing. *Into the Wardrobe*, 84.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

In a letter to a little boy (Laurence)'s, mother, Lewis remarks, "I think every prayer which is sincerely made even to a false god or to a very imperfectly conceived true God is accepted by the true God, and that Christ saves many who do not think they know him".²⁵² I have been suggesting that this is because, on Lewis' account, with every moral decision we make we are turning the central, core part of us either into a heavenly creature or a hellish creature. We have seen the effects of pride on Uncle Andrew, Jadis, and the Dwarfs, each of whom turn their backs on the grace offered them by God. Ultimately, for Lewis, salvation is about a healing of the will, not a control of the will, and a healing that can only be done in us by God (we cannot heal ourselves), and only after we give up the clamouring of our self-will.

Lewis' views on purgatory and the afterlife, in *The Great Divorce*, and in *Letters to Malcolm*, reinforce the importance of character formation and the laying down of self-will for his soteriology. Regarding purgatory, in *Letters to Malcolm*, Lewis says that "I believe in Purgatory" (108). "Our souls *demand* Purgatory, don't they? Would it not break the heart if God said to us, 'It is true, my son, that your breath smells and your rags drip with mud and slime, but we are charitable here and no one will upbraid you with these things, nor draw away from you. Enter into the joy'? Should we not reply, 'With submission, sir, and if there is no objection, I'd *rather* be cleaned first.' 'It may hurt, you know' – 'Even so, sir'" (108-109; single quotation marks in the original). For Lewis, purgatory is not about punishment or retribution, but about cleansing the soul. His

²⁵² Lewis' letter to Mrs. Johnson, Nov. 8 1952. In *Collected Letters. Volume III. Narnia, Cambridge, and Joy, 1950-1963*. Kindle ed., edited by Walter Hooper, HarperCollins e-books

supposal in *The Great Divorce* also reinforces his notion that salvation is ultimately about laying down one's self-will and submitting oneself to God in humble obedience. God will not force this upon us, and yet there must come a time when we choose, once and for all. We must preserve, on Lewis' account, both human freedom and also the sovereignty of God. While on the surface it might seem merciful to insist on universal salvation, and to admit that "the final loss of one soul gives the lie to all the joy of those who are saved" (*GD*, 536), in fact this would give Hell the veto over Heaven. There must come a day when those who refuse God's grace are no longer given any chances to repent. "Either the day must come when joy prevails and all the makers of misery are no longer able to infect it: or else for ever and ever the makers of misery can destroy in others the happiness they reject for themselves. I know it has a great sound to say ye'll accept no salvation which leaves even one creature in the dark outside. But watch that sophistry or ye'll make a Dog in a Manger the tyrant of the universe" (*GD*, 536).

Lewis insists on the availability of salvation and sanctification to everyone. However, one must submit to being remade by God and one must lay down one's self-will in order to be remade. God will not (we might even say cannot) admit into Heaven those who refuse. (We saw why this is the case with the Dwarfs in *Narnia*.) In *The Great Divorce*, Lewis writes that "[e]very disease that submits to a cure shall be cured: but we will not call blue yellow to please those who insist on still having jaundice..." (*GD*, 537). We see this principle illustrated early on when we meet the Big Ghost, a murderer who finds himself in Heaven. By way of explanation, he says, "I do not look at myself. I have given up myself. I had to, you know, after the murder. That was what it

did for me. And that was how everything began” (*GD*, 480). Again, we see that it is not exactly our actions that God cares about, but rather the people that we become. Even a horrific action can be redeemed if we lay down our self-will and seek forgiveness in humble obedience to God.

We also see, in *The Great Divorce*, the significance of character formation for Lewis’ concept of salvation. The protagonist and his guide meet a woman, called simply “the Ghost”, who complains about how various people have treated her in life. She is one of the ghostly people who have come up on the bus ride to Heaven, and it is clear that she is not going to make it in. Lewis’ protagonist expresses concern over this woman’s fate. “[T]hat unhappy creature doesn’t seem to me to be the sort of soul that ought to be even in danger of damnation. She isn’t wicked: she’s only a silly, garrulous old woman who has got into a habit of grumbling” (*GD*, 507). His guide responds, “That is what she once was. That is maybe what she still is. If so, she certainly will be cured. But the whole question is whether she is now a grumbler.... If there is a real woman...still inside the grumbling, it can be brought to life again” (*GD*, 507). In Lewis’ supposal, we see what sort of people we turn ourselves into. And more, we see how a soul, when turned away from God and towards itself, can become nearly nothing. Regarding the grumbling, as of any mood or disposition, the protagonist’s guide says, “Ye can repent and come out of it again. But there may come a day when you can do that no longer. Then there will be no *you* left to criticise the mood, nor even to enjoy it, but just the grumble itself going on forever like a machine” (*GD*, 507). Recall Lewis’ remarks in *Mere Christianity*, where he notes the significance of the fact that human beings are *eternal* creatures. This fits

with his notion of character formation and salvation. Any habit that reinforces pride and self-sovereignty, left to increase over an infinite amount of time, will eventually overtake the whole person. The grumbler will be nothing more than a grumble.

Again and again, we see the emphasis on laying down one's self-will and turning to God. Pam, another of the ghosts along for the bus ride, is looking for her son. She is instructed that until she allows her desire to be reunited to her son (who died long before her) to die and be resurrected, she is using God only as a means and cannot become solid enough to reside in Heaven. The Bright Spirit who greets Pam refers to a "thickening treatment" (*GD*, 518) which consists in "learning to love God for His own sake" (*GD*, 518). Even Mother-love, if it does not submit to death, cannot be resurrected.

Healing the Will, Good Infection, and Character Formation

The pattern that we see emerge across Lewis' corpus is that salvation is about laying our own wills down and following God in humble obedience. Lewis' theological anthropology and his understanding of sanctification are not about *control* of the will, but rather about *healing* of the will. This healing happens through "good infection" when we get close to Christ, however that looks in each person's life. While it usually comes in the form of prayer, sacrament, and community, there are exceptions on both sides of the usual. There will be those who consider themselves Christians of whom God will say, "I never knew you". Perhaps these will be people like Mr. Neo-Angular who act according to the rules but are motivated out of duty and even hatred. There will also be those who did not know Christ in the usual sense who are welcomed into Heaven as children, like

Emeth, the Calormene soldier. What this demonstrates is Lewis' principle of character formation: that each moral decision we make turns us slowly into either a heavenly or a hellish creature. Our goal, for Lewis, is to follow Christ and attempt to be like him – an impossible task under our own steam. It is only when we *recognize* that this is an impossible task that we can “throw up the sponge” and let God work in us, allowing him to conform our wills to his, to kill our natural self and remake us into spiritual selves. Framing his theological anthropology in this way allows Lewis to retain both human freedom and divine sovereignty, and it roots his theological anthropology in his doctrine of creation: we must *voluntarily* lay ourselves open to be remade by God, to accept the cure offered us in Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection, and to take our proper place as creatures in loving relationship with our Creator. Thus, we can see how an understanding of the atonement that rests on the self-consistency of God and our proper place as creatures, plays out concretely in terms of humility and moral transformation in Lewis' works.

CHAPTER FIVE: *Justitia* as Proper Order: The Atonement, Sanctification, and One's Proper Station in *Narnia*

In *Narnia*, we find one of Lewis' most mature expressions of the atonement.²⁵³ It is here where Lewis artfully combines elements of Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm, showing how an understanding of the atonement as Christ's victory over death and defeat of the devil fits with an understanding of the atonement as a propitiatory sacrifice. Underlying this Patristic and Medieval understanding of the atonement is the concept of proper order and the justice and mercy of God, as we saw in chapter three. Lewis depicts this dramatically in *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*. As we have already seen, proper order is a theme that runs throughout Lewis' theology, and is not just confined to his understanding of the atonement. We see this too in *Narnia*, where Lewis depicts the Christian story from the Fall through soteriology. Throughout this narrative, we can trace the concept of proper order as a unifying theme.

In this chapter, we will explore the link between proper order and justice in *Narnia* and we will see concretely how Lewis' understanding of sanctification is an outworking of his understanding of the atonement, how both of these topics are rooted in the nature of God, and how sanctification and proper order play out in the everyday lives of Lewis' characters. I will be arguing that, in the *Narnia* series, the concept of proper order can be seen as the governing idea and that we can understand Lewis' theological anthropology as an outworking of *justitia*, i.e. as an outworking of the atonement as we

²⁵³ We have already addressed the fact that *Till We Have Faces* is one of Lewis' last works, and one which also addresses the atonement. An analysis of the atonement and proper order in *Till We Have Faces* would be a potential topic for further research.

find it in *The Lion*, which is ultimately grounded in this concept of proper order as right relation to God (as well as to one's neighbour and to oneself).

How This Chapter Will Proceed

In examining *Narnia* in light of the concepts of *justitia* and proper order, we will first address Lewis' method in writing *Narnia* and the "problem" of the *Narnia* series: what Michael Ward calls the "problem of composition".²⁵⁴ Contrary to the view that *Narnia* does not hang together theologically, but is rather a bricolage of scriptural elements and other more disparate materials with little apparent coherence in design,²⁵⁵ I will be arguing that the concept of proper order provides the governing framework within which we can understand *Narnia* as a theological whole, and that proper order is grounded in *justitia* (justice) which is grounded in the nature of God. After addressing Lewis' method and the "problem of composition" of the *Narnia* series, I will proceed to briefly lay out the principle that God is the sole foundation of reality. Since we are tying Lewis' theological anthropology back to his understanding of the atonement, and both to his understanding of the nature of God, it will be helpful to ground this discussion in Lewis' understanding of the nature of God as the very foundation of reality itself. I will then briefly address the concept of *justitia* as rectitude of order, as we saw Crouse define it with respect to Anselm. I will also briefly examine the Moral Law as we see it in *Narnia* overall. This will help us to orient ourselves when it comes to examining each

²⁵⁴ Michael Ward. *Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C.S. Lewis*. Oxford University Press, 2008, 8.

²⁵⁵ See, e.g. Michael Ward. *Planet Narnia*, 4, for instance.

book in the *Narnia* series, since I am claiming that Lewis' theological anthropology in *Narnia* is an outworking of his understanding of the atonement, in which God satisfies the demands of the Moral Law on our behalf. Having thus set the terms for our examination of *Narnia*, I will then proceed to draw out the relevant theological themes in each book individually. Overall, in *Narnia* we will see that salvation, for Lewis, is best understood as a restoration of proper order, and that this plays out concretely in terms of good infection, maintaining one's proper station, and character formation which determines our ultimate destination (Heaven or Hell).

Lewis' Method in Writing *Narnia*

What Lewis writes about his method and motives in writing *The Chronicles of Narnia* is instructive, both for considering this set of works, and his theological corpus as a whole, as we have observed in chapter one above. In "Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's to be Said", Lewis identifies the motives of "the Author" against those of "the Man".²⁵⁶ "In the Author's mind, there bubbles up every now and then the material for a story. For me it invariably leads to nothing unless it is accompanied with the longing for a Form: verse or prose, short story, novel, play or what not. When these two things click you have the Author's impulse complete" ("Sometimes Fairy Stories", 45).

²⁵⁶ C.S. Lewis. "Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's to Be Said." In *On Stories: And Other Essays on Literature*. Harcourt, Inc., 1982. 45-48. Subsequent references to "Sometimes Fairy Stories..." will be cited in parentheses within the main body of the text.

Lewis identifies various images with this bubbling: images of a faun carrying an umbrella, a queen on a sledge, and “a magnificent lion” (“Sometimes Fairy Stories”, 46).²⁵⁷

He also compares the process of writing to that of making jam. He refers to the “Author’s impulse”, which is made up of the material for a story and the form (“verse or prose, short story, novel, play or what not”), as something “inside him pawing to get out. He longs to see that bubbling stuff pouring into that Form as the housewife longs to see the new jam pouring into the clean jam jar” (“Sometimes Fairy Stories”, 45-46).

Although Lewis does not explicitly identify his evolving understanding of the atonement with this “bubbling”, we can see that he does go through a process of deepening and enriching his understanding of the atonement. As with the making of jam, we see different elements of Lewis’ theological understanding changing, maturing, and coming together into the finished product that is *Narnia*. Thus, I suggest that it is helpful in understanding Lewis’ thoughts on Christian theology and atonement theology specifically, to take his evolving understanding of the atonement as part of this “bubbling”. For Lewis, the *Narnia* series is the new jam created out of all this “bubbling stuff”.

While “the Author” is concerned with this “bubbling stuff”, i.e. the material for a story, and a form to give the story, “the Man” has different motives. Lewis says of *Narnia* that,

²⁵⁷ When writing of his method of writing, Lewis observes that, “[o]ne thing I am sure of. All my seven *Narnia* books, and my three science-fiction books, began with seeing pictures in my head. At first they were not a story, just pictures” (“It all Began with a Picture”, in *On Stories*, 53). Of course, Lewis acknowledges other motives for writing *Narnia*, but, he says, “The *Lion* all began with a picture of a Faun carrying an umbrella and parcels in a snowy wood” (“It all Began with a Picture”, 53).

the Man in me began to have his turn. I thought I saw how stories of this kind could steal past a certain inhibition which had paralysed much of my own religion in childhood. Why did one find it so hard to feel as one was told one ought to feel about God or about the sufferings of Christ? An obligation can freeze feelings. And reverence itself did harm. The whole subject was associated with lowered voices; almost as if it were something medical. But supposing that by casting all these things into an imaginary world, stripping them of their stained-glass and Sunday school associations, one could make them for the first time appear in their real potency? Could one not thus steal past those watchful dragons? I thought one could (“Sometimes Fairy Stories”, 47).

In *Narnia*, Lewis is bringing Christian theology to life. He is presenting us with an image of what the Fall, the atonement, the process of sanctification, and the last judgement would look like in a world like Narnia, and in setting it in an imaginary world and in stripping it of its “stained-glass and Sunday school associations”, he is attempting to “steal past...watchful dragons”. *Narnia*, for Lewis, is apologetic clothed in fantasy. In fact, Lewis lays out his overall theological plan for the *Narnia* series in a letter to Anne Jenkins dated 5 March 1961. Since this is a letter written to a child, it contains (not surprisingly) only brief statements about each of the books of the *Narnia* series. Nevertheless, to the extent that it is relevant to my thesis, I will examine each of the themes as Lewis’ outlines them in this chapter.

