

# C. S. LEWIS AND BARON VON HÜGEL

A series of possible echoes in Lewis's work from Friedrich von Hügel's  
*Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion* (1921)

selected and edited by

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Among C. S. Lewis's countless quotations from books he had read in the books he wrote, those from the Austrian-born English theologian Friedrich von Hügel (1852-1925) do not seem very prominent. As will appear from the following sequence of quotations, however, von Hügel's influence on Lewis's thought may have been greater than has been generally recognized.

As an invitation to further research of this subject, I have collected those passages from von Hügel's 1921 volume of *Essays and Addresses* which struck me for their similarity to more or less distinctively "Lewisian" ideas. Each numbered quotation or set of quotations from that volume is presented under a key phrase usually derived from Lewis's writings, and accompanied by one or more references to passages by Lewis on the topic at hand: some may be echoes.

- explicit references to von Hügel in Lewis's public writings are confined to – one footnote and one brief allusion in *The Problem of Pain* (1940), chapter 8, and one unreferenced quotation in *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (1942), chapter 8; all refer to *Essays and Addresses*;
- a 1939 review where von Hügel and G. K. Chesterton are jointly contrasted to certain other authors (Lewis, *Image and Imagination*, p. 153);
- two references in scholarly essays of the late 1930s to peculiarities of von Hügel's idiom (Lewis, *Selected Literary Essays*, pp. 207 and 224).

The three volumes of Lewis's *Collected Letters* (2000-2006) contain one more reference to idiom (vol. 1, p. 933), and five instances of Lewis mentioning von Hügel while recommending the latter's book *Eternal Life* (1912); the last of these recommendations is found in a 1955 letter to Sheldon Vanauken.

- In addition, there are two early references to von Hügel in private writings:
  - an unpublished portion of Lewis's diary for 17 June 1924: "I went and sat for an hour reading Baron von Hügel and a very silly book called *Shelley and the Unromantics*" (The Lewis Papers, vol. VIII, p. 244);
  - "De Bono et Malo", dating from 1929 or 1930 and published in 2015 as part of *The "Great War" of Owen Barfield and C. S. Lewis* (pp. 131-144).

## REFERENCES TO C. S. LEWIS'S WRITINGS

*CR* first published in *Christian Reflections*, ed. Walter Hooper, 1967  
*GD* first published in *God in the Dock* (American edition), ed. Walter Hooper, 1970

All essays listed were republished in one comprehensive volume published in 2000.

For more details about Lewis's shorter writings, see [www.lewisiana.nl/cslessays](http://www.lewisiana.nl/cslessays).

*The Abolition of Man*, 1943.

*Collected Letters*, ed. Walter Hooper, three volumes, 2000-2006.

"*De futilitate*", c. 1943, *CR*.

"Dogma and the Universe", 1943, *GD*.

"Evil and God", 1941, *GD*.

"Fern-seed and Elephants", 1959, *CR*.

"The Funeral of a Great Myth", c. 1944, *CR*.

*Image and Imaginations: Essays and Reviews*, ed. Walter Hooper, 2013.

"Is Theism Important?", 1952, *GD*.

"The Language of Religion", 1960, *CR*.

*The Last Battle: A Story for Children*, 1956.

"The Laws of Nature", 1945, *GD*.

*Letters to Malcolm*, 1964.

The Lewis Papers, ed. W. H. Lewis, eleven volumes, unpublished. Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton, Illinois, U.S.A.

*Mere Christianity*, 1952.

"Miracles", 1942, *GD*.

*Miracles*, 1947/1960.

"The Pains of Animals", 1950, *GD*.

*Perelandra: A Novel*, 1943.

*The Pilgrim's Regress*, 1933/1943.

*The Problem of Pain*, 1940.

"The Seeing Eye", 1958, *CR*.

*Selected Literary Essays*, ed. Walter Hooper, 1969.

"Some Thoughts", 1948, *GD*.

*Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life*, 1955.

"Transposition", 1944, first published in *Transposition and Other Addresses*, 1949.

"The World's Last Night", 1951, first published in *The World's Last Night and Other Essays*, 1960.

Controversy with Owen Barfield: see *The Great War of Owen Barfield and C. S. Lewis: Philosophical Writings 1927-1930*, ed. Norbert Feinendegen & Arend Smilde (2015), and letters to Barfield in *Collected Letters*.

Post-"Great War" letters to Anthroposophist friends: these letters include those to Owen Barfield, Cecil Harwood and Daphne Harwood as published in *Collected Letters*.

