

“All Find What They Truly Seek”: C. S. Lewis, Latter-day Saints, and the Virtuous Unbeliever

Blair Dee Hodges

R[oman] C[atholic]’s keep on writing to tell me (like you) that it is a pity that “knowing so much” I shd. be held back from knowing so much more!” –C. S. Lewis¹

We should gather all the good and true principles in the world and treasure them up, or we shall not come out true “Mormons.” –Joseph Smith²

The apologetic works of Clive Staples (“Jack”) Lewis have transcended denominational boundaries to reach an impressively diverse Christian audience. From the beginning of his apologetic career in the mid-1930s, Lewis received letters from Catholics, Evangelicals, Presbyterians, and other Christians thanking him for his inspiring words. Fans from various Christian traditions who felt a certain kinship with Lewis often expressed regret or bewilderment about his allegiance to the Anglican Church. A desire to claim Lewis as a representative of one’s own beliefs still tempts many Christians. Richard Ostling, a former *Time* magazine religion editor, has mentioned the “extraordinary” interest in Lewis among members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who seem to believe Lewis is “almost a crypto-Mormon.” According to Ostling, this phenomenon “shows the extraordinary

acceptability and the usefulness of C. S. Lewis, because of course most of what he says is perfectly acceptable to Mormons.”³

My approach to Lewis and Latter-day Saints differs from previous approaches. Rather than selecting context-less proof-texts which resonate with Latter-day Saints, I will explore how Lewis’s experiences impacted his beliefs regarding conversion.⁴ Lewis’s personal transition from atheism to Christianity led him to understand conversion as a process of coming home to God by embracing good and rejecting evil. For Lewis and Latter-day Saints alike, beliefs from an array of religions or philosophical traditions can be seen as signposts pointing to higher truths on the road home. Thus, part of Lewis’s broad appeal results from an ecumenical view of other religions that is similar to (though looser than) that of many Latter-day Saints.

This ecumenical view did not overshadow what Lewis saw as the fundamental necessity of faith in Jesus Christ, which raises the salient question: If Jesus Christ is the only name by which one can receive salvation, what is the fate of good people who have never heard, or had faith, in that name? Lewis held out hope for those not converted to Christianity during mortality, whom he referred to as “virtuous unbelievers” (2:256, 499). Moreover, because Lewis never came close to joining the LDS Church, he raises interesting questions for Latter-day Saints who believe one must accept “the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (D&C 20:9). To Latter-day Saints, Lewis is a believer—though a virtuous *unbeliever* in the “fulness of the gospel.” Often quoted by LDS authors, teachers, and General Authorities, Lewis is a representative recipient of God’s inspiration which Mormons believe can (and does) exist apart from official LDS channels. Further, he presents an interesting case study regarding the eternal status of non-LDS inspired voices.

Theology loosely understood involves the way believers conceptualize and make sense of their experiences in the world, their experiences with God, and their expected future experiences. Understanding Lewis’s place within the LDS theology of salvation helps clarify the soteriological possibilities extended by Latter-day Saint theology to those who, like Lewis, end their lives outside of Mormonism. Non-Mormons may be surprised to learn that Latter-day Saints do not expect to be the only residents in heaven. Further, because LDS theological positions have not been uni-

form or static, Latter-day Saints themselves may be surprised at the extent of these possibilities for non-Mormons.

Much of my analysis is drawn from Lewis's collected letters rather than from his other published works. I hope to include much fresh material that has remained untapped—material about the context of Lewis's conversion and its influence on his unsystematic theology. From the first letter in which seven-year-old Lewis described the "adventure" of his pet canary Peter being chased by a cat (1:2–3) to the final letter more than fifty years later when sixty-four-year-old Lewis thanked a young boy for telling him how much he enjoyed his books (3:1483–84), Lewis's letters trace his education, friendships, family life, inter-faith dialogue, and academic activities. He was a prolific correspondent; his letters fill three thick volumes and provide great insight into Lewis's philosophical and theological thought.

Occasionally, Lewis seems to turn around and catch you reading over his shoulder. For example, in earlier letters to lifelong friend Arthur Greeves, he said that their correspondence would make a "jolly interesting book" and a "great diversion" for future readers (1:173, 146). This prediction proved true, but it must have made Arthur nervous. Lewis later reassured him that anyone taking time to forage through their "tawdry nonsense" would be an "ill-bred cad" whose opinions they wouldn't care about anyway (1:274). Lewis also recognized the potential for misquotation and proof-texting. Some critics of Lewis have used isolated quotes from various letters to claim he never gave up his "unholy fascination with pagan gods," or that he hated children, or that he was something of a pervert.⁵ Careful evaluation of the letters is required because readers should not assume his letters, which were not written as a systematic whole, unequivocally give the clearest picture of Lewis's thought.⁶ Lewis seems to warn later readers: "A heavy responsibility rests on those who forage through a dead man's correspondence and publish it indiscriminately. In those books of [Sir Walter] Raleigh's we find . . . letters like 'a glass of good champagne' side by side with mere squibs thrown off in high spirits or mere grumbles written when he was liverish."⁷

I appreciate that heavy responsibility.⁸ First, I discuss a few aspects of Lewis's journey to Christianity and argue that his personal experiences along that path contributed significantly to his

sympathetic understanding of other religious traditions and philosophies. The next section documents Lewis's views that conversion was a process, followed by the specific problem of the "virtuous unbeliever." The article concludes with the paradoxical problem that Lewis, in Mormon terms, is himself a "virtuous unbeliever." I explore the potential eternal status of inspired non-LDS post-Restoration voices.

Journey to Christianity

In retrospect, Lewis summarized his religious journey as going "from materialism to idealism . . . to pantheism . . . to theism to Christianity."⁹ His early materialism contained a good deal of contempt for religion. "You ask me my religious views," seventeen-year-old Lewis responded to Arthur Greeves on October 12, 1916. "You know, I think, that I believe in no religion. There is absolutely no proof for any of them, and from a philosophical standpoint Christianity is not even the best. All religions, that is, all mythologies to give them their proper name are merely man's own invention. . . . Superstition of course in every age has held the common people, but in every age the educated and thinking ones have stood outside it, though usually outwardly conceding to it for convenience" (1:230–31). Almost fifteen years later on October 1, 1931, he confessed, also to Arthur: "How deep I am just now beginning to see: for I have just passed on from believing in God to definitely believing in Christ—in Christianity" (1:974). Lewis's gradual conversion heavily influenced his later religious views, concerns, and apologetic method.

Religious conversion is a complex and delicate issue.¹⁰ Susan Kwirecki has described conversion as development: a "gradual unfolding . . . something vague or indistinct becom[ing] definite or articulated." This unfolding occurs in the "thought, emotion, [or] will—directed towards whatever the individual takes to be divine or ultimately significant."¹¹ Though I believe this description is accurate for Lewis's own conversion, he would have disliked the ponderous vocabulary: "Any fool can write *learned* language," he wrote. "The vernacular is the real test. If you can't turn your faith into it, then either you don't understand it or you don't believe it" (3:1,007; emphasis his). Because of his own conversion experience, Lewis was sympathetic to seeing conversion as a pro-

cess rather than an event. Perhaps Lewis would have preferred this description from one of his favorite theologians, Scottish minister George MacDonald: “To give us the spiritual gift we desire, God may have to begin [to work] far back in our spirit, in regions unknown to us. . . . For our consciousness is to . . . our being . . . as the flame of the volcano to the world-gulf whence it issues: in the gulf of our unknown being God works behind our consciousness. With his holy influence . . . he may be approaching our consciousness from behind, coming forward through regions of our darkness into our light, long before we begin to be aware that he is answering our request.”¹²

This is the process Lewis described in his 1955 autobiography, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Life* (3:645). In his letters Lewis referred to the book as “SBJ,” and one friend teased that he planned to write a companion volume for Lewis using the same initials; he’d call it “Suppressed By Jack” (3:750). Lewis tended to emphasize different aspects of his loss and rediscovery of faith, depending on the audience. Bits of what influenced his conversion are strewn like bread crumbs throughout the personal letters, allowing later birds to follow the trail in further detail.

Lewis reports intellectually becoming an atheist around age fourteen when he saw how modern editors of Latin and Greek poets “always assumed that the ancient [pagan] religion was in pure error. Hence . . . came the obvious question ‘Why shouldn’t ours [Christianity] be equally false?’” (2:702). Lewis “pretended to believe for fear of my elders,” but this initial doubt grew to include problems with the efficacy of prayer and the problem of theodicy made acute by the death of his mother when he was nine years old. It was further cemented by a “‘Rationalist’ tutor,” W. T. (“the Great Knock”) Kirkpatrick, whom Lewis called the only “pure agnostic” he had ever met and whom he credited with teaching him “to think” (2:444, 702). Lewis’s youthful letters are often egotistic and antagonistic toward religion, though he was careful to maintain a facade of belief under certain circumstances.¹³ Contrast his formal letters to his father (then unaware of his atheism) with letters to Arthur, whom he often poked in the religious eye. He quoted the Bible regularly—to his father as consolation or as advice to “study the lilies of the field” (Matt. 6:28) but to Arthur in

teasing about his “precious Jehovah,” the “old Hebrew thunder spirit” (1:82, 206).¹⁴

Despite such confidence, Lewis began doubting his empirical worldview as he felt a certain other-worldliness encroaching from behind. In 1916 Lewis eagerly wrote to tell Arthur about a “great literary experience.” He had picked up “by hazard” George MacDonald’s “Faerie Romance for Men and Women,” *Phantastes*, and urged: “You simply MUST get this at once” (1:169–70).¹⁵ He would later credit the book with doing him “much good” before his conversion, “when I had no idea what was behind it.” He recommended it to a friend: “This [book] has always made it easier for me to understand how the better elements in mythology can be a real *praeparatio evangelica* [preparation for the gospel] for people who do not yet know whither they are being led” (2:453).¹⁶

Soon after recommending *Phantastes* to Arthur, Lewis wrote to tell him of another “great find”: an “increasing tendency towards philosophy,” which he had begun studying at Oxford. “All other questions really seem irrelevant till its [questions] are solved. I think you should take it up—its probings would at least save you from the intellectual stagnation that usually awaits a man who has found complete satisfaction in some traditional religious system.” He was impressed by alternate views of morality—for example, that morals can be regarded “as a kind of art . . . to be pursued for its own beauty” (1:341–43).¹⁷ His contempt for “religious systems” was tempered by a fellow student named Leo Baker. One late-night conversation in 1920 turned to “shadowy subjects—ghosts and spirits and Gods.” Baker described “seeing things” as a child, which led him to dabble in hypnotism and automatic writing. He’d given it up, but now “‘things’ were coming back of their own accord.” Lewis became “dazed and drunk in all he said.” Everything seemed “incredibly real.” The conversation left Lewis with a splitting headache. He felt “tired and nervous and pulled to pieces.” He concluded, “Perhaps [Baker] is a bit mad” (1:473). A few months later, Lewis wrote Baker to report an interesting development. Studying philosophy had led him to “postulate some sort of God as the least objectionable theory” accounting for the existence of matter. “But of course,” he hedged, “we know nothing.” Jettisoning his confident atheism, he said, “I have no business to

object to the universe as long as I have nothing to offer myself—and in that respect we are all bankrupt” (1:509).¹⁸

Increasingly enamored with a spiritual side of life, though now agnostic on the question of God, Lewis continued discussing religion with Baker—at one point revisiting his former problems with petitionary prayer.¹⁹ He described the conversation to his brother Warren: “[I told Baker] the trouble about God is that he is like a person who never acknowledges one’s letters and so, in time, one comes to the conclusion either that he does not exist or that you have got the address wrong.” He admitted that it was “of great moment” whether God was really there or not, “but what was the use of going on dispatching fervent messages—say to Edinburgh—if they all came back through the dead letter office. . . . His cryptic reply was that it would be almost worth going to Edinburgh to find out” (1:555). This possibility intrigued Lewis as he felt an ever-increasing “Something Else” mysteriously leaking into his life. Still, he doubted: “Whatever else the human race was made for, it at least was not made to know” (1:640).

