

## ***C.S. Lewis: Calvinist or Classical Arminian?***

C.S. Lewis is one of the most beloved and respected names in Christian literature in our day and time. From his children's series *The Chronicles of Narnia*, to his BBC wartime broadcasts adapted to book in *Mere Christianity*, to his more speculative works of *The Screwtape Letters* and *The Great Divorce*, to mythical novels such as *The Four Loves* and *Out of the Silent Planet*, his literary endeavors and achievements are great indeed. Moreover, with the recent movie adaptation of *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, his popularity has only grown. However, Lewis never wrote anything resembling a systematic theology, as the closest one gets to this is *Mere Christianity*, where he looks at what he considers to be the central core of Christian beliefs accepted by all who name the Name of Christ, regardless of denomination. As such, a study of his views on the providence and sovereignty of God within the 'debate' between Calvinism and Arminianism requires much effort, as one must wade through his numerous works to get a general understanding of his thoughts on the subject. An additional difficulty is that I never found any direct references to the works or thoughts of Arminius or Calvin, and he only explicitly mentions Calvinism in a few places.<sup>1</sup> As such, my arguments in this paper will be based upon his emphasis on the goodness and character of God as much as His power, alongside of human free will. Lewis believes that God did not have to give us free will, but chose to, so as to live in true and loving relationship with His creation. Moreover, God is still sovereign, working out His purposes in the world—bringing Light out of darkness, good out of that which was intended for evil. As Lewis put it, “you will certainly carry out God's purpose, however you act, but it makes a difference to you whether you serve like Judas or like John.”<sup>2</sup> Therefore, God does not condemn anyone to Hell apart from their free choice while remaining sovereign. Having spent some time reading back through his works to get a sense of his theology, I hope that what follows is a coherent—though certainly not exhaustible—account of his thoughts on the providence and sovereignty of God. It is my contention—which will hopefully be demonstrated in what follows—that Lewis is an Arminian; or at the very least, leans strongly in that direction even though he never labels himself as such.

### ***A Brief Biography***<sup>3</sup>

I think it prudent to begin with a brief biographical overview of the life of C.S. Lewis before jumping into a discussion of his theology. Born just before the turn of the century in 1898 in Belfast, Ireland, Clive Staples Lewis grew up the second of two sons to a father who “was a successful lawyer and a mother who had a keen mathematical mind,”<sup>4</sup> and his lifetime was full of historic moments as he lived in the generation that saw the two largest wars in human history to date. Clive, who preferred the name Jack, had a turbulent childhood as he dealt with health issues that often kept him indoors,

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<sup>1</sup> cf. C.S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1961), 31-34.

<sup>2</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1940), 111.

<sup>3</sup> Scott R. Burson and Jerry L. Walls, *C.S. Lewis and Francis Schaeffer: Lessons for a New Century from the Most Influential Apologists of Our Time*. (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1998): in this book, Burson and Walls provide a concise look at the life and work of this great Christian writer and apologist which has proved most helpful here. Their work is the primary source used for the above biography.

<sup>4</sup> *C.S. Lewis and Francis Schaeffer*, 24.

compounded by his mother's death when he was only nine. As such, he grew up with a somewhat pessimistic worldview, which developed into atheistic belief by early adulthood. At the same time, his physical limitations gave him plenty of time to immerse himself in imagination and literature. As Lewis himself noted:

I am the product of long corridors, empty sunlit rooms, upstairs indoor silences, attics explored in solitude, distant noises or gurgling cisterns and pipes, and the noise of wind under the tiles. Also, of endless books. My father bought all the books he read and never got rid of any of them. There were books in the study, books in the drawing room, books in the cloakroom, books (two deep) in the great bookcase on the landing, books in a bedroom, books piled high as my shoulder in the cistern attic...books suitable for a child and books most emphatically not. Nothing was forbidden me. In the seemingly endless rainy afternoons I took volume after volume from the shelves.<sup>5</sup>

Following his mother's death, he went through several boarding schools where his pessimism only grew worse and "the weeds of atheism finally choked out the vitality of his faith."<sup>6</sup> After attending a number of these schools, all of which he greatly disdained, Lewis's father hired W.T. Kirkpatrick as his private tutor to help his son prepare for a college education. At roughly the same time, in 1916 at the age of 18, Lewis read *Phantastes* by George MacDonald. This book was a turning point of sorts for 'Jack,' as it began the shift back to Christian belief and faith. The following year, thanks to Kirkpatrick, he "excelled on his entrance exams and was admitted to Oxford's University College...[where] with the exception of two years of service during World War I, Lewis wound up spending the rest of his life."<sup>7</sup> During the next decade he was influenced by the writings of various Christian thinkers, which ultimately led him to see "the bankruptcy of the nontheistic vision of reality" and "in 1929 [he] finally gave in 'and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed; perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England.'"<sup>8</sup> Yet, he is quick to note that this 'conversion' was simply to theism, not full-blown Christianity which would come later.<sup>9</sup> In this time between 'conversions' he began attending church again, but it was not until he "was driven to Whipsnade [zoo] one sunny day" that his 'conversion' to Christianity came. As Lewis reports, "when we set out I did not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and when we reached the zoo I did."<sup>10</sup> For 'Jack' it was as simple as that.

Following this 'second conversion,' Lewis continued teaching at Oxford, but also began what was to be a prolific writing career as a Christian apologist. While diverse in nature, his writings are unified by "a thoroughly Christian vision of reality and a sincere desire for the reader to adopt the same vantage point...his books, whether overtly apologetic or not, have a decidedly evangelical thrust to them."<sup>11</sup> He remained at Oxford as a lecturer on English literature until 1954 when Cambridge University offered him the position of Chair of Medieval and Renaissance English, which

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<sup>5</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*. (Edison, New Jersey: Inspirational Press, 1986. Reprinted with permission from Harcourt Brace and Company), 7-8 (also referenced in *Why I Am Not A Calvinist*).

