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FAITH AS RATIONAL NARRATIVE PARADIGM IN
C.S. LEWIS' *MERE CHRISTIANITY*

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Abstract

My thesis investigates C.S. Lewis' appeal to natural law and the context with which he uses and defends the word "faith" in his work *Mere Christianity*. To accomplish this, I use Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm and apply the manner in which Fisher uses it to supplement the rational world paradigm to how readers of Lewis might come to better understand his definition of "faith." Faith thus becomes a synthesis of rational world paradigm and narrative paradigm, which I call "rational narrative paradigm." Intrinsic to this "faith" based exegetical framework is his apologia of Natural Law, which serves to further contextualize how Lewis unpacks the biblical Christian narrative.

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“[The great Christians of the past] thought it good for us to be always aware of our mortality. I am inclined to think they were right. All the animal life in us, all schemes of happiness that centered in this world, were always doomed to a final frustration. In ordinary times only a wise man can realize it. Now the stupidest of us know. We see unmistakable the sort of universe in which we have all along been living, and must come to terms with it. If we had foolish un-Christian hopes about human culture, they are now shattered. If we thought we were building up a heaven on earth, if we looked for something that would turn the present world from a place of pilgrimage into a permanent city satisfying the soul of man, we are disillusioned, and not a moment too soon. But if we thought that for some souls, and at some times, the life of learning, humbly offered to God, was, in its own small way, one of the appointed approaches to the Divine reality and the Divine beauty which we hope to enjoy hereafter, we can think so still.”

-Clive Staples Lewis,

Learning in Wartime

Chapter One

Introduction: Reflection and Overview

Allow me to begin by way of personal narrative.

It was the summer of 2009. On one exceptionally bright morning, shortly after abandoning the comfort of my bed, I looked out of my window and saw two young people approaching our family's home. After taking note of their formal apparel and that they were holding books, I had determined that they were either sales people or, more likely, Jehovah's Witnesses. Either way, I was quite eager to go out to meet them, concluding that a discussion with them might be unusually enjoyable. There's nothing quite like a hot cup of apologia to start the day off right.

I opened the door to greet them—a young man and a very young girl—as they stood holding their New World Translation¹ Bibles. The boy, named Malcolm, was perhaps 16, no more than 17 years old, and the girl, whose name escapes me (primarily because she remained silent throughout our conversation), was about 8. Waiting in the car a few yards behind was their mother, who looked on as my two guests and I began to chat.

“So, talk to me a bit about what Jehovah's Witnesses believe,” I asked the two. The young man piped up, giving an extensive monologue about how passionately they believe in the Holy Scriptures and in Jesus Christ, both of which were, no doubt, attempts to build a bridge of identification with me, the assumedly Christian (or at least culturally Christian) target audience. One wonders what direction the conversation would have taken had I been a self-admitted atheist or a devout Muslim.

¹ The text most commonly used by Jehovah's Witnesses.

What they did not know, however, was that their audience was, in this instance, aware that both of these contentions carried unspoken antitheses, conditions and qualifiers. I decided to expose these by prying a bit harder, first on the doctrine of the trinity, which I expected to take us to a point of doctrinal divergence.

Malcolm, in a knee-jerk reaction, pointed me in his Bible to Deuteronomy 6:4, which reads the first phrase of the Jewish Shema—a string of phrases that many Orthodox Jews are likely to repeat to this day. The first phrase of Deuteronomy 6:4 reads, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one” (NIV).² Right away, considering both Malcolm’s demeanor and tone in quoting this verse, I knew that he had virtually no formal training in apologetics. Having been somewhat familiar with the two mainstream competing views of monotheism, numerical oneness and qualitative oneness, I asked my guests to wait at the door while I quickly jumped into the kitchen, opened the refrigerator door, and grabbed an egg. Returning to my two guests, I held up the egg.

“Now, how many eggs do you see?”

They both noted, “One.” This was good—I was not, of course, questioning their powers of observation.

I then tossed the egg into the air, and let it fall to the concrete as it smashed into its component parts. “*Now* how many eggs do you see?”

Again, they both noted “One” aloud.

“Very good!” I exclaimed. “But, what do you see?”

² This reading of Deuteronomy 6:4 shows no textual or translational variance between the NIV and the Jehovah’s Witness’ NWT.

“A shell, a yolk, and egg white. One egg.”

Now, of course I conceded to them immediately that I did not for a moment mean to be insulting by somehow cheapening the likeness of God to that of an egg. The differences in complexity between the two strike me as substantial. It was, nevertheless, intended to illustrate that the use of the word “one,” particularly when read and contextualized within a multitude of other verses in scripture, may not be as simple, or as straightforward, as they believed.

Afterwards, I asked how long they had been Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Malcolm mentioned that they had only been for a bit less than a year, and used to belong to a Methodist church. I then invited him to lunch, and, for the intents and purposes of the forthcoming assignment, I leave my story here to press on.

I chose the above narrative to illustrate two distinct points. One principal reason for Lewis’ authoring *Mere Christianity* was a general loss of Christian doctrine from broader social conversation. The Jehovah’s Witness faith (originally founded by Charles Taze Russell as a Bible study group in 1870) is one of many cults³ that broke from Orthodox Christianity in the 1800’s—a trend that also includes the Christian Science Church (founded by Mary Baker Eddy in 1879) and Mormonism (founded by Joseph Smith Jr. in the late 1820’s) (Morey 20). Each of these “sects” either removes or revises trinitarianism through a reinterpretation of Christ’s

³ Morey offers this description: “The ‘cultic’ hermeneutic is based on the assumption that the cultic leader or founder is especially inspired of God to give a ‘secret’ or ‘inner’ meaning to the Scripture which cannot be found in the grammar, syntax or context of the passage. Thus cultic leaders can and do read into the Bible their own theological aberrations without the constraint of context or grammar” (Death and the Afterlife, 20).

nature. In response to this break from Orthodoxy with compounded interest in questions of life and meaning due in substantial measure to World War II, Lewis saw fit to focus roughly 85% of the text of *Mere Christianity* on Orthodoxy and the relevance of Orthopraxy, while only 15% was dedicated to demonstrating the existence of God. Massive war, after all, tends to generate general social agreement of absolutes at a rapid pace—though rarely ever well thought through (which, of course, allows for those absolutes to be overturned just as quickly as they were introduced). As a result, I would suggest that when Lewis spoke to an audience on such topics, the majority of his audience would have had less difficulty granting the existence of a transcendent being or Natural Law and the respective homouniversality of its transgression.

Second, it is important to clarify what one means in using the word “narrative.” In the following essay, I will be examining the fidelity and coherence, as defined by Walter Fisher in his article “Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument,” of the narratives put forth by Clive Staples Lewis in his work *Mere Christianity*, which will in turn lead to the proposal of a paradigm that will more inclusively supplement the enterprise of establishing a “faith” narrative. Though the story I began with is indeed true, it is not fashioned in quite the same way as the narrative of *Mere Christianity*. Mine was a tale, a story, an anecdote. Lewis’ book takes a slightly different approach in its use of argument as narrative, progressing in complexity with the turn of each page. It, too, is a tale, a story and an anecdote, but the literary medium through which it expresses that narrative is not the same as a “story” in the conventional sense of the word, akin to those beginning with “once upon a time...” Lewis uses narrative as argument by way of deductive syllogistic reasoning, which is to be distinguished from tales that make no such appeal to logical fidelity or are void of any dependence on inductive or deductive reasoning.

Mere Christianity is broken into four books or parts, which themselves were adapted from a BBC Radio talk series delivered to a British audience in the 1940's, in the midst of the second World War. Book one, 'Right and Wrong as a Clue to the Meaning of the Universe,' was orated from August to September of 1941. Book two, 'What Christians Believe,' was delivered between January and February of 1942. Book three, 'Christian Behaviour,' was presented from September to November of 1942, and book four, 'Beyond Personality: Or First Steps in the Doctrine of the Trinity,' from February to April of 1944 (Perry). Each text introduces four central syllogisms respective to their titles in an attempt to both establish and explain the deity of Christ through persuasion by way of analogy. Book one, for example, focuses primarily on establishing the existence of God, book two with connecting God's existence to Christ, book three with examining what this relationship means in a broader social context, and book four with elaborating on the establishment of Christ's relationship with God and what a picture of that connection may look like. It is in this way that Lewis builds his defense of the Christian faith from the ground up, without assuming any presuppositions outside of the belief that people "quarrel." Indeed, the first sentence of the book reads, "Every one has heard people quarrelling" (3).