Early in 1923 when he was twenty-four, Lewis was living with Janie King Moore, the mother of a deceased friend. Moore’s brother, John Askins, a psychologist, came to visit. He had dabbled in spiritualism and, during his visit, experienced an “attack of war neurasthenia” which Lewis described to Arthur: “[Askins] endured awful tortures. . . . [H]e had horrible maniacal fits—had to be held down” by Lewis and Mrs. Moore for several nights in a row. He “had the delusion he was going to Hell.” Lewis advised Arthur to “keep clear of introspection, of brooding, of spiritualism, of everything eccentric. Keep to work and sanity and open air—to the cheerful and matter of fact side of things. We hold our mental health by a thread” (1:605). In *Surprised by Joy* he cites this experience as one reason for “a retreat, almost a panic-stricken flight, from all that sort of romanticism which had hitherto been the chief concern of my life” (1:606 note 6). Shortly after this experience Lewis wrote his father to explain his related flight from the “solitude” of philosophy to English:

I am glad of the change. I have come to think that if I had the mind, I have not the brain and nerves for a life of pure philosophy. A continued search among the abstract roots of things, a perpetual questioning of all that plain men take for granted, a chewing the cud for fifty

years over inevitable ignorance and a constant frontier watch on the little tidy lighted conventional world of science and daily life—is this the best life for temperaments such as ours? Is it the way of health or even of sanity? There is a certain type of man, bull necked and self satisfied in his “pot bellied equanimity” who urgently needs that bleak and questioning atmosphere. But what is a tonic to the Saxon may be a debauch to us Celts. . . . I am not condemning philosophy. Indeed in turning from it to literary history and criticism, I am conscious of a descent: and if the air on the heights did not suit me, still I have brought back something of value. It will be a comfort to me all my life to know that the scientist and the materialist have not the last word: that Darwin and Spencer undermining ancestral beliefs stand themselves on a foundation of sand; of gigantic assumptions and irreconcilable contradictions an inch below the surface. It leaves the whole thing rich in possibilities: and if it dashes the shallow optimism it does the same for the shallow pessimisms. But having once seen all this “darkness”, a darkness full of promise, it is perhaps best to shut the trap door and come back to ordinary life: unless you are one of the really great who can see into it a little way—and I was not. (1:648–49)²⁰

Lewis was “hideously shocked”²¹ in 1923 when two of his closest friends converted to Anthroposophy, a spiritualist-materialist system involving concepts of reincarnation and karma.²² Their conversion initiated what Lewis called “the Great War” (3:1,596–1,645) between him and Owen Barfield.²³ Their prolonged debate destroyed any remaining faith in what he called materialism, and years later he described the “kindly feeling” he had toward Anthroposophy for having “left the way open for Christianity” (3:198–99). Barfield had “failed to convert me to his own views . . . but his attack on my own presuppositions smashed the ordinary pseudo-‘scientific’ world-picture forever,” Lewis wrote (2:702–3). Looking back, Lewis attributed his appreciation and tolerance for non-Christian systems as being potential stepping stones to the ultimate truths of Christianity. He had developed strong reservations about the overriding (and in his view, overconfident) intellectual mood of his time.²⁴ His distaste for spiritualism was tempered by his skepticism of empiricism.

Always the bookworm, Lewis spent time with the plays of Euripides, Alexander’s *Space, Time, and Deity*, G. K. Chesterton’s *The Everlasting Man*,²⁵ and other works. Then in 1926, Lewis received another shock: “The hardest boiled of all the atheists I ever knew

sat in my room on the other side of the fire and remarked that the evidence for the historicity of the Gospels was surprisingly good. 'Rum thing,' he went on. 'All that stuff of Frazer's about the Dying God. Rum thing. It almost looks as if it really happened once.'" Lewis felt that, if this man was not "safe," what could he say for his own mental defenses?²⁶

By 1929 the leak of "Something Else" was becoming a flow. Lewis kicked off one of his many walking tours with friends by visiting Salisbury Cathedral where they attended evensong to hear the reading of psalms. He was very unimpressed by the "four fat and spongy clergymen [who] scampered and simpered through the job in a way that really disgusted me. It is perhaps too much to expect any intense spiritual quality in the reading of men who have to do it every day (and yet why are they in the church if the thing means so little to them as that?) . . . I know I should be ashamed to read out a recipe as abominably as they read out the psalms" (1:795).²⁷

Lewis expected something more sincere and intimate in religious experience than he felt as he listened to this reading of the psalms. This concern for sincerity pervades his later apologetic approach and his understanding of the process of conversion. He had been feeling something—God creeping up behind him—but the feeling did not come and go merely as a verse of scripture was read or as he attended a religious service. Would these clergymen understand that feeling?²⁸ Though the exact date is unknown, it was during Trinity Term (from the end of April to the middle of June) in 1929 that Lewis discovered that he finally believed in God: "You must picture me alone in that room . . . night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. . . . I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England."²⁹

"Terrible things are happening to me," he wrote to Barfield in February 1930. "The 'Spirit' . . . is showing an alarming tendency to become much more personal and is taking the offensive, and behaving just like God. You'd better come on Monday at the latest or I may have entered a monastery" (1:882–83). He wrote Arthur at the end of January 1930 to tell him about the "beauties of com-

ing . . . to an attempt at religion,” which included the many books on God he now read with interest. “One finds oneself on the main road with all humanity, and can compare notes with an endless succession of previous travelers. It is emphatically coming home: as Chaucer says ‘Returneth home from worldly vanitee’” (1:872–73). The changes kept coming; a few weeks later, he wrote to tell another friend that his outlook was now “definitely religious. It is not precisely Christianity, tho’ it may turn out that way in the end. . . . [W]hereas once I would have said ‘Shall I adopt Christianity’, I now wait to see whether it will adopt me” (1:887).

It adopted him “one sunny morning” in September 1931 while riding to Bedfordshire’s Whipsnade Zoo in the sidecar of his brother’s motorbike: “When we set out I did not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and when we reached the zoo I did. Yet I had not exactly spent the journey in thought. Nor in great emotion. . . . It was more like when a man, after a long sleep, still lying motionless in bed, becomes aware that he is now awake” (1:972).³⁰

Lewis began writing about his conversion. His first published fictional work on the subject was *The Pilgrim’s Regress* (1933), a Bunyan-esque portrait of “John” traveling through a philosophical landscape before arriving at Christianity. Lewis used his own conversion to inform John’s travels; when one reader asked Lewis why the book seemed to end so abruptly, he replied: “The reason why John’s return journey is so simple in the book is that I hadn’t then begun traveling it and knew v. little about it—in fact ‘ignorance, Madam, sheer ignorance’” (2:492).³¹ His understanding of Christianity continued to grow. Soon he was pleased to experience yet another of his “delightful *vernal* periods when doctrines that have hitherto been only buried seeds begin actually to come up—like snowdrops or crocuses” (2:493; emphasis his). The doctrines, the beliefs, were coming to life in him. He often pointed out that as a new Christian he still had much to learn. For the rest of his life, he referred to himself as an “amateur theologian” and resisted systematizing his own thoughts.³² Still, he dug right in, looking for answers, encouraging other believers, writing apologetics, and making personal (and often frustrating) efforts to become more Christlike. The path he traveled into Christianity had a profound impact on the rest of his journey.

Lewis's outlook should strike a responsive chord with Latter-day Saints who are admonished to seek "anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy" (Thirteenth Article of Faith), even in other religions. Lewis's experience-based understanding of religious conversion resonates strongly with Mormon views of the process.

Conversion as a Process

Shortly after his conversion, Lewis remained reluctant to lay out any one specific path for discovering God given his own roundabout way. He believed God was very involved in the process, though He would not compel one to believe in Him through proof.³³ When author Sheldon Vanauken wrote Lewis about his own feeling of reluctant attraction to religion, Lewis teased: "I think you are already in the meshes of the net! The Holy Spirit is after you. I doubt if you'll get away!" (3:75-76)³⁴ Lewis was "chary" of defining the steps of religious conversion too narrowly because the individual is not the only one involved in the process; God plays a fundamental role in drawing people to Him without coercion. Thus, mapping out an "indispensable norm (or syllabus!) for all Christians" would be a mistake. "I think the ways in which God saves us are probably infinitely various," he wrote. "Anything which sets [the patient] saying 'Now . . . Stage II ought to be coming along . . . is this it?' I think bad and likely to lead some to presumption and others to despair. We must leave God to dress the wound and not keep on taking peeps under the bandage for ourselves" (2:914).