<sup>6</sup> C.S. Lewis and Francis Schaeffer, 27.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>9</sup> *Surprised by Joy*, 126.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>11</sup> C.S. Lewis and Francis Schaeffer, 31.

he accepted and occupied until retirement.<sup>12</sup> Lewis eventually married Helen Joy Gresham late in life. The two had ‘met’ when Helen sent ‘Jack’ a letter after her conversion to Christianity, and a friendship via correspondence emerged. Eventually the two wed, though the marriage was short lived as Joy died in 1961. His book, *A Grief Observed*, describes his grief over the loss of the first woman he had come to love in such an intimate way. As Joy’s son (Lewis’s step-son) noted, “it almost seems cruel that her death was delayed long enough for him to grow to love her so completely that she filled his world as the greatest gift that God had ever given him.”<sup>13</sup> Lewis’s own death followed relatively soon after, as he died on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November, 1963—the same day U.S. President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. “The loss of the American leader totally overshadowed the passing of Lewis. Few newspapers reported his death and only a handful of friends attended his funeral. Hardly a fitting tribute for one of the century’s most powerful and articulate representatives of the Christian faith, but just the way Lewis would have wanted it.”<sup>14</sup>

### ***On the Goodness of God***

In the writings of C.S. Lewis the sovereignty and goodness of God are clearly accentuated alongside of human free will. Contrary to popular perception, the goodness of God (not human free will) is the central core around which Arminian theology builds, and Lewis seems to do the same. *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* is now, after the recent movie adaptation, probably Lewis’s most well known work. In this story we see him emphasizing that while God is all powerful, He is also all good; and His goodness conditions His actions and use of power. That is, God acts in accordance with His character, making Him knowable and trustworthy. In one scene, a girl named Lucy has come into the land of Narnia with her siblings through an old wardrobe, and they meet a couple of beavers who tell them about the lion Aslan, who is the Christ-figure in the story. After hearing about Aslan, Lucy’s conversation with the beavers is as follows:

‘Is he—quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion.’ ‘That you will, dearie, and make no mistake,’ said Mrs. Beaver; ‘if there’s anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they’re either braver than most or else just silly.’ ‘Then he isn’t safe,’ said Lucy. ‘Safe?’ said Mr. Beaver; ‘don’t you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? *‘Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.*’<sup>15</sup>

Here we see an example of Lewis’s perception of God. God (Aslan) is all powerful (He, indeed, is not ‘safe’) but His goodness, His character conditions His power. This is quite consistent with classical Arminian theology, which argues that “the heart of the matter is how we understand the *character* of God. The issue is not how powerful God is but what it means to say that He is perfectly loving and good.”<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1952), biographical section on the back cover.

<sup>13</sup> *A Grief of Observed*, xxx.

<sup>14</sup> C.S. Lewis and Francis Schaeffer, 23.

<sup>15</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1978), 80 (emphasis added).

<sup>16</sup> Jerry L. Walls and Joseph R. Dongell, *Why I Am Not A Calvinist*, (Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 217.

As such, a key Arminian objection to Calvinism is that it brings God's character, His goodness, into question. As one scholar noted, Arminians feel that "the truly fundamental dispute is not over power but rather over God's character. . . . The fundamental issue here is which theological paradigm does a better job of representing the biblical picture of God's character."<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, if you affirm (as Calvinism does) that God is the 'all determining reality'—the Cause of everything that happens—then God is the Author of sin and evil as well as of good.<sup>18</sup> In *A Grief Observed*, written in the weeks following the death of his wife, Lewis addressed such a notion:

[C]ould one seriously introduce the idea of a bad God, as it were by the back door, through a sort of extreme Calvinism? You could say we are fallen and depraved. We are so depraved that our ideas of goodness count for nothing; or worse than nothing. . . . Now [in this system] God has in fact—our worst fears are true—all the characteristics we regard as bad: unreasonableness, vanity, vindictiveness, injustice, cruelty. But all these blacks (as they seem to us) are really whites. It's only our depravity that makes them look black to us.<sup>19</sup>

Such reasoning is often used as a defense of Calvinism which I have personally heard from people with whom I have dialogued, and which I have read in books on the issue.<sup>20</sup> My response—which I believe is in keeping with classical Arminianism—is to affirm that God's ways are indeed higher than and different from our ways, but in degree not kind. That is, our views of good and evil come from our Creator, from the *imago dei* He placed in us, which remains despite our depravity post-Fall. As such, our notions of good and evil cannot be different from God's in kind, but only in degree. Lewis seems to fully agree, as he follows up the above statement by saying that if you accept such a view "the word *good*, applied to [God], becomes meaningless: like abracadabra. We have not motive for obeying Him. . . . If His ideas of good are so very different from ours, what He calls Heaven might well be what we should call Hell, and vice-versa."<sup>21</sup>

One may attempt to argue that these statements were written when this great Christian thinker was in a period of great grief, and 'was not thinking clearly.' However, such a conclusion cannot be defended since Lewis strongly emphasizes that God's goodness is not unknowable in other writings as well. God, for Lewis, is not morally ambiguous; and in fact, in *Mere Christianity*, he goes so far as to label the notion that God is not at all knowable by our notions of good and evil as pantheistic.

If you do not take the distinction between good and bad very seriously, then it is easy to say that anything you find in this world is a part of God. But, of course, if you think some things really bad, and God really good, then you cannot talk like that. You must believe that God is separate from the world and that some things we see in it are contrary to His will. Confronted with a cancer or a slum the Pantheist can say, 'If you could only see it from the divine point of view, you would realize that this is also God.' The Christian replies, 'Don't talk damned nonsense.' For Christianity is a fighting religion. It thinks that God made

<sup>17</sup> *Why I Am Not A Calvinist*, 8; Roger E. Olson, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities*, (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 97-114.

<sup>18</sup> I recognize that Calvinists argue against this conclusion, asserting that God is not morally culpable for sin and evil even though it was decreed or rendered certain by Him. However, I don't see how you can logically (reasonably) assert that God caused the Fall—and causes or renders certain all things—and avoid making God both Cause and Author of sin and evil as well.

<sup>19</sup> *A Grief Observed*, 31-32.