Each book's central contention builds upon the previous book's argument. Lewis constructs his rationale for the Christian narrative like building blocks, laying each conclusion atop the other. The initial block is the act of quarrelling, and the case for Christ builds from there. I will be investigating some of the arguments used to forward the central claims Lewis applies as a cohesive for each building block. The first book, for example, seeks to found God's existence on moral law that is "hard as nails" (30). People quarrelling, he argues, assumes the existence of some agreed upon standard which ought not to be broken. Lewis derives this

argument from the apostle Paul, who argued along similar lines in Romans 1 and 2 (NIV). Lewis, along with Paul, notes that any moral pronouncement assumes a standard of right and wrong, held by the accuser, which is applicable to others. Thus, when we remark, “That is not fair,” or “That is wrong,” we are appealing to a standard that we “expect others to know about” (3). Lewis remarks sarcastically, “And the other man very seldom replies: ‘To hell with your standard’ ” (3). Afterwards, Lewis spends a good deal of time refuting various rebuttals (the standard to which we appeal is culturally constrained, is contrived by humans, etc.). Still a far cry from proclaiming God as triune, he has begun to lay the rhetorical foundations, which will be explored later at greater length.

The second book explores and defends what Christians believe in light of the aforementioned moral law. He notes that there are two main divisions—those who believe in God and those who do not, and for those who believe in God, he muses over what sort of God they believe in. He spends time exploring each side of both divisions, beginning with a brief outline of his own personal journey from atheism to Jesus. This narrative will be explored in greater detail, but it will suffice to note, for now that Lewis concludes atheism to be “too simple”—that is to say,

If the whole universe has no meaning, we should never have found out that it has no meaning: just as, if there were no light in the universe and therefore no creatures with eyes, we should never know it was dark. *Dark* would be a word without meaning (39).

Once he has come to a point where he feels comfortable dismissing atheism, he turns to those who believe in God and examines how this set of beliefs play out. Some of the more prominent conceptions Lewis touches upon include Pantheism and Dualism. He does not spend time

attempting to discredit other major religions, such as Islam, Buddhism, Judaism or Hinduism, to name a few. Indeed, he remarks that many of these religions have much in common with Christianity. Lewis notes,

When I was an atheist I had to try to persuade myself that most of the human race have always been wrong about the question that mattered to them most; when I became a Christian I was able to take a more liberal view (35).

Rather than countering other major religions, he expounds on why he believes in Christ.

The third book, ‘Christian Behaviour,’ further elaborates on Christian doctrine of morality and some “cardinal virtues,” by which he means virtues which “all civilized people recognise.” The “cardinal virtues” Lewis delineates are *prudence, temperance, justice* and *fortitude* (76). These are to be distinguished from “Theological virtues,” which are those that “only Christians know about” (including *faith, hope* and *charity*). What follows is a two-part discussion on social morality, both as a non-Christian might understand it (cardinal virtues) and as a Christian understands it (theological virtues). Some other topics covered in this section include chastity, Christian marriage, and what Lewis calls “The Great Sin”; what he calls “one vice of which no man in the world is free; which every one in the world loathes when he sees it in someone else; and of which hardly any people, except Christians, ever imagine that they are guilty themselves” (121). The Great Sin is pride. Lewis discusses it, and its contrary, humility, at length, purposefully wedging them between the cardinal virtues and the theological virtues.

The fourth and final book, ‘Beyond Personality: Or First Steps in the Doctrine of the Trinity,’ investigates the Christian notion of One God as triune (that is, Father, Son, and Spirit as collectively One God) and attempts to explain how that might look and why it’s important. To illustrate these points, Lewis turns to existence in three dimensions, God’s positioning outside of

the space/time continuum, and the claim that “God is love.”⁴ Lewis concedes, of course, that the portrait that he paints of God is just that—merely a portrait, and cannot be the thing itself—cannot perfectly describe God’s triune nature. He likens his description, and theology as a whole, to a map (154), which cannot itself *be* the landscape. Once he feels as though the conception of the trinity is adequately demonstrated, he moves to conclude by asking what this means, and subsequently what the whole of the discussion means to us and how we ought to live our lives.

My focus will be on Lewis’ conception of Natural Law and his use of the word “faith.” I shall explore the syllogisms utilized by Lewis in formulating these arguments in greater detail through narrative paradigm as described by Fisher. Fisher defines this narrative paradigm as “a dialectical synthesis of two traditional strands in the history of rhetoric: the argumentative, persuasive theme and the literary, aesthetic theme” (2). That is to say, the narrative paradigm is a fusion of persuasion and artistic (visual, textual or otherwise) appeal. He further notes that communication as stories inevitably carry “moral inducements” (2).

The narrative paradigm is to be distinguished from what Fisher calls the “Rational World Paradigm” (4)—a scientific or philosophical approach to knowledge that “assumes that people are logical, making decisions on the basis of evidence and lines of argument” (Griffin, 301). Not discounting these methods, Fisher feels as though the list is incomplete, and includes his narrative paradigm among the various valid ways of understanding communication.

Mere Christianity is an attempt to arrange a compelling story of deductive analysis in defense of Christian claims. According to Fisher, narrative is to be seen as the basis for all human communication (Griffin, 302). There are two questions to ask when examining any

⁴ 1 John 4:8

narrative: is the story coherent (is there consistency? Do the parts fit together to form a whole?) and does the story have fidelity (does it ring true? Can the reader identify with the narrative?).

Clarifying Narrative Paradigm

Before going any further with Lewis, Fisher's "Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm" could be usefully explored in a bit more detail. Early on in his essay, Fisher defines narration as follows:

I do not mean a fictive composition whose propositions may be true or false and have no necessary relationship to the message of that composition. By 'narration,' I refer to a theory of symbolic actions—words and/or deeds—that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them. The narrative perspective, therefore, has relevance to real as well as fictive worlds, to stories of living and to stories of the imagination. The narrative paradigm, then, can be considered a dialectical synthesis of two traditional strands in the history of rhetoric: the argumentative, persuasive theme and the literary, aesthetic theme...the narrative paradigm insists that human communication should be viewed as historical as well as situational, as stories competing with other stories constituted by good reasons, as being rational when they satisfy the demands of narrative probability and narrative fidelity, and as inevitably moral inducements (2).

Thus, though the Narrative Paradigm theoretically expands the grounds on which narrative may be evaluated by, in a sense, loosening the enlightenment's modernist grip on historical and rhetorical tradition, it retains its respective roots in rationality, necessitating "good reasons" alongside "narrative probability," "fidelity," and "moral inducements." The Narrative Paradigm

does not encompass all narratives from all peoples for all purposes. It has no category for narratives from “out of left field,” so to speak. Rather, it draws from a text’s semiotic dimension to establish some residue of an objective, knowable anchor in an accessible rationality while granting the legitimacy of subjective experience in deciphering that reality, *provided* that experience (or narrative) carries substantial verisimilitude. The narrative, and thus the paradigm, must cohere as a system of thought—as a story, as it were.

Fisher lays out his Narrative Paradigm as a supplement to, not a replacement of, what he refers to as the Rational World Paradigm. Contrasted with the Narrative Paradigm, the Rational World Paradigm asserts certain characteristics derived from Aristotle’s *Organon* regarding the nature of human communication, negotiation of meaning, and methods of analyzing fidelity and coherence as we interact with reality. These include:

- 1) humans are essentially rational beings; 2) the paradigmatic mode of human decision-making and communication is argument—clear-cut inferential (implicative) structures; 3) the conduct of argument is ruled by the dictates of situations—legal, scientific, legislative, public, and so on; 4) rationality is determined by subject matter knowledge, argumentative ability, and skill in employing the rules of advocacy in given fields; and 5) the world is a set of logical puzzles which can be resolved through appropriate analysis and application of reason conceived as an argumentative construct. In short, argument as product and process is *the* means of being human, the agency of all that humans can know and realize in achieving their *telos*. The philosophical ground of the rational world paradigm is epistemology. Its linguistic materials are self-

evident propositions, demonstrations, and proofs, the verbal expressions of certain and probable knowing (4).

Here, we may duly note Fisher's willingness to grant the validity of these characteristics. Their relevance is non-negotiable, as they have proven their worth (if not also their partialness) in having stood the test of time.