## 1. DOG'S EYE VIEW

CSL – “Fern-seed and Elephants”: Tyrrell

» VON HÜGEL:

The source and object of religion, if religion be true and its object be real, *cannot, indeed, by any possibility, be as clear to me even as I am to my dog.*

— 102, “Preliminaries to Religious Belief” (1914)

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## 2. CHRISTIANITY AND HISTORY

CSL – *The Pilgrim's Regress*, Book VIII, chapters 7-8: the Hermit / History

– *The Problem of Pain*, chapter 1

– *Surprised by Joy*, chapter 14: Chesterton and Frazer

» VON HÜGEL:

[T]hese ... writings will reveal a deep apprehension of the Unconditioned, the Abiding, the Absolute – of our need and of our certitude of these; and especially also of Christianity as the original awakener of the deeper Historic sense, and of our reaching the Superhistoric with it. Nothing indeed is more striking than the perennial affinity between Christianity and History – that History of which indeed Christianity has itself furnished so central a part. ...

... In actual life Natural or Rational Religion or Pure Theism exists as the mirage after the setting, or as the dawn before the rising, of an Historical Religion. And such Historical Religion always claims to be, not Rational but Revelational, and not Natural but Supernatural; and such a Religion is never purely Theistic, but always clings also to a Prophet or Revealer of God and to a Community which adores God and worships the Revealer. And again in real life Natural Religion exists as a set or as a system of propositions effected by philosophers who, in spite of their frequent disdain of all Sects and Churches, derive both their materials and their understanding of these materials from these despised positive teachings and historical traditions. And beside those rudiments of the positive religions and these abstractions from the positive religions there exists no such thing, in actual life, as a Natural, Philosophical Religion.

— xvi, Preface

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### 3. CONDEMNING THE UNIVERSE

CSL – “*De futilitate*”: Heroic Pessimism in Swinburne, Hardy, Shelley and Housman

– “The Pains of Animals”: Tennyson’s “Despair” and the Promethean attitude in Shelley

» VON HÜGEL:

... [P]lease note well. Where does the keenness of this our scandal come from? Why do we, in all such cases, suffer such feelings of shock and outrage? ... The case is, I think, quite parallel with that as to trust in reality generally. ... Why is untruthfulness so very odious? ... Whence springs the suffering – the most keen suffering – of the thought of being thus shut up, if we *are*, in fact, thus shut up within our own purely subjective impressions and fancies? The answer, surely, is that we thus suffer because, in fact, we are *not* thus shut up, because we *do* communicate with realities other than ourselves ...

... [B]oth in the matter of Truth and Reality and in the matter of Love and a Lover, we suffer, when scepticism assails us, because we are *not* simply shut up within our own fancies, because (mysteriously yet most actually) we are penetrated and moved by God, the Ultimate Reality and Truth, the Ultimate Lover and Goodness. ... [I]t is not Judaism, not Christianity, not any kind of Theism that bids us, or even allows us, to hold and to accept as good in themselves the several painful or cruel or wrong things that happen in this our complicated, difficult life. None of these convictions worship Nature, or the World-as-a-whole; they all, on the contrary, find much that is wrong in Nature as we know it, and in the World-as-a-whole as we actually find it. All such believers worship and adore not Nature but God – the love and the action of God within and from behind the world, but not as though this love and action were everywhere equally evident, not as though they directly willed, directly chose, all things that happen and as they happen. On the contrary: these great religions leave such a pure optimism to absolute Idealist philosophers, and to rhapsodising pantheists and poets; and these religions believe such views, wheresoever they are taken as ultimate, to be either shallow and unreal, or sorry travesties of the facts.

... Thus my very bitterness and despair over the apparent insult flung at my love by the world as I know it, turns out to be but one more effect of the reality and operativeness of God, and one more reason (again not clear, not readily transferable, but rich and fruitful) for believing and trusting in Him, in Love, the Lover.

— 114-116, “Preliminaries to Religious Belief”

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#### 4. CARDINAL DIFFICULTIES OF NATURALISM

CSL – *The Abolition of Man*, chapter 2  
– *Miracles*, chapters 3-5

» VON HÜGEL:

The purely naturalistic view of man conceives him as a mere superior animal, which projects its own largely fantastic wishes on to the void or the unknown, and which then fishes them back as objective realities distinct from itself their true creator. And this view is the more plausible, the more quickly statable, the more vividly picturable, the alone readily transmittable, view. But then, the view has all these qualities, precisely because it stops short at the surface impressions of things, and remains utterly inadequate to all the deeper and deepest implications, requirements and ends of knowledge in general, and of art, ethics, philosophy and religion in particular. Yet as soon as we hold the difference between various kinds of human acts and dispositions to be always potentially, and often actually, of essential, of ultimate, of more than simply social, simply human importance, we are insisting upon values and realities that essentially transcend space and even time. Every at all noble, every even tolerably adequate, outlook always possesses some such more than merely empirical, simply contingent, or purely material and mechanical character. ... Thus every profound search after, or belief in, the fundamental truth or essential beauty or satisfying goodness of anything – when we press it duly home and sincerely and delicately analyse it – overflows the ordinary, superficially obvious, requirements of man's knowledge, action, life. In each case we get a scheme that looks too big and too ambitious for us little men, and that involves alternatives too wide and deep for the average moments of the average mortal.