Was one saved by God's grace alone without any personal effort? Understanding that some Christians believe Paul made that argument, Lewis warned one questioner against "us[ing] an Apostle's teaching to contradict that of Our Lord's," which urged believers to do good works. Nevertheless, any Christian, Lewis said, "looking back on his own conversion must feel—and I am sure the feeling is in some sense true—'It is not *I* who have done this. I did not choose Christ: He chose me. It is all free grace, wh. I have done nothing to earn.'" Lewis's conversion was not a progressive struggle of his own efforts to achieve certainty about Christianity, but the grace of God filling his heart with surprising joy. It might feel natural to understand that feeling as a universal rule that all

people should expect such an experience, but that is “exactly what we must not do,” Lewis continued. He could not find a completely convincing formula regarding “the inter-relation between God’s omnipotence and Man’s freedom,” believing such a formula is beyond human reason. But Lewis added that we can be “quite sure that every kind act . . . will be accepted by Christ. Yet, equally, we all do feel sure that all the good in us comes from Grace. We have to leave it at that” (3:354–55).³⁵

Reflecting on his own conversion, Lewis concluded that any number of beliefs could be a door in, or a door out—a path toward, or away from the truth. In 1934 Paul Elmer More published *The Sceptical Approach to Religion*³⁶ as an effort to reconcile faith and reason. Lewis was impressed by the book and wrote to congratulate More but also to raise a question countering More’s disapproval of Idealism.³⁷ More would understand Lewis’s lenience for idealism, Lewis insisted, had More traveled the same route as Lewis “from materialism to idealism . . . to pantheism . . . to theism to Christianity.” It was natural they should see things differently:

A field which seems a high place to one ascending the mountain, seems almost part of the valley to one descending.³⁸ Idealism is suspect to you as a door *out* of Christianity: for me it was the door *in*. Clearly a door, *ex vi termini* [by the force of the term] has this double aspect. I do not think I should be disrespectful in urging to you remember the “door *in*” aspect—to remember that in shutting the door to keep the faithful in, as you do so very firmly, you are inevitably, by the same act, shutting out those who might return. (2:145)³⁹

Lewis said such tolerance resulted from “mere experience.” The door into Christianity would “always be dear” to him, though he thanked More for reminding him of the “door out” aspect which he had been overlooking (2:145–46).⁴⁰ Lewis uses similar metaphors to make the same point. For example, while critiquing Sartre, Buber, and Tillich, Lewis noted that “the road into the city [of God] and the road out of it are usually the same road: it all depends which direction one travels in!” (3:1,238) Why disparage the path when there were valuable lessons to be learned by the way? Lewis expressed this point to his friend Dom Bede Griffiths, who had experienced a similar journey from doubt to faith, although Griffiths wound up as a Catholic priest. He had corresponded with Lewis throughout their respective journeys.⁴¹ “And

the result of the arrival is certainly not any ingratitude or contempt to the various signposts or hostelries that helped on the journey” (2:133). Lewis, like More and Griffiths, had found truth in surprising places and retained gratitude for their guiding signposts long after his conversion to Christianity.

Looking for truth wherever it can be found has been emphasized as a religious duty for Latter-day Saints who view themselves as taking part in a “restitution of all things” (Acts 3:21). However, Joseph Smith’s 1820 visitation from God and Christ included the troubling declaration that Christ told him to join none of the existing churches because their creeds were “an abomination” and their professors “corrupt” (JS—History 1:19).⁴² Condemnation of an apostate Christendom is found in each of Joseph’s eight accounts of his vision. In the 1832 (earliest) version, the Lord tells Joseph that “the world lieth in sin and at this time and none doeth good no not one they have turned asside from the gospel and keep not <my> commandments[.]”⁴³ This declaration, however, was preceded by a personal moment described in only two of Joseph’s known accounts. The first words Joseph said he heard from the Lord were “Joseph <my son> *thy sins are forgiven thee. go thy <way> walk in my statutes and keep my commandments behold I am the Lord of glory I was crucified for the world that all those who believe on my name may have Eternal life.*”⁴⁴ This detail from the earliest account of the First Vision tempers descriptions of apostasy in the later accounts.⁴⁵ Joseph’s words about “abominable creeds” and “corrupt professors” should be considered in the light of these and other moderating statements. Church President Gordon B. Hinckley’s invitation for all non-Mormons to “bring all the good that you have and let us see if we can add to it” was not a recent development.⁴⁶ It was Joseph Smith who said, “We don’t ask people to throw away any good they have got; we only ask them to come and get more.”⁴⁷ “Truth” and “goodness” appear in relation, and there are truths to be found in many traditions.⁴⁸

LDS philosopher David Paulsen argues that, while God directs the ongoing restoration, He expects “concurrent human initiative—not only in seeking and receiving direct revelation from God, but also in seeking, recognizing, and appropriating ‘truths’ from others, wherever found.”⁴⁹ Joseph’s First Vision helps demarcate the acceptable boundaries for Latter-day Saints with its

emphasis on Christ's mission to save the entire world rather than a few elect, the significance of authority, and the importance of sincerity in Christian behavior. A sincere and good person can be acceptable to God—even without authority or “orthodox” understanding—Joseph Smith and his First Vision serving as a case in point for Latter-day Saints. The vision came before the reception of priesthood authority and without a “true and living Church” yet on the earth (D&C 1:30).

Many of the same soteriological puzzles arose for the newly converted Lewis as did for Joseph Smith. Consider Lewis's answer to the question, “What happens to Jews who are still waiting for the Messiah?” (3:245 note 241). He responded, “I think that every prayer which is sincerely made even to a false god . . . is accepted by the true God and that Christ saves many who do not think they know Him. For He is (dimly) present in the *good* side of the inferior teachers they follow” (3:245; emphasis his).⁵⁰ For such statements, Lewis has been labeled a “dangerous false teacher” by some Christians who believe that Lewis is much too ecumenical.⁵¹ But compare his words to Brigham Young's statement:

I do not believe for one moment that there has been a man or woman upon the face of the earth . . . who has not been enlightened, instructed, and taught by the revelations of Jesus Christ.

What! the ignorant heathen?

Yes, every human being who has possessed a sane mind. . . . No matter what the traditions of their fathers were, those who were honest before the Lord, and acted uprightly, according to the best knowledge they had, will have an opportunity to go into the kingdom of God.⁵²

This is not to say that Lewis or Latter-day Saints preach an “anything goes” religion; there are certain boundaries. Nevertheless, it is difficult to negotiate between being “true to the faith” and the possibility of refusing new truths because they run counter to tradition.⁵³ Moreover, accepting truth from any source any time might create believers who never make a solid commitment. This was the difficulty Lewis saw with attempts to proselyte for Christianity in the East: “Your Hindus certainly sound delightful,” he wrote to a friend who was writing a book on Christian-Hindu dialogue: “But what do they deny? That's always been my trouble with Indians—to find any proposition they wd. pronounce false.

But truth must surely involve exclusions?” (3:704).⁵⁴ Both Lewis and Latter-day Saints have ultimate courts of appeal to help adjudicate what “truths” can be gathered in and what “exclusions” such truths involve. Lewis often fell back upon scripture, Christian tradition, the Early Church Fathers (see, e.g., 2:451), and the common ground between Christian denominations. “We are free to take out of Anthroposophy anything that suits us, provided it does not contradict the Nicene Creed,” he advised one questioner (3:199).⁵⁵ Joseph Smith would have rejected that stopping point: “I cannot believe in any of the creeds of the different denominations, because they all have some things in them I cannot subscribe to, though all of them have some truth. I want to come up into the presence of God, and learn all things; but the creeds set up stakes [limits], and say, ‘Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further’; which I cannot subscribe to.”⁵⁶ Joseph Smith lamented the rigidity of belief that Christian creeds posed: “I have tried for a number of years to get the minds of the Saints prepared to receive the things of God, but we frequently see some of them after suffering all they have for the work of God will fly to peaces like glass as soon as anything Comes that is Contrary to their traditions, they Cannot stand the fire at all.”⁵⁷

Lewis understood this precarious position in his adroit description of the “double task of reconciling and converting”: “The activities are almost opposites, yet must go hand in hand. We have to hurl down false gods and also elicit the peculiar truth preserved in the worship of each” (3:1,300).

Despite Joseph’s dislike of the creeds, he too had limits. He declared that he had received authority directly from God: “No one [else] shall be appointed to receive revelations and commandments” for the Church until God “appoint[s] another in his stead” (D&C 28:2, 7). Lewis would likely have seen such revelations as unnecessary additions to biblical and Christian traditions. Joseph also taught that the path to exaltation required ordinances such as baptism by proper authority (D&C 20:73). Lewis declared such specific requirements superfluous if not too exclusionary. In one letter he advised: “As far as I know any baptism given in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, whoever gives it, is valid. But any instructed parson will tell you for sure” (3:490). His equivocation on authority is interesting in indicating Lewis’s def-

erence to some ordained ministers. Smith revealed new commandments adapted to contemporary circumstances, including the “Word of Wisdom,” which forbade coffee, tea, tobacco, and alcoholic drinks (D&C 89). Lewis, who enjoyed his pint of ale, “strongly object[ed] to the tyrannic [sic] and unscriptural insolence of anything that calls itself a Church and makes tee-totalism a condition of membership” (3:580).⁵⁸

As these examples demonstrate, by appealing to different authorities, Latter-day Saints and Lewis have charted boundaries to prevent borderless relativism. While Latter-day Saints turn to priesthood, prophets, the scriptural canon, and personal revelation, Lewis turned to scripture, tradition, and Christian common ground.⁵⁹ Aside from these differences, Lewis and Latter-day Saints advocate reliance upon the guidance of the Holy Ghost (3:1,540). Despite believing that God wants all people to receive the ultimate truths (for Lewis, “mere Christianity,” for Latter-day Saints, “the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ,” each with different requirements), both leave open the possibility that spiritual experiences and guidance from God occur within different faith traditions. The personal religious experiences of others do not necessarily invalidate one’s own.⁶⁰ A correspondent named William P. Wylie wrote Lewis in 1958 with questions on how to reconcile his personal spiritual experiences with those of non-Christians. Lewis admitted that God could influence many outside of Christianity; such experiences are not always “mere fictions or delusions of individual charlatans or lunatics.” We are not under obligation, Lewis argued, to cast such things aside. They may represent: “(a.) Truths about the spiritual world omitted by Revelation because they are irrelevant to our redemption. (b.) Truths omitted because they are positively dangerous and noxious to us in our present condition. (c.) Real psychic facts of no particular importance (d.) Semi-rationalised—or philosophized—mythology (e.) Diabolical delusions. (f.) Straight quackery for catching flats” (3:928–29).

The Fate of the Virtuous Unbeliever

As Lewis saw it, God may utilize different belief systems to lead His children back to Him. But “even if there are a thousand orders of beneficent being [sic] above us, still, the universe is a cheat unless at the back of them all there is the one God of Chris-

tianity” (2:108). What did Lewis think about those who would not accept that one God? Moreover, what about Latter-day Saints who believe Lewis may have missed his own opportunity to accept the “fulness of the restored gospel”? Some Latter-day Saints might emphasize this selection from the Book of Mormon:

For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors.