Fisher does, however, simultaneously assert the respective limitations of such a paradigm. Its two primary limitations are: a) it requires "participation of qualified persons in public decision-making," and b) "there must exist something that can be called public or social knowledge and there must be a 'public' for argument to be the kind of force envisioned for it" (4). The rational world paradigm, then, demands a general, common base of understanding within a given state. This means that pluralism,⁵ then, becomes *ipso facto* rendered exigent—even viral. The more empirical diversity within a state, the more a government must ascertain control in order to preserve peace.

This begs the question, then, how can one go about celebrating diversity while maintaining the anchor of a common heritage of values within a given culture? It is in his attempt to answer this question that Fisher offers the narrative paradigm as a solution—a filling of the gaps left by the rational world paradigm in lieu of an ever-diversifying postmodern world. In doing so, his narrative paradigm embraces, rather than replaces, the rational world paradigm.

⁵ By pluralism here, I do not mean philosophical pluralism, but empirical pluralism—that is to say, a state with a diversity of peoples—not ethnically, but philosophically, ontologically and theologically. You can have minimal government only when you have maximal agreement within the culture.

Chapter Two

Mere Christianity, Book One: Natural Law as Evidence of the Divine

Considering the “faith-based” nature of my analysis, it seems as though I ought to unpack the word “faith” as it relates to narrative. When I submit a discussion on the fidelity and coherence of Lewis’ *Mere Christianity* as it relates to the Christian faith (both as orthodoxy and orthopraxy), the question inevitably arises, “With what standard should one compare the text in order to establish fidelity and/or coherence, or lack thereof?” There seems to be an intrinsic danger to undertaking a task regarding a particular faith if certain axioms of postmodern critique are not first explicated. After all, this analysis is restricted by a personal subjective religious commitment or choice, is it not? What, then, would be the point of trying to establish the fidelity and coherence of “x” when any understanding of “x” is entirely subjective in the first instance?

Certainly, there is an undeniable subjective component to faith. However, we ought not then conclude on the basis of its distance from mathematical proof the necessity of faith meaning *only* subjective belief. In the same way that Fisher views his narrative paradigm as a supplement to and completion of the well-established real world paradigm, I assert that a reexamination of the nature of faith in its objective context complements our postmodern understanding of faith as personal subjective preference. I would suggest that the objective use of the word “faith” has been transmuted by postmodern epistemology and worldview pluralism, just as the complementary and equally valid subjective understanding of faith was earlier transmuted by modernist epistemology as it strove for a-historical and a-experiential universality.

It seems fit, then, to begin with the earliest documented definition of faith in its Christian context as explicated in the Bible. I will follow this analysis with an exposition of three early

Church fathers (all non-Canonical works) and contrast their understanding of faith with its more contemporary usage.

The Bible on Faith: Four Brief Exegetical Expositions

Hebrews 11:1

I will begin with Hebrews 11:1, which reads, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (NIV). The biblical understanding of faith, then, is delivered in two parts with the entire argument preceded by the words, “faith is being sure of...” This raises the question, “Being sure of what?” which is then addressed by the text in the next portion of the clause. Faith is being sure of “what we hope for.” It is also being sure of “what we do not see.” Here, the text confirms a conjoining definition of faith, which may be further extrapolated with both subjective and objective connotations. It is *subjective* in that it calls for assurance in what we do not see. It is not observable, and is thus not methodological. It is not tangible, and is thus not measurable by any human gauge. I cannot *see* your faith. With an honest heart, I may examine my own, but that would be the most that I could say.

On the other hand, it is also *objective* in being *sure of what we hope for*. The word “we” in this context refers to the Jewish community, as the author’s intended audience are Hebrews who have not recognized the resurrection and salvation offered by Christ. This reasoning is taken in context of the entire chapter of Hebrews, which follows its definition of “faith” with examples of individuals throughout the history of God’s first covenant, beginning with God and followed by Abel, Enoch, and so on.

If “we” refers to the community of those within God’s covenant, then the question arises: “What *did* the Jewish community hope for?” They hoped for the Messiah—the promised one of God, who would lead the people to freedom and salvation. Thus the text may be equally

rendered, “faith is being sure of the Messiah,” or “being sure of the coming of the Messiah,” or “being sure of YHWH’s promise to deliver His people *through* the Messiah,” and so on. The author of Hebrews, in contending that the Messiah has come in Jesus—a real man, who walked, talked, lived, breathed, and preached his ministry here on earth—is also intrinsically tying faith to that which is accessible to the senses, not only within myself, but collectively; “*we*” are sure of what “*we*” hope for—that is, the coming of the Messiah.

Acts 17:11

The Bible makes firm distinctions between faith and gullibility. Thus, while faith *is more* than believing the truth, it is in no way less. Indeed, the Bible refers to extrapersonal investigation as “noble” or “honorable.” Such a conclusion, far from limited to Acts 17:11, is revealed clearly in the passage: “Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true” (NIV). Here, the apostle Paul is preaching to the Jewish people in the synagogues of Berea, and the author, Luke (who is widely believed to be a historian himself), is praising them for their investigation beyond the self. Luke, though not explicitly using the word “faith,” is demonstrating nevertheless that a person is of “noble character” who examines the teachings of Paul as they align with Torah. Luke does *not* write, “The Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and blindly believed everything Paul said because they wanted it to be so,” or “because it rang true in their hearts.” It is their search for the truth of the matter, even their skepticism of Paul, for which Luke praises them.

John 20:24-28

I propose John’s account of “Doubting” Thomas as the third apologetic for a

definition of “faith” intrinsically tied, in measure, to an objective reality.

In context, it is critical to recall that the apostles were first century Jews who, in the first instance, most likely believed that the Messiah would guide the Jewish people to freedom in a military conquest against the Roman Empire. Jesus had already been crucified in the previous chapter, and the apostles *had no category for a resurrected Messiah*. In their minds, as in the rest of the minds of the Jews, Messiahs don’t die—they win. Seeing Jesus on the cross smashed the hopes of the first apostles. At this point in the narrative, they are certainly terrified for their lives and are likely running from the authorities. It is in this frame of reference that we pick up the account of John 20:24-28 (NIV):

Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.” A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”⁶

⁶ I do not for a moment intend to ignore verse 29, though to expound it would take me in a direction far divorced from the issues at hand. Verses 29-31 (NIV) read, “Then Jesus told him, ‘Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet

Here, Thomas offers the absolute criterion that would overturn the skepticism of a disappointed Jew. Here is a man, after all, who had spent the past 48 months or more following a man who claimed to have the authority to forgive sins and took on his lips the very name of God,⁷ only to be crucified through Roman sanction. Jesus had been overcome. He had lost, and the hopes of the apostles had been in vain. Thomas had been fooled once into believing what he thought to be a lie, so that when the other apostles came to them claiming to have seen “the Lord,” Thomas’ only response was to lay out that which would invariably prove that what they said was true. Could it be that the apostles saw a look-alike Jesus? Notice Thomas’ criteria, “...unless I put my finger into

have believed.’ Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” Because we come to this text with the cultural baggage of our times, we tend to read the text as Jesus saying, “Good job for believing, Thomas, in light of this unquestionable evidence, but it would have been more impressive if you hadn’t needed it.” Rather, the text of verse 29 is invariably tied to verses 30 and 31, whereas Thomas, precisely *because* he now believes, is now called to become one witness within the string of apostolic witnesses with this experience serving as a testimony to Christ’s resurrection. In other words, the text is more accurately saying, “This is written so that you, reader, may believe, and here is the account of one who believes, though you, reader, have not seen.” There is more that could be said on the exegesis of verses 29-31, but for our intents and purposes, I stop here.

⁷ John 8:58

his side.” Apart from the traditional wounds inflicted during crucifixion on the wrists and feet, Jesus had a unique wound on his torso, as a Roman soldier stabbed Jesus to be sure that he was dead.⁸ This meant that Jesus also had a unique wound, which Thomas included in his specifications for what would be required for belief.

1 Corinthians 15:14-19

While some may believe “faith” to derive from personal experience or choice, Paul, writing in the first century, is far more frank. He writes,

And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men (NIV).

Paul is explicitly noting that if Christ has not really risen from the dead, then all of Christian “faith” is futile, and we are “of all men most to be pitied.” Christian faith, then, according to the Bible, is bound up in the *bodily* resurrection of Jesus,⁹ as this passage is contextually refuting a group of people in Corinth who do not believe in the resurrection of the dead. Paul is teasing out what this means to the Christian faith, noting that it is not only important, but essential.

⁸ John 19:31-34. The Roman soldier pierced Jesus’ pericardium.