— 207-208, “What do we mean by Heaven?  
And what do we mean by Hell?” (1917)

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#### 5. THE UNIVERSE AS A GOING CONCERN

CSL – post-“Great War” letters to Anthroposophist friends  
– “Miracles” (1942 essay)  
– “The Funeral of a Great Myth”  
– “The Laws of Nature”  
– *Miracles*, chapter 15

» VON HÜGEL:

As to Creation, it is plain that no sheer beginnings, however much we may attempt to conceive them in terms and images of the latest Natural Science, are

picturable, or clearly thinkable, by us at all. ... Natural Science cannot indeed start otherwise than with already extant diffused matter, and cannot but tend to speak as though this matter, by its purely immanent forces, groups itself into such and such combinations, and proceeds to ever more complex and interior results. ... We thus ... get in Natural Science, if not a clear and complete proof of an Eternal Wisdom creating and ever sustaining all things, yet many a fact and problem which indicate how largely modal, where at all certain, is Evolution. Evolution in reality still gives us, at most and at best, not the ultimate *why* but the intermediate *how*; whilst the points of central religious importance here appear to be, not so much the non-eternity, as the createdness, of all finite realities.

Thus St. Thomas can teach us that the Eternity of the material universe would not be incompatible with its Creation, and that only Creation is intrinsically essential to Theism; although the Jewish-Christian Revelation has now taught us that, as a matter of fact, the universe is not only a creature but a non-eternal one.

— 48-49, “Religion and Reality” (1909/1918)

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## 6. CLUES TO THE MEANING OF THE UNIVERSE

- CSL – *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, 1943 preface
- *Miracles*, chapters 3-4
- *Surprised by Joy*, chapters 14-15

» VON HÜGEL:

Man can never jump out of his own skin. Yet this in no way decides how widely that skin may stretch, nor what, nor how much of, Reality really affects man and is presumably apprehended by him with some genuine knowledge. Indeed man is found to possess somehow, in very certain fact, a more or less continuous, often most painful, sense of the inadequacy of any and all merely human mode and degree both of existence and of apprehension. And this sense is too fundamentally human, and too demonstrably impels him towards, yet never to rest in, his noblest achievements in science and philosophy, in art, in ethics, in life generally, for it to be anything but suicidal for man himself ever, in the long run and deliberately, to declare this sense to be sheer illusion, or (what is practically the same, and equally inadequate) to find in this sense nothing but the merely human race-instinct. There then remains no way out of scepticism, where scepticism is least tolerable and where it is most ruinous, than to carry right up into religion what we believe and practise in our practical life and in our science. Just as we simply admit the existence of countless realities, more or less different from, though only lower than or equal to ourselves; and as we frankly grant the real influence of these realities upon ourselves and our real knowledge of them, since

such influence and knowledge are prior to, and are the material of, our discursive reasoning about them: so also let us simply admit the existence of a perfect Reality, sufficiently like us to be able to penetrate and to move us through and through, the which, by so doing, is the original and persistent cause of this our noblest dissatisfaction with anything and all things merely human. Certainly no other explanation has ever been given which does not sooner or later mis-state or explain away the very data, and the immense dynamic forces of the data, to be explained. But this, the only adequate, explanation moves us on at once, from the quicksands of religion as illusion, to the rock of Religion as the witness and vehicle of Reality.

— 40-41, “Religion and Illusion” (1909/1918)

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## 7. AWE

CSL – *Perelandra*, chapter 17: last speech in the “Great Dance” conversation

» VON HÜGEL:

True, philosophical reflection and natural science bring perplexities to the religious mind, and there is *some* connection between a man’s growth in such other insights and his analysis and theory of his religious experience. Yet the influence of philosophy and of science upon religious experience itself appears to be primarily the furnishing of obstacles and stimulants, of tests and purifications; and certainly the sense of *awe*, derived by the religious soul from its vivid apprehension of the greatness of the Reality, a Reality experienced as so much deeper and richer than the soul can ever express, is specifically different from any sense of *uncertainty* as to the existence and the superhuman nature of the Reality underlying and occasioning this apprehension. Healthy mysticism and genuine scepticism are thus intrinsically opposites.