The Magician’s Nephew tells the creation and how evil entered Narnia.
The Lion ___ etc. the Crucifixion and Resurrection
Prince Caspian ___ restoration of the true religion after a corruption
The Horse and His Boy ___ the calling and conversion of a heathen
The Voyage of the Dawn Treader ___ the spiritual life (especially Reepicheep)
The Silver Chair ___ the continued war against the powers of darkness
The Last Battle ___ the coming of Antichrist (the Ape) the end of the world, and the Last Judgement

As we have already noted, in a letter to Patricia Mackey, dated 8 June 1960, Lewis writes about the *Narnia* stories as supposals: “Suppose there were a world like Narnia and it needed rescuing and the Son of God (or the ‘Great Emperor oversea’) went to redeem *it*, as He came to redeem ours, what might it, in that world, all have been like?” Lewis goes on in this letter to elaborate on some similarities and dissimilarities between our world and Narnia:

1. The creation of Narnia is the Son of God creating *a* world (not specially *our* world).
2. Jadis plucking the apple is, like Adam’s sin, an act of disobedience, but it doesn’t fill the same place in her life as his plucking did in his. She was *already* fallen (very much so) before she ate it.
3. The stone table *is* meant to remind one of Moses’ table.
4. The Passion and Resurrection of Aslan are the Passion and Resurrection Christ might be supposed to have had in *that* world – like those in our world but not exactly like.
5. Edmund is like Judas a sneak and a traitor. But unlike Judas he repents and is forgiven (as Judas no doubt wd. have been if he’d repented.)
6. Yes. At the v. *edge* of the Narnian world Aslan begins to appear more like Christ as He is known in *this* world. Hence, the Lamb. Hence, the breakfast – like at the end of St. John’s Gospel. Does not He say ‘You have been allowed to know me in *this* world (Narnia) so that you may know me better when you get back to your own?’
7. And of course the Ape and Puzzle, just before the last Judgement (in the *Last Battle*) are like the coming of Antichrist before the end of our world.

These themes will be picked up throughout this chapter as we come to them. For now, we can note that there are significant parallels between Lewis’ depiction of the atonement in *Narnia* and his understanding of how the atonement works in our world. While Lewis insists that *Narnia* is not allegory (there is no one-to-one match between characters and events in that world and in this world) (“Letter to Mrs Hook, 12/29/58), his labelling of it

as a “supposal” and his laying out of the overall theological plan and some of the similarities (and dissimilarities) between *Narnia* and our world suggest that the parallels that we might draw between *Narnia* and Lewis’ thoughts on the atonement are warranted.

And so, we can take Lewis’ bubbling theological thoughts, the images of the faun and the queen and the lion, and combine it with a desire to “steal past those watchful dragons”, and we can see, out of Lewis’ theological and philosophical corpus comes the new jam of *Narnia*.

The “Problem” of Narnia

In *Planet Narnia*, Michael Ward identifies what he calls a “problem of composition” within the *Narnia* series: “Three of the books seem to be clearly based on biblical source material while four of them have no obvious scriptural foundation”.²⁵⁸ We can see the obvious ties between *The Magician’s Nephew* and the story of creation, between *The Lion* and the doctrine of the atonement, and between *The Last Battle* and the coming of the AntiChrist and the last judgement. Lewis identifies this much as well in his letter to Ann Jenkins, describing broadly what each book in the series is about. In this chapter I intend to show that the entire series does in fact have a theological coherence, hinging on the concepts of proper order and of *justitia*, and that the theological anthropology that we find in these books (especially in the books following *The Lion*) is an outworking of the doctrine of the atonement that we find in *The Lion*.

²⁵⁸ Michael Ward. *Planet Narnia*, 4.

Regarding the idea that Narnia is fundamentally allegory or “supposition”, Ward asserts that “[t]he allegorical’ elements are fragmentary and allusive, no more than that”.²⁵⁹ Ward makes a convincing case for the fundamental role that Medieval cosmology plays in shaping the *Narnia* series, and he insists that the archetypes that we find in Medieval cosmology (the seven planets: Jupiter, Mars, Sol, Luna, Mercury, Venus, and Saturn) provide the underlying framework that unites the whole *Narnia* series.²⁶⁰ While I do not intend to disagree with Ward’s classification of the *Narnia* stories based upon Medieval cosmology, I do intend to assert that the suppositional elements in *Narnia* are not fragmentary but rather are woven together into a comprehensive whole. While “Lewis’ basic imaginative co-ordinates” may have been “located elsewhere than the pages of the New Testament”,²⁶¹ the motives of the Man, and what we might call the basic theological co-ordinates were located squarely in the New Testament and in the theology of the Church Fathers. When we examine *Narnia* with an eye towards *justitia* as it plays out in the atonement and sanctification, we can see that the series hangs together as a whole as a depiction of a substitutionary theory of the atonement and the outworking of the consequences of such a theory.

We should note at the outset that with such an analysis, we will lose some of the unique flavour of each book. However, what I am attempting to do here is not to preserve

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 73.

²⁶⁰ Ward traces the influence of each of the planets in each individual *Narnia* book, writing that, for instance, Jupiter is the governing archetype in *The Lion*, and that the characteristics of kingliness and Joviality are central to this story. *Prince Caspian*, in contrast, is governed by the archetype of Mars and so, in that story, Ward insists that Aslan plays the role of a general in an army (displaying martiality) rather than the kingly role that he plays in *The Lion*. The characteristics of kingliness and martiality are especially relevant to my analysis of *Narnia* and to Lewis’ understanding of the atonement and proper order, and so we will return to these when we come to *The Lion* and *Prince Caspian*.

²⁶¹ Michael Ward. *Planet Narnia*, 73.

the entire unique structure of each book, but rather to trace the common theological elements. Consequently, we can expect some flattening of the richness and character of each work. Where appropriate, I will attempt to preserve the unique flavour of each text, especially as it illuminates Lewis' understanding of salvation history. However, our focus will be on the outworking of *justitia* and of proper order.

God as the Sole Foundation of Reality

God, for Lewis, is the sole foundation of reality. He makes this clear in *Miracles*, where he writes of the supernaturalist that he is one who “believes that one Thing exists on its own and has produced the framework of space and time and the procession of systematically connected events which fill them” (309).²⁶² Since Lewis believes that one of the key characteristics of Christianity held *ubique et ab omnibus* is a full supernaturalism, we can confidently hold that this notion of God as the foundation of reality is central to Lewis' thought. Edith M. Humphrey writes of Lewis' conception of God that “He is both real and Reality itself – and any reality that other things or beings or persons have is entirely derivative”.²⁶³ This concept of God as the foundation of reality, as Reality itself, is central to our understanding of the atonement, and also sanctification, in *Narnia*, since I am claiming that Lewis' understanding of the atonement is rooted in the nature of God. Rowan Williams draws our attention to this principle of God as the sole foundation of reality as it is demonstrated in *The Silver Chair* when Jill approaches Aslan

²⁶² That one Thing being God.

²⁶³ Edith M. Humphrey. *Further Up and Further In*, 25.

at the stream: “there is no other stream”.²⁶⁴ There is no other option. Aslan is not safe, but he is the only source of living water. He, as God, is the foundation of reality itself of which everything else is derivative. As the sole foundation of reality, God is the source of the laws that inform creation. It is his nature ultimately that informs reality and determines *justitia*, that rectitude of order which embraces the whole of creation and regulates the relation of man to God, to his neighbours, and to himself. Humphrey writes, “If God is the ground of reality, then all things in that reality must depend on the One Who Is”.²⁶⁵ We can see this play out in *Narnia* in Lewis’ depiction of the atonement in *The Lion*, and in his theological anthropology throughout the series. The most obvious example of this is in the Deep and Deeper Magic in *The Lion*, where we see justice upheld through mercy, and where we see these laws, if we may call them that, written on the sceptre of the Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea (in the case of justice), and further back before the dawn of time (in the case of mercy, the vicarious death that can be offered by an innocent volunteer in place of a traitor). These are not arbitrary rules that we must follow in order to appease God and earn Heaven; rather, they are rooted in the very nature of God himself and inform all of creation. How this plays out concretely throughout the *Narnia* series we will examine in this chapter.

***Justitia* as Rectitude of Order**

We have seen Robert Crouse define *justitia* as "rectitude of order, which has its source in God Himself, and embraces the whole order of creation, regulating the relations

²⁶⁴ Rowan Williams. *The Lion's World*, 63.

²⁶⁵ Edith M. Humphrey. *Further Up and Further In*, 29.

of man to God, of man to man, and mutual relations within the interior being of man".²⁶⁶

Crouse wrote of *justitia* in the theology of Augustine and Anselm. The same concept applies to Lewis. We have already seen that Lewis defines morality in these same terms in *Mere Christianity*, where he writes that we can think about morality in terms of a fleet of ships: "The voyage will be a success only, in the first place, if the ships do not collide and get in one another's way; and, secondly, if each ship is sea-worthy and has her engines in good order", and thirdly if they are on course for where they are trying to get (66-67). Thus, morality is concerned with relations between individuals, with the character of the human being himself (the mutual relations within the interior of a person), and with the relationship of humanity to God, since it is God who determines "the general purpose of human life as a whole: what man was made for" (*MC*, 67). Earlier in the same work, Lewis insists that morality, "the Moral Law" (20), is rooted in the nature of God himself. For Lewis, proper order is crucial to the running of the universe. We have seen already that, for Lewis, we disrupted this order in the Fall, by attempting to take the place of God and act as though we had created ourselves. Salvation is now a matter of restoring the order of the universe that finds its ground in God himself. This is achieved, in *Narnia*, through good infection and maintaining one's proper station, which involves a heavy dose of humility and putting to death one's own self-will.

²⁶⁶ Robert D. Crouse. "The Augustinian background," 114.

The Moral Law in *Narnia*

At the very beginning and the very end of the *Narnia* series, there is an emphasis on what we might call the law. In *The Magician's Nephew* Aslan tells Digory that he cannot make an act of selfishness the source of contentment. In *The Lion*, he asserts the impossibility of acting against the Deep Magic. In *The Last Battle*, he calls those characters who belong to Tash his "lawful prey". The entire *Narnia* series is bookended by this notion that there are certain laws built into the very fabric of creation that have to do with justice and mercy and the consequences of sin.²⁶⁷

In *The Lion*, the law, that is the Deep and Deeper Magic, has to do with justice and mercy: the life of a traitor belongs to the White Witch, but if someone who has committed no treachery (an innocent volunteer) offers himself on behalf of the traitor, then the law concerning death is undone and Death itself begins to work backwards. Aslan is able to save Edmund (a parallel to Christ saving humanity from death and destruction) by fulfilling the Deep Magic. Aslan pays what Edmund owes to the Witch, and in so doing, invokes a Deeper Magic that not only sets Edmund free, but reverses the Witch's curse that held all Narnia captive. Mercy is achieved through the fulfillment of the law concerning death, a parallel to Christ's offering mercy through the fulfillment of justice.

This is how *justitia* works itself out in *Narnia*: Aslan fulfills the Deep Magic and in so doing reverses the law concerning death and the Witch's hold on Narnia. Salvation, we might say, is thus made available in principle, as Lewis claims in *Mere Christianity*

²⁶⁷ As with Christ in the Gospels, Aslan does not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it.

(*MC*, 147), and it is the job of each individual to appropriate that salvation, which involves taking one's proper place in the order of creation. This involves, first and foremost, obedience to the will of Aslan, humility, and a kind of death, which, as we have noted earlier, Lewis elsewhere terms a "mystical death", a death of self-will. We will see how Aslan's followers take up their salvation in this way as we examine each of the books of *Narnia*. We will also see what happens to the characters who insist on rebellion and following their own selfish desires.

It is God's purpose for humanity that we come to share in the life of Christ, in a begotten life, which Lewis terms *Zoe* or spiritual life, and that we should become sons and daughters of God. He cannot achieve this by overriding our free will, however, nor can he forgive simply by fiat, since salvation is not a matter of God attributing goodness to us, but rather our *becoming* the very creatures who could be at home in Heaven. In this case, moral transformation requires *both* mercy as a sort of rescue from death and destruction (from being held captive by the devil) *and* justice as reformation of character, as an excising or shedding of the elements that keep us far from God. God's purpose for us, to make us into children of God, is accomplished through *justitia*, through restoring that order which was lost in the Fall. Adam and Eve, we saw, tried to behave as though they had created themselves, but this was to *live a lie*; it went against the very nature of reality. What was broken cannot then be fixed without putting the pieces back in order, so to speak. What this looks like concretely is what Lewis calls good infection: laying ourselves open to God so that He can change our *Bios* life into *Zoe* life. How this process

of moral transformation connects back to the atonement, proper order, and the nature of God we see worked out in *Narnia*.

I. The Magician's Nephew: Reality is Law Governed and Has its Source in the Nature of God

The Magician's Nephew is one of the *Narnia* series that has an obvious scriptural foundation, telling the story of creation and how evil entered Narnia.²⁶⁸ Within this context, we also learn a great deal about Lewis' understanding of reality and what we might call the created order, i.e. how the world works and our proper place in it. One of the most important things that we learn in *The Magician's Nephew* is that reality is law-governed. We also begin to see here that these laws are rooted in the nature of God (though this will become more explicit in *The Lion* and *The Silver Chair*), and that humility is central to maintaining one's proper station and to seeing reality as it really is.

Reality is Law-Governed...