⁹ John 2:19-21

Rather than having superior faith because it is divorced from fact, Paul argues that the person who holds such views on faith is not only wrong, but is a bit of a buffoon—a person whom he feels sorry for, for believing something that is not true.

Lewis and Natural Law

Before I begin, it might be helpful to elaborate on why I have selected the excerpts from each book that I have. It is my judgment that the selected passages (insofar as a passage can do so) most comprehensively summarize Lewis' argument of that particular section. Should a circumstance arise in which a qualification must be placed on Lewis' broader argument, then I shall make note of it. For now, let us begin with the opening two paragraphs of *Mere Christianity* as Lewis lays the groundwork for establishing the existence of Natural Law, or what he calls the "Law of Human Nature":

Every one has heard people quarrelling...I believe we can learn something very important from listening to the kind of things they say. They say things like this: 'How'd you like it if anyone did the same to you?'—'That's my seat, I was there first'—'Leave him alone, he isn't doing you any harm'...People say things like that every day, educated people as well as uneducated, and children as well as grown-ups.

Now what interests me about all these remarks is that the man who makes them 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. And the other man very seldom replies: 'To hell with your standard.' Nearly always he tries to make out that what he has been doing does not really go against the standard, or that if it does there is some special excuse.

He pretends there is some special reason in this particular case why the person who took the seat first should not keep it...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 or morality or whatever you like to call it, about which they really agreed. And they have. If they had not, they might, of course, fight like animals, but they could not quarrel in the human sense of the word. Quarrelling means trying to show that the other man is in the wrong. And there would be no sense in trying to do that unless you and he had some sort of agreement as to what Right and Wrong are; just as there would be no sense in saying that a footballer had committed a foul unless there was some agreement about the rules of football (3-4).

Lewis sets out on his narrative journey with little more than the universal truth of human quarrelling. To begin, he sets forth the task of deciding what excusing and accusing one another entails. Against what mechanistic metatheories do we assert that there is anything intrinsically wrong with murder or intrinsically right with the golden rule?¹⁰ More importantly, are these assertions coherent and are they consistent with the broader Christian narrative?

Lewis derives this argument from a similar line of reasoning used by the apostle Paul in his address to the Romans. Paul makes two key points along these lines. The first is that belief in God is properly basic. Even some qualities of God, including “his eternal power and divine nature” may be “clearly seen” in creation, including not only earth, but people, and the homouniversality of conscience.¹¹

¹⁰ Matthew 7:12

¹¹ Romans 1:18-20

Another Pauline syllogism that runs along similar lines emphasizes the universality of God’s judgment of both Jew and Gentile. The Jews, Paul writes, are those who have the law, and will thus be “judged by the law.” The Gentiles, having it no easier according to Paul, are apart from the law, but still “do by nature things required by the law.” Therefore, even those who sin apart from the law “will also perish apart from the law.” Those who do not have the law (the Gentiles) are not excused, since they “show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts” by doing them of their own accord, and that “their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.”¹² Hence, while humans do not themselves institute this standard, they are compelled to obey it and defend themselves according to it.

Since Lewis’ statements about quarrelling as intrinsic to human nature and as objective standard of assessing conduct are themselves rooted in an argument brought to light by Paul himself, it is safe to say that this first pillar of truths building his argument for the Christian narrative, that of Natural Law, certainly has the necessary fidelity and coherence with that narrative.

There is another piece to this puzzle—that of cultural locatedness. Lewis anticipates this most common objection, “Isn’t what you call morality relative to the various interpretative communities throughout the history of humankind?” Though he points his readers to his work *The Abolition of Man* for a more comprehensive response, he does grant us a glimpse of his response in the following pages of the opening chapter. Lewis writes,

¹² Romans 2:12-15

There have been differences between their moralities, but these have never amounted to anything like a total difference. If anyone will take the trouble to compare the moral teaching of, say, the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Hindus, Chinese, Greeks, Romans, what will really strike him will be how very like they are to each other and to our own. . . I need only ask the reader to think what a totally different morality would mean. Think of a country where people were admired for running away in battle, or where a man felt proud of double-crossing all the people who had been kindest to him. You might just as well try to imagine a country where two and two made five. Men have differed as regards what people you ought to be unselfish to—whether it was only your own family, or your fellow countrymen, or every one. But they have always agreed that you ought not to put yourself first. Selfishness has never been admired. Men have differed as to whether you should have one wife or four. But they have always agreed that you must not simply have any woman you liked (6).

Lewis' language in his preliminary response is complex and vague. "There have been differences in their moralities, but these have never amounted to anything like a *total* difference." What might be some characteristics that anchor "total" difference? Lewis, at least here, does not say, but does give the reader some clues as to what he means. Total difference indicates, for example, a complete shift of moral conscience, to advocate that that which is universally recognized as "bad" might be universally recognized as "good" (though not necessarily vice-versa). Lewis addresses this possibility in more detail in a later chapter (that is, the problem of evil, and why "bad" really cannot be "good" under any circumstances). We will return to this point shortly. At the moment however, whether or not we are to grant this point, one cannot avoid the fact that

Lewis' argument with respect to the homouniversality of conscience is coherent with the biblical narrative provided in Paul's address to the Romans as stated above.

Anticipating the sister objection to that described above, that what Lewis calls Natural Law (or here, "Moral Law") is little more than a social construction that has been "put into us by education" (which could equally be rendered "social construction"), Lewis writes:

Other people wrote to me saying, "Isn't what you call the Moral Law just a social convention, something that is put into us by education?" I think there is a misunderstanding here. The people who ask that question are usually taking it for granted that if we have learned a thing from parents and teachers, then that thing must be merely a human invention. But, of course, that is not so. We all learned the multiplication table at school. A child who grew up alone on a desert island would not know it. But surely it does not follow that the multiplication table is simply a human convention, something human beings have made up for themselves and might have made differently if they had liked? (12)

This, then, is no small point. It functions as clarification, though simultaneously (seemingly subconsciously) conceding (or so it seems) that it is possible for a person to be ignorant of the law, even if one were to grant its omnipotent existence. Could it be, then, that if a Natural Law were to exist, that Victor of Aveyron could not be considered aware of its existence?

Once more, we may find biblical insight from Paul in his same address to the Romans. Note in the passages above that the Gentiles *also* did not "have" the law, yet they were to be held accountable for that which their consciences defended them against. In other words, if I internally rationalize a defense for myself from x, then it necessarily follows that I felt accused of x in the first occasion. That is why it is written,

All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them (Romans 2:12-15).¹³

Provided that some proto-Moral Law *is* stamped on the hearts of God's image bearers, is Lewis claiming that it cannot be changed, shifted or adjusted in lieu of culture? If not, does his contention carry fidelity to the Christian narrative as is scripturally consistent?

I would argue that Lewis is consistent with the Christian faith narrative, provided one or two words of warning are given. If what Lewis refers to when noting that "Moral Law" is not

¹³ It should be noted that Paul here writes of the Mosaic law, laid out in the Pentateuch, but more specifically of their basis—that is, the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 5:7-21), spoken and written, we are told, by God Himself (Deuteronomy 5:22). It is their basis because each of the 603 laws that follow are functions of properly carrying out these ten—that is, this is (in a practical sense) how the whole of the law is ordained to be kept. When Lewis writes of "Natural Law," he indirectly refers to the Ten Commandments, as it is they that lay the groundwork for God's perfect standard, of which we all have fallen short. Obedience to God and the desire to seek that which is good, then, is understood to be stamped on the hearts of every man and woman.

culturally constricted (that is to say, stands as universally true for the whole of humanity), then what he must be referring to are the faith narratives that hold up broader Christocentric structural narratives of orthodoxy. As a contrasting example, Paul instructs believers to “greet one another with a holy kiss.”¹⁴ Today, if an evangelical were to approach a Christian German walking down the street, or even a Christian New Yorker (let alone Christians in most Asian communities), kissing would most likely not be the medium of greeting that is most accepted or even desired in these particular cultures. Does that mean that believers who do not kiss one another in these cultures when greeting stand opposed to Paul’s instruction? The answer, of course, is no. Because the issue is not that there is an orthodoxy or orthopraxy in the Christian narrative with respect to *kissing*. Rather, there *are* entire theological structures bound up in orthodoxy and orthopraxy with respect to welcoming others in love. It is therefore not the *medium* (in this instance, kissing) that is claimed under Lewis’ assertions of that which is objectively good, but the principle behind the action, while understanding that this sort of delineation within a biblical framework is *only applicable* to circumstances in which orthodoxy does not become compromised.