<sup>20</sup> cf. Paul Helm's *Providence of God*, chapter 8; Peterson's and Williams' *Why I Am Not An Arminian*, 157-161.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

the world [good]...But it also thinks that a great many things have gone wrong with the world that God made and that God insists, and insists very loudly, on our putting them right again.<sup>22</sup>

Paul Helm, a noted Calvinist theologian, seems to assert exactly what Lewis is arguing against here when he states that “there is no reason in principle why the providence of God should not extend to all wicked and sinful actions.”<sup>23</sup> As such, he argues that God permitted the Fall (as do Arminians), but goes on to claim that what he means by permission “in the case of God is every bit as much an action as is ‘performance.’”<sup>24</sup> Therefore, he concludes, “if it is correct to say that God permitted the fall...it is also correct to say *at least* that God permits them to take place, in the sense of ‘permit’ that has been given. For, if God did not permit evil in this way [viz. perform or cause], then both His knowledge and His power would be compromised.”<sup>25</sup> And I think it would be fair to presume that Lewis’s response would be something like: ‘don’t talk damned nonsense,’ if God caused the Fall then what is good and what is evil? The words lose all meaning.

Finally, in *The Problem of Pain*, we find Lewis again defending the goodness and character of God by rejecting the notion that He is the Cause of sin and evil. In this book, he addresses the existence of pain and suffering, evil and sin in a world created by a good and sovereign God. Christianity, he feels, “creates, rather than solves, the problem of pain, for pain would be no problem unless, side by side with our daily experiences of this painful world, we had received what we think a good assurance that ultimate reality is righteous and loving.”<sup>26</sup> If, as Calvinism claims, God has caused or rendered certain all events—even the Fall of humanity into sin—then the problem of pain, per Lewis, seems to be removed. God becomes morally ambiguous since He has revealed Himself as good, yet He is the Cause of that which we consider evil. Therefore, the problem of pain can be removed, but at the expense of God’s goodness. Here I must note that this is my interpretation of Lewis’s thinking, since he does not directly reference Calvinism in the bulk of his writings. However, I feel that I am not misinterpreting his viewpoint in the least. While not all Calvinists assert that God’s goodness is wholly different than our conception of good, they do defend God’s foreordination of sin and evil by appealing to a great or higher good.<sup>27</sup> To me, this still seems to make God’s goodness far different from our understanding of good and evil, so much so that it results in God being both unknowable and morally ambiguous. The question remains: “What kind of God is it who is glorified by foreordaining and unconditionally reprobating persons to hell?”<sup>28</sup> Lewis’s response to such notions is as follows:

On the one hand, if God is wiser than we His judgments must differ from ours on many things, and not least on good and evil...On the other hand, if God’s moral judgment differs from ours so that our ‘black’ may be His ‘white,’ we can mean nothing by calling Him good; for to say ‘God is good,’

<sup>22</sup> *Mere Christianity*, 36-38.

<sup>23</sup> Paul Helm, *The Providence of God: Contours of Christian Theology*, (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1993), 101.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *The Problem of Pain*, 14.

<sup>27</sup> *The Providence of God*, chapter 8;

<sup>28</sup> *Arminian Theology*, 99 (footnote 5).

while asserting that His goodness is wholly other than ours, is really only to say ‘God is we know not what.’ And an utterly unknown quality in God cannot give us moral grounds for loving or obeying Him. If He is not (in our sense) ‘good’ we shall obey, if at all, only through fear—and should be equally ready to obey an incompetent Fiend. The doctrine of Total Depravity—when the consequence is drawn that, since we are totally depraved, our idea of good is worth simply nothing—may thus turn Christianity into a form of devil-worship.<sup>29</sup>

Lewis’s beliefs are clearly in line with those of Arminius, who said that if God decrees all things, including the Fall, then one can only surmise “‘that *God really sins...*[t]hat *God is the only sinner...*[t]hat *sin is not sin.*”<sup>30</sup> Thus, on the issue of the character of God, Lewis stands firmly in the Arminian tradition.

### ***On the Free Will of Humanity***

“It is not too much to say that historically Arminian theology has tended to pit human freedom against divine sovereignty.”<sup>31</sup> This is, unfortunately, the (false) portrayal of Arminianism one frequently finds in Calvinistic literature, and is often (falsely) seen as the locus of the Calvinism-Arminianism debate. As a Calvinist friend of mine asked over lunch one day, ‘would you rather be a Calvinist and have God be sovereign or an Arminian and have free will?’ I answered that I would be an Arminian any day of the week, but quickly noted that Arminians do not deny the sovereignty of God. Thus, the misconceptions of Arminian theology clearly abound. Classical Arminianism affirms both God’s sovereignty *and* libertarian human free will. “Arminians (and some other Calvinists) believe God’s control over human history is always already *de jure*—by right and power if not already completely exercised—but at present only partially *de facto*. God can and does exercise control, but not to the exclusion of human liberty and not in such a way as to make Him the author of sin and evil.”<sup>32</sup> Arminians, as has been noted, do not begin with human free will. They begin with God’s sovereignty and goodness, and then move to His choice to give humanity free will in order to have a loving, intimate, personal relationship with all who wish to have one. As such, Lewis’s emphasis on both the sovereignty and goodness of God along with human free will—in the libertarian, not the compatibilist sense—seems to place him within the bounds of classical Arminian theology.

The references to free will in Lewis’s books are one of the most prominent features the reader encounters. Indeed, even a cursory reading of a number of his works would reveal his belief in God’s gift to humanity of a free will to choose between two equally available choices. That is, to choose between good and evil, right and wrong. This is why it was so surprising to read that J.I. Packer once asserted that “Lewis was a Calvinist, although an inconsistent one.”<sup>33</sup> However, as authors Jerry Walls and Joseph Dongell noted, this view seems to be rooted in Packer’s thinking that God’s sovereignty and human libertarian freedom are incompatible. This is most likely how,

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<sup>29</sup> *The Problem of Pain*, 28-29.

<sup>30</sup> *Arminian Theology*, 105.

<sup>31</sup> Robert A. Peterson and Michael D. Williams, *Why I Am Not An Arminian*, (Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 136.

<sup>32</sup> *Arminian Theology*, 117.

<sup>33</sup> *Why I Am Not A Calvinist*, 153.