That reality is law-governed is made most explicit in the episode of Digory and the magic apple. Aslan commands Digory to retrieve an apple from a garden in the Western Wild, which is to provide the seed to be planted to protect Narnia from the Witch. When Digory returns and tells of his near betrayal of Aslan's orders, and also of the Witch's having eaten an apple (the apple of youth and of life), he is told that "Things

²⁶⁸ C.S. Lewis. "The Magician's Nephew." *The Chronicles of Narnia*. First American edition, HarperCollins, 2001, 7-106.

always work according to their nature” (*MN*, 100). Because the Witch ate an apple, she will be always young, “[b]ut length of days with an evil heart is only length of misery” (*MN*, 100). Digory, too, should he have eaten a stolen apple, would live a long and miserable life, like the Witch, “[f]or the fruit always works – it must work” (*MN*, 100). Reality is law-governed, and things always behave according to their nature. Moreover, Aslan notes that, had Digory stolen an apple for his ailing mother, she indeed would have been made well, but “[t]he day would have come when both you and she would have looked back and said it would have been better to die in the illness” (*MN*, 100). Having obeyed Aslan, however, and returned with the apple as commanded, Digory is now given an apple to heal his mother, one that will bring healing and joy. It is an apple from the same tree; there is nothing different about it except for the intentions and the character of the actor (and the instructions given by Aslan). Rowan Williams writes of this episode that Aslan “cannot make an act of selfishness produce contentment... He cannot...make an act of betrayal, however apparently minor, the source of happiness”.²⁶⁹ Things in this world have a real nature and they always behave according to that nature. This is another way of saying that reality is law-governed. Not only that, but there is a moral quality to the law, what we here might suggest has the undertones of justice and mercy: an act of selfishness cannot produce contentment. There is justice in this, which, in *Mere Christianity*, Lewis terms “fairness; it includes honesty, give and take, truthfulness, keeping promises” (*MC*, 72), since a promise broken cannot justly be rewarded; deceit and selfishness cannot produce contentment. There is also mercy in the ability of selfless

²⁶⁹ Rowan Williams. *The Lion’s World*, 66-67.

obedience to produce healing (in terms of Digory's mother), protection (in terms of Narnia against the Witch), and joy. Aslan does not let Digory's mother die, nor does he abandon Narnia to the Witch, but rather he offers healing from the corruption of death, and release from the captivity of the Witch. That this healing and protection comes as a result of Digory's selfless obedience suggests that humility and the death of self-will are crucial in bringing about salvation.

...And Has Its Source in the Nature of God

We are not told explicitly that these laws are rooted in the nature of God, in *The Magician's Nephew*, but we do see Aslan singing creation into existence at the very beginning of the world. What we can gather from this is that Aslan is the source and the foundation of all creation. All things come from him. Taken alone, this may not be enough evidence to insist that the law concerning mercy and justice, and in fact all laws written into the fabric of creation, are rooted in the nature of God. However, in *The Lion* we learn that the Deep Magic is written on the sceptre of the Emperor-beyond-the-Sea. We could posit that it is something that is related to God in a fundamental way. The Deeper Magic comes from even further back, before the dawn of time. We see these rules written into creation elsewhere in Lewis' work as well. In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* Aslan asks Lucy, "Do you think I would not obey my own rules?" (498) In *The Silver Chair*, Aslan is the only source of living water. He tells a terrified Jill that "there is no other stream" (558). Overall, we get a picture of Aslan as sovereign King, as the only source of salvation, a salvation that cannot neglect justice, but which also shows mercy.

As we explore the later books of the *Narnia* series, we will see that a number of these rules that Aslan enforces (and must obey himself as well) involve maintaining one's proper station, which involves a heavy dose of humility and obedience to one's Creator. This is the foundation of the Moral Law: dependent creatures must accept their place under Aslan, who is sovereign King above all Kings. There is an order to reality that must be obeyed. If we try to step out of line, to set up on our own and create our own rules, then we are going against the very fabric of reality. As Rowan Williams notes in *The Lion's World*, "[t]he greatest and most dangerous delusion of human agents [is] the belief that the consequences of my actions shall be as I please".²⁷⁰

In *The Magician's Nephew*, we already see examples of what happens when we try to disrupt the order of sovereign Creator above dependent creature in Uncle Andrew and Jadis the Witch. We have seen, in chapter four, that both Andrew and Jadis believe that they are above common people, that they make their own rules and are accountable only to themselves. They are prideful and attempt to be sovereign unto themselves. Most strikingly, in Andrew, this behaviour results in a literal blindness to how things actually are. He is unable to hear Aslan's singing at the foundation of Narnia, and he hears the speech of the Talking Beasts only as gruntings and growlings. Jadis, who is the White Witch in *The Lion*, holds Narnia under her power for a time, but is conquered by the mercy of Aslan at the Stone Table. Crucially, humility and obedience are fundamental to maintaining one's proper station and fitting into the proper order of reality.

²⁷⁰ Rowan Williams. *The Lion's World*, 67.

How Evil Entered the World

Lewis mentions, in his letter to Anne Jenkins, that *The Magician's Nephew* is about the creation and how evil entered Narnia. Having addressed creation already, we can turn to the entry of evil into Narnia and what it can tell us about Lewis' theology. In *The Magician's Nephew*, we learn that Digory is responsible for bringing the Witch (the source of evil) into Narnia. Having introduced an evil into this newly formed world, Digory is then given the task of helping to rectify this disruption. He does so by retrieving a magic apple from the garden at the end of the Western Wild, beyond the land of Narnia, that Aslan will plant and over the course of the story it will grow into a tree which will protect Narnia.

“You see, friends,” [Aslan] said, “that before the new, clean world I gave you is seven hours old, a force of evil has already entered it; waked and brought hither by this son of Adam.” The Beasts, even Strawberry, all turned their eyes on Digory till he felt that he wished the ground would swallow him up. “But do not be cast down,” said Aslan, still speaking to the Beasts. “Evil will come of that evil, but it is still a long way off, and I will see to it that the worst of it falls upon myself. In the meantime, let us take such order that for many hundred years yet this shall be a merry land in a merry world. And as Adam's race has done the harm, Adam's race shall help to heal it. Draw near, you other two.” (*MN*, 80)

Lewis depiction of evil's entry into Narnia and humanity's responsibility for it helps to give humanity a role in redemption.²⁷¹ It is humanity who is responsible for evil in Narnia, and it is humanity who must help to rectify the harm done, but, and we must take careful note of this, Aslan says that he will ensure that the worst of the evil will fall on himself (*MN*, 80).

²⁷¹ In *Against the Arians*, Athanasius notes that, since death came by man, so the resurrection came also by man. Anselm as well insists that only man needs to atone for sin, while only God can offer atonement.

What Lewis cannot depict in the character of Aslan is the *humanity* of Christ. Rowan Williams, in *The Lion's World*, writes that this is because Lewis is trying, in this series, to combat a tendency to exalt humanity, to focus too closely on the sameness of humanity and God rather than on the difference: "in spite of everything, he is not *just* trying to 'translate' Christian doctrine".²⁷² Lewis is "bringing to the foreground what is obscured by a too habitual and too easy stress on solidarity".²⁷³ We could say that Narnia is a sort of "mouth-wash" for the imagination.²⁷⁴

However, to retain the principle that only God can offer atonement for sin, while only humanity ought to do so, Lewis must have humanity play a role in redemption and the rectification of original sin. Just as Christ had to be fully human, so as to be part of the race that owed repentance, so in *The Magician's Nephew* we see a picture of the entry of evil into that world that requires humanity to help heal the harm done. The parallel is this: Adam's race, being responsible for the introduction of evil, must be involved in the healing of the harm done.

II. The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe: Substitution, Mercy, and Justice in the Atonement

We have already dealt with the themes of victory, ransom, substitution, sacrifice, and punishment in *The Lion* in chapter three, and so what we do here will largely be summary.

²⁷² Rowan Williams. *The Lion's World*, 27.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ Lewis uses this term in his letter to Jane Gaskell, when speaking of the effect of fairy tales on one's imagination after reading things like "Women's Magazines", which are "baneful influence[s] on your mind and imagination" (C.S. Lewis. "Letter to Jane Gaskell, Sept 2/57". *Collected Letters. Vol. III*, edited by Walter Hooper, HarperCollins e-books, 2007. Digital.)

In *The Lion*, we see a picture of God accepting a punishment on our behalf and, in so doing, fulfilling the law concerning justice, when Aslan accepts Edmund's punishment on his behalf and fulfills the Deep Magic that requires blood for treachery. Since Aslan had committed no treachery (i.e. he was sinless), his death fulfilled a deeper law, the Deeper Magic that says that "a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards" (*LWW*, 185). Lewis artfully combines elements of substitution, victory, ransom, and vicarious punishment in this picture of the atonement. What underlies each of these themes, as we have seen in chapter three, is the centrality of justice and mercy.

Ward, in *Planet Narnia*, insists that "the centrality of sacrifice in *The Lion* is a centrality in terms of plot and atmosphere, not in terms of its particular theology of atonement".²⁷⁵ While Lewis does combine elements of a substitutionary account and a ransom/Christus Victor account, the fact that he does not strictly adhere to only one picture of the atonement does not mean that the centrality of sacrifice is peripheral in terms of a particular theology. We have seen that what Lewis puts forward is an objective understanding of the atonement that relies on substitution and victory over evil. Sacrifice, here, ushers in salvation and sanctification because it fulfills the requirements of justice. This is central to *The Lion* as well as to the rest of Lewis' theology. Justice must be fulfilled, not solely in terms of punishment but also in terms of debt: we need to right a wrong, to re-establish the order of creation that was disrupted in the Fall, and we cannot do this on our own. Only God *can* do it on our behalf. And yet, only humanity

²⁷⁵ Michael Ward. *Planet Narnia*, 70.

must atone. This was Lewis' position in *Mere Christianity* and the reason for the God-Man offering atonement in our place. Once this sacrifice is offered, our natures (because all humanity is like one living organism, or like branches attached to the vine) can begin to change through good infection. Mercy is fulfilled not in defiance of justice, but *through* justice.

Mercy, Justice, and the Law Concerning Death

We can see many commonalities between Lewis and the early Church Fathers when it comes to justice in *The Lion*. In *Against the Arians*, Athanasius writes that Christ died “to raise man up and destroy the works of the devil” (II.55). He also describes the atonement in terms of the fulfillment of the law, where Christ has lifted judgement on human beings by taking on the judgement himself and fulfilling “the righteousness of the law” (*Against the Arians*, I.51). This is the picture that we see in *The Lion*: Aslan does not work *against* the Deep Magic, but rather fulfills the Deep magic, the law that says that a traitor is the lawful prey of the Witch, and in so doing, because he has committed no treachery, fulfills the Deeper Magic as well, which releases Edmund, and all of the Narnian creatures, from the Witch's power.

Augustine, as well, depicts Christ as having beaten the devil at the justice game, not the power game (*On the Trinity*, XIII. 17) since we came to death by sin, but he came by justice. Because Christ was sinless, the devil, having slain him, was required (by justice) to let the debtors (us) go free. So too did Edmund come to death by sin (because of his treachery he was the lawful prey of the Witch), but Aslan, being sinless came to

death by justice and fulfilled that deeper law that required the Witch to let her debtors, those who rightfully belonged to her, go free.

Anselm too insists that mercy is upheld by upholding justice: Because Christ, of his own accord, gave to his Father what he was never going to lose as a matter of necessity, he paid on behalf of us sinners a debt which he did not owe (*WGBM*, II.18). He satisfied our debt, and in so doing fulfilled the demands of justice which require either satisfaction or punishment for sin. What then could be juster, asks Anselm, “than that the one to whom is given a reward greater than any debt should absolve all debt, if it is presented with the feeling that is due?” (*WGBM*, II.20). Aslan paid the debt owed to the Witch by Edmund. He satisfied the law concerning death, and, having defeated the Witch in this way, then not only absolved Edmund’s debt, but also brought new life to all of the Narnian creatures held captive by the Witch. Thus, the Deep and Deeper Magic, the two laws that form the foundation of Narnia, offer us Lewis’ closest parallel to the role that justice and mercy play in the Church Fathers.

Aslan as the Foundation of Reality

Regarding the Deep and Deeper magic in Narnia, Humphrey suggests that Lewis gives us a picture of reality as something divinely constructed. “[I]n Lewis’ hands, reality includes harsh details (such as the treachery of Edmund and the death of Aslan) but undergirding it is a ‘deeper’ reality where evil cannot stand firm”.²⁷⁶ This brings the laws of justice and mercy under Aslan’s control, so to speak. The deeper reality, where mercy

²⁷⁶ Edith M. Humphrey. *Further Up and Further In*, 29.

is enacted, is grounded in the very nature of Aslan as the foundation of reality, as Reality itself. We see the emphasis on the *realness* of Aslan in contrast to the Witch: “Aslan is no ghost, but real and fully alive; the White Witch is not pure white, but deadly pale and destined for death. Winter, in which Narnia is locked, is only the absence of warmth, which Aslan, on returning, provides by a new springtime. At his return, streams gush, trees bloom, and animals rejoice. On feeling his breath, frozen statues return to life”.²⁷⁷ Humphrey uses this evidence to support her claim that God (Aslan) is the ground of reality, and “[i]f God is the ground of reality, then all things in that reality must depend on the One Who Is”.²⁷⁸ We can extend this to say that both justice and mercy are written into the very fabric of creation, and these laws must be grounded in the nature of God, in Aslan’s nature in *Narnia*. He is the foundation of reality itself; he is both just and merciful; he is the sovereign Creator who can die on behalf of dependent creatures and enact mercy and salvation through justice. This is a dramatic enactment of what Lewis does in *Mere Christianity* in grounding justice and the Moral Law in the nature of God.

Once this act of atonement is complete, there is now the matter of appropriating the salvation that has been made available to all in principle. We will see this work itself out in terms of proper order (maintaining one’s proper station), obedience, humility, and good infection in the rest of the *Narnia* series.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

III. Prince Caspian: Faithful Obedience and Proper Order

Lewis writes that *Prince Caspian* is about the restoration of the true religion after a corruption (Lewis' letter to Anne Jenkins, 5 March 1961).²⁷⁹ While there is no organized religion in Narnia, we can see what Lewis intends by this comment in Caspian's overthrow of Miraz and the restoration of the old Narnia after a period of selfish and brutal rule of the Telmarines. Miraz, who is Caspian's uncle, took the throne as king after Prince Caspian's father's death. As we enter the story, Miraz's wife has just given birth to a son and Miraz is plotting Caspian's death, to ensure that the throne remains in his own lineage. The four Pevensie children are called into Narnia by Caspian and his troops in order to aid in their defense and to re-establish the rule of Narnians over the corrupt rule of the Telmarines. The "true religion", we could posit, is Narnia as it was before the rule of the Telmarines. Presently, we will examine the characteristics of this "true religion", the "old Narnia", and what it has to tell us about Lewis' theology.²⁸⁰

Michael Ward, in *Planet Narnia*, brilliantly outlines the Martial qualities of this story and suggests that it is the archetype of Mars, as understood by Medieval astrology, that drives the story and gives it coherence.²⁸¹ Within this martial framework, Ward notes that "[f]aithful obedience is the chief characteristic that Aslan imparts to his followers",²⁸² and that the entire story of *Prince Caspian* displays the theme of knightliness, a theme

²⁷⁹ C.S. Lewis. *Prince Caspian*. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*. First American edition, HarperCollins, 2001, 311-418. Subsequent references to *Prince Caspian* will be cited, using the abbreviation *PC*, in parentheses within the main body of the text.