It is of paramount importance to pause and note the mutual connections of faith’s dual components as represented here by Lewis to provide evidence for the first step of Christian apologetics as narrative. Moral Law, as Lewis puts it, is “hard as nails” (30) and encompasses stark objective reality (its existence is in no way soft, nor on its own accord leads to God’s goodness, if He/She/It even *be* good—we must not get ahead of ourselves). It also denotes subjective reality, insofar as this law may be known or unknown in faintly varying degrees, and, even to

¹⁴ Romans 16:16

some extent, may be culturally manipulated while remaining faithful to and coherent with the larger narrative itself. This is how Natural Law functions, finally, as evidence for faith in every sense of the word.

Science as Revelation

When considering questions of existence and their parallel questions of natural law (both as ethic and as science), Lewis takes the time to unpack (though admittedly “very roughly” [21]) two primary and competing worldviews—the “materialist view” and the “religious view” as contrast.¹⁵ On the materialist view, Lewis writes,

People who take that [the materialist] view think that matter and space just happen to exist, and always have existed, nobody knows why; and that the matter, behaving in certain fixed ways, has just happened, by a sort of fluke, to produce creatures like ourselves who are able to think. By one chance in a thousand something hit our sun and made it produce the planets; and by another thousandth chance the chemicals necessary for life, and the right temperature, occurred on one of these planets, and so some of the matter on this earth came alive; and then,

¹⁵ Lewis footnotes the “religious” view to indicate the recognition and rebuking of a vision that attempts to synthesize these two philosophies—what he calls the “Life-Force philosophy.” This faith narrative contends human evolution is the “purposiveness” or “striving” of a Life-Force. Lewis asserts that those who hold this view ought to be more specific about what they mean by “Life-Force”—specifically with an answer to the question of whether or not it has a mind. If it does, then “their view is thus identical with the Religious.” If it does not, then “what is the sense in saying that something without a mind ‘strives’ or has ‘purposes’”? (26)

by a very long series of chances, the living creatures developed into things like us (22).

The sarcastic tone of Lewis' caricature of the materialist view aside, he is, by-and-large, faithful to the competing atheistic narrative, though I'm equally certain that one who holds such views would be quick to contribute several caveats to Lewis' summary.

To contrast, Lewis also provides the religious view, which reads, According to it (the religious view), what is behind the universe is more like a mind than it is like anything else we know. That is to say, it is conscious, and has purposes, and prefers one thing to another. And on this view it made the universe, partly for purposes we do not know, but partly, at any rate, in order to produce creatures like itself—I mean, like itself to the extent of having minds (22).

Note that Lewis views the vagueness of each faith narrative in different ways. In the first occasion (the materialist view summary), his description of ambiguity is implicit—that is to say, he does not come out and say on behalf of those who hold this view that they blankly “do not know” (though those who propagate such a view might be among the first to assert that they sometimes do not) about the intricacies of our universe. One could say that Lewis' language is far more clear and assertive in the second exposition, but could also point out that he still acknowledges uncertainty here by saying that we “do not know” its (God's, or this “mind's”) purpose. The difference is that in the second instance, his admittance of a gap in understanding is explicit—clearer and, one might say, less surreptitious. This point becomes relevant when Lewis concedes an important point that, in this case, keeps him from sounding arrogant. His concession is this: “Please do not think that one of these views was held a long time ago and that the other has gradually taken its place. Wherever there have been thinking men both views turn up” (22).

Lewis is recognizing the potential intellectual legitimacy of *both* faith narratives—the religious and the materialistic. He then uses this admission to isolate and virtually sterilize science as an argument proof positive for either view.¹⁶ He clarifies that science’s agency is led by experimentation and sensory observation, neither of which serve to explain questions of “why” and “whether there is anything behind the things science observes,” as queries accountable to scientific inquiry. Lewis then deduces that if there is ‘Something Behind,’ “then either it will have to remain altogether unknown” (as it is not immediately accessible to humans through sensory perception) “or else make itself known in some different way” (23). Lewis thus notes the suitable roles (“very useful and necessary” roles at that) and limitations of science. This last point is entirely vital to grounding Lewis’ argument as Christian narrative, predominantly because the God of the Bible asserts Himself as a God who *talks*. He communicates with human beings through every conceivable medium, granting access “through grace” to a sure place to stand, whether ontologically, epistemologically or axiologically.

¹⁶ Lewis is thus not condoning NOMA (Non Overlapping Magisteria)—that science and religion as “passing ships of the night,” whose claims in no way bear on one-another (Gould). That is to say, science deals with the real or the rational world and religion with the extra-rationalism. Within this frame of reference, it may thus be argued that science may work to affirm a position of materialistic naturalism as it works to measure and experiment on that which is within the natural order. That is not what Lewis is asserting here. He is rather arguing that science cannot be used as proof for either view. He is not then suggesting that one cannot have any bearing on the other and even less so that science may be used as evidence for one and not the other.

Introductory Evidences: The Universe as Merciless Art

Lewis takes care, still by way of introduction, to remind the reader that his words have not yet become “religious jaw” and not to think that he is going faster than he really is. He has a far way to go before being able to assert in any measurable fashion that the ‘Something Behind’ is the God of the Bible.

He begins to formulate his opening arguments, however, by deducing conclusions based on his observations thus far.

We are not taking anything from the Bible or the Churches, we are trying to see what we can find out about this Somebody on our own steam. And I want to make it quite clear that what we find out on our own steam is something that gives us a shock. We have two bits of evidence about the Somebody. One is the universe He has made. If we used that as our only clue, than I think we should have to conclude that He was a great artist (for the universe is a very beautiful place), but also that He is quite merciless and no friend to man (for the universe is a very dangerous and terrifying place) (29).

Lewis asserts the object of creation as proof positive that there must then be a creator. The use of the created order as evidence for God does indeed find its Christian roots in the Bible narrative, first elaborated by Paul.¹⁷ Considering this point, Lewis draws two distinct conclusions—that God (the ‘Somebody’) is 1) a “great artist” and 2) is “merciless and no friend to man.” Note that we arrive at these characteristics *provided that we isolate the universe as the sole clue* into this ‘Something’s character. Prior to analyzing either point, we must remind ourselves of Lewis’

¹⁷ Romans 1:18-20. A similar, though baser point may be found in the introduction to Psalm 14.

location at the current juncture, and, once more, of his distance from the specificity of a Christian narrative. If, then, his responses do not bring fidelity to it, the reader ought not trouble him over it, because he will arrive at such points later in the book.

The first and perhaps easier of the two would be to see that the ‘Somebody’ (to the Christian narrative, ‘God’) is indeed depicted as a magnificent artist. One of the most striking narratives that depict Him as such is in his monologue response to the protagonist in the book of Job. Here, God is speaking to Job and rebuking him with chapter after chapter of rhetorical questions to make it abundantly clear to Job that God is God.

Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation?...Have you ever given orders to the morning, or shown the dawn its place, that it might take the earth by the edges and shake the wicked out of it?...What is the way to the abode of light? And where does darkness reside? Can you take them to their places?...Can you bind the beautiful Pleiades? Can you loose the cords of Orion? Can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons or lead out the Bear with its cubs? (Job 38)

The Christian narrative may assert, in more aesthetic terms, that the universe is God’s canvas, and that it, too, was created by Him. Thus any rendering of any form of art, be it intrinsic to the natural space-time order or conceived by the hearts, minds and hands of humans, is necessarily bound up in divine creative revelation. This illustrates that a mere examination of the universe may logically lead one to the conclusion of God as “artist,” thus establishing God (Lewis’ ‘Something’) as the primary agent through which all artistic mechanisms of expression find fullness.

Lewis’ second conclusion is slightly more difficult to scrutinize without a fuller exposition of the yet unpacked Christian narrative. The problem is that his terms (the “universe”

as “dangerous” or “terrifying,” thus God as “merciless” and “no friend to man”) demand certain Christian theological categories of understanding to be in place, including an eternal transcendent existence beyond the physical realm and the personhood of Christ, to name two examples. The absence of these categories at this point in Lewis’ text is indeed consistent and follows chronologically in his broader narrative as he constructs his argument, deduction by deduction. Notice above with God as “artist” that in order to properly contextualize this claim, it became necessary to impose a biblical framework via Job.

Within that biblical framework, however, describing God as “merciless” or as “no friend to man” could not more sharply contradict the Christian narrative. The most crucial detail to recognize, however, is that Lewis never intended for this description of God to be consistent with the biblical narrative. Lewis does not propose to establish Christianity’s legitimacy solely on the observable evidence of the laws governing our universe. These qualities derived from the universe and its laws are eventually overturned in light of additional evidences introduced as Lewis continues to build his apology.