“despite Lewis’s widely recognized Arminian views,” Packer can argue that he was a confused Calvinist.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, it is my contention that Lewis’s conception of free will is clearly Arminian as the following quotes will surely reveal.

In one of his many essays, collected and edited in a book entitled *God in the Dock*, Lewis rejects the notion that God changes people by force apart from their free decision. After discussing a task taken up by nearly everyone—viz. trying to ‘fix’ or change the actions or habits of people which we do not find acceptable—he says that in the end we all come to realize that apart from the decision and choice of person ‘X,’ “you can’t alter their characters.”<sup>35</sup> Before looking further at Lewis’s comments here, it should be noted that the Calvinist view is that God can and does alter people’s character apart from their choice.<sup>36</sup> This is seen in the central tenets of Calvinism, which assert that the grace of God is unconditional, irresistible, particular, and efficacious. God has chosen some for salvation (the elect) and all others for damnation (the reprobate) apart from any choice they make.<sup>37</sup> Now back to Lewis, whose views clearly contrast these Calvinistic doctrines. After saying that you cannot force ‘person X’ to change apart from their choice, he states the following:

And now comes the point. When you have seen this you have, for the first time, had a glimpse of what it must be like for God....He has provided a rich, beautiful world for people to live in. He has given them intelligence to show them how it can be used, and conscience to show them how it ought to be used...And, having done all this, He then sees all His plans spoiled—just as our little plans are spoiled—by the crookedness of the people themselves... You may say it is very different for God because He could, if He pleased, alter people’s characters, and we can’t. But this difference doesn’t go quite as deep as we may at first think. God has made it a rule for Himself that He won’t alter people’s characters by force. He can and will alter them—but only if the people will let Him. In that way He has really and truly limited His power. Sometimes we wonder why He has done so, or even wish that He hadn’t. But apparently He thinks it worth doing. He would rather have a world of free beings, with all its risks, than a world of people who did right like machines because they couldn’t do anything else. The more we succeed in imagining what a world of perfect automatic beings would be like, the more, I think, we shall see His wisdom.<sup>38</sup>

As we see here, Lewis (in agreement with classical Arminianism) does not posit free will as the *sine qua non* of the universe. God was not forced to give free will. He could have chosen to create a world where there was no free will, where everyone always acted according to His perfect will, where all of creation were merely puppets or robots controlled by the Creator. But God desired true and personal relationships. And if one will truly consider the notion, how can a real relationship exist without the freedom of contrary choice? Husbands and wives ask yourself this: if your wife or husband had no choice but to marry you, would you not feel less loved, less special? Of course

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>35</sup> C.S. Lewis, *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, “The Trouble with ‘X’...,” Walter Hooper, ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), 152.

<sup>36</sup> *Why I Am Not An Arminian*, 127-128.

<sup>37</sup> cf. *Why I Am Not An Arminian*, 173-191

<sup>38</sup> *God in the Dock*, “The Trouble with ‘X’...,” 152-153.

you would, because an essential part of relationship is that you each chose the other, you forsook all others for the person you married. This, we find, is true of any relationship in life. Is it not much less and much different than what most consider to be a true, loving relationship if you have no choice? We all know this, but yet many seem to forget this essential part of relationship when it comes to God and His creation. Lewis does not. Classical Arminianism does not. Calvinism appears to do just that.<sup>39</sup>

In *Mere Christianity*, we again see Lewis emphasizing God's sovereignty and goodness alongside of libertarian free will:

God created things which had free will. That means creatures which can go either wrong or right. Some people think they can imagine a creature which was free but had no possibility of going wrong; I cannot. If a thing is free to be good it is also free to be bad. And free will is what has made evil possible. Why, then, did God give them free will? Because free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that make possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. A world of automata—of creatures that worked like machines—would hardly be worth creating. The happiness which God designs for His higher creatures is the happiness of being freely, voluntarily united to Him and to each other...And for that they must be free.<sup>40</sup>

Lewis again leaves no room for the Calvinist perspective. He not only argues for free will, but for incompatibilist freedom where one is truly free to choose good or bad, God's will or sin. Moreover, he later addresses a key objection to Arminianism made by Calvinists and Open Theists: if God foreknows all of our free decisions, how are they truly free? Are they not necessarily determined because of God's knowledge of what will happen? In answering, Lewis affirms both that God truly foreknows all things and that human decisions are truly free. For him, God is timeless and sees all our 'future' decisions at once, but this does not change the fact that they are still free choices. As such, he rejects both Calvinism and the more recent notion of Open Theism, saying that since God is above or outside of time, all events and actions are presently before Him. "What we call 'tomorrow' is visible to Him in just the same way as what we call 'today'.... You never supposed that your actions at this moment were any less free because God knows what you are doing. Well, He knows your tomorrow's actions in just the same way—because He is already in tomorrow and can simply watch you. In a sense, He does not know your actions till you have done it: but then the moment at which you have done it is already 'Now' for Him."<sup>41</sup>

Finally, Lewis affirms that humanity has misused and abused the free will given to us by God. This abuse, not God's foreordained decree to cause or render certain the Fall, is the reason for the presence (and problem) of pain, sin, and evil in our present world. It was a good and perfect world, created by a good and perfect God, which has gone bad because of humanity's choice to rebel. Over and against any notion that would directly or indirectly make God the Author or Cause of sin

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<sup>39</sup> To be fair, many Calvinists strongly assert that it is a truly personal and loving relationship as they posit a compatibilist free will. However, I simply cannot accept the notion that we are anything more than robots if everything is caused (or rendered certain) by God. How can we truly love God and live in personal relationship with Him when all our decisions, actions, and 'choices' have already been decided not by us, but by God? Moreover, I think many Calvinists might shy away from asserting that God changes people apart from their will, but this, to me, seems the inevitable conclusion Calvinism comes to in the end.

<sup>40</sup> *Mere Christianity*, 47-48.