— 41, “Religion and Illusion”

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## 8. “ARGUMENT” FROM DESIRE

CSL – *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, 1943 Preface

» VON HÜGEL:

I now propose to concentrate ... upon the Evidential, Revelational quality of religion, intimations of Superhuman Reality, and to meet more systematically the chief objections to the trans-human validity of these intimations. ... The intima-

tions we here study are of a Superhuman Ultimate Reality; and this ultimate reality, in proportion as religion grows deeply and delicately religious, is apprehended as good, happy and holy. ... The argument gets under way only upon the admission that religion, in fact, is always penetrated by these intimations; and the argument reaches port the moment these intimations are allowed really to be what they themselves claim to be.

— 42, “Religion and Reality”

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## 9. PHILOSOPHY COMING ALIVE

CSL – “Is Theism Important?": “Thus we must admit that Faith” etc.

– *Surprised by Joy*, chapter 14: “the dry bones in that dreadful valley of Ezekiel’s”

– “The Language of Religion”

» VON HÜGEL:

[I]n the Theory of Knowledge and in Logic, and again in *Æsthetics*, ... the worlds of the trans-subjectively True and the trans-subjectively Beautiful are as truly necessary presuppositions as is a world of the trans-subjectively Good a necessary presupposition in ethics.

Now even with these three more-than-simply-subjective worlds we have not, it is true, yet reached the Self-conscious Spirit experienced by Religion. But we have thus established important points. ... [H]aving got as far as those three revelations, it is exceedingly difficult for men at large to retain a vivid faith in those three worlds, and yet deliberately to reject the revelation of Self-conscious Spirit offered to them by Religion. True, ... Fichte, continuously so sure of the reality and more than human character of the Moral World, tells us ... that “this faith is faith full and entire. ... There is no ground in reason for going beyond such a Moral Cosmic Order, and, by means of a conclusion from the effect to the cause, to assume, in addition, a Particular Being as this cause.” But then we are left thus at the surely strange, highly abstract, more or less mythical, conception of “an active Ordering”. We are thus given an Order which is not a mere *Orderedness*, in which case God and world would be one, and there would be no God; but an Order which is an *active Ordering*, which is, in so far, distinct from the world it orders; and yet an Ordering which neither is, nor implies, an *Orderer*. ... But ... [i]nsistence upon this *intermezzo*, as the ultimate analysis of man’s entire legitimate experience, becomes indeed something doctrinaire and contradicts the general method and temper which have led the mind to the point attained, if we will maintain it even after we have been brought face to face with the massive, varied, persistent witness of the religious sense and life. ... Fichte indeed bids us ... to beware lest, by our hypothesis of a Personal God, we make the first of all

objective cognitions, the most certain of all certainties, to depend upon “ingenious pleadings (*Klügelei*).” Yet ... Fichte here confounded philosophical thinking and the general idea of religiousness with the specifically religious experiences themselves. Theological deductions and speculations have indeed at times articulated or analysed, in “ingenious” ways, the deepest and most delicate experiences of living religion. Yet these experiences themselves always present their object as overflowing existent; and, in proportion as spirituality becomes more conscious of its own requirements and more sensitively discriminating, this object is apprehended as perfect Self-conscious Spirit, as very Source of all existence and reality.

— 54-55, “Religion and Reality”

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## 10. COUNTING THE COST

CSL – *Mere Christianity*, Book IV, chapter 9

– *Surprised by Joy*, chapter 14: “a prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful”

» VON HÜGEL:

I believe that not to be aware of the costliness, to unspiritualised man, of the change from his self-centredness, from *anthropocentrism* to *theocentrism*, means not only a want of awakesness to the central demand of religion, but an ignorance or oblivion of the poorer, the perverse, tendencies of the human heart.

— 13, “Responsibility in Religious Belief” (1920)

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## 11. MERE SURVIVAL

CSL – *Surprised by Joy*, chapter 10: “human survival”

– *Surprised by Joy*, chapter 15: the “training of the Jews”

– *Letters to Malcolm*, chapter 14

» VON HÜGEL:

It is certainly, at first sight, very remarkable that the fantastic abnormality of the form and method, which characterises all animistic and spiritualist practices, would habitually yield so less than a normal, so shrunken, banal, and boring a content. Yet such a method cannot fail to reach no further than this very little distance.

The simple fact, assuredly, is that the soul, *qua* religious, has no interest in just simple unending existence, of no matter what kind or of a merely natural kind – an existence with God at most as the dim background to a vivid experience of its own unending natural existence. The specifically religious desire of Immortality begins, not with Immortality, but with God; it rests upon God; and it ends in God. The religious soul does not seek, find or assume its own Immortality; and thereupon seek, find, or assume God. But it seeks, finds, experiences, and loves God; and because of God, and of this, its very real though still very imperfect, intercourse with God – because of these experiences which lie right within the noblest joys, fears, hopes, necessities, certainties which emerge within any and every field of its life here below – it finds, rather than seeks, Immortality of a certain kind. The very slow but solidly sure, the very sober but severely spiritual, growth of the belief in Immortality amongst the Jews, a belief fully endorsed and greatly developed by our Lord, was entirely thus – not from Immortality of no matter what kind to God, but from God to a special kind of Immortality. Especially does Christ always keep God and the Kingdom of God central, as the beginning and end of all, and the Immortality peripheral, as but the extension and full establishment of the soul's supernatural union with, and of its supernatural activity towards, God and man.