²⁸⁰ The "Old Narnia" is a classification used in *Prince Caspian* to denote Narnia as it was before the rule of the Telmarines. See, e.g. *Prince Caspian*, 333.

²⁸¹ Michael Ward. *Planet Narnia*, 88. For a full analysis of the marital qualities of *Prince Caspian*, see Michael Ward's *Planet Narnia*. The elements that are relevant to my thesis are discussed here (faithful obedience, self-sacrifice, and proper order), but these do not exhaust Ward's analysis.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 98.

that is fundamentally rooted in self-sacrifice and the proper order and rhythm of the universe.²⁸³ Since our thesis here is that the theological anthropology that we find in *Narnia* is an outworking of the conception of the atonement that we find in *The Lion*, and that the atonement, for Lewis, is characterised by obedience, self-sacrifice, and proper order, we must now examine these themes of faithful obedience, self-sacrifice, and proper order as we find them in *Prince Caspian* in depth. We will see how these characteristics describe the old Narnia, the “true religion”, and are contrasted with the selfishness and brutality of the Telmarines. Further, we will see that these characteristics, which for Lewis are part and parcel of the spiritual or begotten life (*Zoe*), are communicated through good infection.

Faithful Obedience and Lucy’s Encounter with Aslan

Ward notes that faithful obedience is the chief characteristic that Aslan imparts to his followers in *Prince Caspian*. Discipline, obedience, faithfulness, strength, and growth are qualities that become available to all well-disposed characters, and “[m]artyrdom, not knighthood, is the summit of Martial achievement and contains no worldly dignity or honour”.²⁸⁴ Lucy provides us with a perfect example of faithful obedience in *Prince Caspian*. On a trek to find Prince Caspian and join in a battle against King Miraz, Lucy is the first to catch a glimpse of Aslan. She is convinced that Aslan wants her and her companions to follow him, but the others do not believe her. After choosing to follow another path, instead of obeying Aslan’s silent urging to Lucy, and getting chased back by

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 96.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 97.

sentries with bows and arrows, the party ends up hiking up the gorge in the direction Lucy had wanted to go in the first place. Night falls and Lucy is confronted by Aslan a second time. He insists that Lucy wake the others and tell them that she has seen him, and that they all must get up at once and follow him. Even though the others will not see Aslan at first, but must take Lucy at her word, Lucy displays courage, obedience, and faith when she follows Aslan's orders. "It is a terrible thing to have to wake four people, all older than yourself and all very tired, for the purpose of telling them something they probably won't believe and making them do something they certainly won't like", explains the narrator (*PC*, 381). Despite her fear, Lucy obeys Aslan's order. "'I musn't think about it, I must just do it,' thought Lucy" (*PC*, 381). Lucy's obedience and her courage are rewarded as the party safely finds their way to Caspian and defeats Miraz's army.

We see another example of faithful obedience in Trufflehunter, the badger. When Caspian, Trufflehunter, and Nikabrik are waiting for help to come, having used Susan's horn to call the Pevensies into Narnia, Nikabrik expresses doubt and goes as far as to rely upon a Witch and a Wer-wolf for aid in defeating Miraz's troops. Nikabrik displays no loyalty to Caspian or to Aslan, but rather is concerned only for himself. When Caspian questions his plan to call on the White Witch for help, Nikabrik admits that she may have been a tyrant towards human beings, but "she got on all right with us Dwarfs" (*PC*, 394). Nikabrik displays the same selfishness and desire for power above all that we see in the worst of the Telmarines. Trufflehunter, in contrast, is a picture of faithfulness as Lewis outlines it in *Mere Christianity*, as we have already had occasion to observe. Faith, Lewis

writes there, has a twofold structure: i) it is “the art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of changing moods” (*MC*, 116); ii) faith in the second 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” (*MC*, 119-120). Faith in this second sense is learning to trust God, to trust that Christ will somehow share with us 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” (*MC*, 121). Trufflehunter is firm in his faith in Aslan, despite the danger and uncertainty of the situation. “I stand by Aslan. Have patience, like us beasts. The help will come. It may be even now at the door” (*PC*, 391). In fact, help *is* even now at the door. Faithfulness is a central characteristic of the old Narnia and of the creatures who are on the side of Aslan.

The Rightful King, Knightliness, and Proper Order

Another lesson that we learn in *Prince Caspian* is the importance of proper order and of sticking to one’s station, something that I have been suggesting is fundamental to Lewis’ conception of the atonement as well. As Lucy and her companions follow Aslan through the forest, he slowly becomes visible to the others besides Lucy as well. As they approach Miraz’s camp,

Aslan, who seemed larger than before, lifted his head, shook his mane, and roared. The sound, deep and throbbing at first like an organ beginning on a low note, rose and became louder, and then far louder again, till the earth and air were shaking with it. It rose up from that hill and floated across all Narnia. Down in Miraz’s camp men woke, stared palely in one another’s faces, and grasped their weapons.

Down below that in the Great River, now at its coldest hour, the heads and shoulders of the nymphs, and the great weedy-bearded head of the river-god, rose from the water. Beyond it, in every field and wood, the alert ears of rabbits rose from their holes, the sleepy heads of birds came out from under wings, owls hooted, vixens barked, hedgehogs grunted, the trees stirred. In towns and villages mothers pressed babies close to their breasts, staring with wild eyes, dogs whimpered, and men leapt up groping for lights. Far away on the northern frontier the mountain giants peered from the dark gateways of their castles (*PC*, 387).

Ward writes of this episode that “[t]his is the most militaristic moment in Aslan’s role in the story. Although he is clearly the commander-in-chief, who requires Lucy’s absolute obedience, takes the boys’ salute, and instructs Peter to knight Caspian, he is otherwise not directly involved with the war”.²⁸⁵ Ward suggests that this is because knightliness, the underlying theme that he identifies in *Prince Caspian*, is different from kingliness, the underlying theme of *The Lion*, where Aslan had “come roaring in and frighten[ed] all the enemies away” (*PC*, 381). Knightly behaviour, notes Ward, is self-sacrificial. It also demands that one stick to one’s station. While the king must be the first in every desperate attack, and the last in every desperate retreat, the knight, on the other hand, “is a soldier among soldiers, and in the military chain of command, discipline is everything; every man must do his duty...each must stick to his post”.²⁸⁶ If Mars (and martiality) is the governing archetype in *Prince Caspian*, then we would expect Aslan, as the general of his army, to play a different role than in *The Lion*, where the governing archetype is Jupiter and kingliness. While Aslan is the King above all kings throughout the *Narnia* series, what is brought to the forefront in *Prince Caspian* is not his kingliness but his rank as general in the military chain of command.

²⁸⁵ Michael Ward. *Planet Narnia*, 96.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

In the Pevensies' and Caspian's approach of Miraz's camp, we can see the theme of proper order and maintaining the station in life that belongs to us. Ward writes that "we see Aslan and his underlings equally 'taking their places in the ordered rhythm of the universe'. *Qua* Mars, Aslan commands: that is his obedience to the military order. He marshals and inspires his troops, but does not, on this occasion, enter the front line" (Ward, 96). Each creature must stick to his post. In *Prince Caspian*, we learn that it is the job of kings to do battle. It is the king who must be first in every desperate attack, and in the battle for the throne, it is the kings who fight to the death. And so, it is the job of Prince Caspian and High King Peter to meet the Telmarines in battle.

The battle, in *Prince Caspian*, is over the throne, over who is the rightful king, and in the end, it is the courageous, faithful, and obedient Caspian who wins out.²⁸⁷ In fact, he wins the throne because of the bravery and selflessness of High King Peter. It is characteristic of the *Narnia* stories that the followers of Aslan and those who win out in the end are those who demonstrate characteristics of obedience and bravery, among others. Courage, faithfulness, obedience, and selflessness are all characteristics of the old Narnia, of the "true religion".

At the end of the story, Aslan asks Caspian whether he feels himself "sufficient to take up the kingship of Narnia" (*PC*, 411). When Caspian answers *no*, Aslan assures him that this is proof of his readiness. "If you had felt yourself sufficient, it would have been

²⁸⁷ We see examples of Caspian's character throughout the story. When Caspian learns that the Telmarines, having conquered Narnia years ago, silenced the Talking Beasts and killed or drove away the Dwarfs, he displays courage in eagerly offering to help restore Narnia to its rightful inhabitants (339). He displays loyalty to Doctor Cornelius, his teacher, in insisting that he remain a part of his army, despite his half-Dwarf heritage (355). He displays courage and selflessness in his desire to meet Miraz in battle and avenge his father's death (397).

proof that you were not” (*PC*, 411). Again, we see the theme of proper kingship, of who is ready to rule and when. It is Caspian’s character (brave, humble, faithful, and obedient) that qualifies him for the position. We might also here note the suggestion of self-sovereignty and creatureliness in Aslan’s response as well: of course Caspian is not *sufficient* to take up the kingship, as the king is appointed under God. He is not sufficient alone, but may be sufficient because of the very fact that he recognizes that he is not sufficient. Unlike his uncle and Lord Glozelle, who undertake to make themselves sovereign and accountable to no one, Caspian knows his place in the proper order of creation. When Caspian is made king, we are told that “Narnia would henceforth belong to the Talking Beasts and the Dwarfs and Dryads and Fauns and other creatures quite as much as to the men” (*PC*, 414). Thus, we see the rightful king restored, with creatures restored to their own proper places: Narnia now belongs to the Talking Beasts, etc., *just as much* as to the humans.

Related to this concept of proper order, in the defeat of the Telmarines, we see the juxtaposition of pride with humility and accepting one’s station. The younger Telmarines are delighted to stay in Narnia and live among the Talking Beasts and the other Narnians. “But most of the older men, *especially those who has been important under Miraz*, were sulky and had no wish to live in a country where they could not rule the roost” (*PC*, 415; emphasis added). These sulky and prideful Telmarines are sent back to their homeland, though not without further displays of pride, fear, and hatefulness on their part.

In Reepicheep, as well, who volunteers to go through the portal that the Telmarines so fear, we see another example of proper order and sticking to one’s station.

Aslan declines Reepicheep's offer to take eleven mice with him through the door to prove its safety (Reepicheep says, "If my example can be of any service, Aslan..."), demonstrating his own faithful obedience) by saying that "[t]hey would do dreadful things to you in that world.... It is others who must lead" (*PC*, 417). The others, whose place it *is* to lead in this situation, turn out to be the Pevensie children as they return home, through the portal, to London.

And it is not only proper order as in sticking to one's post that is depicted in *Prince Caspian*, but also the proper ordering of desires (what Lewis calls temperance in *Mere Christianity*, one of the four cardinal virtues). When Reepicheep expresses dismay at his missing tail, having been otherwise healed of his battle wounds, saying that "a tail is the honour and glory of a Mouse" (*PC*, 412), he is gently mocked by Aslan, who says that "I have sometimes wondered, friend...whether you do not think too much about your honour" (*PC*, 412). Honour is an admirable quality in Narnia, but only if it comes *after* faithfulness and obedience. In *The Four Loves*, Lewis lays this principle out explicitly, where in *Narnia* we see it depicted dramatically: An honour made king, as it were, honour above all else, is an idol that will lead one away from God. Crucially, in *Prince Caspian*, after the other Mice have drawn their swords and expressed their willingness to cut off their own tails in solidarity with the High Mouse, Aslan restores Reepicheep's tail, saying that "[n]ot for the sake of your dignity, Reepicheep, but for the love that is between you and your people, and still more for the kindness your people showed me long ago...you shall have your tail again" (*PC*, 413). It is love and selflessness that are to reign over dignity and honour.

Throughout *Prince Caspian*, we see an emphasis on sticking to one's post, on having faith in, and being obedient to, Aslan, and on sacrificing oneself when appropriate. We see the perfect example of this in Peter, who bravely does hand to hand combat with Miraz even though he believes it will be the death of him, noting that "it is what Aslan would like" (406). This selflessness and obedience is contrasted again and again with the cowardice, selfishness, and brutality of the Telmarines (the ones who do not reform themselves at the end): Lord Glozelle, one of Miraz's trusted advisors, demonstrates this perfectly in his manipulation of Miraz into accepting Caspian's challenge, in a bid to get rid of him (Miraz) and take Narnia for himself, and again in his cold-blooded murder of Miraz as he lay helpless after losing the battle against King Peter.²⁸⁸

Good Infection in *Prince Caspian*

We will see that good infection plays a role throughout *Narnia* in transforming various characters into heavenly creatures. In *Prince Caspian*, we can see this process of good infection happening in Edmund, who bravely goes with Glenstorm the Centaur and the Giant Wimbleweather to deliver Caspian's challenge to Miraz. Here, the narrator notes that Lord Glozelle and Lord Sopesian do not recognize Edmund, "[n]or indeed would the other boys at Edmund's school have recognized him if they could have seen him at that moment. For Aslan had breathed on him at their meeting and a kind of greatness hung about him" (PC, 399). Recall that in *Mere Christianity*, Lewis compares the process of sanctification, which he calls "good infection", to a great fountain: "If you

²⁸⁸ Recall also the sulky behaviour of the Telmarines who "had been important under Miraz," when Caspian took the throne and they were no longer in charge (PC, 415).

are close to it, the spray will wet you” (*MC*, 144). Being in Aslan’s presence, and having Aslan breathe on him, is enough to change Edmund for the better and shape him into a heavenly creature.²⁸⁹

We see the same process happening with the first Telmarine to go through the portal back to his homeland. Aslan bends towards him and touches the man’s nose with his nose. “As soon as the Lion’s breath came about him, a new look came into the man’s eyes – startled, but not unhappy – as if he were trying to remember something. Then he squared his shoulders and walked through the Door” (*PC*, 417). Again, we can note that this image is highly suggestive of the imparting of the Holy Spirit, and that through the process of good infection this man is being transformed. Aslan’s touch, and his breath, gives this man strength and bravery.