. . . I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; for after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed. (Alma 34:32–33)⁶¹

Similarly, Lewis did not necessarily think unbelievers would have an eternal opportunity to turn to God. His 1940s radio broadcasts (later published as *Mere Christianity*) included a sense of urgency: “Now, today, this moment, is our chance to choose the right side. God is holding back to give us that chance. It will not last for ever. We must take it or leave it.”⁶² Lewis explained this point elsewhere: “I mean that each individual only has [the chance] for a short time i.e. is only alive on this Earth for a short time” (2:776). Some LDS leaders have spoken against the possibility of a “second chance” at salvation. Elder Bruce R. McConkie listed the idea among his “Seven Deadly Heresies.” After paraphrasing from Alma 34, he declared: “For those who do not have an opportunity in this life, the first chance to gain salvation will come in the spirit world. . . . Those who reject the gospel in this life and then receive it in the spirit world go not to the celestial, but to the terrestrial kingdom.”⁶³ McConkie did not address how mortals are to know what actually constitutes an honest and true “chance” or who has actually received one. Church president Joseph Fielding Smith, McConkie’s father-in-law, expressed a similar view in interesting terms: “All who have not had the *privilege* of repentance and acceptance of the plan of salvation in this life will have that opportunity in the world of spirits. Those who repent there and believe when the message is declared to them are heirs of salvation and exaltation.” Still, he concluded: “It is the duty of all men who hear the gospel to repent. If they reject the gospel when it is declared to them here, then they are damned. The Sav-

ior has said it. If they receive and endure to the end, they shall receive the blessings. Every man has his agency.”⁶⁴

Neither of these works is considered “official doctrine” of the LDS Church. Other LDS leaders have presented slightly more lenient views.⁶⁵ Joseph Smith’s own understanding adapted over time as he received further revelation. The Book of Mormon’s “night of darkness” (Alma 34:33)⁶⁶ was somewhat brightened in 1832 by Smith’s vision of the “three degrees of glory,” presenting a significant departure from a strict heaven/hell dichotomy with graded degrees of celestial, terrestrial, and telestial. This revelation appears to depict virtuous unbelievers as being incapable of reaching the highest (“celestial”) degree of glory. “Terrestrial” inhabitants “are they who died without law; Who received not the testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but afterwards received it. These are they who are honorable men of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men. These are they who receive of his glory, but not of his fulness” (D&C 76:72–76). This revelation may have caused consternation for the Prophet, whose older brother Alvin died before being baptized.⁶⁷ However, in 1836 “the heavens were opened” again to Joseph in the Kirtland Temple. There he “beheld the celestial kingdom of God, and the glory thereof,” whose inhabitants included Adam and Eve, Abraham, Alvin, Joseph’s deceased father, and his still-living mother:

[I] marveled how it was that [Alvin] had obtained an inheritance in that kingdom, seeing that he had departed this life before the Lord had set his hand to gather Israel the second time, and had not been baptized for the remission of sins.

Thus came the voice of the Lord unto me, saying: All who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God;

Also all that shall die henceforth without a knowledge of it, *who would have received it* with all their hearts, shall be heirs of that kingdom;

For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts. (D&C 137:5–7; emphasis mine)⁶⁸

This doctrine seems foreshadowed in the Book of Mormon’s “plan of restoration,” whereby people would be judged by “intent

of heart” and the “law” under which they lived (Alma 41; Moro. 7:6–11).

This doctrine was vividly described in one of Brigham Young’s discourses, which told of one well-meaning—though particularly impatient—missionary:

I recollect . . . sending an Elder to Bristol, to open a door there, and see if anybody would believe. He had a little more than thirty miles to walk; he starts off one morning, and arrives at Bristol; he preached the Gospel to them, and sealed them all up to damnation, and was back next morning. He was just as good a man, too, as we had. It was want of knowledge caused him to do so. I go and preach to the people, and tell them at the end of every sermon, “he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be damned.” I continue preaching there day after day . . . and yet nobody believes my testimony. . . .

“What shall I do in this case, if I am sent to preach there?” you may inquire. You must continue to preach there . . . [I would] continue to plead with them, until they bend their dispositions to the Gospel. Why?

Because I must be patient with them, as the Lord is patient with me; as the Lord is merciful to me, I will be merciful to others; as He continues to be merciful to me, consequently I must continue in long-suffering to be merciful to others—patiently waiting, with all diligence, until the people will believe, and until they are prepared to become heirs to a celestial kingdom, or angels to the devil.⁶⁹

How can Young’s patient God be reconciled with scriptures describing the path to God’s kingdom as so “strait and narrow” that “few there be that find it”? (Matt. 7:14). This particular verse troubled Lewis enough that he brought it up during a weekly gathering of friends (the “Inklings”) to hash through its implications. It resulted in fireworks: “The occasion was a discussion of the most distressing text in the Bible (‘narrow is the way and few they be that find it’) and whether one really could believe in a universe where the majority were damned and also in the goodness of God. [Charles] Wrenn, of course, took the view that it mattered precisely nothing whether it conformed to your ideas of goodness or not” (2:283; see also 2:450–51, 1,008).

When Charles Williams disagreed, Wrenn was upset and “expressed a strong wish to burn Williams, or at least maintained that conversation with Williams enabled him to understand how inquisitors had felt it right to burn people” (2:283).⁷⁰ However,

Lewis concluded that “the general sense of the meeting was in favour of a view on the lines taken in *Pastor Pastorum*—that Our Lord’s replies are never straight answers and never gratify curiosity, and that whatever this one meant its purpose was certainly not statistical.” A decade later the verse still escaped Lewis’s grasp. He wondered: “Dare we gloss the text ‘Strait is the way and few there be that find it’ by adding ‘And that’s why most of you have to be hustled and badgered into it like sheep—and the sheep-dogs have to have pretty sharp teeth too!’ I hope so” (2:1,008).⁷¹

Lewis believed that all who are saved will be “saved by Christ whether His grace comes to us by way of the Natural Law” or through Christianity (3:23).⁷² Aquinas saw natural law as “nothing other than the light of understanding placed in us by God; through it we know what we must do and what we must avoid. God has given this light or law at the creation.”⁷³ Latter-day Saints have a similar concept in the “Light of Christ” which is “given to every man, that he may know good from evil” (Moro. 7:16; see also Alma 12:9–11).⁷⁴ In order to separate the true from the false manifestations, proper living will increase one’s perception and possession of “light.” Truth is measured on a scale from darkness to light which can grow “brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (D&C 50:24; Prov. 4:18) through obedience, regardless of initial denomination or belief, and regardless of where various truths originated, or, as Lewis wrote to a recent Christian convert: “One can begin to try to be a disciple before one is a professed theologian. In fact they tell us, don’t they, that in these matters to act on the light one has is almost the only way to more light” (3:1,540). The key for conversion is not simply arriving at a correct understanding of the nature of God or agreeing on various other theological points. The key for what Lewis called the “virtuous unbeliever”⁷⁵ is *virtue*.

“Seriously,” Lewis wrote, “I don’t pretend to have any information on the fate of the virtuous unbeliever. I don’t suppose this question provided the solitary exception to the principle that actions on a false hypothesis lead to some less satisfactory result than actions on a true. That’s as far as I would go—beyond feeling that the believer is playing for higher stakes and incurring danger of something really nasty” (2:256).⁷⁶ He had wondered what “Christ’s descending into Hell and preaching to the dead” indicated;⁷⁷ and

when directly asked if people could receive “another chance after death” to accept the gospel, he hedged by referring the questioner to the views of a friend (Charles Williams) on purgatory. “Of course,” he added, “our anxiety about unbelievers is most usefully employed when it leads us not to speculation but to earnest prayer for them and the attempt to be in our own lives such good advertisements for Christianity as will make it attractive” (3:245–46).⁷⁸ Lewis did not believe the Bible was specific enough for him to take a definite stance on the issue: “I don’t think we know the details,” he wrote, “we must just stick to the view that (a.) All justice and mercy will be done, (b) But that nevertheless it is our duty to do all we can to convert unbelievers” (3:163).⁷⁹

Borrowing from the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25), Lewis privileged orthopraxy over orthodoxy in his NARNIA series. At the end of *The Last Battle*, Emeth finds himself in the heavenly Narnia standing before Aslan. He feels out of place and ashamed, believing he had worshipped a false god, Tash, all his life:

“The Glorious One,” [Emeth] said, “bent down his golden head and touched my forehead with his tongue and said, Son, thou art welcome. But I said, Alas, Lord, I am no son of thine but the servant of Tash. He answered, Child, all the service thou has done to Tash, I account as service done to me. . . . Dost thou understand, Child? I said, Lord, thou knowest how much I understand. But I said also (for the truth constrained me), Yet I have been seeking Tash all my days. Beloved, said the Glorious One, unless thy desire had been for me thou shouldst not have sought so long and so truly. For all find what they truly seek.”⁸⁰

Latter-day Saints similarly put more emphasis on what humans have become as a result of God’s grace, combined with the individual’s actions, more than what humans have intellectually assented to or believed in creedal declaration.⁸¹ Some Christians have labeled such beliefs “damnable heresies.”⁸² Others claim that such believers, including Latter-day Saints, merit eternal damnation because they disobey the first of Christ’s two great commandments by loving a “false” god. Claims by some counter-cult movements that Latter-day Saints worship a “different Jesus” are constructed largely on ontological foundations; that is, on LDS rejection of post-biblical creeds regarding the nature of

God.⁸³ However, there can be little doubt about the devotional direction of the *second* of the two great commandments: “love thy neighbor as thyself.” The Bible seems to depict obedience to the second as necessarily reflecting back on the first, a concept depicted in the parable of the sheep and the goats: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matt. 25:40).⁸⁴ Loving one’s neighbor is like loving God. Lewis believed this parable “suggests that [virtuous unbelievers] have a very pleasant surprise coming to them.”⁸⁵ The way a person fulfills these two great commandments plays an important part in God’s final judgment of human souls, be they Latter-day Saint, Anglican, Buddhist, agnostic, or otherwise.

This ecumenical soteriology has carried through from Joseph Smith’s revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants to more recent LDS general conference addresses from members of the Quorum of the Twelve. Elder Dallin H. Oaks has urged Latter-day Saints to “never give up hope and loving associations with family members and friends whose fine qualities evidence their progress toward what a loving Father would have them become. . . . We should never give up on loved ones who now seem to be making many wrong choices.”⁸⁶ Rather than “judging and condemning” others not of one’s own faith without mercy, as “one portion of the human race” does, Joseph Smith said “the Great Parent of the universe looks upon the whole of the human family with a fatherly care and paternal regard; He views them as His offspring, and without any of those contracted feelings that influence the children of men.”⁸⁷ Citing Christ’s parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16), Oaks emphasized that all workers, those who worked all day, half the day, and part of the day, received the same wage. One lesson from this parable is “that the Master’s reward in the Final Judgment will not be based on how long we have labored in the vineyard,” which Oaks likened to belonging to and participating in the LDS Church:

We do not obtain our heavenly reward by punching a time clock. What is essential is that our labors in the workplace of the Lord have caused us to *become* something. For some of us, this requires a longer time than for others. What is important in the end is what we have become by our labors. Many who come in the eleventh hour have been refined and prepared by the Lord in ways other than

formal employment in the vineyard. . . . [T]hese workers are in the same state of development and qualified to receive the same reward as those who have labored long in the vineyard.⁸⁸

Again, as with Lewis, the emphasis is on orthopraxy.