— 196-197, “What do we mean by Heaven / Hell?”

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## 12. FREEDOM OR NECESSITY?

CSL – *Surprised by Joy*, chapter 15  
– *Collected Letters II*, 464

» VON HÜGEL:

... something beyond responsibility. Nothing is grander, in the development of the human outlook, so long as such development is fully, finely Christian ... than the ineradicable implication, and the growing articulation, of the difference between Imperfect and Perfect Liberty. All through the great movement we can trace the operation of the twin facts that man is by his Nature constituted in Imperfect liberty, but that the same man is called by Grace to the love of, and the indefinite approximation to, the Perfect Liberty of God. ... Thus the Liberty of Choice is an imperfect kind of liberty, and Perfect Liberty consists in willing fully and spontaneously the behests of a perfect nature, and in the incapacity to will otherwise. Hence the more arbitrary an act, the less really free it is.

— 16-17, “Responsibility in Religious Belief”

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### 13. ETERNAL NOW

CSL – *Mere Christianity*, Book IV, chapter 3  
– *Miracles*, Appendix B

» VON HÜGEL:

A man's religion, in proportion to its depth, will move in a Concrete Time which becomes more and more a Partial Simultaneity. And these his depths then more and more testify to, and contrast with, the Fully Simultaneous God. Because man thus lives, not in an ever-equal chain of mutually exclusive moments, in Clock Time, but in Duration, with its variously close interpenetrations of the successive parts ... he can, indeed he must, conceive absolutely perfect life as absolutely simultaneous. God is thus not Unending, but Eternal; the very fullness of His life leaves no room or reason for succession and our poor need of it. ... We need only persistently apprehend this Simultaneity as essential to God, and Succession as varyingly essential to all creatures, and there remains no difficulty – at least as regards the Time-element – in the doctrine of Creation. For only with the existence of creatures does Time thus arise at all – it exists only in and through them.

— 93, “Progress in Religion” (1916)

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### 14. TRANSPOSITION AND MIRACLES

CSL – controversy with Owen Barfield  
– “Transposition”  
– *Miracles*, chapter 13: “If in giving such weight to the sense of fitness...”

» VON HÜGEL:

All our previous considerations have prepared us thus to conceive Reality as, in proportion to its depth, an ever nearer and nearer approach to the Concrete Universal, to the unique embodiment of a universally valuable type; to discover, in this tendency, throughout the successive stages of realities, to ever increasing typical uniqueness, the increasingly large operation of the actually extant Concrete Universal, God; and to recognise, as we retrace these stages, that neither does God's Spirit live all aloof from man's spirit, nor does man's spirit live all aloof from man's body or from this physical body's physical environment. On the contrary, throughout reality, the greater works in and with and through the lesser, affecting and transforming this lesser in various striking degrees and ways. To at least this degree in these ways does Miracle, and the belief in Miracle, thoroughly belong to the permanent experience of mankind, and to the adequate analysis of this experience.

— 58, “Religion and Reality”

... The Unincarnate God has ... a wider range, though a less deep message, than the Incarnate God; and these two Gods are but one and the same God; and these two Gods are but one and the same God, Who, mysteriously, mostly slowly and almost imperceptibly, prepares or supplements, expresses and otherwise aids Himself, in each way by the other way. Thus though of course far from all that passed and passes for Religion in Paganism can be held by us to be, in its degree and manner, true and right – to be capable of Christianisation, indeed itself to serve the fuller apprehension and service of God and of man; yet *some* of the great Greek thinkers' thinking, of the great Roman lawyers' legislation, of the Græco-Roman later religious philosophies and cults, in very deed sprang from the Unincarnate God to serve and supplement the God Incarnate. Only then can we be freed from anxiety, and can we sincerely rejoice and be confirmed in our faith in God the Omnipresent, when we discover how largely the Old Testament Book of Wisdom borrows from Plato, how appreciable is St. Paul's indebtedness to the Greek Mysteries, how much in the form of the Fourth Gospel comes from Philo, how greatly Tertullian learnt from Roman Law, how important was St. Augustine's indebtedness to Plotinus, how almost wholesale was the Dionysian writer's incorporation of Proclus, and how systematic and gratefully avowed was St. Thomas of Aquino's utilisation of Aristotle. ... Christianity could not otherwise have lived and thriven in this world ...