<sup>41</sup> *Mere Christianity*, 170.



and evil, Lewis proclaims that “man is now a horror to God and to himself and a creature ill-adapted to the universe not because God made him so but because he has made himself so by the abuse of his free will....Christianity asserts that God is good; that He made all things good and for the sake of their goodness; that one of the good things He made, namely, the free will of rational creatures, by its very nature included the possibility of evil; and that creatures, availing themselves of this possibility, have become evil.”<sup>42</sup> He is clearly seeking to protect and defend God’s goodness by affirming that it was humanity who freely chose sin, and it seems absolutely clear to me that on the issue of free will he clearly rests within the bounds of classical Arminianism—where God is both good and sovereign, and humanity is truly free. “Our life is,” he proclaims, “at every moment, supplied by Him: our tiny, miraculous power of free will only operates on bodies which His continual energy keeps in existence.”<sup>43</sup>

### ***Hell: Necessary or Unnecessary?***

Directly tied to the discussion of God’s goodness and human free will is the issue of Hell. No one will deny that Hell causes them no little difficulty. The issue, then, becomes whether Hell was (is) necessary or unnecessary? And one’s answer to this question is a direct result of one’s view of God’s goodness and human free will. If humanity is truly free, then Hell cannot be unconditionally necessary. It may (has) become necessary, but it is a consequence of the abuse of freedom at the Fall, and humanity’s continued rebellion against and resistance to God’s redemptive grace. On the other hand, if humanity is not truly free and the Fall into sin and evil was necessary, then Hell is necessary as well. And here, as on the issue of free will, classical Arminianism parts ways with Calvinism.

The Calvinistic viewpoint is summed up well in the following statement: “(1) God loves a sinful world, and (2) He has a special effective love only for the elect.”<sup>44</sup> In other words, many Calvinists will affirm that God does indeed love all of humanity (as John 3.16 asserts) and truly wishes that none would perish (as 2 Peter 3.9 says), but they assert that God has at least two types of love. His love for the elect is such that He has decreed that they will be saved. This choice is effectual (it will happen), unconditional (the elect do nothing, not even choose not to resist), and irresistible (it cannot be refused or rejected, there is no other option). His ‘love’ for the reprobate, on the other hand, is such that He has decreed that they will not be saved. They will spend eternity in Hell apart from God because He does not ‘love’ them to salvation, but ‘lovingly’ sends them to Hell.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, their ‘election’ to reprobation is necessary for God’s grace and glory to be fully

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<sup>42</sup> *The Problem of Pain*, 63.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 33; [for further examples of Lewis’s emphasis on free will see: *God in the Dock*: 104-107; *Mere Christianity*: chs. 2-3, 183, 211-213; *The Problem of Pain*: 14-15, ch. 2, 48, ch. 5, 86, 94-96, 99, 111, 119, 124, 129-131; *Miracles*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers), 1947: 195-197, 284, 288-290, 292; *The Great Divorce*: viii-ix, 22, 49, 61, 72-73, 75, 139-141]

<sup>44</sup> *Why I Am Not An Arminian*, 214.

<sup>45</sup> *Why I Am Not An Arminian*, 128: “While God commands all to repent and takes no delight in the death of the sinner, all are not saved because it is not God’s intention to give His redeeming grace to all.” One is left with a mystery as to how God can desire one thing and yet will another. Did Jesus not say that ‘a house divided against itself will not stand’ (Lk 11.14-20)? Does not God, then, have two contrary wills with the latter ‘winning out’ over the former?

revealed in this manifestation of ‘loving’ justice and wrath. Consequently, it is said that Hell is necessary for the glory of God. In the end, it seems, for the Calvinist, Hell is not a tragic, undesirable fact, but is somehow good, glorious, and necessary because it further displays God’s glory. As John Piper, a prominent Calvinist speaker and writer asserted, “the greater value [of God’s decreeing the elect and reprobate unconditionally] is the manifestation of the full range of God’s glory in wrath and mercy (Rom 9.22-23).”<sup>46</sup>

Arminians simply cannot accept this view because the following questions remain inadequately answered: How can a good and loving God choose and reject people apart from a free choice or response? Why is Hell truly necessary for the glory of God? Was the Cross of Christ not sufficient? They cannot live under a theological system in which the God of the Bible Who has revealed Himself as loving and good—even going so far as to send His Son to make possible the Way back to Life and relationship with Himself after the Fall—has at the same time decreed that many (apart from their choice to resist His grace) will spend eternity in Hell. The Arminian view of election is conditional upon acceptance (non-resistance) to God’s grace. Therefore, Hell is not an unconditional necessity, but a conditional one. It is the tragic consequence of and for those who continue to resist and rebel against the extravagant, world changing, creation redeeming grace of God. Likewise, Lewis strongly affirms that Hell is not necessary, but is a tragedy of the highest degree and greatest proportion. “You will remember,” he says, “that in the parable [cf. Mt. 25, 34, 41], the saved go to a place prepared for *them*, while the damned go to a place never made for men at all.”<sup>47</sup>

In *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis devotes an entire chapter to the Christian doctrine of Hell, in which he staunchly defends the view that Hell is unnecessary, and only exists as a consequence of humanity’s persistence in rebellion against their Creator. Free will makes true relationship with God possible, but it also allows for the possibility of sinful rebellion. Even after God’s gift of redemptive grace in and through Christ, “the Divine labour to redeem the world cannot be certain of succeeding as regards every individual soul. Some will not be redeemed” because they freely choose to continue to resist and rebel.<sup>48</sup> This conclusion is often used in arguments against Arminianism, as Calvinists claim that it cannot explain why some accept God’s grace and others do not.<sup>49</sup> And this is a true and valid assertion. In response, Calvinists posit God’s eternal, effectual, and irresistible decree as the solution to why some accept grace and others refuse. But does this solve anything? Arminians and Lewis think not, because one is left to answer the question of why God, Who has said He desires that all should be saved (John 3.16; Eph 2.8-9; Romans 11.32; et al), chooses not to save all. Mystery is simply not an acceptable answer because this view is injurious to the character of God.

Nevertheless, even though the Arminian view protects God’s character, it does not remove the tragic nature of Hell itself. Indeed, it only enhances it. In expressing his strong dislike of the fact

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<sup>46</sup> *Why I Am Not A Calvinist*, 174-175.