In conclusion, Lewis lays the foundation of his argument in defense of the Christian belief structure already granting the possibility of establishing, in measure, some ontological validity through observation and by drawing true conclusions based on those observations. These evidences constitute an indispensable ingredient—one of the various substances that make up Lewis’ faith. And while there is undoubtedly more to be said of Lewis’ other evidences offered to scrutinize the Christian claims of Christ’s divinity and their subjective nature (which we will hitherto inspect), there is a non-negotiable anchor to reality independent of personal preference. They must then complement one-another to understand what Lewis means by faith, as narrative

(or subjective) paradigm functions to synthesize the facet of truth's mechanism that is discernible and desirable under the rational world (or objective) paradigm.

Chapter Three

Lewis on Faith: Parts 1 and 2

Prior to commencing my scrutiny of Lewis' "faith" (which is concentrated on in two distinct ways and speaks to two distinct uses of the word), it is worth inquiring how and why Lewis distinguishes faith as a virtue from certain others. He first establishes two primary classes into which various virtues may be placed; they are 'Cardinal'¹⁸ virtues and 'Theological' virtues. The 'Cardinal' class includes the virtues of *prudence, temperance, justice* and *fortitude*. For the intents and purposes of this essay, we need not examine these virtues further other than to note how and why they are distinguished from the three Theological virtues, *faith, hope* and *charity*.

Lewis, for his part, spells out his reason for separating the categories as he did. He writes,

The 'Cardinal' ones [virtues] are those which all civilized people recognize: the

'Theological' are those which, as a rule, only Christians know about (76).

It must be clarified that Lewis' application of the terms used to describe his three 'Theological' virtues is not to be examined from their common definitions. He does not mean what we today think of when we use the word "charity"—the giving to the poor, understood to be free from theological motive. Rather, he means something closer to "Giving to the poor out of 'Love, in the Christian sense' " (129). When he writes of "hope" as a 'Theological' virtue, it is because he means hope as an eternal desire for heaven and to exist forever in the company of the divine (134-137). But what of faith? In what ways does Lewis define this term?

¹⁸ Lewis clarifies: "The word 'cardinal' has nothing to with 'Cardinals' in the Roman Church. It comes from a Latin word meaning 'the hinge of a door.' These were called 'cardinal' virtues because they are, as we should say, 'pivotal'" (76).

At this juncture Lewis puts forth two separate definitions of the word “faith,” one of which may clearly be understood outside the context of a Christian narrative. The second definition, more consistent with his categorical description of ‘Theological’ virtues, may only be understood within a Christian context. We shall address both with a disproportionate focus on the first use of the word for its wider and more comprehensive scope.

Faith, Part 1: Concerning Emotions and Habit

Lewis defines “faith” in the first instance as follows:

Now Faith, in the sense in which I am here using the word, is the art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods. For moods will change, whatever view your reason takes (140).

He opens the first faith chapter by referencing “faith” to mean “simply Belief—accepting or regarding as true the doctrines of Christianity” (138). But we must pry further into Lewis’ narrative to investigate the assumptions behind such a definition. The first is that the Christian doctrines have the capacity to be regarded as true; a claim which Lewis clarifies is to be determined, like any other assertion, based on the evidence that either supports or refutes it.

...a sane man accepts or rejects any statement, not because he wants to or does not want to, but because the evidence seems to him good or bad. If he were mistaken about the goodness or badness of the evidence that would not mean he was a bad man, but only that he was not very clever. And if he thought the evidence bad but tried to force himself to believe in spite of it, that would be merely stupid (138).

The worth of faith claims, then, are understood by Lewis to be intrinsically tied, like any other statement, to the same ontologically grounded measures of rationality utilized in the calculation

of any other contention, which include the three aforementioned proofs offered by Zacharias: logical consistency, empirical adequacy and experiential relevance (123).

Lewis also concedes, however, that rationality is not the only force at work in shaping faith narratives or any other paradigmatic accounts of truth. It is also directed, in part, by one's imagination and/or emotions. To illustrate this point, Lewis uses an allegory of anesthetics. In this particular passage, the *rational* dimension of his mind has *faith* based on

...good evidence that the anesthetics do not smother me and that properly trained surgeons do not start operating until I am unconscious. But that does not alter the fact that when they have me down on the table and clap their horrible mask over my face, a mere childish panic begins inside of me. I start thinking I am going to choke, and I am afraid they will start cutting me up before I am properly under. In other words, I lose my faith in anesthetics. It is not reason that is taking away my faith: on the contrary, my faith is based on reason. It is my imagination and emotions (139).

Lewis changes the very foundations upon which discussion about Christianity or any other faith claim are to be negotiated by first asserting faith's correlation with reason (rationality) *over* and *against* mood changes, or one's "emotions and imagination."

This analysis, however, seems to beg the question: Is Lewis' definition of faith as reinforced by rationality and as in conflict with imagination and emotion diluting the subjective tinge of faith's classification, and thus straying from its biblical fidelity?

It is difficult to say for certain, but to get close to an answer I would invoke one of Fisher's qualifying descriptions of narrative paradigm as insisting that "human communication should be viewed as ... stories competing with other stories constituted by good reasons" (2). I

may simultaneously revisit Zacharias' third criterion of truth—that of experiential relevance—as a proper fitting for faith's subjective quality. Two syllogisms following these lines of reasoning may be assembled as such:

- *If* “good reasons” (Fisher)/“experiential relevance” (Zacharias) are understood to be descriptive of the passing sensations that shape our worldview, *then* they are qualitatively interchangeable with Lewis' “emotions and/or imagination.”
- *If* “good reasons” (Fisher)/“experiential relevance” (Zacharias) are qualitatively interchangeable with “emotions and/or imagination” (Lewis), *then* Lewis weakens faith's definition by the removal of its subjective attributes.

I would submit that the first syllogism's conclusion is erroneous. Number one, Fisher's “good reasons” are removed indefinitely from the category of emotion. The only language that Fisher uses that may be extrapolated to suggest otherwise is that of “imagination” in lieu of the following clause in his narrative paradigm description:

The narrative perspective, therefore, has relevance to real as well as fictive worlds, to stories of living and to stories of the *imagination* (2, emphasis added).

But this description of “imagination” is not to be understood in this clause as that which constitutes the narrative paradigm itself. Rather, it speaks to what the narrative perspective has *relevance* to. We must not confuse mechanism with agency. Narrative paradigm is the agent, employing one mechanism (imagination) in its relevant application. Imagination is thus one function of what narrative paradigm addresses, but is not substantive of its internal construct.

Secondly, Zacharias' experiential relevance is only comprised of emotion and/or imagination in part. Though a stronger correlation may exist here than did with Fisher, the two categories of “experiential relevance” and “emotion/imagination” are not qualitatively

interchangeable. Emotion and imagination are encompassed within the category of experiential relevance, but experiential relevance carries a far broader scope and is thus not limited to emotions and imagination alone. To equate the two would be akin to calling a rectangle a square. This is not true, but its converse is true—a square is a rectangle.

Therefore, Lewis' assertion that emotion and imagination conflict with faith does not intrinsically detract from faith's subjective attribute, and thus retains historical, biblical consistency.

Why, then, does Lewis establish faith and reason as in competition with emotion and imagination (or what he also calls “mood changes”)? He explains,

This is why Faith is such a necessary virtue: unless you teach your moods ‘where they get off’, you can never be either a sound Christian or even a sound atheist, but just a creature dithering to and fro, with its beliefs really dependent on the weather and the state of its digestion. Consequently one must train the habit of faith (141).

Lewis moves to describe one additional facet of faith's outworking that has until now gone unexplored—namely, the alleged necessity of habit. Habit, for its part, is not described as a contributing component of faith's definition, but is rather unpacked as an indispensable mechanism of faith's practice or application.

But does this square with a biblical Christian narrative? After all, were not the Pharisees rebuked by Christ Himself for diluting the law¹⁹ by practicing it as habit rather than by a willingness to please God? Consider, for example, Matthew 15:1-10:

¹⁹ See footnote 27

Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don’t wash their hands before they eat!” Jesus replied, “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother’ and ‘Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.’ But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,’ he is not to ‘honor his father’ with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.’ ” Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen and understand. What goes into a man’s mouth does not make him ‘unclean’ but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him ‘unclean’ ” (NIV).