— 134-135, "The Apocalyptic Element in the Teaching of Jesus" (1919)

To the (doubtless many) men who are not aware that they are actually serving Christ in their heroic service of their suffering fellow-creatures, to men, then, who presumably do not all know the historic Jesus or who do not perceive Him to be the Christ, Christ the King says at the judgment "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Inasmuch as ye have done these things unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" ...

— 222-223, "What do we mean by Heaven / Hell?"

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## 15. PERSONALITY AND ANTHROPOMORPHISM

CSL – *Mere Christianity*, Book I, chapter 4, "What lies behind the Law"

- "Dogma and the Universe": "We are in no position to draw up maps of God's psychology" etc.
- "The Seeing Eye"
- *Letters to Malcolm*, chapter 15

» VON HÜGEL:

As to the Personal God, it has now become a prevalent fashion angrily to proclaim, or complacently to assume, the utter absurdity of anything Personal about the infinite; since Personality, of every degree and kind, essentially implies, indeed largely consists of, limitations of various kinds, and is a gross anthropomorphism the moment we apply it to anything but man himself. Yet it is interesting to note the readiness with which these same thinkers will hypostatise parts, or special functions, of our human personality, and will indeed do so largely with concepts which we know to be specially characteristic of spatially extended bodies. Thus Thought or Love or Law, or even Substance, nothing of all this is, for such thinkers, anthropomorphic or sub-human; but anything personal is rank anthropomorphism. Yet it is only self-conscious spirit that we know well, since it alone do we know from within. Self-conscious spirit is immensely rich in content; and self-conscious spirit is by far the widest and yet deepest reality known to us at all. True, Natural Science and even Philosophy do not, of themselves, fully find the Personal God, since Natural Science is not, as such, busy with the like ultimate questions, and since Philosophy (as we shall show presently) appears, of itself, to bring us indeed to certain more than human orders or laws, but hardly fully to the Orderer. But there is nothing intrinsically unreasonable in thinking of the ultimate Cause, Ground and End of the world as certainly not less than, as somehow not all unlike, what we know our own self-conscious mind, feeling and will to be, provided we keep the sense that God is certainly not just one Object amongst other objects, or even simply one Subject amongst other subjects; and that, though variously present and operative in all subjects and objects, He is not only more perfect than, but distinct and different from, them all. In so thinking we find in, or we attribute to, the supreme Reality what we ourselves possess that is richest in content, that is best known to us, and that is most perfect within our own little yet real experience – we have done what we could; and life and history abound with warnings how easy it is here to go apparently further and to fare in fact very much worse.

— 49-50; “Religion and Reality”

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## 16. HEAVEN, HELL, AND PURGATORY

CSL – *The Problem of Pain*, chapters 8 and 10

– *Letters to Malcolm*, chapter 14: “Servile fear is, to be sure, the lowest form” etc.

» VON HÜGEL:

The saved spirits will thus, according to their supernatural call and of their supernatural establishment within it, be quasi-simultaneous in their intelligence, feeling, volition, acts, effectuations. ... The lost spirits will persist, according to the degree of their permanent self-willed defection from their supernatural call, in the all but mere changingness, scatteredness, distractedness, variously characteristic of their self-elected earthly life.

... The saved spirits will ... be supported, environed, penetrated by the Supreme Reality and by the keenest sense of this Reality. This sense of God ... will evoke continuous acts and habits – an entire state – of a responsive self-givingness in the soul itself. ... The lost spirits will persist ... in the varyingly all but complete self-centredness and subjectivity of their self-elected earthly life. But now they will feel, far more fully than they ever felt on earth, the stuntedness, the self-mutilation, the imprisonment involved in this their endless self-occupation and jealous evasion of all reality not simply their own selves.

... The saved spirits ... will receive, exercise, enjoy, aid, and complete a richly various, deep and tender, social life with fellow souls. ... The lost spirits will persist, in their claimfulness and envious self-isolation, in their niggardly pain at the sight or thought of the unmatched greatness and goodness of other souls.