Humility and Self-Sacrifice in the Restoration of the True Religion

At the end of *Prince Caspian*, after the defeat of the Telmarines and the re-establishment of Narnian rule, Aslan and the children run through Narnia joyfully, calling to others to join them. At a girls’ school, when Aslan and the children interrupt a lesson, most of the girls, as well as their teacher, flee from fear, but one little girl, Gwendolen, joins hands with the Maenads of the party and joins in the festive frolicking. “[I]n the little town of Beruna it was the same. Most of the people fled, a few joined them” (*PC*,

²⁸⁹ While there are three distinct images here – that of infection, that of a fountain, and that of breath – each of them is suggestive of what Lewis says is crucial in catching this “good infection”: getting close to God. We could also note the suggestiveness of the imparting of the Holy Spirit through Aslan’s breath, though of course, a full analysis of Lewis’ thoughts on the role of the Holy Spirit in sanctification is beyond the scope of this project.

408). In the course of this frolicking, Aslan also encounters a sick and dying girl and heals her, and Bacchus, a greek god whom Lewis has incorporated into his story, turns water into wine. This passage is rife with Biblical references, and it also suggests a humility in one's willingness to drop everything and follow Aslan. Gwendolen abandons her school work, takes off her stuffy clothing, and runs through the fields and the town with Aslan and his followers. Similarly, a teacher at a boys' school abandons her class (who have all turned into pigs after they saw Aslan and his party)²⁹⁰ and joins the revelry (*PC*, 409). Overall, we get a picture of obedience, self-sacrifice, and taking up one's proper place in the restoration of old Narnia, i.e, the "true religion".

IV. The Horse and His Boy: Pride v. Humility

According to Lewis' letter to Anne Jenkins, *The Horse and His Boy* is about the calling and conversion of a heathen.²⁹¹ He does not make explicit exactly *who* is called and converted in this story, but there is ample reason to believe that Aravis, Shasta, and Bree all fit the bill for this role. What we see, in both the conversions of Aravis, Shasta, and Bree, and also in the behaviour of the Calormenes and the Narnians, is a desire for power, based in pride and greed, contrasted with a humility and a willingness toward self-sacrifice that demonstrates both justice and mercy.

²⁹⁰ Like Screwtape and Eustace, these boys turn into animals after displaying selfish and mean behaviour (*PC*, 409).

²⁹¹ C.S. Lewis *The Horse and His Boy*. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*. First American edition, HarperCollins, 2001, 198-310. Subsequent references to *The Horse and His Boy* will be cited, using the abbreviation *HHB*, in parentheses within the main body of the text

Pride, Greed, and Self-Sacrifice in *The Horse and His Boy*

Throughout the story of *The Horse and His Boy*, we see the characteristics of pride and greed (both a manifestation of self-centeredness) contrasted with those of humility and self-sacrifice. The inhabitants of the city of Tashbaan are especially greedy, selfish, and prideful. When Aravis is recognized by Lasaraleen in Tashbaan, Lasaraleen shows little concern for Aravis' safety and well-being, instead focusing on her own pride and vanity. She wishes to leave the curtains open on her litter, so that the crowd may see her new dress, a priority, it seems, above the physical safety of her friend. She recommends that Aravis marry Ahoshta, whom Aravis finds reprehensible, because he has great riches and power. Finally, after narrowly escaping from a secret meeting between the Tisroc, his son (Prince Rabadash), and Ahoshta (the Grand Vizier), for which they would be killed if caught, Lasaraleen tries to back out of helping Aravis escape, showing no concern that her friend would be forced into marriage and likely punished severely. Lasaraleen, though vain and proud, is also rather frivolous and harmless, however.

In Rabadash and the Tisroc, we see a vanity, a greed, and a pride that are much more dangerous. Rabadash, when he learns that the four Pevensies, now Kings and Queens of Narnia, have fled Tashbaan in the night, effectively turning down his proposal of marriage to Queen Susan, becomes inflamed. "But I *want* her," cried the Prince. "I must have her. I shall die if I do not get her – false, proud, black-hearted daughter of a dog that she is! I cannot sleep and my food has no savour and my eyes are darkened because of her beauty. I must have the barbarian queen" (*HHB*, 256). Rabadash insists

that his father, the Tisroc, send his army after the escaped Kings and Queens, capture Queen Susan, and lay waste to Arkenland and eventually to Narnia. In the case of both Rabadash and the Tisroc, the concern is only for power. The Tisroc rejects Rabadash's proposal, on the grounds that Narnia is a land of demons and of "strong magic" (*HHB*, 258) and that Tashbaan is not likely to win such a battle. When Rabadash suggests a plan to conquer both Arkenland and Narnia with no risk to his father (except that Rabadash, his son, might die trying), the Tisroc agrees, but tells Rabadash to "expect no help nor countenance from me" (*HHB*, 260). If Rabadash succeeds in storming and conquering Arkenland and Narnia, the Tisroc tells Ahoshta, "we have Arkenland and perhaps hereafter Narnia. If he fails – I have eighteen other sons after Rabadash" (*HHB*, 261). Besides, the Tisroc notes that Rabadash was "beginning to be dangerous" (*HHB*, 261), and expresses relief that such a mission would lessen the chance that he himself would be overthrown by a rash and impatient son. In this whole episode, we see a lack of loyalty, selfishness in spades, greed, pride, and brutality.

The character of the Calormenes stands in stark contrast to the character of the Narnians. Peter, when planning his and his siblings' escape from Tashbaan, insists, "I do not doubt that every one of us would sell our lives dearly at the gate and they would not come at the Queen but over our dead bodies" (*HHB*, 238). This loyalty and self-sacrifice is the exact opposite of what we have seen in Rabadash and the Tisroc (and to a lesser degree in Lasaraleen). When Rabadash does invade Arkenland, and when Narnia comes to their aid and helps defeat Rabadash's army, the Narnians and the Arkenlanders show justice and mercy to their enemy, instead of the greed, anger, hatred, and brutality of the

Calormenes. Having vanquished the Calormene army, but still having Rabadash as a prisoner, Lord Peridan of Narnia notes that King Lune of Arkenland “would have a perfect right to strike off his head” (*HHB*, 305). All agree, however, that to kill Rabadash now would be to kill him in cold blood, and that the better decision is to show charity and mercy. While Rabadash’s assault on Arkenland “puts him on a level with assassins” (*HHB*, 305), King Edmund notes (cleverly, as the narrator is here referring to *The Lion*) that “even a traitor may mend” (*HHB*, 305). King Lune offers to set Rabadash free, on certain conditions, but is met with insults and threats on the part of the vengeful and proud Rabadash.

At this point, Aslan makes explicit what has been running as a current throughout the story: “Take heed,” he advises Rabadash. “Your doom is very near, but you may still avoid it. Forget your pride...and your anger...and accept the mercy of these good kings” (*HHB*, 306). Rabadash still, at this point, tries to intimidate his captors. He calls Aslan a demon and threatens the whole party, shouting, “Learn who I am... I am descended from Tash, the inexorable, the irresistible. The curse of Tash is upon you” (*HHB*, 307). He threatens to kidnap Queen Susan and obliterate Narnia. And then, in the midst of his shouting and threats, Aslan turns Rabadash into a donkey, and Aslan cites the principles of justice and mercy. “Now hear me, Rabadash,” says Aslan. “Justice shall be mixed with mercy. You shall not always be an Ass” (*HHB*, 307). Rabadash must return to Tashabaan and go to the temple of Tash in order to return to his human form. He must also stay within ten miles of the temple lest he become a donkey again, this time for good.

What is especially significant about this episode, for our purposes, is the mention of pride, of justice, and of mercy. The Narnians, who are on the side of Aslan, and who rule *under* Aslan, show *both* justice *and* mercy to their prisoner (who of course meets this with only anger and pride). Justice turned Rabadash into an Ass. Mercy spared his life and returned him, under certain conditions, back to his human form. In fact, the punishment seems to suit the crime: Rabadash is willful and stubborn, and just before he is turned into a donkey, he is wagging his ears up and down in an attempt to threaten his captors, an expression we might expect to see in a donkey (Rabadash's ears are changed first). It may also be a clue that Aslan uses the word Ass, where the narrator uses the word donkey, since Rabadash is behaving like a perfect one.

The Conversions of Aravis, Shasta, and Bree

Aravis, Shasta, and Bree all display some elements of pride and self-centeredness at the beginning of *The Horse and His Boy*, and all go through a process of reformation over the course of the story. Aravis displays her pride when she first meets Bree and Shasta: "Aravis never spoke to Shasta at all if she could help it" (*HHB*, 225), since she saw Shasta as below her own station. She also has a callous disregard for what would happen to the servant whom she drugged to aid in her escape. When they arrive in Tashbaan, we see Aravis' vanity and pride in her shame that she is there disguised as a slave instead of "riding on a litter with soldiers before me and slaves behind" (*HHB*, 229). "It's different for you", she tells Shasta, who is not of noble birth.

Aravis' vices are not as deep-rooted as those of the other Calormenes, however. She is loyal, as the narrator notes when Shasta is worrying that she may have gone on to Narnia without him: "She was proud and could be hard enough but she was as true as steel and would never have deserted a companion" (*HHB*, 244). She is also brave (*HHB*, 263). And over the course of the story, what vices she has are significantly reformed. Partway through their adventure, Aslan claws Aravis, leaving scratches on her back that "were equal to the stripes laid on the back of your stepmother's slave because of the drugged sleep you cast upon her" (*HHB*, 299). Aravis expresses remorse after this, and concern over what more will happen to the slave. She also realises her mistreatment (and misjudgement) of Shasta and apologizes (*HHB*, 297). In the end, she goes to live in the castle at Anvard, in Arkenland, with Shasta (now named Cor) and the two get married and raise a family.

Bree's pride seems to run much deeper than Aravis', and Bree also undergoes something of a reformation over the course of the story. Bree is a great war horse of Narnian descent, and he takes great pride in being what he thinks such a great and noble horse should be. As Aravis, Shasta, Bree, and Hwin enter Tashbaan, Bree expresses reluctance at disguising himself by cutting his tail short and ragged. "Have you pictured to yourself how very disagreeable it would be to arrive in Narnia in *that* condition?" he asks Hwin (*HHB*, 226). Bree is also shown up by Shasta when the party is being chased by lions. Bree runs for his own life, while Shasta leaps off Bree's back and runs *towards* the lion, unarmed, to chase him away from Aravis and Hwin. Bree becomes morose after this, declaring his shame that he should have been "beaten by a little human boy"

(*HHB*, 275). Crucially, Bree's remorse is mostly over his own self-image, rather than the fact that the others needed help, which he did not provide. Aslan corrects Bree at this point, saying, "My good Horse, you've lost nothing but your self-conceit.... You're not quite the great Horse you had come to think.... But as long as you know you're nobody special, you'll be a very decent sort of Horse" (*HHB*, 275). This illustrates the centrality of humility in Lewis' theology. In *Screwtape*, the senior devil informs Wormwood that their task is to keep people's minds "endlessly revolving around themselves" (*Screwtape*, 225), whereas God wants us to turn our attention away from ourselves and towards Him and towards our neighbours (*Screwtape*, 224). Self-forgetfulness is an important trait of the heavenly character.

Bree is still learning this lesson in self-forgetfulness at the end of the story, when he expresses fear that proper Narnian horses do not roll (something that he enjoys immensely). Of course, Lewis knows that character formation and sanctification is something that happens over time, with multiple failures (*MC*, 59). Bree, even if he is in the process of becoming a creature who is at home in Heaven, is just this: in the *process*. He will see failure, but he will be able to pick himself up and try again.

Another lesson in pride and humility comes in what we might call Bree's Christology. Once Rabadash's army is defeated and Bree, Hwinn, and Aravis are able to continue on to Narnia, Aravis questions Bree about Aslan and they get into a discussion about the nature of Aslan that strongly resembles the debates over the humanity of Christ in the early church. Bree displays a sort of Docetism at this point in the story, insisting that Aslan isn't *really* a lion, but only that he is as *strong* as a lion and as *fierce* as a lion.

Bree insists that it would be absurd and even disrespectful to suppose that he is a *real* lion. “If he was a lion he’d have to be a beast just like the rest of us” (*HHB*, 298). This insistence that Aslan is not a *real* lion goes hand in hand with Bree’s pride: he imagines that it is beneath God to take on creaturely form and to have four paws and a tail and whiskers. When Aslan appears just then and assures Bree that he is a “true Beast”, Bree admits, “I must be rather a fool.” This heartens Aslan, who assures Bree, “Happy the Horse who knows that while he is still young” (*HHB*, 299). Again, we see the emphasis on humility, but this time in Aslan’s taking on creaturely form and in Bree’s recognition that he had been a fool.

Shasta gives us another example of moral transformation, though different from Aravis and Bree. While Aravis and Bree had some prideful and selfish tendencies that needed correction, Shasta is not proud but is completely ignorant of “how noble and free-born people behave” (*HHB*, 239). When he fails to tell the Narnian Kings and Queens that he is not Prince Corin, as they expect him to be, he is acting out of self-preservation because he thinks he will be killed if he reveals himself. Having grown up with a cruel and selfish father, Shasta has no example of the good. He does have an internal and innate moral compass, however,²⁹² as he expresses some remorse at “all those nice people imagining him a traitor” (*HHB*, 248).

As the story unfolds, Shasta displays great bravery in chasing a lion (who turns out to be Aslan, but who appears ferocious and dangerous at the time) unarmed (*HHB*, 271-72), and also in running to King Lune’s castle to warn him of Rabadash and his army.

²⁹² Recall that in *Mere Christianity*, Lewis argues for the existence of an innate moral compass and suggests that this natural morality points us to God.