<sup>47</sup> *The Problem of Pain*, 127.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>49</sup> *Why I Am Not An Arminian*, 127-130.

of Hell, Lewis continues to firmly refute any notion that God sends people there against their free choice. “The problem is not simply that of a God Who consigns some of His creatures to final ruin...Christianity, true, as always, to the complexity of the real, presents us with something knottier and more ambiguous—a God so full of mercy that He becomes man and dies by torture to aver that final ruin from His creatures, and Who yet, where that heroic remedy fails, seems unwilling, or even unable, to arrest the ruin by a mere act of power...And here is the real problem: so much mercy, yet still there is Hell.”<sup>50</sup> Neither Lewis nor classical Arminianism denies this problem, and openly affirm the tragic mystery of why so many refuse God’s grace. Yet while this mystery remains, God’s character and goodness are not lessened or blurred. Thus, it could be argued that God’s omnipotence has been ‘defeated’ since not all are, though God wills all to be, saved (cf. 2 Pet. 3.9). Lewis’s response?

And so it does. In creating beings with free will, omnipotence from the outset submits to the possibility of such defeat. What you call defeat, I call miracle: for to make things which are not Itself, and thus to become, in a sense, capable of being resisted by its own handiwork, is the most astonishing and unimaginable of all the feats we attribute to the Deity. I willingly believe that the damned are, in one sense, successful rebels to the end; that the doors of hell are locked on the *inside*....They enjoy forever the horrible freedom they have demanded, and are therefore self-enslaved: just as the blessed, forever submitting to obedience, become through all eternity more and more free. In the long run the answer to all those who object to the doctrine of hell, is itself a question: ‘What are you asking God to do?’ To wipe out their past sins and, at all costs, to give them a fresh start, smoothing every difficulty and offering every miraculous help? He has done so, on Calvary. To forgive them? They will not be forgiven. To leave them alone? Alas, I am afraid that is what He does.<sup>51</sup>

While Lewis’s view of Hell has been clearly expressed and shown to be in keeping with Arminianism, *The Great Divorce* is one of his most intriguing works dealing with the issues of Hell and Heaven, God’s goodness and sovereignty, and human free will. As such, a look at Lewis’s theology cannot be complete without at least a brief glimpse at this book in which he writes a mythic tale of a bus trip from Hell to Heaven. The ultimate assertion of the book is that God gave humans free will, and, inexplicable though it may be, only some choose to accept (not resist) His grace and choose Heaven, while others do not accept (resist) His grace and choose Hell. Throughout the story Lewis looks at various characters that have come to the ‘edge’ of Heaven, and about halfway through the book the narrator is conversing with one of the saints, George McDonald, who has come to meet the passengers of the bus. At one point the narrator asks why some choose Hell over Heaven, and McDonald replies:

‘Milton was right...The choice of every lost soul can be expressed in the words ‘Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.’ There is always something they insist on keeping even at the price of misery. There is always something they prefer to joy—that is, to reality....There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘*Thy* will be

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<sup>50</sup> *The Problem of Pain*, 121.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 129-130.

done.’ All that are in Hell choose it. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find. To those who knock it is opened.’<sup>52</sup>

### ***Grace and Works: Monergism or Synergism?***

A traditional objection to Arminianism, expressed in different forms, is that it is a theology of works where grace only plays a part. It is often (falsely) characterized as a Pelagian or semi-Pelagian system that says ‘if you’ll take one step towards God, He’ll come the rest of the way toward you.’ However, both Calvinists and Arminians believe in total depravity,<sup>53</sup> and the inability of sinners to choose God on their own. One Calvinist author says that the difference is that Arminians posit only a ‘hypothetical’ inability while Calvinists insist on a ‘biblical’ understanding of ‘actual’ inability.<sup>54</sup> This characterization is both false and unfair; as classical Arminians strongly emphasize that apart from the prevenient grace of God there is no possibility for a sinner to repent. Therefore, the key difference is over the issue of choice, which has been discussed above. It ultimately comes down to a debate over free will as ‘hypothetical’ (Calvinism) or ‘actual’ (Arminianism), and God’s grace as irresistible (Calvinism) or resistible (Arminianism). And these Reformed theologies diverge in how they answer this question.

For Calvinists, salvation is *monergistic*, where God does everything and humans play no part in the process. For Arminians, salvation is *synergistic*, where God’s grace is essential and necessary for every part of salvation, but He has conditioned grace so that it must be accepted (i.e. not resisted). That is, no one can be saved apart from God’s action in extending His grace, but God does not force us to accept His grace. It may, indeed, be resisted. “Arminians believe that if a person is saved, it is because God initiated the relationship and enabled the person to respond freely with repentance and faith....All the person does is cooperate by not resisting.”<sup>55</sup> In reading through Lewis’s writings, his synergistic understanding of salvation is quite evident. This makes perfect sense given his belief in a truly free will given to humanity by God. Salvation has to be synergistic—in the Arminian sense—if we are truly free to accept or reject God’s grace. Again, neither Lewis nor Arminians posit a works based righteousness. All is of grace, but there is a choice to not resist God’s prevenient grace that must be made.

In a chapter from *God in the Dock*, Lewis responds to various questions presented to him, and in at least two places he addresses the issue of God’s grace and our acceptance of it. The statement was presented to him that “we do nothing to obtain [salvation], but follow Christ...nothing we do qualifies us for heaven, but Christ,” and Lewis answered: “The controversy about faith and works is one that has gone on for a long time...I personally rely on the paradoxical text: ‘Work out your salvation...for it is God that worketh in you’ [Phil 2.12]. It looks as if in one sense we do nothing, and in another case we do a damned lot. ‘Work out your own salvation with fear and

<sup>52</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1946), 71, 75.

<sup>53</sup> Interestingly enough, Lewis himself seems to deny the doctrine of total depravity in his book *The Problem of Pain* (see pages 61-62).

<sup>54</sup> *Why I Am Not An Arminian*, 162-172.