Clearly, the traditional habit of hand washing was seen as something of value attached to the practice of the Pharisee sect of first century Jewish faith. Jesus, however, turns the Pharisees’ interrogation on its head by making a parallel point to two separate laws—honor your father and mother²⁰ and capital punishment for children who curse their father or mother²¹—in order to illustrate the Pharisees willingness to observe these laws independently of the function that they were intended to serve. Their primary function was not to keep misbehaving children obedient

²⁰ Deuteronomy 5:16

²¹ Exodus 21:17

for obedience to the parents' sake (though this was undoubtedly a legitimate function of these laws). More foundationally, they were intended to illustrate the importance of focusing on God and His desire for the Israelites to live as a holy people. These and other laws are the means of reaching that end. Obedience to father and mother is therefore one manifestation of the principal act—loving God first—followed then by honoring thy mother and father as an expression of love for God. The problem that Jesus points out in the passage is that the Pharisees missed this purpose and followed the law out of habit of doing so, that is, for tradition's sake. Finally, then, Jesus comes around to addressing the question of washing one's hands by refocusing the discussion on loving and honoring God rather than on the cleanliness of a person's hand. What comes out of the mouth is what comes out of the inside—the heart, the mind, etc.—and it is this sin within us that Christ draws attention to as that which makes us “unclean.” The tradition or “habit” of the Pharisees, then, seems to be what led them astray in the first instance.

But let us not close this case so quickly. There are other biblical texts which seem to affirm the role of habit. Consider briefly Deuteronomy 6:6-9 and Exodus 12:24-27:

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on your doorframes of your houses and on your gates (Deuteronomy 6:6-9 NIV).

Obeys these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants.

When you enter the land that the Lord will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. And when your children ask you, “What does this ceremony mean to you?” then tell them, “It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the

houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians” (Exodus 12:24-27 NIV).

In these passages, habit seems to be reinforced as good and right in the proper practice of one’s faith. How, then, do we square these texts with Jesus’ rebuke of the Pharisees for their high esteem of habit manifested as tradition?

But then, this choice between habit and, as Jesus asserts, putting God and his commands first, is a false dichotomy, is it not? Let us revisit Jesus’ teaching and examine it more closely. Was it the Pharisees’ tradition being rebuked or was its hierarchical importance? Note what Jesus does *not* say. He does not say, “Washing your hands before a meal is bad.” He says that its consequence pales in comparison to inner cleanliness. The habit-making of washing one’s hands, or any other of the Pharisees’ traditions, is not to be understood as intrinsically bad. It is when their traditions or habits take a controlling hold of its followers, such that the primary reasons behind the traditions become peripheral and take a back seat to the habitual nature of the act itself. They keep the “what” and lose the “why.” Jesus comes along and reminds them to keep the “why” first, before the “what.” This is how the Pentateuch may affirm and reaffirm the importance of “habit” legitimately, because their most basic intent did not originally lie in the actions themselves, but for the benefit of human beings.

This reintroduces us to a similar problem that was tackled earlier in Romans when the question arose, when is it permissible to suggest that certain practices are bound up in orthodoxy while others are merely representative of it. I will refer back to the same answer I gave in

response to that same question with respect to Paul writing that Christians are to “greet one another with a holy kiss”²² and press forward.

That said, it seems to me that Lewis’ suggestion of habit, as one part of faith’s implementation, is indeed coherent with the biblical Christian narrative. Lewis clarifies:

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

(141)

Faith, Part 2: Concerning Law and Works

I introduced this chapter noting that I would be spending a greater amount of time addressing Lewis’ use of faith in its first implication. Lewis offers a similar disclaimer of faith’s second use, forewarning not of disproportionate space but of disproportionate relevance, audience pending:

I want to start by saying...if this chapter means nothing to you, if it seems to be trying to answer questions you never asked, drop it at once. Do not bother about it at all. There are certain things in Christianity that can be understood from the

²² See note 28

outside, before you have become a Christian. But there are a great many things that cannot be understood until after you have gone a certain distance along the Christian road (144).

In this chapter on faith,²³ Lewis does not intend to work through any explicit definition of the word. Rather, he is arguing something closer to, “Now that we have some understanding of the aforementioned virtues (including faith), let us examine how its practical application has been a point of conflict within Christian circles.” He spends this chapter unpacking the alleged tension in Christian orthodoxy of the doctrine of salvation—the split between “faith” and “works.”

One significant question since the birth of the Church as an institution has been, “What is the primary means by which a person attains heaven? Is it by doing good deeds (performing ‘works’) or by believing in Christ as the savior (having ‘faith’)?” Doctrinally, asking which is superior (though I would hesitate to accept the premise of the question) has taken two millennia for Christian theologians to work through, and there does not yet seem to be much hope for a consensus. That being said, I would venture to guess that, of all the Christian believers who fall on the faith/works spectrum, the mainstream average would likely be quick to say that “both are necessary,” or perhaps, “one leads to the other.” Either way, it is not a question that will be resolved here, nor is it resolved in Lewis’ book. Instead, he offers both sides up as non-negotiable (as the biblical Christian narrative necessitates both orthodoxy and orthopraxy) and flatly rejects either extreme.

²³ Faith is the one topic for which Lewis devotes two separate chapters because he uses the term to work through its application in very different ways.

There are two parodies of the truth which different sets of Christians have, in the past, been accused by other Christians of believing: perhaps they may make the truth clearer. One set were accused of saying, ‘Good actions are all that matters. The best good action is charity. The best kind of charity is giving money. The best thing to give money to is the Church. So hand us over £10,000 and we will see you through.’ The answer to that nonsense, of course, would be that good actions done for that motive, done with the idea that Heaven can be bought, would not be good actions at all, but only commercial speculations. The other set were accused of saying, ‘Faith is all that matters. Consequently, if you have faith, it doesn’t matter what you do. Sin away, my lad, and have a good time and Christ will see that it makes no difference in the end.’ The answer to that nonsense is that, if what you call your ‘faith’ in Christ does not involve taking the slightest notice of what He says, then it is not Faith at all—not faith or trust in Him, but only intellectual acceptance of some theory about Him (148).

Lewis suggests elsewhere that asking which is more necessary is a bit like “asking which blade on a pair of scissors is more necessary” (148). They are two sides of the same coin and to sacrifice either would make theological shipwreck.

It is relevant to note, however, that Lewis first approaches this conclusion of mutual significance earlier on in the chapter from an angle that seems to favor faith—if not as superior to works, certainly as a superior avenue through which to bring about the topic of this faith/works spectrum itself (hence the chapter’s title, “Faith,” rather than “Works”). His rhetorical approach is telling of what is most likely his own stance on the presumed dichotomy, though he does not overtly state favoritism to faith. He does, however, spend a great deal of time

unpacking how and why people cannot earn heaven by simply “trying harder” and how, no matter what a person does, it will never, on the sole merits of the action itself, muster enough upward momentum to reach the heights of the pearly gates (146).

Regardless of where a Christian falls on this topic, it cannot be avoided that Lewis’ rhetorical approach carries a biblical fidelity as seen most clearly in Paul’s rebuke of the apostle Peter and some churches in Galatia in the mid first century. At the time, Paul believed Peter to be in danger of intermingling Jewish doctrine of observance of the law²⁴ as a means of obtaining the Holy Spirit. Though the question at the time was with regard to the Spirit, the argument parallels more contemporary queries of salvation by works (observance of the law) or faith. To the Galatians, Paul writes,

After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? [...] Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard? [...] All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”²⁵ Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, “The righteous will live by faith.”²⁶ The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, “The man who does these things will live by them.”²⁷ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by

²⁴ See footnote 27

²⁵ Deuteronomy 27:26

²⁶ Habakkuk 2:4

²⁷ Leviticus 18:5

becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”²⁸ He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit (Galatians 3:3-14).

The basic premise of this argument, with which all Christians with biblical fidelity *must* agree, is that we cannot attain the Spirit (or subsequently, heaven) by our own efforts, by trying to be good enough or observing the law. To say so would nullify Christ’s sacrifice and resurrection, upon which the entire faith narrative hangs. This brings to an unyielding halt any possibility of a Christian falling to the extreme end of the “works” side of the spectrum, just as other passages invalidate the extreme end of faith²⁹ by isolating it from works. I would submit that these passages among others biblically validate Lewis’ claim of equal necessity of faith and works, though utilizing faith as the chief rhetorical avenue through which to evaluate both claims.

²⁸ Deuteronomy 21:23

²⁹ Romans 6:1-2 and Revelation 22:12, among others.