Lewis as a “Virtuous Unbeliever”

From an LDS standpoint, Lewis himself is viewed as a virtuous unbeliever since he was not baptized by the authority of the LDS Church. At the same time, his labors in God’s vineyard of the world have been recognized and enjoyed by many Latter-day Saints who believe that inspired words can come from those of different faith traditions.⁸⁹ Many Latter-day Saints would likely include Lewis in Oaks’s description of unbaptized workers who “are like the prepared dry mix to which it is only necessary to ‘add water’—the perfecting ordinance of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. With that addition—even in the eleventh hour—these workers are in the same state of development and qualified to receive the same reward as those who have labored long in the vineyard.”⁹⁰

In the LDS view, exaltation is not out of reach for an individual like Lewis because the “eleventh hour” does not necessarily end at death.⁹¹ The “fulness of the gospel” is being preached to the dead in the spirit world (D&C 124:29–39) and required ordinances like baptism can be administered by living proxies (D&C 138) on behalf of the deceased.⁹² Latter-day Saints believe that individuals in the spirit world choose to accept or reject proxy ordinances performed on their behalf, thus preserving their agency.⁹³ This doctrine mercifully expands possibilities for the virtuous unbeliever while keeping the Christian conditions ultimately the same.⁹⁴ Latter-day Saints balance the necessity of Jesus Christ, the meaningful free will of humans, and the mercy and justice of God by recognizing that ultimately, in this life or after death, every person can choose to “become one” in Christ.

As described in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, the actions and choices of virtuous unbelievers in their daily lives play a role in their ultimate destiny. God is teaching His children the lessons they need to learn even though they may not have heard specifically of Jesus Christ. For Latter-day Saints, as well as for Lewis, mortal life itself is structured to shape humans as God desires—providing opportunities to accept or reject the light. God

is working with all of His children on their own levels and in various religious traditions to bring them back home. Christianity asserts that through God all men and women can be born again.

In the eternal scheme of things as understood in Mormonism, justice and mercy work together to provide all with an opportunity to receive “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,” to use Paul’s words (Eph. 4:13). Or as Latter-day Saints might say, to receive a “celestial glory” in the hereafter, without leaving the necessary ordinances behind. But the ordinances themselves are only one part of the process of conversion in Latter-day Saint thought, and they can come at the very tail end of the process if need be. For Lewis and Latter-day Saints, conversion is a process that is difficult, if not impossible, to pin down. It is not merely instantaneous, it might not appear on the outside to follow the same set path for everyone, but it is real. “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again,” Christ explained. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (John 3:7–8).

Notes

1. C. S. Lewis, *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis*, 3 vols. edited by Walter Hooper (London: HarperCollins, 2004–6), Vol. 2: *Books, Broadcasts, and the War 1931–1949*, 670. Vol. 1 is subtitled *Family Letters 1905–1931*; Vol. 3 covers *Narnia, Cambridge and Joy 1950–1963*; hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by volume and page. Lewis, a voluminous correspondent, frequently abbreviated common words.

2. Joseph Smith Jr. et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B. H. Roberts, 2d ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1973 printing), 5:517. This particular sentence was added to the reconstruction of a Joseph Smith sermon on July 23, 1843, apparently in the handwriting of Jonathan Grimshaw, who may have been adding material recollected by George A. Smith. Grimshaw first wrote this: “Have the Presbyterians any truth? Embrace it. Have the Baptists, Methodists &c any truth? Embrace that. Get all the good in the world, and then you will come out a pure Mormon.”

3. Douglas LeBlanc, “Mere Mormonism: Journalist Richard Ostling Explores LDS Culture, Theology, and Fans of ‘Crypto-Mormon’ C. S. Lewis,” *Christianity Today*, February 7, 2000, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2000/february7/8.72.html> (accessed April 12, 2010). Ostling

also claims that Lewis “was aware of the LDS claims and totally rejected them,” which I believe is a significant overstatement. See Blair Dee Hodges, “C. S. Lewis: Crypto-Mormon? Part II: Lewis on Latter-day Saints,” <http://www.lifeongoldplates.com/2009/05/c-s-lewis-crypto-mormon-part-ii-lewis.html>, posted May 5, 2009. Ostling and his wife Joan co-wrote *Mormon America: The Power and the Promise* (New York: HarperOne, 1999).

4. Previous approaches have focused mainly on quotations from Lewis that resonate with an LDS audience. Often, Lewis is approved insofar as he is seen to agree with LDS perspectives. For instance, see Marianna Edwards Richardson and Christine Thackeray, *C. S. Lewis: Latter-Day Truths in Narnia* (Springville, Utah: Cedar Fort, 2008); Nathan Jensen, *The Restored Gospel According to C. S. Lewis* (Springville, Utah: Cedar Fort, 1998); Andrew C. Skinner and Robert L. Millet, eds., *C. S. Lewis: The Man and His Message* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1999). Exceptions include Mary Jane Woodger, “The Words of C. S. Lewis as Used by the Leadership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” *Harvest Magazine*, February, 2000 (discontinued), crlamppost.org/woodger.htm (accessed May 3, 2010); Evan Stephenson, “The Last Battle: C. S. Lewis and Mormonism,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 30, no. 4 (Winter 1997): 43–69. The latter focuses mostly on areas of disagreement. My perspective differs only slightly from many of Stephenson’s conclusions.

5. See David Cloud, “C. S. Lewis and Evangelicals Today,” *Way of Life Literature*, August 12, 2008, <http://www.wayoflife.org/files/2e66ace0fe4b2b419ec7f916702eabf6-134.html> (accessed March 15, 2009); Trevor Thompson, “The Pervert, the Whip, and *The Chronicles of Narnia*,” *Simon Magazine*, December 14, 2005, http://www.thesimon.com/magazine/articles/why_are_they_famous/01039_the_pervert_whip_the_chronicles_narnia.html (accessed March 15, 2009). See also A. N. Wilson’s controversial biography, *C. S. Lewis: A Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002) and the reply by George Sayers, Lewis’s pupil and friend, “C. S. Lewis and Adultery,” in *We Remember C. S. Lewis: Essays and Memoirs*, edited by David Graham (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 97–103.

6. Lewis once explained to his father how “correspondence is unhappily no true parallel to conversation: and it is just when one would be most ready for a talk in the odd hour of the day when one shoves ones [sic] work from one and lights the pipe of peace, that one is least ready to sit down and write a letter. I often wonder,” he added, “how the born letter writers whose ‘works’ fill volumes, overcame this difficulty.” Lewis,

Collected Letters, 1:518. Lewis himself obviously overcame the difficulty. Even at three volumes, his letters are “collected” rather than “complete.”

7. Lewis, *Collected Letters*, 1:665. Lewis was corresponding with his father regarding *The Letters of Sir Walter Raleigh*. Later, while reading the letters of Robert Southey, Lewis noted how reading letters written throughout one’s life can make a happy life look grimmer than it likely was, an appraisal of the incompleteness of such a record. *Ibid.*, 2:421.

8. Lewis would be especially concerned that a student of journalism like me had written a paper using his letters, since he would not “hang a dog on a journalist’s evidence.” Lewis, *Collected Letters*, 2:849. Given Lewis’s frequent lambasting of journalists, the reader will have to take this paper for whatever it is worth. *Ibid.*, 2:53, 849; 3:63, 114, 252, 410–11, 667, 786.

9. *Ibid.*, 2:145. This overview of Lewis’s conversion is not comprehensive, for which the reader should see Roger Green and Walter Hooper, *C. S. Lewis: A Biography*, rev. ed. (New York: Harvest Books, 1994) and David C. Downing, *The Most Reluctant Convert: C. S. Lewis’s Journey to Faith* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002), and Alan Jacobs, *The Narnian: The Life and Imagination of C. S. Lewis* (New York: HarperOne, 2005). Because I focus more on Lewis’s conversion as he understood it, I omit many important events in Lewis’s environment which deserve consideration, for example, the early death of his mother, estrangement from his father, early dislike of school, being injured as a soldier in World War I, losing friends in battle, a possible sexual relationship with an older woman, Mrs. Moore, and other influential experiences.

10. Sociologists and psychologists have attempted to craft various “stages of faith,” many of which tend to play favorites regarding *how* one should be converted and *to* what. For one example, see James Fowler, *Stages of Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981). An interesting response to such efforts (which also informed my interpretation of Lewis’s conversion) is Susan Kwilecki, “A Scientific Approach to Religious Development: Proposals and a Case Illustration,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 27, no. 3 (September 1988): 307–25. Kwilecki is a professor of philosophy and religious studies at Radford University.

11. Kwilecki, “A Scientific Approach to Religious Development,” 310. In some faith traditions, such development is believed to be instantaneous; for example, some Evangelical Christians seek a vivid moment in which they are “saved” or “born again.”

12. George MacDonald (1824–1905), *Unspoken Sermons* (1867–89; rpt. Whitefish, Mont.: Kessinger Publishing, 2004), 102. Clive Staples Lewis, ed., *George MacDonald: An Anthology* (New York: Macmillan,

1946), 18, said he regarded MacDonald as his “master”: “My own debt to [*Unspoken Sermons*] is almost as great as one man can owe to another. . . . Indeed, I fancy I have never written a book in which I did not quote from him. But it has not seemed to me that those who have received my books kindly take even now sufficient notice of the affiliation.”

13. Upon reading these early letters years later, Lewis was most struck by their “egotism” and “priggery.” “I seem to be posturing and showing off in every letter. . . . How ironical that the very thing wh. I was proud of in my letters then should make the reading of them a humiliation to me now!” (1:973). This mortification seems to have carried over into his reading of *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*. Perhaps there was something autobiographical in his remark: “One can see quite clearly that having so early acquired the *talk* [Macaulay] found he could go on quite comfortably for the rest of his life without bothering to notice the *things*. He was from the first clever enough to produce a readable and convincing slab of claptrap on any subject whether he understood it or not, and hence he never to his dying day discovered that there was such a thing as understanding” (1:815).

14. Lewis often quoted verses from both the Old and New Testaments. At times the quotations were straightforward with no positive or negative spin. His letters demonstrate an impressive early acquaintance with the Bible.

15. Lewis and Arthur were clearly bibliophiles, often discussing books in great detail, including their physical dimensions, construction, and quality. They favored “Everyman” editions, which could be ordered with a custom color binding. In the letter mentioning *Phantastes*, Lewis reported that he recently purchased a volume in the chocolate binding he used to dislike. “So you see I am gradually becoming converted to all your views,” he teased. “Perhaps one of these days you may even make a Christian of me” (1:170–71).

16. MacDonald greatly influenced Lewis’s later approach to writing fiction.

17. Lewis was reading books on William Morris and later viewed this stage of his belief as something like “pantheism” or other “sub-Xtian beliefs” (1:342 note 146; 2:702).

18. After his conversion, Lewis maintained that refuting should include replacing if possible. When Elizabeth Anscombe rebutted Lewis’s argument that “Naturalism is Self-Refuting,” he noted: “The lady is quite right to refute what she thinks bad theistic arguments, but does this not almost oblige her as a Christian to find good ones in their place: having obliterated me as an Apologist ought she not to *succeed* me?” (3:35).

19. Some biographers have pointed to Lewis’s early discomfort with

prayer as key in his loss of faith. See Downing, *The Most Reluctant Convert*, 44, 132. Significantly, Lewis later wrote a book on the subject: *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1964). Earlier, he had abandoned an effort to write this book (3:276, 428).

20. Anglican New Testament scholar N. T. Wright, "Simply Lewis," *Touchstone Magazine*, March 2007, complained: "I don't know whether it's Lewis or his republishers, but I am puzzled that such a great writer should have been so indiscriminate and seemingly muddled with his use of the colon and semi-colon." From the letters, I am confident Lewis was responsible.

21. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 160. Lewis felt "deserted" by his friends following their conversion. Several collected letters contain advice to recent converts struggling with unbelieving loved ones. This idea later informed Lewis's novel *Till We Have Faces* which he describes as "the story of every nice, affectionate agnostic whose dearest one suddenly 'gets religion'" (3:590; see also 2:482-83).

22. As an alternative to Madame Blavatsky's "Theosophy" movement, Rudolph Steiner founded the official Anthroposophy Society in 1912. Goetheanum, the school of spiritual science and current seat of the society near Basel, Switzerland, currently claims 150,000 annual visitors. For Steiner's works, see rsarchive.org.

23. Lionel Adey, *C. S. Lewis's Great War with Owen Barfield* (Victoria, British Columbia: Ink Books, 2000).

24. Lewis told one worried writer to disregard charges that believers were suffering from a deluded "escapism," calling such people "Turnkey critics: people who want to keep the world in some ideological prison because a glimpse at any remote prospect wd. make their stuff seem less exclusively important" (3:418). Though not opposed to scientific investigation, Lewis was annoyed by "Scientocracy," glossing Shakespeare: "There are more things in heaven & earth than are dreamed of in your science" (3:1104, 623-24). Christians should be especially wary of twisting the gospel into "one more of their high brow fads" (2:134). Pining too much faith on any currently popular philosophical trend (in this case, Neo-scholasticism,) could be dangerous: "I mean, we have no abiding city even in philosophy: all passes, except the Word" (2:176).

25. G. K. Chesterton was one of the Christian writers who seems to have impacted Lewis most. Before his conversion, Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 216, viewed Chesterton as "the most sensible man alive 'apart from his Christianity.'" In 1947 after converting, he called Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man* "the v. best popular defence of the full Christian position" he knew (2:823; 3:72). He often listed it in letters when asked for recommendations (2:375, 941; 3:363, 652, 1,264, 1,353).

26. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 216.

27. Lewis later found some of the psalms troubling, especially those appearing to manifest vindictiveness and a “festering, gloating, undisguised” hatred. He wrote *Reflections on the Psalms* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1958), 1, 22, to help readers understand these troublesome aspects, though he insisted he was not writing as a Hebraist or higher critic.

28. Lewis would later urge patience with clergymen: “We have a very trying curate in our parish,” he explained. “Some say ‘the devil lives v. near the altar’, [and] I take it your Rector is just an instance of the brother one has to forgive unto seventy times seven.” He concluded, “If they have a bad priest they need good laity all the more” (3:463).

29. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 228–29. He noted that God’s willingness to accept him despite this attitude is a witness to God’s remarkable mercy. Notably, Lewis’s father passed away during this time.

30. Lewis could not date “the ride to Whipsnade” (3:996). According to Walter Hooper, Lewis’s brother recorded the date in his journal as September 28, 1931 (3:996; 1:972). This revelation took place days after a very influential late-night conversation with friends Hugo Dyson and J.R.R. Tolkien. As a theist, Lewis had been puzzled by the “whole doctrine of Redemption: in what sense the life and death of Christ ‘saved’ or ‘opened salvation to’ the world.” Dyson and Tolkien convinced Lewis to view the story of Christ as he viewed other similar myths involving death, sacrifice, and propitiation. Lewis realized that “the story of Christ is simply a true myth: a myth working on us in the same way as the others, but with this tremendous difference that it really happened . . . [.] the Pagan stories are God expressing Himself through what we call ‘real things’. Therefore it is true, not in the sense of being a ‘description’ of God (that no finite mind could take in) but in the sense of being the way in which God chooses to (or can) appear to our faculties. . . . Does this amount to a belief in Christianity?” (1:976–77).

31. He is quoting Boswell’s *Life of Samuel Johnson*, which Lewis claims is the only biography he ever enjoyed reading. He quoted from it often; the ‘ignorance’ line was something of a running gag (3:26).

32. See, e.g., 2:481, 975; 3:66, 562. In 1941 he thanked one reader for her kind letter, concluding, “Though I’m forty years old as a man I’m only about twelve as a Christian, so it would be a maternal act if you found time sometimes to mention me in your prayers” (2:263–64). To a priest who wrote Lewis in 1947 to ask for help in resolving denominational conflict, Lewis responded: “I am a layman, indeed the most lay of laymen, and least skilled in the deeper questions of sacred theology. I have tried to do the only thing that I think myself able to do: that is, to

leave completely aside the subtler questions about which the Roman Church and Protestants disagree among themselves . . . and in my own books to expound, rather, those things which still, by God's grace, after so many sins and errors, are shared by us" (2:801); translation from Lewis's Latin original, and hence his title for *Mere Christianity*.

33. Lewis quoted Alexander Pope: "His praise is lost who stays till all commend" (3:75).

34. Sheldon Vanauken (1914–96) was an American author whose autobiography discusses love, conversion, and tragedy. See Vanauken, *A Severe Mercy: C. S. Lewis and a Pagan Love Invaded by Christ, Told by One of the Lovers* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977).

35. Seeming discrepancies between Paul's writings and the Gospels are being studied in light of the "new perspective on Paul." See, e.g., N. T. Wright, "New Perspectives on Paul," 10th Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference: August 25–28, 2003, http://www.ntwrightpage.com/Wright_New_Perspectives.htm (accessed April 29, 2009). For a diverging interpretation of how Lewis understood the interplay of grace, faith, and works, see Will Vaus, *Mere Theology: A Guide to the Thought of C. S. Lewis* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004), chaps. 4, 10.

36. According to Paul Kuntz, More was interested largely in dualism and concluded that "Spirit depends on matter and needs corporeal instruments, while matter adapts itself to spiritual purposes," Paul Grimley Kuntz, "The Dualism of Paul Elmer More," *Religious Studies* 16, no. 4 (December 1980): 400. More's thought has interesting similarities to Lewis's. For example, he believed that all humans will feel a "ubiquitous sense that somehow something is wrong with existence and that somehow the wrong can be, and ought to be, escaped." More, *The Catholic Faith* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1931), 8. Like Lewis he believed that truth and goodness could be found in many faith traditions; and although he believed Christianity was the "Truth," he borrowed thought from the East in Buddhism, Hinduism, and also from Western thought in Plato. The Dharma, as well as the Dialogues, was a "preface to the gospel," and Gautama Buddha and Plato "would have accepted Christ." "Kuntz, The Dualism of Paul Elmer More," 400. See the full article, *ibid.*, 389–411. Similarly, Lewis's Christianity could easily pick up where the Tao leaves off: "Have you read the *Analects* of Confucius? He ends up by saying 'This is the Tao. I do not know if any one has ever kept it.' That's significant: one can really go direct from there to the *Epistle to the Romans*" (3:72; 2:561).

37. For Lewis's understanding of Idealism, see *Surprised by Joy*, chap. 13.

38. Lewis's affinity with MacDonald can be seen in his use of meta-

phors like this one. MacDonald repeatedly used imagery of a mountain and valley to represent higher states of spiritual knowledge. For example, to explain why Christ didn't answer the young rich man more directly in Matthew 19, MacDonald reasoned: "To begin with [the ultimate answer] would be as sensible as to say to one asking how to reach the top of some mountain, 'Just set your foot on that shining snow-clad peak, high there in the blue, and you will at once be where you wish to go.'" MacDonald, *Unspoken Sermons*, 71. Whether Lewis was derivative here or whether the men simply reasoned alike deserves further exploration; when one quotes Lewis, who is Lewis quoting? Not likely many of his contemporaries. He often admitted his neglect of any "modern" theologians, poets, and writers. In 1955 he wrote: "I am v. ill acquainted with modern theological literature having seldom found it helpful. One book did a great deal for me: G. K. Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man*. But I can't give you such a list as you want" (3:652).

39. More traveled his own interesting path from Manichaeism into a dualism that attempted to reconcile spirit and matter in the paradox of Christ's incarnation. This path led through Hindu views to Platonic dualism to Christianity, among other places. Kuntz, "The Dualism of Paul Elmer More," 394.

40. Lewis, "Christianity and Culture," *Theology* 40 (March 1940): 177, commented: "Culture is not everyone's road into Jerusalem, and for some it is a road out" (2:332-33). Although the quotation is from Lewis, it is from an article, added as a transition between two letters.

41. Griffiths was one of the three theologians Lewis asked to critique his radio broadcasts before delivering them (2:496, 498, 502-3).

42. David Paulsen, "What Does It Mean to Be Christian? The Views of Joseph Smith and Søren Kierkegaard," *BYU Studies* 47, no. 4 (2008): 55-91, compares and contrasts Søren Kierkegaard and Joseph Smith's radical critiques of nineteenth-century Christian culture.

43. Quoted in Dean C. Jessee, "The Earliest Documented Accounts of Joseph Smith's First Vision," in *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820-1844*, edited by John W. Welch and Erick B. Carlson (Provo, Utah: BYU Press / Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 1-33.

44. *Ibid.*; emphasis mine. See also John 3:17, which receives less attention than the preceding verse: "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." The references to apostasy in Joseph's First Vision accounts should be tempered by this information even as the First Vision story is understood in different contexts for different purposes. See James B. Allen, "The Significance of Joseph Smith's 'First Vision' in Mormon Thought," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 1, no. 3 (Fall 1966): 29-45. Inciden-

tally, the same contextual issues can be raised regarding Lewis, whose book (as noted above) could be called “suppressed by Jack” according to some friends. Lewis emphasizes different aspects of his conversion for different audiences and to different ends. But would this attention to his correspondent call into question the overall veracity of his experience?

45. James B. Allen discusses the various accounts considering different contexts and differing purposes in “Emergence of a Fundamental: The Expanding Role of Joseph Smith’s First Vision in Mormon Religious Thought,” *Journal of Mormon History* 7 (1980): 43.

46. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The BYU Experience,” *BYU Speeches*, November 4, 1997, <http://speeches.byu.edu/reader/reader.php?id=2973> (accessed April 2, 2010).

47. Joseph Smith, discourse, January 22, 1843, reported by Wilford Woodruff, in *History of the Church*, 5:259.

48. Rhetoric regarding the apostasy of Christendom was frequent in LDS missionary efforts. LDS views of the apostasy were more formally presented in works like Apostle James E. Talmage’s *The Great Apostasy* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1909) which closely followed Protestant narratives of Christian history. LDS scholarship on the apostasy has become more sophisticated and nuanced over time. A good example is Noel B. Reynolds, ed., *Early Christians in Disarray: Contemporary LDS Perspectives on the Christian Apostasy* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2005). In another effort to foster ecumenical outreach, a Mormon chapter of the Foundation for Interreligious Diplomacy was recently formed. “Mormon Diplomacy Chapter Created,” *Deseret News*, April 23, 2009, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/705299039/Mormon-Times-briefing.html> (accessed April 24, 2009). This development is interesting, especially in light of past statements like that of Royden G. Derrick of the presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy: “We cannot join any ecumenical movement, for if we do so, we will be required to compromise principles. We cannot do that, for the Lord has established the principles upon which his church is built, and we have no right to change them.” Derrick, “Valiance in the Drama of Life,” *Ensign*, May 1983, 23. The Church has not officially sanctioned the Foundation for Interreligious Diplomacy. Several BYU professors belong to the founding board. The Church has joined in various causes with other religions since 1983, most recently urging members to support and help finance California’s Proposition 8 (2008). “Protect-Marriage” was not an ecumenical movement but consisted of various faith traditions working toward a common goal. See newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/commentary/same-sex-marriage-and-proposition-8 (accessed April 1, 2010).