... The saved spirits in the Beyond will doubtless no further know suffering and pain, temptation and risk and fall ... And yet it is not difficult to find, within the deepest characteristics of the human soul even upon earth and the most certain and most dominant conditions of the Other Life, operative causes for the continuance in Heaven itself of the essentials in the nobility furnished by devoted suffering and self-sacrifice here below. ... Hence, even in Heaven, there remains, for the saved soul, room and the need to transcend itself, to lose itself, that it may truly find itself. ... And ... such plunges of the soul there into God, and the somewhat similar goings-out there of the same soul to its fellow souls ... are the equivalents there of men's heroic plunges here ... into the instincts and intuitions (as yet relatively obscure) of a fuller love and service of God and men. ... The lost souls are left to the pain of stainedness and self-contractions; they do not attain to, since they do not really will, the suffering of purification and expansive harmonisation. For man, once he is supernaturally awakened, cannot escape pain; he can only choose between the pain of fruitful growth, expansion, tension ... and the aches of fruitless stunting, contraction, relaxation, the dull and dreary, or the angry and reckless, drifting in bitter sweet unfaithful or immoral feelings, acts, habits, which, thus indulged, bring even-increasing spiritual blindness, volitional paralysis and a living death. ... [E]ven in Heaven there is a certain analogue to the genuine cost in the real gain traceable within the deepest acts of the human soul whilst here on earth.

— 215-219, “What do we mean by Heaven / Hell”?

[T]he grace of God and Christ ... will, in most cases, work slowly within innumerable new acts of mine, acts contrary in character to those old habits, and within a long self-discipline which now, step by step, retraces the pervious long self-dissipation of the soul. Purgatory is thus, so far at least, a sheer fact for the soul in its relation to God during this life. But it is not reasonable to assume a radical change or supersession of so fundamental a spiritual law at the death of the body, except under the constraint of some very definite and unanswerable reason. Such a reason is not forthcoming. And hence I can find no serious ground to deny the reality of a similar Purgatory for the same soul in face of the same God in the other life. And if Purgatory exists also in the Beyond, then most of the supernaturally called souls will presumably go, at death, not to Hell, nor, in the first instance, to Heaven, but, first of all, to Purgatory.

— 203, “What do we mean by Heaven / Hell?”

We must first of all remember ... that the question concerning the final destination of man, as such, is not identical with the question concerning the final condition of particular human beings. Hence it is quite beside the mark to bring up the cases of little children, of idiots, of pure savages. We must also not forget that there need be no real question of Hell even for the majority of the supernaturally awakened souls, if there actually exists a state and process of purgation in the Beyond, as there undoubtedly exists such a state and process here. Yet these provisos do not eliminate the real possibility of Hell, as the general rule, where-soever is a real possibility of Heaven; they leave Heaven and Hell as a generally inter-related couple.

— 207, “What do we mean by Heaven / Hell?”

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## 17. GOOD AND EVIL NOT IN BALANCE

CSL – “Evil and God”

– *Mere Christianity*, Book II, chapter 2

» VON HÜGEL:

Evil, and the evil effects of Evil, are, indeed, not the mere absence of Good and of the good effects of Good; Evil is in truth a force and positive – it is an actual perversion, and not an abolition, of the efficacious will. Yet Evil and its effects are not as fully and concentratedly evil, as Good and its effects are full and concentrated. If this were false, Manichaeism would be true, and Evil would fully balance Good. According to all Theism, and especially all Christianity, the Good, if not sheerly all-powerful, is, at the least, more powerful for good than is the Evil for evil. No doubt, the absolute parallelism of form present in certain of our Lord’s declarations concerning Heaven and Hell, as these are given in St. Mark

and St. Matthew, and as they operate in practically all the popular echoes and expansions of these declarations ever since their utterance, would, if pressed, rule out this discrimination; yet such a discrimination cannot otherwise be seriously refuted from any sensitively Christian premisis. We shall thus indeed admit an Evil and a Suffering in the Lost, in correspondence to the respective Good and Happiness of the Saved; but we shall carefully guard against finding that Evil and Suffering to be as full and as concentrated as is this Good and Happiness.

— 214-215, “What do we mean by Heaven / Hell?”

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## 18. IS PAIN A PROBLEM?

CSL – *The Problem of Pain*, chapter 1

» VON HÜGEL:

... in Paper No. 4 I have attempted to show how the reality of Evil is beyond any direct explanation by anyone – the true state of affairs here is not that believers can explain and that unbelievers cannot explain, still less that Christians cannot explain but that sceptics can. No: but that Christianity does, if something other, yet something more than explain Evil. Christianity has immensely increased the range and depth of our insight as to Evil; and, at the same time, Christianity alone has given man the motives and the power not only to trust on, unshaken, in the spiritual sun, in God, in spite of these sun spots of Evil, but to transform Evil into an instrument of Good.