Chapter Four

Concluding Remarks: *Faith* Refocused as Rational Narrative Paradigm

It seems most clear that the historical Christian categories through which “faith” was once understood have been transmuted by sociophilosophical linguistic trends, resulting in a common loss of foundations upon which interpretations of Christian texts such as Lewis’ ought to be constructed. We must first, insofar as is possible, remove ourselves momentarily from the lenses of our own corners of culture. Only after these categories of faith as rational narrative paradigm have been firmly reestablished may we examine the fidelity of any claim with respect to the Christian narrative.

And it is the narrative—inseparable from the tenets of logical coherence—that grounds its account of faith to truth claims that are expected to carry the burden of rational consistency as it is unpacked, tested and explored. Whether or not the Christian faith narrative *risers to meet* this obligation is for each person to conclude for him or herself on the basis of the evidence supporting and refuting it. For those who choose not to subscribe to the Christian narrative, the setting aside of beliefs in biblical scripture as *theopneustos*³⁰ does not rescind the value or the possibility of meaning’s discernment through the use of a common text.

Faith, then, may finally be best understood as rational narrative paradigm. Its anchor in historical claims verifies Fisher’s concession of the rational world paradigm’s poise and value, tested and upheld over time, while offering the narrative paradigm as a more comprehensive frame of reference through which we, the story tellers and hearers, may engage the world around us:

³⁰ God-breathed or God-inspired

Adoption of the narrative paradigm, I hasten to repeat, does not mean rejection of all the good work that has been done; it means a rethinking of it and investigating new moves that can be made to enrich our understanding of communicative interaction (6).

If the question thus becomes, “In which paradigmatic category could one ground a definition of faith that is consistent with a use that carries the most fidelity to biblical Christianity when approaching Lewis’ *Mere Christianity*?” I should have to answer, “Both.” In fact, it is worth noting that “fidelity” and “faith” both stem from the same Latin root word, *fidelis*.³¹

Provocative as it may be, it seems an inevitably fruitless endeavor to examine the rational narrative fidelity of faith in Lewis’ text if we lack the most essential tool—a scale by which to measure the exactitude of our analysis. This, then, begins to approach Fisher’s warrant for asserting ontology as the narrative paradigm’s philosophical ground (8). The Greek *De Ontos*, or “One must,” is introduced at the critical point of the emergence of questions such as “Who says?” or “Who decides?” which *must* arise and *must* be confronted. The confrontation of and the reaction to these questions *necessitates* that a given person or agent is able to provide an answer for them, which in turn introduces a *hierarchal mode of rationality*. “Who says?” and “Who decides?” are rhetorical devices that veil a more assertive question, “By what or whose authority do you make the claims that you do?” Fisher concedes this point:

...I should note that, while the narrative paradigm provides a radical democratic ground for social-political critique, it does not deny the legitimacy (the inevitability) of hierarchy. History records no community, uncivilized or civilized,

³¹ Latin: *fidelitatem*, "faithfulness, adherence," from *fidelis*, "faithful," from *fides*, "faith".

without key story-makers/story-tellers, whether sanctioned by God, a ‘gift,’ heritage, power, intelligence, or election (9).

On the other hand, Fisher also takes care to note that the people within these communities still retain a rational basis by which they evaluate the warrant for and accuracy of the claims made on their behalf. He further concedes that the people, in their assessment of such claims, may still err in that assessment. The form of hierarchy that the narrative paradigm stands against, then, is the sort in which the elite class abuses its power as a means to numb, blind and enslave the masses to the mindless master of technology (9).

Lewis, for his part, invokes intelligible syllogisms through two interpretative agents: the mechanism of cognitive reasoning independent of any scriptural source, followed by deductions from biblical principles. The mind behind both—Lewis’ *De Ontos*—is established in theistic hierarchy, placing a Trinitarian tripersonal God as the central and supreme agent, by virtue of whose existence (based on the evidences discovered by the two processes above) we may come to know a thing truly. God becomes Lewis’ authority, thus satisfying Fisher’s demand that the narrative paradigm function within a hierarchy whose elite protagonist is non-malicious toward its subordinate entities.

God and the Elephant

Let us finally examine what one of the more popular models of “faith” isolated from its ontological roots demonstrates about God as authority with respect to humans in our finitude and how far it wanders from Lewis’ assertions. One such allegory about God as an elephant is often told along these lines:

There is an elephant that represents Truth. People approach the elephant blindfolded trying to discern what Truth is. The first blind person finds the tail.

“Ah-hah!” exclaims the first person. “An elephant is like a rope.” The second person comes and finds the leg and says, “No, an elephant is like a tree.” The third finds the nose and says, “No, an elephant is like a hose.” The fourth finds the side and says, “No, an elephant is like a wall.” They all have two choices: They may disagree, fight and kill each other over their own personal experiences with Truth, or they may respect each others’ faith journeys and live in peace. We need to be humble enough to accept that other peoples’ experiences are just as valid as ours and we ought not say that any one experience with truth is more legitimate than the others. I must thus respect the faiths of the Muslim, the Buddhist, the Hindu, etc. and respect their faith journeys, because all truth is one truth.

This message is extremely powerful. As noted, this understanding is believed to solve the problems of dependence on evidence by introducing the equal legitimacy of almost all views. Most Christians operating with a definition of faith that is tied to truth claims may look foolish to say, “My truth is the *right* truth,” at which point others turn and point fingers at the Christian, declaring, “You are the cause of the world’s problems for thinking that your truth is the only way.”

But there is a problem buried deep within the assumptions of the allegory’s narrative. There is this temptation, for lack of understanding, to categorize all faiths in this context as making different though equal claims about the same Truth/God. The analogy’s dilemma, however, is the elephant’s passivity; *it does not speak*. The blindfolded individuals seeking Truth are left to their own devices, which itself assumes a particular vision of God that is qualitatively different than the Muslim’s *and* the Christian’s, at which point the teller of this parable renders

him or herself just another blindfolded elephant-feeler, equally fallible in its assumptions of God's nature.

In the end, redefining and reasserting truth claims as preeminent within a narrative construct with respect to "faith" and "fidelity" offer a unique opportunity to allow the foot of scholarly pursuit to firmly replant itself in meaningful discourse to advance the equality of all persons. It is the development and expansion of a common understanding of principles grounded in "faith" and "fidelity" that approach a fuller awareness of the diversity of narratives. There was a time that recognized the hierarchical nature of ideas complemented by an equality of people. Today, we find ourselves in danger of reversing this epistemological Eden by constructing an equality of ideas that renders a hierarchy of people. Lewis reminds us that all ideas are not created equally, are not of equal value and that the truth or falsehood of a statement will invariably lead their respective advocates in different directions. Most importantly, he reiterates that this holds true not only for worldly disciplines, but equally so in the domain of faith:

Remember that religion involves a series of statements about facts, which must be either true or false. If they are true, one set of conclusions will follow about the right sailing of the human fleet: if they are false, quite a different set (74).

He reminds us further in his work *The Great Divorce* that the inquisitive nature of human beings is delineated for the purpose of seeking and discovering that truth:

"Well," says the ghostly ex-cleric, "really, you know, I am not aware of a thirst for some ready-made truth which puts an end to intellectual activity in the way you seem to be describing. Will it leave me the free play of Mind, Dick? I must insist on that, you know."

"You have gone far wrong," Dick replies, "Thirst was made for water; inquiry for truth. What you now call the free play of inquiry has neither more nor less to do with the ends for which intelligence was given you than masturbation has to do with marriage" (44).

If the primary function of scholarly inquiry is to discover truth, and religion makes statements which ought to be held accountable to the standard of truth, then it follows that we ought to investigate theological claims with the same criteria for establishing truth in other discourses, including logical consistency, empirical adequacy and experiential relevance (Zacharias 123).

We must finally observe the intrinsic role of narrative in the academic exploration of truth, as each contention is intrinsically tied to an agent that stands behind that contention. What stands behind each agent is a narrative. Faith, far from abandoning its narrative's rational fidelity, is the tale of a synthesis of these two paradigms that, for Lewis, leaves room for little else.

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Student Government Association 2008-Present

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Assisted the Circle C Youth Ranch in renovating their school and aided the Miami Rescue Mission in preparing care packages for the homeless

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Organized, led and taught free chess lessons to elementary school children

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University of North Texas, Denton, TX

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- Presented paper entitled “Rhetoric and Truth: Hitler and a Reexamination of Aristotelian *Ethos*.”

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