In both cases, we see Shasta acting selflessly, and we see humility demonstrated at the end of the tale when Shasta, instead of boasting of his having chased off an angry lion, completely neglects to tell King Lune that part of the story and “felt rather foolish” at its retelling (*HHB*, 304). As Shasta is running to warn King Lune, we also see something like good infection in his encounter with Aslan, who breathes on Shasta (though more to show that he is not something dead than to transform Shasta), touches his head with his own, licks his forehead, and meets his eyes before disappearing into a “swirling glory” (*HHB*, 282). Shasta then drinks from the water that has pooled in Aslan’s large footprint before he goes on to find the Narnians and warn them about the attack on Arkenland. At the end of the adventure, once Rabadash and his army are vanquished, Shasta (now named Cor) learns that he will inherit the throne from his father, King Lune, and rule Arkenland. This news comes in the exchange with King Lune about the king being under the law and the importance of sticking to one’s post.

And so, in *The Horse and His Boy*, we see “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” (*MC*, 135). This is why the Calormenes think that Aslan is a demon, and it explains Shasta’s initial blindness to the good. The Calormenes are prideful, cruel, greedy, and selfish. The Narnians, in contrast, are humble, merciful, just, and selfless. In *The Last Battle*, we will see what becomes of each of these types of characters, when the world comes to an end and the heavenly creatures are sorted from the hellish ones. In *The Horse and His Boy*, we see the gradual transformation of three such characters: Aravis, Bree, and Shasta.

Power, Justice, and Mercy in *The Horse and His Boy*

Throughout *The Horse and His Boy*, we see the Calormenes focus on power, while the Narnians focus on justice and mercy. Rabadash is willing to make Susan his wife by any means necessary, including kidnapping and mass slaughter. The Tisroc is motivated primarily by imperial conquest. Ahoshta, during the conversation about invading Narnia, expresses something like awe and respect towards the White Witch, and calls her a “most powerful enchantress” (*HHB*, 257).

The Narnians, in contrast, treat even their enemies with justice and mercy, as we have seen with Prince Rabadash. At the end of the whole adventure, Shasta, who is now named Cor, learns that he will inherit the throne of Arkenland after his father, King Lune. Cor tries to refuse, to remain a prince while his twin brother becomes king, but he is told that “[t]he King’s under the law, for it’s the law that makes him a king. Hast no more power to start away from thy crown than any sentry from his post” (*HHB*, 309). Here we see the suggestion of keeping to one’s proper station, a theme that is fundamental to Lewis’ conception of the atonement, and one that plays a large part in the story of *Prince Caspian* as well. This comment is also suggestive of the self-consistency of God. Elsewhere (*HHB*, 282), Aslan is called the King above all Kings. As such, he too is subject to the law, though in this case the law is not some externally imposed standard but is rooted in the very nature of creation and of the Creator himself.

V. The Voyage of the Dawn Treader: Character Formation and the Spiritual Life

As we have seen, Lewis writes that *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* is about the spiritual life (especially Reepicheep). While Lewis himself does not make this connection, it is worth noting that he calls *Zoe*, in *Mere Christianity*, the spiritual life. Perhaps what Lewis is doing here is giving us an image of what *Zoe* looks like in Reepicheep. We can see in Reepicheep an ideal of honour, bravery, and the desire to know God. Reepicheep is also selfless and more than once risks his own life and safety to help others: When Eustace disappears on Dragon Island, for example, Reepicheep, without regard to his own safety, says that “[t]he creature is no friend of mine but he is of the Queen’s blood, and while he is one of our fellowship it concerns our honour to find him and to avenge him if he is dead” (*VTD*, 465). Despite his personal dislike for Eustace, Reepicheep is his “most constant comforter” on evenings when the dragon-Eustace would slink away from the camp and lie curled up between the wood and the water (*VTD*, 472). When the Dawn Treader is attacked by a sea serpent, Reepicheep demonstrates great courage and self-sacrifice when he leaps onto the bulwark and starts pushing on the back of the snake in order to free the ship. “Reepicheep alone”, notes the narrator, “had, of course, no more chance of doing this than of lifting up a cathedral, but he had nearly killed himself with trying before others shoved him aside” (*VTD*, 479). We have seen in *Prince Caspian* Aslan correct Reepicheep for his inordinate concern for his own honour. In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, this honour seems now to be subordinated to a love of Aslan, a love of his shipmates, and a desire above all to reach Aslan’s country:

Reepicheep is the one who departs from the Dawn Treader as they reach the easternmost point of the sea and continues on to Aslan's country, behind the sun.

We can contrast Reepicheep with Eustace in this story. Eustace, when he enters the story, is bossy, mean-spirited, selfish, greedy, a "record stinker" (*VTD*, 426) in the words of Edmund. Eustace complains the whole time they are on the ship (Eustace, Edmund, and Lucy enter Narnia by magic and find themselves aboard the Dawn Treader). He blames everyone else for his discomfort. He assaults Reepicheep as the mouse is sitting on the bulwarks of the ship (*VTD*, 438). He is demanding and boastful (*VTD*, 436-37), insisting that things where he is from are so much better (such as ocean liners, motor-boats, and aeroplanes). He is also a coward and a know-it-all (*VTD*, 456) and insists that they turn back instead of risking the dangers of the open sea, as well as a liar and a thief, trying to steal water beyond his own rations late one night (*VDT*, 457).

Eustace also seems to have a blindness about him which, as we know for Lewis, is characteristic of evil. Eustace seems, in fact, not to even know how horrid he is behaving until *after* his transformation by Aslan. He has a false sense of charity, and perhaps really believes that his sneaking to get extra water during a period of rationing is so that he will not wake the others. The narrator notes that, after becoming a dragon, Eustace "realized more and more that since the first day he came on board he had been an unmitigated nuisance" (*VDT*, 472), suggesting that his false sense that he is being wronged is not a show but what Eustace actually believes. Recall that in *The Horse and His Boy* Aslan noted, when speaking to Bree, the importance of knowing that one is really foolish. Eustace does not even reach this level of moral awareness. At the same time, he is blind

to what the good really is. After he sneaks off on an island instead of doing his share of the work, he panics and rushes back out of fear that he would be deserted. “If he had understood Caspian and the Pevensies at all he would have known, of course, that there was not the least chance of their doing any such thing. But he had persuaded himself that they were all fiends in human form” (*VDT*, 460).

A significant part of *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* is devoted to the moral transformation of Eustace. We will focus on Eustace here, on how his natural life, *Bios*, to use the words of *Mere Christianity*, is transformed into spiritual life, *Zoe*. This is accomplished in an episode that is suggestive of the sacrament of baptism: in Eustace’s undragoning. This is part and parcel of the overall picture of character formation and of the spiritual life that we see emerge in *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*.

Eustace Becomes a Dragon: Character Formation, Sacrament, and Finding our True Selves in God

Since we have already addressed the case of Eustace in chapter four, some of what follows will necessarily be repetition. However, returning to Eustace again here will help us to draw out the theological themes that we have been tracing throughout *Narnia*.

As Eustace wanders off on what comes to be called Dragon Island, he discovers a valley with a dragon in it, a dragon who lies down and dies right in front of his eyes. After this happens, Eustace, wet and cold from the rain, finds a cave and crawls inside, seeking shelter. Upon discovering that this was the dragon’s cave and is filled with treasure, Eustace pockets some diamonds, with the intention of escaping to Calormen and

living off his profits, and he slips a gold bracelet around his arm. He falls asleep atop the treasure and awakens having been transformed into a dragon. This is a dramatic illustration of Lewis' principle of character formation. Eustace "had turned into a dragon while he was asleep. Sleeping on a dragonish hoard with greedy, dragonish thoughts in his heart, he had become a dragon himself" (*VDT*, 466). For Lewis, we have seen, salvation is not just a matter of assent to a certain doctrine or creed; it is rather *what we become*, how we shape ourselves and whether we become heavenly or hellish creatures.

This also demonstrates Lewis' principle that we find our true selves in God (*MC*, 176; see also Williams, 88). Through greedy, selfish, and prideful behaviour we can turn ourselves into something less than human. But if we lay ourselves open to God, then we can allow him to transform us into the heavenly creatures we are meant to be. Eustace cannot effect his own transformation from a dragon back into a boy. In an episode heavy with images and suggestions of baptism, Aslan tells Eustace that he must undress before entering into the pool of water that will transform his dragon-self. Eustace scratches layers of dragon skin away, but makes no progress. Aslan then tells him, "You will have to let me undress you" (*VDT*, 474), at which point Eustace lies on his back and lets Aslan tear away the dragon skin and then throw him into the water (*VDT*, 475). It is painful, but Eustace emerges transformed back into a boy. Aslan dresses him in new clothes and sets him on his way (*VDT*, 476). While Lewis does not explicitly mention baptism here, nor does he discuss baptism in detail elsewhere, we can recall that, for Lewis, sacrament (and baptism, specifically)²⁹³ is one of the ways that we might catch the "good infection"

²⁹³ In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis identifies baptism specifically as one of the things that spreads new life (57).

introduced by Christ, and have *Bios* (our natural life) turned into *Zoe* (the spiritual life). We see this in the case of Eustace, who submits to being remade by Aslan and who then gains new life.

This new life involves moral transformation. The moral transformation of Eustace is not immediate but rather a process of becoming more humble, brave, and selfless, in a word becoming a more heavenly creature. While he does have hiccups and relapses, Eustace displays greater bravery, kindness, humility, and selflessness throughout this story and the next: he attempts to hack at the sea serpent that attacks the ship with a sword at great risk to himself (*VDT*, 478); he gives away the gold bracelet without a care for its value (*VDT*, 473); and he continues on the voyage to the eastern sea with far less boasting and complaining from then on out.

What is crucial about Eustace's undragoning, beyond its illustration of how we shape ourselves, is that we cannot effect our own salvation. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis writes of the change that we need to undergo, "[I]t is God who does everything. We, at most, allow it to be done in us" (155). This is part and parcel of the process of good infection: we must lay ourselves open to God and allow him to transform us, to take our *Bios* life and turn it into *Zoe* life. What is demanded of the Christian is not adherence to a certain set of rules, but rather the handing over of one's whole self. "Hand over the whole natural self", says God, and "I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you Myself; my own will shall become yours" (*MC*, 157).

This episode illustrates another point we have been making regarding Lewis' conception of the atonement and how it works itself out in his understanding of

sanctification and his theological anthropology: “We are not *punished* for our recalcitrance, as if by an outside agency imposing a penalty – only left with ourselves in a ‘length of misery’”.²⁹⁴ Eustace has transformed himself into a dragon, both literally and figuratively. As such, he was a creature unsuitable for community and human social interaction. Note dragon-Eustace’s loneliness: he began to long for the community that he once shunned. If we turn ourselves into such twisted, selfish creatures, we will be out of alignment with ourselves, with others, and with God. We can choose to live with these consequences, or we can choose to open ourselves to God and allow him to transform us.

Two other principles that we see throughout Lewis’ corpus are present in *The Horse and His Boy* as well: i) the principle that God is bound by nothing other than who and what he is (but that this is a real and unshakeable bond); ii) the principle that acceptance of one’s proper station is crucial in salvation and sanctification.

Bound By His Own Laws (By Who and What He Is)

Aslan insists that he is bound by his own laws in *The Voyage of the Dawn Trader*, when Lucy makes the monopods (previously invisible) visible again, along with everything else that was made invisible when they (the monopods) had cast the invisibility spell. When Lucy assumes that Aslan – having just become visible – has just arrived, he corrects Lucy, and says, “I have been here all the time...but you have just made me visible” (*VDT*, 498). Lucy is astonished and does not believe that anything that *she* could do would make Aslan visible, at which point Aslan asks, “Do you think I

²⁹⁴ Rowan Williams. *The Lion’s World*, 87; citing *Magician’s Nephew*

wouldn't obey my own rules?" (*VDT*, 498). It is a common theme throughout *Narnia* that Aslan is bound by nothing but his own rules, and that these rules are not artificially imposed from outside but are grounded in what and who he is.²⁹⁵

One's Proper Station

The theme of accepting one's proper station, which was explored in *Prince Caspian*, appears in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* as well, when Caspian wishes to continue on to Aslan's country at the eastern end of the sea. He is rebuked by Aslan, who tells him that he must return with his crew and his ship to Narnia. Just prior to this, Reepicheep told Caspian the same: "You are the King of Narnia. You break faith with all your subjects...if you do not return" (*VDT*, 537). A king's proper station is to rule and to be loyal to his subjects, not to leave on personal adventures as though he were a private citizen.

Good Infection in *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*

We see good infection in *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* as well, in the form of sacrament, experience, and community. We saw the element of new life being transmitted through something akin to baptism with Eustace. We can also see something like good infection working when Lucy is frightened in the middle of the great darkness

²⁹⁵ That the rules by which God is bound are grounded in what and who he is we can infer from Lewis' grounding of the Moral Law in the nature of God in *Mere Christianity*. We have already observed, in chapter two above, that Rowan Williams makes a similar point, in *The Lion's World*, when he writes that "Aslan cannot break his own laws. He is not bound by anything except what and who he is, but that is a real and unbreakable bond. He cannot be other than truth" (64).

at sea. Aslan comes in the form of an albatross to lead the crew back into the light and there he breathes on Lucy and whispers, “Courage, dear heart” (*VDT*, 511), which helps to strengthen her. We might consider this an instance of good infection insofar as Lucy has an encounter with Aslan that results in a moral transformation of fear into courage.

Good infection, as we know, is not only transmitted through direct contact with God, for Lewis. God also uses books, experiences, and other people (*MC*, 153). Everyone on board the *Dawn Treader* offers an example of selflessness to Eustace in this story: for example, Lucy offers the cranky Eustace her own water ration (*VDT*, 458), and Caspian sets about to abolish the immoral slave trade on the Lone Islands at great risk to himself (*VDT*, 450). While Eustace’s baptism is the most significant episode in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* that results in the biggest change in Eustace, if *Mere Christianity* is any indicator, perhaps just being around people such as Lucy and Caspian helps Eustace in his continuing transformation. In fact, we will a similar dynamic with Jill in *The Silver Chair*. While we must lay ourselves open to God and allow him to work in us, sometimes he works in us through the influence of other people.