49. David L. Paulsen, "The Search for Cultural Origins of Mormon Doctrines," in *Excavating Mormon Pasts: The New Historiography of the Last Half Century*, edited by Newell G. Bringhurst and Lavina Fielding Anderson (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2004), 50. Many Mormons have found such "truths" in Lewis's works.

50. Lewis says he "jolly well hope[s]" God sends "uncovenanted mercies. . . . After all[,] non-existent Gods, if appealed to with good heart, probably have done quite a lot: the real God, of His infinite courtesy, re-addresses the letters to Himself and they are dealt with like the rest of the mail" (3:478).

51. See, e.g., David Cloud, "Beware of C. S. Lewis," Fundamental Baptist Information Service, March 1, 2002; David J. Stewart, "C. S. Lewis: Exposed!", both http://www.jesus-is-savior.com/Wolves/cs_lewis-exposed.htm (accessed April 1, 2009). I suppose Lewis's declarations about "false gods" are not enough for some, though these comments would likely sound offensive to those worshipping *those* "gods." Lewis typically reserved harsher phraseology for personal correspondence. See note 55.

52. Brigham Young, December 3, 1854, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool and London: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1855–86), 2:139. Accepting truth wherever found was a recurring theme in Young's sermons: "It is our duty and calling, as ministers of the same salvation and Gospel, to gather every item of truth and reject every error. Whether a truth be found with professed infidels, or with the Universalists, or the Church of Rome, or the Methodists, the Church of England, the Presbyterians, the Baptists, the Quakers, the Shakers, or any other of the various and numerous different sects and parties, all of whom have more or less truth, it is the business of the Elders of this Church . . . to gather up all the truths in the world pertaining to life and salvation, to the Gospel we preach, to mechanism of every kind, to the sciences, and to philosophy, wherever it may be found in every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, and bring it to Zion. The people upon this earth have a great many errors, and they have also a great many truths. This statement is not only true of the nations termed civilized—those who profess to worship the true God, but is equally applicable to pagans of all countries, for in their religious rights [sic] and ceremonies may be found a great many truths which we will also gather home to Zion. All truth is for the salvation of the children of men—for their benefit and learning—for their furtherance in the principles of divine knowledge; and divine knowledge is any matter of fact—truth; and all truth pertains to divinity." Young, October 9, 1859, *ibid.*, 7:283–84. Future Church president John Taylor, June 12, 1853, 1:155, similarly stated: "I was going to say I am not a Universalist,

but I am, and I am also a Presbyterian, and a Roman Catholic, and a Methodist, in short, I believe in every true principle that is imbibed by any person or sect, and reject the false. If there is any truth in heaven, earth, or hell, I want to embrace it, I care not what shape it comes in to me, who brings it, or who believes in it, whether it is popular or unpopular. Truth, eternal truth, I wish to float in and enjoy." LDS emphasis on ecumenism has ebbed and flowed over time.

53. For thoughts on religious flexibility versus rigidity, see Richard D. Poll, "What the Church Means to People Like Me," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 2 (Winter 1967): 107–17, and his "Liahona and Iron Rod Revisited," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 16 (Summer 1983): 69–78.

54. Lewis often wondered how the Christian gospel could ever take hold in the East given the cultural disconnect (3:408).

55. When discussing whether it was "lawful for a Christian to bear arms," Lewis appealed to the New Testament, St. Augustine, and the "general agreement of all Christian communities except a few odd sects—who generally combine pacifism with other odd opinions" (2:233–34). Lewis, like some Latter-day Saints, was not always cordial in his comments about other faiths. Anthroposophy was mostly "nonsense" (3:199), Hindus undoubtedly worshipped "false gods" (3:1300), and he was not particularly welcoming to Catholic "papalism," theology of cremation, the "B.V.M." (Blessed Virgin Mary), and transubstantiation (2:358, 646–47).

56. *History of the Church*, 6:57, punctuation modernized, discourse by Joseph Smith, October 15, 1843. Joseph asserted that "the most prominent difference in sentiment between the Latter-day Saints and sectarians was, that the latter were all circumscribed by some particular creed, which deprived its members the privilege of believing anything not contained therein, whereas the Latter-day Saints have no creed, but are ready to believe all true principles that exist, as they are made manifest from time to time." *History of the Church*, 5:215; the sentence appears in this form in "History of the Church" Manuscript Book D-1, p. 1433, LDS Church History Library. Joseph also stated: "The first and fundamental principle of our holy religion is, that we believe that we have a right to embrace all, and every item of truth, without limitation or without being circumscribed or prohibited by the creeds or superstitious notions of men, or by the dominations of one another, when that truth is clearly demonstrated to our minds, and we have the highest degree of evidence of the same." Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book/Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2002), 458.

57. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), 319. Coincidentally, Terryl L. Givens quotes C. S. Lewis soon after this same Joseph Smith quotation in his “Joseph Smith: Prophecy, Process, and Plentitude,” in *Joseph Smith: Reappraisals after Two Centuries*, edited by Reid L. Neilson and Terryl L. Givens (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 110, 112.

58. On this question, Lewis usually cited the fact that the Lord Himself drank wine (e.g., 3:608) and that “abstinence from liquor” was “unscriptural and erroneous doctrine” (3:1,126). The Word of Wisdom is predicated on the existence of new revelation through living prophets, an objectionable premise for those who grant final authority to the Bible, creeds, or Early Church Fathers.

59. Such an appeal to “common ground” is problematic, as there are still some significant differences between mainstream denominations who adhere to the Apostles’ and Nicene creeds. Lewis was aware of such divisions, telling one priest that “the schism in the Body of Christ is both a source of grief and a matter of prayers, being a most serious stumbling block to those coming in and one which makes even the faithful even weaker in repelling the common foe” (2:801). For this reason he often refused to engage in minor doctrinal squabbles: “When all is said (and truly said) about the divisions of Christendom, there remains, by God’s mercy, an enormous common ground.” He characterized his refusal to debate this particular point as “abstaining from one tree in the whole garden” (2:136).

60. Roger R. Keller, former minister and current professor of Church history at Brigham Young University, recounted his family’s spiritual experiences predating Mormonism in “Do I Know My Neighbor?,” *Ensign*, March 1991, 25–28: “We had been clearly shown a continuity between the Holy Ghost we knew as Presbyterians and the Holy Ghost we experienced as Latter-day Saints. Thus, we have never questioned whether we walked with God in our previous vocation of ministry or whether the Lord had led us to that ministry on our path to the fulness of the gospel. We had been shown clearly that there was definitely more to the Christian faith than we had previously known. It was, and still is, offensive to us that these sacred post-baptism experiences are construed by some as proving our superiority over family and friends who did not wish to join us in our decision. In order to avoid this doctrinally unfounded approach and better understand our relationship as Latter-day Saints to our other-denominational friends and neighbors, we need to be aware of their role in the Restoration. Above all, we need to acknowledge

the invaluable contributions our Christian neighbors have made, and continue to make, in furthering the Lord's work on the earth."

61. See also 2 Nephi 2:21: "And the days of the children of men were prolonged, according to the will of God, that they might repent while in the flesh; wherefore, their state became a state of probation, and their time was lengthened, according to the commandments which the Lord God gave unto the children of men." If the "night of darkness" is seen as beginning at mortal death, those who heard about the restored gospel during mortality but did not accept it are in danger of not reaching the highest advancement God offers.

62. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1977), 65–66.

63. Bruce R. McConkie, "The Seven Deadly Heresies," *Brigham Young University Devotional Speeches of the Year* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1981), <http://speeches.byu.edu/reader/reader.php?id=6770> (accessed February 10, 2010).

64. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, edited by Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1955 (1954–56), 2:134; emphasis mine. Other LDS leaders have emphasized the difficulty of repenting after death—but "difficult" is not "impossible." Elder Melvin J. Ballard, *Three Degrees of Glory* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1922), 14–15, stated: "We are sentencing ourselves to long periods of bondage, separating our spirits from our bodies, or we are shortening that period, according to the way in which we overcome and master ourselves." President Spencer W. Kimball quoted Ballard's statement, then added, "Clearly it is difficult to repent in the spirit world of sins involving physical habits and actions. There one has spirit and mind but not the physical power to overcome a physical habit." Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1969), 168. These quotations typically refer directly to Alma 34:32–35. Matthew Roper and John A. Tvedtnes provide another interpretation of these verses in "Scripture Insight: 'Do Not Procrastinate the Day of Your Repentance,'" *Insights* (FARMS newsletter) 20:10, n.d. <http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/insights/?vol=20&num=10&id=160> (accessed March 29, 2010).

65. A more current view from a more "official" source is "Chapter 35: Redemption for the Dead," in the Relief Society/Priesthood instruction manual, *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Intellectual Reserve, 2007), 401–11. Parsing official from unofficial LDS doctrine is difficult. The Church's most recent statement is "Approaching Mormon Doctrine," LDS Newsroom, May 4, 2007, <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/commentary/approaching-mormon-doctrine> (accessed February 10, 2010).

66. This scripture demonstrates the difficulty of formulating a sys-

tematic theology using scriptural proof-texts. Because Latter-day Saints believe that God reveals His will “line upon line” in different dispensations and circumstances, taking a snapshot of any moment in scripture could mislead. This canonized flexibility is described in Alma 29:8: “For behold, the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word, yea, in wisdom, *all that he seeth fit that they should have*; therefore we see that the Lord doth counsel in wisdom, according to that which is just and true” (emphasis mine). Alma 40 discusses his own uncertainty about certain aspects of the afterlife, thus canonizing some prophetic speculation and uncertainty. Quoting *The Problem of Pain* as though it were Lewis’s final view would be a mistake considering the greater fluidity of his views in his letters.

67. Grant Underwood, “‘Saved or Damned’: Tracing a Persistent Protestantism in Early Mormon Thought,” *BYU Studies* 25, no. 3 (1985): 85–103, notes that Section 76 (“The Vision”) “was not initially appreciated for its revolutionary significance.” Even Joseph Smith seldom mentioned it. Early Mormon thought on the afterlife resembled Protestantism’s emphasis of salvation or damnation, heaven or hell. Brigham Young, June 21, 1874, *Journal of Discourses*, 18:247, recalled: “I was not prepared to say that I believed it, and I had to wait. What did I do? I handed this over to the Lord in my feelings, and said I, ‘I will wait until the Spirit of God manifests to me, for or against.’ I did not judge the matter, I did not argue against it, not in the least. I never argued the least against anything Joseph proposed, but if I could not see or understand it, I handed it over to the Lord.”