<sup>55</sup> *Arminian Theology*, 159-160.

trembling.’ But you must have it in you before you can work it out.”<sup>56</sup> While he leaves it there at this point, a later question leads him to clarify his views further. The question was asked about how to ‘want God enough’ so as to find Him. Lewis responded by saying that the very fact that the questioner wanted to find God was evidence that he “has in fact found God,” but he says, “at any rate, what is more important is that God has found this person, and that is the main thing.”<sup>57</sup> Both questions essentially address the issue of seeking God and being sought by God, to which Lewis responds that it begins and ends with God—He seeks us first, which enables us the choice to seek after and accept Him. Moreover, in *The Problem of Pain* we find an expanded answer to the above questions:

It is good for us to know love; and best for us to know the love of the best object, God. But to know it as a love in which we were primarily the wooers and God the wooed, in which we sought and He was found, in which His conformity to our needs, not ours to His, came first, would be to know it in a form false to the very nature of things. For we are only creatures: our role must always be that of a patient to agent...mirror to light, echo to voice. Our highest activity must be response, not initiative. To experience the love of God in a true, and not an illusory form, is therefore to experience it as our surrender to His demand, our conformity to His desire...I do not deny, of course, that on a certain level we may rightly speak of the soul’s search for God, and of God as receptive of the soul’s love: but in the long run the soul’s search for God can only be a mode, or appearance (*Erscheinung*) of His search for her, since all comes down to Him, since the very possibility of our loving is His gift to us, and since our freedom is only a freedom of a better or worse response.<sup>58</sup>

Lewis, therefore, stands firmly in the tradition of classical Arminian synergism—a stance he further solidifies in *Mere Christianity*. “Fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement”—a rejection of Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism—“he is a rebel who must lay down his arms.”<sup>59</sup> Yet the question remains: does he ‘lay down his arms’ freely or by force? Lewis affirms the former, Arminian view: “repentance, this willing submission to humiliation and a kind of death, is not something God demands of you before He will take you back and which He could let you off if He chose: it is simply a description of what going back to Him is like...Can we do it if God helps us? Yes, but what do we mean when we talk of God helping us? We mean God putting into us a bit of Himself, so to speak. He lends us a little bit of His reasoning powers and that is how we think: He puts a little of His love into us and that is how we love one another.”<sup>60</sup> Choice remains. We can, and many unfortunately do, resist this redeeming grace of God. Later in this book Lewis addresses the issue of faith, and discusses his synergistic view in greater detail. As he sees it, “in one sense, the road back to God is a road of moral effort, of trying harder and harder. But in another sense it is not trying that is ever going to bring us home. All this trying leads up to the vital moment at which you turn to God and say, ‘You must do this, I can’t.’”<sup>61</sup> We come to the point where we

<sup>56</sup> *God in the Dock*, “Questions,” 55 (both quotes found on this page).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>58</sup> *The Problem of Pain*, 44-45.

<sup>59</sup> *Mere Christianity*, 56.

<sup>60</sup> *Mere Christianity*, 57.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

realize we cannot earn salvation. Though Lewis does not explicitly say so, I think it a fair assumption to say that he believes this is a place God leads us to by His grace. It is part of His luring and drawing us to Himself. As he put it in another chapter:

What, then, is the difference which [Christ] has made to the whole human mass? It is just this; that the business of becoming a son of God, of being turned from a created thing into a begotten thing, of passing over from the temporary biological life into timeless 'spiritual' life, has been done for us. Humanity is already 'saved' in principle. We individuals have to appropriate that salvation. But the really tough work—the bit we could not have done for ourselves—has been done for us. We have not got to climb up into spiritual life by our own efforts; it has already come down into the human race. If we will only lay ourselves open to the One Man in Whom it was fully present, and Who, in spite of being God, is also a real Man, He will do it in us and for us.<sup>62</sup>

We clearly find that Lewis's view of salvation is, in fact, Arminian, which is not a works-based righteousness. All is of God, but He will not change us, create us anew, apart from our choice to accept (not resist) His grace. As Arminius himself argued: "free will is unable to begin or to perfect any true and spiritual good, without Grace...No man believes in Christ except him who has been previously disposed and prepared by preventing or preceding grace."<sup>63</sup> Thus, both Lewis and classical Arminians affirm a synergistic view of salvation. It is "an evangelical synergism that reserves all the power, ability and efficacy in salvation to grace, but allows humans the God-granted ability to resist or not resist it. The only 'contribution' humans make is non-resistance to grace."<sup>64</sup>

### ***Prevenient Grace: Limited, Unconditional, Irresistible or Universal, Conditional, Resistible?***

As we have seen, Lewis's views agree with classical Arminianism regarding the synergistic nature of salvation, which is merely human response (acceptance via non-resistance) to the prevenient grace of God. This leads directly to the final topic of this paper—the issue of God's prevenient grace, which will inevitably overlap some with the above discussion. As mentioned, the Calvinist view is that God's grace is limited, irresistible, efficacious and unconditional. Those to whom He has chosen to extend His grace will be saved. Those to whom He has not chosen to offer His grace will not be saved. Prevenient grace is irresistible and only given to the elect. In sharp contrast is the Arminian view which sees God's grace as universal, conditional and resistible. As Arminius himself noted, it is all of grace from the first to the last. We are all dead in our sins and unable to respond to God. Therefore, His grace must go before in renewing and restoring the ability to respond to His call. But this grace may be refused as "many persons resist the Holy Spirit and reject the grace that is offered"...Arminius thus believes not so much in free will as in a freed will, one which, though initially bound by sin, has been brought by the Spirit of Christ to a point where it can respond freely to the divine call."<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>63</sup> *Arminian Theology*, 144-145; [for further examples of Lewis's synergistic views see: *God in the Dock*: 151-155; *Mere Christianity*: 177, 188-189, 196-198, ch. 9, 211-212; *The Problem of Pain*: 94-96, 99-100, 111, 152, 156, 158; *Miracles*: Appendix B; *The Great Divorce*: viii-ix, 72-73, 109-112].

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>65</sup> *Arminian Theology*, 162, 164-165.