VI. The Silver Chair: Proper Order and The Powers of Darkness

Lewis writes that *The Silver Chair* is about the continued war against the powers of darkness.²⁹⁶ We see as much stated in the story as well, by the oldest Dwarf (after Prince Rillian, Puddleglum, Jill, and Eustace escape from Underland), who says of the

²⁹⁶ C.S. Lewis. *The Silver Chair*. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*. First American edition, HarperCollins, 2001, 543-663. Subsequent references to *The Silver Chair* will be cited, using the abbreviation *SC*, in parentheses within the main body of .the text

Green Witch, “those Northern Witches always mean the same thing, but in every age they have a different plan for getting it” (*SC*, 655). The Green Witch, we learn, was of “the same kind as that White Witch who had brought the Great Winter on Narnia long ago” (*SC*, 655). We will not see much of who these powers of darkness are (though Ward compares the Green Witch to Feuerbach, Freud, and Marx),²⁹⁷ perhaps because such an analysis would interrupt the story and Lewis’ purpose of sneaking past watchful dragons, or perhaps because the struggle is a *continual* one and so the specific powers might be different at different times, though always after “the same thing”. What these powers of darkness seem to be after is power, a power that inverts the hierarchy (the proper order) of creation, i.e. that of creatures dependent upon, and obedient to, the will of their Creator. We will see this attempt to gain power and invert the proper order in the plans of the Green Witch. Her attempts are doomed to failure, however, since such rebellion goes against the very nature of things (*PPL*, 74). We will reflect on the nature of things and its foundation in the nature of God when we see Lucy encounter Aslan at the stream. We will also see good infection at work in the characters of Eustace and Jill. The moral transformation of these two characters helps them to defeat the injustice of the powers of darkness. Overall, in *The Silver Chair*, we get a picture of the proper order of creation, grounded in the nature of God, and the continual attempts of the “powers of darkness” to overturn this order.

A Perverse Inversion of Hierarchy

²⁹⁷ Michael Ward. *Planet Narnia*, 134.

The Green Witch, who calls herself the Queen of the Underworld, has abducted and enchanted the Earthmen of Bism, the land beneath the underworld, as well as Prince Rillian, and intends to invade Narnia with this army and displace the proper king. Ward notes the anti-hierarchical tyranny of this plan: the Witch “will not rest content with creaturely, reflective status, but desires instead to invert the hierarchy, rebelling against higher ranks by tyrannizing lower ranks, for she cannot achieve her objective of ruling Narnia except by enslaving the inhabitants of Bism, the country beneath Underland”.²⁹⁸ It is significant that she wants to *invert the hierarchy*: she captures the Earthmen from Bism, at the bottom of the world, beneath Underland, and intends to bring them to the surface so that they would be “crawling about like flies on the top of the world” (SC, 643). The Earthmen are horrified at this prospect, and express great fear of the Earth’s surface. They are creatures who were made for Bism. The bottom of the world is their proper place, and they all gladly return there when the Witch’s enchantment is broken. The Witch wants to disrupt the proper order of creation for her own selfish gain. In order to invade Narnia, the Witch also has to capture Prince Rillian, and she would have him rule, but in name only and under an evil enchantment, while in reality being her slave. Rillian’s proper place, we know, is the rightful rule of Narnia. The Witch perversely inverts this by intending to have him appear as the ruler, but really to be her mouthpiece, while she tyrannizes both the Narnian creatures and the (former) inhabitants of Bism, in a perverted hierarchy.

²⁹⁸ Michael Ward. *Planet Narnia*, 139.

Such anti-hierarchical action, though it may be temporarily successful, “cannot succeed” in the long run, since “it has made the very nature of things its enemy”.²⁹⁹ While Lewis makes these remarks about the success of anti-hierarchical tyranny with respect to Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and the Hierarchical Conception (and not with respect to his own work),³⁰⁰ we must note two things that suggest this is appropriate with respect to Narnia as well: i) Lewis identifies Milton’s version of the Fall (and Satan’s disruption of the hierarchical order) as “substantially that of St. Augustine, which is that of the church as a whole” (*PPL*, 66). We have seen Lewis describe himself to be “restating ancient and orthodox doctrines” (*PP*, 550), and I have been making the case that Lewis’ understanding of the atonement is based in the thought of Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm. We have also seen in *The Problem of Pain* that Lewis adopts an understanding of the Fall that is fundamentally Augustinian. If he identifies Milton’s version of the Fall with Augustine’s, then we have grounds for drawing parallels between Lewis and Milton. ii) Throughout Lewis’ corpus, we see sin painted as a fundamental concern with oneself over one’s concern with God and with others, an inordinate love of oneself that expresses itself in pride and selfishness as well as greed, cruelty, and other vices. This love of self placed above the love of God (and a desire for selfish gain over obedience to one’s Creator) inverts the proper order of dependent creature obedient to their Creator. There is

²⁹⁹ *Preface to Paradise Lost*, 74; cited in Michael Ward, *Planet Narnia*, 139.

³⁰⁰ Lewis writes of the Hierarchical Conception that, “according to this conception degrees of value are objectively present in the universe. Everything except God has some natural superior; everything except unformed matter has some natural inferior. The goodness, or happiness, and dignity of every human being consists in obeying its natural superior and ruling its natural inferiors. When it fails in either part of this twofold task we have disease or monstrosity in the scheme of things until the peccant being is either destroyed or corrected. One or the other it will certainly be; for by stepping out of its place in the system...it has made the very nature of things its enemy” (*PPL*, 73-74).

“only one thing that interests Satan”, writes Lewis in *Preface to Paradise Lost*, and that is a “monomaniac concern with himself” (*PPL*, 102). This concern with himself is rooted in pride, which is the “complete anti-God state of mind” (*MC*, 103). This is a disruption of proper order that places one’s own will above God’s will. It can only be remedied by a mystical death, a complete death of self-will and an openness to God that restores the proper hierarchy of God as sovereign ruler and us as dependent creatures.³⁰¹ Any attempt to act otherwise is a rebellion against the very nature of things.

No Other Stream

Rowan Williams remarks on the impossibility of doing things other than God’s way in writing of the episode where Jill meets Aslan at a stream in *The Silver Chair*: “Aslan makes no promise; nothing can make him safe, and there is no approaching him without an overwhelming sense of risk. But there is no other stream. A less fearful and guilty person than Jill might – like the talking horse Hwin in *The Horse* (Ch. 14, p.299) – conclude that ‘I’d rather be eaten by you than fed by anyone else.’ But one thing Aslan cannot do is pretend he is not what and who he is”.³⁰² That “there is no other stream” suggests that we cannot make our own rules. We must be obedient to the will of God or suffer the consequences that we have already seen in Uncle Andrew, Jadis, and the Dwarfs. Aslan will not guarantee Jill’s safety (*SC*, 557), but there is no other way. Williams writes, “Things are as they are.... Human rules are neither here nor there.... Things in the world have a real nature and their effects are according to that nature...the

³⁰¹ This is how, in chapter three, we saw Lewis describe the atonement.

³⁰² Rowan Williams. *The Lion’s World*, 63.

greatest and most dangerous delusion of human agents [is] the belief that the consequences of my actions shall be as I please".³⁰³

We can glean from this that there is a *real* structure to reality, one in which Aslan (God) is the sovereign creator and we are dependent creatures. There are certain rules – such as justice and mercy (*The Lion*) and obeying one's proper station (*Prince Caspian*) – that are written into the very fabric of reality.³⁰⁴ Any attempt to usurp these rules is a rebellion against the very nature of things. Jill's meeting Aslan at the stream reinforces this idea that there is no other way.

Ward notes the parallels between the scene with Jill at the stream and John 4:4-30 in which Christ offers the woman at the well "living water...whoever drinks of the water that I shall give will never thirst".³⁰⁵ Jill chooses to approach Aslan and to follow his orders (though not without forgetting the signs he gave her to remember along the way, and suffering the consequences).³⁰⁶ In so doing, she helps to defeat the Green Witch and she goes on to fight the injustice at Experiment House, the school that she attends. Submitting to the will of Aslan helps Jill to bring about Aslan's kingdom (i.e. to protect Narnia against the continuing assault of the powers of darkness) and helps to shape her into a heavenly creature (we see Jill in Aslan's country at the end of Narnia).³⁰⁷ This is one instance of the more general principle we have seen in Lewis' thought: if we

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 66-67.

³⁰⁴ While justice and mercy are not rules *per se*, they are fundamental principles insofar as they inform the structure of reality. They also inform certain rules proper, such as that rule that says (in Narnia) that a traitor's life belongs to the White Witch, and also the rule that says that an innocent victim may be offered in the traitor's stead.

³⁰⁵ John 4:4-30.

³⁰⁶ *The Silver Chair*, 558; 596.

³⁰⁷ *The Last Battle*, 706.

approach God, and lay our own self-will down at his feet, and submit to a kind of death, a death of all our desires and our own selfishness, we will be given living water and eternal life. In *The Great Divorce*, Lewis writes that all of our desires must submit to death:

“Nothing, not even the best and noblest, can go on as it now is. Nothing, not even what is lowest and most bestial, will not be raised again if it submits to death” (*GD*, 526).

Obedience is about the death of self-will, a death (as we have already seen) which is the key to eternal life.

We get another image of this process later in *The Silver Chair*. When Rillian is restored as proper heir to the throne of Cair Paravel in Narnia, and Prince Caspian the 10th has died, Jill and Eustace meet Caspian in Aslan’s country. Caspian is there resurrected by a drop of Aslan’s blood. This is the reward, so to speak, for following Aslan. Prince Caspian was loyal to Aslan and, through a series of selfless, brave, and noble acts, has become a creature who would be at home in Heaven. Caspian’s journey was not safe, but he maintained his proper station and was obedient to Aslan’s promptings.³⁰⁸ Having approached the stream and submitted his own self-will to a kind of death on a daily basis, he is now given the living water of eternal life, obtained through Aslan’s blood. That Caspian is resurrected by a drop of Aslan’s blood brings to mind Christ’s own atonement and Aslan’s own substitutionary death in *The Lion*. While Lewis does not make the explicit connection here, we know that he believes that we are given

³⁰⁸ We see examples of Caspian’s character, for instance, in *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, in his willingness to give up the bunk in the Dawn Treader to Eustace and sling a hammock instead for himself (435). The narrator notes that everyone on Caspian’s ship took turns rowing; they did not have slaves for that job (435). Caspian rescues Edmund, Lucy, and Eustace from the slave trade on the Lone Islands (451). Caspian also returns to his kingdom, to his proper station, after the voyage, instead of going on to the Very End of The World, as he desires, the most explicit example of obedience to Aslan’s orders (537).

new life through Christ's blood. We see a dramatic depiction of this in Caspian's resurrection.

Good Infection in *The Silver Chair*

Good infection functions, in *The Silver Chair*, to help shape the characters into the sorts of people (people who are brave and who look out for others) who can defeat the powers of darkness. Perhaps the most striking example of good infection in *The Silver Chair* is that of Eustace. When we first met Eustace in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, he was greedy, selfish, mean, and blind to the good. In *The Silver Chair*, we meet a Eustace much reformed. At the very beginning of *The Silver Chair*, the narrator tells us that Eustace is not "a bad sort" (SC, 550), quite a contrast with how he is described at the beginning of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, as bossy and mean, liking only the wrong sort of books, and, as noted earlier, a "record stinker" (VDT, 426). In *The Silver Chair*, we learn that he has stood up to bullies and kept secrets ("under torture", SC, 550), demonstrating his courage and loyalty. Throughout his adventure in Narnia, Eustace keeps his promises (SC, 605), admits his own faults and takes responsibility for his actions (SC, 604), and demonstrates bravery, obedience, and self-sacrifice when he (along with Jill and Puddleglum) unties Prince Rillian, who is bound to an enchanted chair, even though he knows it may cost him his life, because Aslan had commanded them to do so (SC, 626). We see his bravery in his desire to go down to Bism, at the bottom of the world. As he stares into the chasm that had opened up in Underland, "[h]e looked much more like the Prince than like the old Scrubb at Experiment House. For all his adventures,

and the days when he had sailed with King Caspian, were coming back to him” (SC, 645). Eustace is so radically changed, in fact, that his schoolmates and the headmistress at Experiment House do not recognize him upon his return (SC, 663). We know that Eustace has been previously transformed by Aslan at the pool on Dragon Island, and Aslan has also been working on Eustace through the influence of other people. His *Bios* life is gradually being transformed into *Zoe* life.

We see this with Jill as well in *The Silver Chair*. When we first meet Jill she is cowardly and a little bit boastful. She ends up in Narnia because she is hiding from a pack of bullies at Experiment House (SC, 553). Once she and Eustace enter Narnia, Eustace ends up falling off a cliff because Jill had been showing off and standing too close (SC, 554). She also misses three out of four of the signs that Aslan gives her out of carelessness and the desire for physical comfort over doing her duty (SC, 596). By the end of the story, however, Jill demonstrates ownership for and remorse over her wrongdoings (SC, 660) and bravery, as she is the first to escape from Underland through a hole in a tunnel (SC, 649-51). As she approaches the horses stabled in Underland, in the midst of their escape, the narrator describes how Jill, “who had been so cowardly about going through a black hole between one cave and another, went in *without fear*” (SC, 638; emphasis added). Much of Jill’s moral reform comes as a result of experiences and exposure to other people, but she also receives renewed bravery and a selflessness that helps her defeat the injustice at Experiment House when Aslan breathes on her (and Eustace) before their return to England (SC, 662).

In the end, Eustace, Jill, Puddleglum, and Prince Rillian win out; they defeat the Witch, free the enchanted Earthmen, prevent an attack on Narnia – and they become better people for it. Of course, we see that this is all guided by Aslan. Puddleglum acknowledges this when he says that “[t]here *are* no accidents. Our guide is Aslan; and he was there when the giant King caused the letters to be cut, and he knew already all things that would come of them; including *this*” (*SC*, 620). Prince Rillian acknowledges Aslan’s sovereignty when, in the midst of the chaos in Underland after the Witch’s death, he says, “Aslan will be our good lord, whether he means us to live or to die” (*SC*, 637). Behind everything that the characters do and everything that they experience, Aslan is in control. In *The Silver Chair*, we see that “it is God who does everything. We, at most, allow it to be done to us” (*MC*, 155). This sentiment, that “Aslan will be our good lord”, is contrary to the rebellion and the selfishness that we saw in the Green Witch. The powers of darkness, as we noted in the beginning, are after power: a power that usurps the proper order of creation. Aslan’s followers, in contrast, fit into their proper place through obedience and self-sacrifice. Rillian is willing to risk death in order to follow Aslan. While Aslan is not “safe”, as we have seen, there is no other way.