68. This section and Section 138 regarding missionary work in the spirit world were added to the Doctrine in Covenants in 1981. Robert J. Woodford, “Doctrine and Covenants Editions,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1992), 1:426.

69. Brigham Young, August 8, 1852, *Journal of Discourses*, 3:91. Early Mormons expected the Millennium to arrive quite soon. Underwood, “Saved or Damned,” 91.

70. Lewis joked that he and Tolkien agreed: “[Just] as some people at school . . . are eminently kickable, so Williams is eminently combustible” (2:283).

71. Over time LDS leaders have employed the same verse: (1) to justify few converts, (2) to underscore the “great apostasy” and consequent need for restored LDS authority, (3) to encourage missionaries discouraged by few converts, and (4) to create tension before explaining the doctrines of vicarious ordinances.

72. Lewis is quoting Dom Bede Griffiths, “Catholicism To-day,” *Pax: The Quarterly Review of the Benedictines of Prinknash*. Though Lewis

agreed with the sentiment, he thought Griffiths's argument needed further clarification: "All are saved by Christ or not at all, I agree. But I wonder ought you to make clearer what you mean by His Grace coming 'by way of the Natural Law'—or any other Law. *We are absolutely at one about the universality of the Nat. Law, and its objectivity, and its Divine origin.* But can one just leave out the whole endless Pauline reiteration of the doctrine that Law, as such, cannot be kept and serves in fact to make sin exceedingly sinful [Rom. 7:12–13]?" One could not be saved apart from Christ, in Lewis's view, whether His grace is received through the "Natural Law" or otherwise. In *Mere Christianity*, chaps. 1–5, Lewis appeals to the very existence of the natural law as indicating that something is behind it—namely, God. All are convicted by the natural law because no one perfectly obeys its moral demands. Lewis believed that the New Testament preaches repentance and forgiveness which "assumes an audience who already believe in the Law of Nature and know they have disobeyed it." He feared that "modern England" was quickly losing belief in natural law so most New Testament "apologetic begins a stage too far on. The first step is to create, or recover, the sense of guilt" (2:470).

73. Thomas Aquinas, *Collationes in Decem Praeceptis*, 1. From *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), 426; see also Rom. 2:14–15.

74. D&C 93:31–32: "Behold, here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man; because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the light. And every man whose spirit receiveth not the light is under condemnation."

75. The virtuous unbeliever is similar to the "Anonymous Christian" idea articulated by Karl Rahner, the Jesuit theologian who played an important role in the concept's becoming official Catholic doctrine during Vatican II. Karl Rahner, "Religious Inclusivism," *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*, edited by Michael Peterson et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). Thus to the catechism was added: "Those who through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience—those too may achieve eternal salvation." *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: Burns & Oates, 2002), 196–97. Some view this addition as unbiblical and too inclusive while others see it as parochial and offensive to other faiths. See Stephen M. Clinton, "Peter, Paul and the Anonymous Christian: A Response to the Mission Theology of Karl Rahner and Vatican II," *Orlando Institute Leadership Forum*, November 1998, Evangelical Theological Society, www.toi.edu/Resources/Anonomous2.pdf (accessed April 15, 2009).

76. Bruce R. Reichenbach, "Inclusivism and the Atonement," *Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers* 16, no. 1 (January 1999): 43–54, succinctly phrased this approach: "One can appropriate something subjectively without knowing how it is achieved objectively. . . . Salvation or liberation is possible [for people], though they do not know or have a mistaken notion of the exact circumstances whereby the merits of Christ's death are made available." John Sanders distinguishes the ontological versus the epistemological necessity of Christ's atonement in *No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Fate of the Unevangelized* (1992; rpt., Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 30. This book is an excellent overview of Christian thought on the fate of virtuous unbelievers from three main positions that he classifies as restrictivism, universalism, and "wider hope." Lewis receives a detailed treatment on 251–57. Unfortunately, Sanders overlooks LDS thought in this book.

77. Lewis added his own footnote to "Hell" in this letter, distinguishing "Hades, the land of the dead" from "Gehenna, the land of the lost" (3:163). D&C 19 describes hell as a place or condition that exists eternally but which will end for certain individuals.

78. Lewis also stated: "If the Church is Christ's body,—the thing he works through—then the more worried one is about the people outside, the more reason to get *inside* oneself where one can help—you are giving Him, as it were, a new finger" (2:499). Lewis had been working on the radio broadcasts at this time and uses the same example there. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 65.

79. There is a period after the "a" but not after the "b". Clinton, "Peter, Paul and the Anonymous Christian," 13 note 126, ends his critique of Rahner by appealing to a more concerted Christian missionary effort and declaring that the "anonymous Christian" idea is unbiblical and thus false.

80. C. S. Lewis, *The Last Battle*, Vol. 7 in THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA (London: HarperCollins, 2001 printing), 757. Applying a coherent theory of the Atonement to the inclusivist approaches of Lewis and Latter-day Saints is beyond the scope of this paper. Reichenbach, "Inclusivism and the Atonement," discusses religious inclusivism's relation to sin and atonement theory. How are the effects of Christ's atonement actually available to someone who is ignorant of its occurrence? This problem exists for various atonement models (including the moral exemplar model); how can one follow an example or be encouraged or helped by something one never heard about? LDS thought posits a universal Light of Christ, posthumous missionary work, and proxy ordinances as part of the solution. Reichenbach concludes that if God truly discerns the hearts of His children, any person might employ *functionally* equivalent repentance techniques, though the concepts or language

they employ may seem foreign to Christians. For Atonement theories in LDS thought, see Blake T. Ostler, *The Problems with Theism and the Love of God*, Vol. 2 in EXPLORING MORMON THOUGHT (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2006).

81. The “grace and works” debate is beyond the scope of this article. The role of “intelligence” (not “intelligences”) in LDS soteriology should be kept in mind. Joseph Smith emphasized: “A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge,” quoted by Wilford Woodruff, discourse, April 10, 1842, *History of the Church*, 4:588. This statement was canonized as: “And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come” (D&C 130:19). This scripture emphasizes diligence and obedience as methods of gaining knowledge. Ultimately, correct belief on less than “weightier matters” can be acquired even beyond the veil. Joseph Smith taught: “When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned them.” *History of the Church*, 6:306–7.

82. See Harvest Mission Ministries, http://harvestgathering.org/page_83.html (accessed March 30, 2009). While discussing literary critics who have a similar narrow approach to anything that does not suit their fancy, Lewis quoted Alexander Pope: “Thus Wit, like Faith, by each man is applied / To one small sect, and all are damned beside” (2:734).

83. For the most comprehensive response to the charge that Mormons worship a “different Jesus,” see Daniel C. Peterson and Stephen D. Ricks, *“Offenders for a Word”: How Anti-Mormons Play Word Games to Attack the Latter-day Saints* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998).

84. Mosiah 2:17: “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God.”

85. He added: “But in the main we are not told God’s plans about them in any detail” (2:499). Latter-day Saints believe that they have received additional revelation concerning their fate. (See below.) Lewis referred to the parable of the sheep and goats several times. For instance, when asked about the scripture “He who has not the Son has not the father” (1 John 5:12), he responded: “[It] must mean, I think, he who wholly lacks the Spirit of the Son. Those who do not recognize Him as the Son of God may nevertheless ‘have’ Him in a saving sense—as the ‘Sheep’ had in the parable of the sheep and goats” (3:1447; see also 3:163).

86. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Challenge to Become,” *Ensign*, November

2000, 32–34, <http://www.lds.org/conference/talk/display/0,5232,23-1-138-15,00.html> (accessed March 30, 2010).

87. Joseph Fielding Smith, comp. and ed., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (1938; Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1954 printing), 218.

88. Oaks, “The Challenge to Become.”

89. Blair Dee Hodges, “C. S. Lewis: Crypto-Mormon? Part I: Latter-day Saints on Lewis,” posted May 5, 2009, <http://www.lifeongoldplates.com/2009/04/c-s-lewis-crypto-mormon-part-i-latter.html>.

90. Oaks, “The Challenge to Become.”

91. Latter-day Saints often differentiate between “salvation” and “exaltation,” the former being granted in certain degrees to all of God’s children, the latter being predicated on accepting and living the gospel. Exaltation is granted to those in the celestial kingdom. Margaret McConkie Pope, “Exaltation,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1992), 2:479.

92. Lorenzo Snow, fifth LDS Church president, said: “Missionary work is more successful in spirit prison than on earth. A wonderful work is being accomplished in our temples in favor of the spirits in prison. I believe strongly, too, that when the gospel is preached to the spirits in prison, the success attending that preaching will be far greater than that attending the preaching of our elders in this life.” Quoted in Lorenzo Snow, *The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, edited by Clyde J. Williams (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1984), 98.

93. Elma Fugal, “Salvation of the Dead,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1992), 3:1257–59: “The performing of earthly ordinances by proxy for those who have died is as efficacious and vitalizing as if the deceased person had done them. That person, in turn, is free to accept or reject the ordinances in the spirit world.”

94. Vatican II’s acceptance of the idea resulted in the defection of the Society of St. Paul Pius X, which called such inclusion “a very grave doctrinal error because it declares personal justification as being already realized for every man without any participation of his will or free choice and, so, without any need of his conversion, faith, baptism or works.” Society of St. Pius X, Australian District, “Errors of Vatican II,” *Si Si No No*, No. 52 (May 2003), http://www.sspxasia.com/Documents/SiSiNoNo/2003_May/errors_of_vatican_II.htm (accessed March 30, 2010). The LDS view retains the necessity of ordinances and works coupled with Christ’s grace as requirements for all. Thus, the LDS position cuts through objections to Karl Rahner’s anonymous Christian concept.

Creationism and Intelligent Design: Scientific and Theological Difficulties

David H. Bailey

Many religious believers today are comfortable with the notion of an evolutionary process over many millions of years as God's means for achieving the creation. In other words, they believe that, while God governed the creation in some sense, it proceeded largely by natural laws and processes that can be uncovered by diligent research. An open-ended philosophy of this sort is entirely consistent with modern scientific knowledge, and for many (myself included), the "war" between science and religion ends here.

A recent report by the National Academy of Science observed, "Science and religion are based on different aspects of human experience. . . . Attempts to pit science and religion against each other create controversy where none needs to exist." The report adds, "Scientists and theologians have written eloquently about their awe and wonder at the history of the universe and of life on this planet, explaining that they see no conflict between their faith in God and the evidence for evolution."¹ Among the notable and openly religious scientists cited in this report are Francis Collins (director of the U.S. National Institutes of Health and former director of the Human Genome Project), Kenneth Miller (a well-known biologist and co-author of a widely used biology textbook), and George Coyne (former director of the Vatican Observatory).

Others in modern society (often but not always associated with conservative religious movements) insist on a more traditional view of the creation. Many of these persons further believe