In *Mere Christianity* Lewis asserts this Arminian understanding of God's prevenient grace. "When you come to knowing God, the initiative lies on His side. If He does not show Himself, nothing you can do will enable you to find Him. And, in fact, He shows much more of Himself to some people rather than to others—not because He has favourites, but because it is impossible for Him to show Himself to a man whose whole mind and character are in the wrong condition."<sup>66</sup> Moreover, for Lewis, Christ is the greatest and fullest manifestation of this 'going before' grace of God. Through Christ Jesus God made the Way for all of humanity to enter again into relationship with God. It was grace for all peoples, grace for all Creation:

It is as if something which is always affecting the whole human mass begins, at one point, to affect the whole human mass in a new way. From that point the effect spreads through all mankind. It makes a difference to people who lived before Christ as well as to people who lived after Him. It makes a difference to people who have never heard of Him. It is like dropping into a glass of water one drop of something which gives a new taste or a new colour to the whole lot.<sup>67</sup>

In Lewis's thinking, God's grace goes before and enables human acceptance of this saving grace. This is the classical Arminian perspective on prevenient grace as well—it was not that we first loved God, but that He first loved us. God has gone to extraordinary lengths to restore and redeem humanity even after they have chosen to rebel against Him. He draws all men to Himself, but not without their choice not to resist. This is the reason why we saw that Lewis (and Arminians) asserts an 'evangelical synergism' regarding salvation. In *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis discusses what this drawing and leading of all people by God looks like:

As St. Augustine says somewhere, 'God wants to give us something, but cannot, because our hands are full—there's nowhere for Him to put it'....Now God, Who has made us, knows what we are and that our happiness lies in Him. Yet we will not seek Him as long as He leaves us any other resort where it can even plausibly be looked for....What then can God do in our interests but make 'our own life' less agreeable to us, and take away the plausible source of false happiness? It is just here, where God's providence seems at first to be most cruel, that the Divine humility, the stooping down of the Highest, most deserves praise....If God were proud He would hardly have us on such terms: but He is not proud, He stoops to conquer, He will have us even though we have shown that we prefer everything else to Him, and come to Him because there is 'nothing better' now to be had.<sup>68</sup>

Here we read an Arminian understanding of God's prevenient grace. It is His pursuing us, enabling us, renewing us so that we can again live in relationship with Him. Our free will does not mean that God does not seek to bring us back into relationship with Himself. The Incarnation should be ample evidence of this fact. His prevenient grace reaches people apart from their will in one sense, but it can be refused. Consider the following example: you do not (cannot) choose when or if a friend offers you assistance when you are in need, but you can refuse to accept their offer. The offer, in this

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<sup>66</sup> *Mere Christianity*, 164.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>68</sup> *The Problem of Pain*, 94-96.

sense, is forced upon you. Prevenient grace follows this pattern. God's pursuit of us, Lewis argues, is 'forced' on everyone in this sense, but we do not have to accept it, we do not have to respond positively. How else could it be since in our fallen condition we cannot even pursue God apart from His grace? Yet such grace is, indeed, resistible. This results in the possibility of true, loving relationship between creature and Creator, but also the tragic, yet unavoidable, possibility of sin, evil, Hell.

### *C.S. Lewis: A Classical Arminian*

As has been asserted, and hopefully demonstrated in this paper, C.S. Lewis seems to fall squarely and soundly within an Arminian theological framework. We began by noting that Lewis begins with the character, the goodness, of God as the basis for his theological assertions. As such, God could not be the Author or Cause of sin and evil, directly or indirectly. Thus, one must provide an answer to the problem of pain, sin, and evil existing in this present world. Calvinists see all of this as foreordained (in the sense of caused or rendered certain) by God for His glory. Lewis and Arminians, on the other hand, believe the conditions of the present world are a result of the abuse of human free will given by God. In order to have true relationship free will was necessary, and God chose to give this gift to us. Therefore, the Fall and Hell were conditional and unnecessary apart from the human choice to rebel and persist in rebellion. Even after the Fall God has extended His grace to humanity—most fully and completely in Christ—restoring our ability to choose to resist or not resist His grace. Nevertheless, free will remains, and God will not force anyone to accept this gift of grace and redemption. It has, hopefully, been confirmed that Lewis firmly expresses these views, and therefore we can safely say that though he never uses the expression himself, he was an Arminian.

A scene from *The Silver Chair*, part of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, seems a fitting summary and conclusion. Here we find a metaphor for the desperate need of humanity for redemption and the free offer of grace that must be accepted. Those who choose not to resist grace gain God and eternal Life, namely, Heaven; and those who choose to resist 'gain' their desire, will, and wish, namely, Hell. This scene involves a girl named Jill who enters Narnia and encounters Aslan in a forest. She has been looking for water and her thirst continues to grow. Finally she spots a stream and is overjoyed. But then she sees a lion, Aslan, standing by the stream. Jill spends some time debating about what she should do since her thirst is only getting greater, but yet she is afraid of the lion. Finally, Aslan speaks, breaking the silence, telling Jill that she may come and drink if she desires. Yet she still hesitates, afraid.

'Are you not thirsty?' said the Lion. 'I am *dying* of thirst,' said Jill. 'Then drink,' said the Lion. 'May I—could I—would you mind going away while I do?' said Jill. The Lion answered this only by a look and a very low growl. And just as Jill gazed at its motionless bulk, she realized that she might as well have asked the whole mountain to move aside for her convenience. The delicious rippling noise of the stream was driving her near frantic. 'Will you promise not to—do anything to me, if I come?' 'I make no promise,' said the Lion. Jill was so thirsty now that, without noticing it, she had come a step nearer. 'Do you eat girls?' she said. 'I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms,' said the Lion. It didn't say this as if it were boasting, nor as if it were sorry, nor as if



it were angry. It just said it. 'I daren't come and drink,' said Jill. 'Then you will die of thirst,' said the Lion. 'Oh dear!' said Jill, coming another step nearer. 'I suppose I must go and look for another stream then.' 'There is no other stream,' said the Lion.<sup>69</sup>

For Lewis, in the end it all comes down to a choice, a decision. God brings us to a place where we must decide. Drink from the Stream and live; or refuse to drink and die. Say to God 'Thy will be done;' or find that He finally says to you, '*Thy* will be done.'<sup>70</sup> And, indeed, 'there is no other Stream.'

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<sup>69</sup> *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Silver Chair* (Middlesex, England: Puffin Books, 1977), 26-27.

<sup>70</sup> *The Great Divorce*, 75.

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