VII. The Last Battle: The Followers of Aslan and the Lawful Prey of Tash

The Last Battle is about the coming of the Antichrist (the Ape), the end of the world, and the Last Judgment. The end of the world, in *The Last Battle*, is ushered in by Shift, the Ape (representing the Antichrist in this story). Shift convinces his friend Puzzle, the Donkey, to dress up in a lion skin and pretend to be Aslan in order to exploit Narnia

and its creatures for his (Shift's) own personal gain. As has been characteristic throughout the *Narnia* series, what we might call the powers of darkness – in this story Shift the Ape and Rishdaa Tarkan, along with the other Calormene soldiers – are characterized by selfishness, greed, and cruelty. This attitude represents a kind of rebellion against Aslan, a refusal to recognize his will as sovereign, and an insistence, instead, on pursuing one's own selfish purposes. This attitude is contrasted with that of Aslan's followers, who consistently demonstrate obedience and self-sacrifice. In *The Last Battle*, we see these characteristic traits play out in where they eventually end up: Heaven or Hell. This is where we see the Final Judgement, when Aslan sorts the creatures into those who belong to him and those who belong to Tash: those who have demonstrated a "monomaniac concern" with themselves (*PPL*, 102) become the lawful prey of Tash. Those who recognize the sovereignty of Aslan and follow him in obedience take their place in his country (i.e. Heaven) at the end of story. We will examine these elements in reverse order in what follows, first addressing those who follow Aslan and respect his sovereignty and then turning to those who follow Tash and who become his "lawful prey" at the Last Judgment.

The Sovereignty of Aslan

One characteristic of the followers of Aslan, that we have seen in *Narnia* – the characters who belong to Aslan and the characters who end up in Aslan's country at the end of *The Last Battle* – is the recognition of the sovereignty of Aslan and their proper place as creatures (which involves humility, bravery, selflessness, and most of all,

obedience). The creatures destined for Hell, who belong to Tash and become his “lawful prey” (*LB*, 740) during the Last Judgement, “have only an eye to their own profit” (*LB*, 741): they are selfish and cruel and greedy; they are not adhering, we might say, to their proper station but instead are trying to make and to enforce their own rules, to act as though they had created themselves (*MC*, 51).

Eustace and Jill experience the sovereignty of Aslan firsthand when they are whisked into Narnia a week (London-time) after Tirian’s cry for help, quite apart from their own plans to get there. They had planned to use the magic rings that Andrew had made back in *The Magician’s Nephew*, for it was the only way they could think of to get to Narnia. When they arrive and meet Tirian, however, they tell him that “Aslan did it all for us in his own way without any Rings” (*LB*, 696). Characteristically of the *Narnia* series, Aslan accomplishes things on his time and in his way.

Later in the story, Tirian puts his full trust in Aslan’s sovereignty when he says that “[n]othing now remains for us seven but to go back to Stable Hill, proclaim the truth, and take the adventure that Aslan sends us. And if, by a great marvel, we defeat those thirty Calormenes who are with the Ape, then to turn again and die in battle with the far greater host of them that will soon march from Cair Paravel” (*LB*, 718). Despite the grim outlook, Tirian is obedient to Aslan’s will. He recognizes his place and accepts it.

We saw this as well with Caspian in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, and Rillian in *The Silver Chair*. Obedience to the will of Aslan and acceptance of one’s place (and the courage, humility, and selflessness that come with that) are crucial to shaping one into a heavenly creature. Those who hold out and refuse to trust and obey, those who

stubbornly insist on their *own* selfish profit, ultimately become the lawful prey of Tash (*LB*, 740).

Lawful Prey and Character Formation

When Risha Tarkaan is thrown through the stable door, the three Pevensies (Peter, Edmund, and Lucy) as well as Lord Digory and Lady Polly all try to reach him. By their account, he is in the same sunlit and grassy field (Aslan's country) as they are, "but we thought he could neither see nor hear us. And he never looked round on the sky and the sunlight and the grass; I think he couldn't see them either" (*LB*, 745). Instead, Tash appears and from behind him, "strong and calm as the summer sea, a voice said: 'Begone, Monster, and take your lawful prey to your own place: in the name of Aslan and Aslan's great Father, the Emperor-over-Sea'" (*LB*, 740). The same word is used here as was with reference to Edmund and the White Witch in *The Lion*: "lawful prey". This mention of "lawful prey" brings in the law of justice: according to the Deep Magic of Narnia, as we have already seen, traitors belong to the powers of darkness.

While Aslan, in *The Lion*, accepted death and thereby acted in accordance with the Deeper Magic, it still remains for the creatures of Narnia to appropriate the salvation made available to them. Risha Tarkaan has evidently failed to do so. What's more is that he has not only failed to appropriate his salvation, but he is blind to Aslan and the good. In *Mere Christianity*, we saw Lewis wrote, "the instrument through which you see God is your whole self" (*MC*, 135). Risha Tarkaan's soul is so twisted that he cannot even see

the Heaven that is right in front of him. Of course, we saw the same phenomenon with the Dwarfs in chapter four: a stubborn selfishness has made them blind to all that is good.

The failure, on the part of Risha Tarkaan and the Dwarfs, is one of obedience and of fulfilling his purpose: God demands that we turn to him. Our obedience, trust, and openness to him is something we can freely choose to give or to refuse, and it is “the only purpose for which [we] were created” (*MC*, 167). This, as we saw Lewis state earlier, is the whole offer of Christianity: “that we can, if we let God have His way, come to share in the life of Christ” (*MC*, 144). It is this *letting God have His way* that we see in the Kings and Queens of Narnia, and all the Talking Beasts who arrive in Aslan’s country, and it is this that Rishda Tarkaan and the Dwarfs (excepting Trumpkin, of course) reject.

The one exception among the Calormenes, Emeth, reinforces this principle of turning to God and acknowledging his sovereignty. We have already examined the case of Emeth in chapter four. However, it will be fruitful to look briefly at Emeth again here in order to see why someone may, or may not, be the “lawful prey” of Tash. Emeth arrives in Aslan’s country, at first thinking that it was Tash’s country. When he sees Aslan, however, he reacts with love and awe rather than hatred and fear. He suspects that this means death for him, since “I have served Tash all my days” and not Aslan. “Nevertheless,” Emeth insists, “it is better to see the Lion and die than to be Tisroc of the world and live and not to have seen him” (*LB*, 755). Emeth displays a selflessness and a desire to know God (Aslan) that we do not see in the other Calormenes. Aslan notes that Emeth does in fact belong here, since “no service which is vile can be done to me, and none which is not vile can be done to [Tash]” (*LB*, 757), and so Emeth has in fact been

serving Aslan. This is not a matter of reward for good deeds, however, but rather a demonstration of the principle that “all find what they truly seek” (*LB*, 757). Emeth, seeking God instead of worldly profit, finds what he seeks. Each choice that he has made has helped to shape him into a creature who recognizes the sovereignty of Aslan and desires a relationship with him above all else.

The End of the World and The Last Judgement

In *The Last Battle*, the end of the world is ushered in by the Antichrist (the Ape), and the Last Judgement is carried out by Aslan, who sorts creatures into those who belong to him and those who belong to Tash. We see the principle of character formation demonstrated in this story, where those who become the “lawful prey” of Tash have shaped themselves into greedy, mean, and selfish individuals after their own profit. Those who belong to Aslan have shown themselves throughout the *Narnia* series to be obedient to his will, willing to sacrifice their own safety, comfort, and desires to do Aslan’s will. Those who refuse to trust and obey are, in a sense, refusing the only reality offered to them. This is demonstrated, for instance, in the case of the Dwarfs, as we have already seen in chapter four, who have shaped themselves into such greedy, selfish creatures that they literally cannot see the good right in front of them. In fact, the Dwarfs and Uncle Andrew bookend this series, as they both show us what happens when one refuses the salvation offered to us by God. They literally become blind to the divine reality. Characters such as Caspian, Rillian, Eustace, Jill, and the three Pevensies (Lucy, Edmund, and Peter) accept their proper station, in contrast; they demonstrate the mystical

death that Lewis describes in *Miracles* and they are consequently formed into heavenly creatures.

Theological Anthropology as an Outworking of *Justitia*

In chapter three, we saw Lewis depict the atonement as Christ paying a debt or enduring a punishment on our behalf. At the core of Lewis' understanding of the atonement is a substitutionary death: a death (Christ's) that was not owed, that converts our penal death into a mystical death, which is the key to eternal life. Lewis writes that the very nerve of redemption is surrender and death, the death of pride and of self-will (*PP*,610). This is based in the proper order of creation: Our true creaturely position, for Lewis – that place for which we were made – is one of obedience and of submitting our wills to that of God's. In obeying the will of God, we are enacting our creaturely role (*PP*, 608-609). Having rebelled in the Fall, however, we cannot now offer to God what we owe to him. In the words of Lewis in *Miracles*, we cannot “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” (*M*, 417). Christ does this on our behalf. Our job is now to appropriate that salvation that was made available to us in principle in Christ's act of atonement (*MC*, 147). We can do this by sharing in the life of Christ, which involves undergoing a death of self-will and being transformed by God into heavenly creatures (having our *Bios* turned into *Zoe*). This death of self-will, and this process of being transformed by God, also involves taking our proper place in creation. We see this process emphasized throughout *Narnia*. Consistently, throughout the series, we see the

followers of Aslan taking their proper place, as in *Prince Caspian*, for example. We see them submitting to being remade by Aslan, as does Eustace in *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. We see the demonstration of selflessness and obedience in characters such as Reepicheep, Lucy, and Tirian, contrasted with the pride, greed, and selfishness of characters such as the Rabadash, Rishda Tarkaan, Shift the Ape, and the Dwarfs. In *The Last Battle* especially, we see the consequence of a continued rebellion against the will of Aslan when the followers of Tash become his “lawful prey”. Throughout *Narnia*, we see Lewis work out concretely in the everyday lives of his characters what a death of self-will looks like, and also what continued rebellion against the will of God (Aslan) looks like. Thus, we can say that Lewis’ theological anthropology in *Narnia* is an outworking of his doctrine of the atonement insofar as, in *Narnia*, Lewis explores what an appropriation of our salvation looks like. Fundamental to Lewis’ understanding of the atonement and to sanctification is this notion of proper order, of our proper creaturely role, that we can choose to enact or to rebel against.

CONCLUSION

In *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis claims to be restating ancient and orthodox doctrines. While he rarely identifies his sources outright, we have seen that his understanding of the atonement fits within the same framework as that of Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm. For each of these theologians, the doctrine of the atonement was fundamentally an outworking of the nature of God as both just and merciful. We have seen that Athanasius and Augustine set the stage for Anselm, who systematically worked out a substitutionary theory of the atonement that preserves both the justice and the mercy of God. While justice and mercy are somewhat implicit in Lewis' thought, we have seen that both justice and mercy must be preserved in the atonement, and that both are rooted in the nature of God.

I have suggested that the concepts of *justitia* and proper order are fundamental to Lewis' theology. While he does not use the term *justitia*, I believe that we can usefully apply it to his work to understand the place that justice holds, especially as it relates to rectitude of order. For Lewis, proper order is central both to our understanding of the problem of the Fall and to the solution that we find in the atonement, as well as to the resulting process of sanctification: we disrupted the order and the beauty of the universe as concerns ourselves in the Fall, by trying to wield power as though it were our own, i.e. to be sovereign unto ourselves, or to act as though we belonged to ourselves. This goes against the very nature of the created order, where creatures are dependent upon the will of our Creator. Augustine described the Fall of Satan in this way, and Lewis described the Fall of humanity in this way. Fundamentally, the problem is one of pride: of trying to

set our own wills above that of God. The solution, consequently, is a death of this self-will, what Lewis calls a “mystical death”, which was undergone on our behalf in Christ’s act of atonement. Lewis describes the atonement in the same framework as that of Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm: in terms of the defeat of death and the Devil, in terms of the payment of a debt and the suffering of a vicarious punishment. This reconciliation, this at-one-ment, could only be achieved by someone who was both God and human, and so God took on human nature and paid the debt (endured the punishment) that we owe. In so doing, he was able to tread Adam’s steps backward. Since human beings are not separate from each other, from God’s point of view, Christ was thus able to introduce a “good infection” into human nature, which spread the Christ-life (*Zoe*) to all who would lay themselves open to God and be transformed. This is how we can say that Lewis’ theological anthropology is an outworking of a classically oriented understanding of the atonement: justice and mercy were both upheld in the atonement. Afterwards, our job is to appropriate the salvation that was made available to us in principle, which concretely looks like submitting to the death of our own self-will. This corrects the disruption of proper order that was introduced in the Fall.

In *Narnia* we find one of Lewis’ most mature expressions of the atonement. It is here that Lewis combines elements of Athanasius, Augustine, and Anselm, showing how an understanding of the atonement as Christ’s victory over death and defeat of the devil fits with the understanding of the atonement as a propitiatory sacrifice. In *Narnia*, we also see how sanctification works out concretely in the everyday lives of Lewis’

characters. Here, we learn that humility and obedience are crucial in taking our proper place in the created order.

Throughout the *Narnia* series, we see the emphasis on proper order in terms of maintaining one's proper station and obedience to Aslan. Humility and selflessness are key characteristics of the characters who find themselves in Aslan's country at the world's end. An obstinate selfishness and a desire to live by one's own rules (and to exploit others in the process) results in a blindness to the good and to one becoming the "lawful prey" of Tash. The notion of the law, of rules that are written into the very fabric of creation, frames the entire series, being present in *The Magician's Nephew* and *The Last Battle* and informing the salvation and sanctification of Narnia and its creatures in between. Aslan comes not to abolish the law concerning justice (or any other law written into creation) but to fulfill it. The sanctification of creation then comes in their obeying the law and fitting into the proper order of creation. Dependent creatures can only do this by laying themselves open to Aslan and allowing him to work in them. Once they do this, they will then be transformed into heavenly creatures and find themselves at home in Aslan's country. Thus, in *Narnia*, we see the whole sweep from creation through the atonement to salvation and sanctification at the world's end. Thinking about this process in terms of *justitia* helps us to see how *Narnia* can hang together as a theological whole, and how the theological anthropology that we find in the series can be seen as an outworking of the doctrine of the atonement presented in *The Lion*.

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