— x, Preface

And let it be noted carefully: the greatest theoretical difficulty against all Theism lies in the terrible reality of Evil; and yet the deepest adequacy, in the actual toil and trouble of life, of this same Theism, especially of Christianity, consists in its practical attitude towards, and success against, this most real Evil. Pantheism, on the contrary, increases, whilst seeming to surmount, the theoretical difficulty, since the world as it stands, and not an Ultimate Reality behind it, is here held to be perfect; and it entirely fails really to transmute Evil in practice. Theism, no more than any other outlook, really explains Evil; but it alone, in its fullest, Jewish-Christian forms, has done more, and better, than explain Evil: it has fully faced, it has indeed greatly intensified, the problem, by its noble insistence upon the reality and heinousness of Sin; and it has then overcome all this Evil, not indeed in theory, but in practice, by actually producing, in the midst of deep suffering and through a still deeper faith and love, souls which are the living expression of the deepest beatitude and peace.

— 93-94, “Progress in Religion”

Pray believe me here: it is to Christianity that we owe our deepest insight into the wondrously wide and varied range throughout the world, as we know it, of pain, suffering, evil; just as to Christianity we owe the richest enforcement of the fact that, in spite of all this, God *is*, and that He is good and loving. And this enforcement Christianity achieves, at its best, by actually inspiring soul after soul, to believe, to love, to live this wondrous faith.

Hence all attempts to teach Christianity anything on this central matter of pain and suffering would be, very literally, to “teach one’s grandmother to suck eggs.” For the very existence of the problem – I mean man’s courage to face it, together with sensitiveness as to its appalling range and its baffling mystery – we owe, not to philosophy nor to science, still less to their won untutored hearts, but to religion – above all to the Jewish and Christian religion.

— 113, “Preliminaries to Religious Belief”

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## 19. APOCALYPSE NOT NOW

CSL – “The World’s Last Night”

– “Some Thoughts”

– *Mere Christianity*, Book III, chapter 10, “Hope”

» VON HÜGEL:

The more ancient is a New Testament document, the more clearly does it announce, or the more intimately does it imply, such a keen expectation of a Proximate Second Coming of Christ; indeed the Synoptic Gospels report words of Our Lord himself, of a lapidary emphasis, which His hearers evidently took in the same sense. I have ventured here to study this difficult question, because, although, as with the problem of Evil, I do not know any direct and simple solution of it, yet I stoutly believe in the solidity of the delimitations and of the utilisations proposed, and that the full and vivid, operative faith in Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life, remain as genuinely grounded in reason and as entirely possible to feeling, after recognition of the facts concerned with the Parousia, as does the faith in God, the all powerful and all good, remain well grounded and entirely possible, in full confrontation of the still wider and deeper facts concerning Evil.

— x-xi, Preface

Religion achieves its fullest power and balance only in the completest interaction of God, Christ, Church; and yet each of these great sides and stages of religion contains severally a difficulty so profound and obstinate as to be, in strictness, capable only of delimitation and discrimination – of being rendered bearable for the sake of the light and the power which surround the burden and the darkness;

but incapable, I believe, of any quite direct and entirely clear, easy and readily transferable solution. ... [As regards the second “great side and stage of religion”, Christ,] there stands the reality of Jesus and of His immense attraction and beneficence; but there stands at this place also the reality of the *Parousia* – of all the fantastic-seeming teaching concerning a very near universal cataclysm and cosmic regeneration, with Jesus Himself as the visible centre of overwhelming power. ...

... [A]t and after Caesarea Philippi [Mark 8:27 and parallels] Jesus, with ever increasing clearness, implies or insists upon *three distinct and several cataclysms*; historical criticism is doubtless right in refusing to identify any two of them. ... [first,] His own resurrection after His own passion and death ... [secondly,] the early destruction of the Temple ... [thirdly,] a proximate, sudden, God-worked end of the then extant world generally, with Himself descending from heaven as judge of all mankind at this great assize.

Now this Second Coming is an entirely original conception of Jesus Himself ... No Jew had ever before Jesus applied Daniel 7:13 to a personal Messiah ... The personal application is the original work of Jesus, and of the Jesus of the second period. So far all the critics agree with emphasis. There is, however, another doctrine which Jesus launches simultaneously ... which, I know not really why, is less confidently held, by these same critics, to be Jesus’s own discovery – the doctrine of the Suffering Messiah. Nevertheless it is certain that the first Jewish attribution known to us of Isaiah 53 (the Suffering Servant) to a Personal Messiah is that of Trypho in St. Justin’s dialogue, written not before A.D. 155 ...

— 119-124, “The Apocalyptic Element in the Teaching of Jesus” (1919)

We have now accumulated a mass of pressing difficulties, of poignant questions. At bottom they raise the problem not merely of Jesus’s Divinity, or at least of His Inerrancy even with regard to matters of directly religious import, but primarily of the soundness and sanity of His human mind. And even if we succeed in finding room for such teaching within His mind, as the convictions of a supremely sane Jew of well-nigh two thousand years ago, what possible use, what present-day appeal, can we unforcedly still discover in these strange-sounding propositions? And if we do not make some such discovery, is not even the simply human attraction of Jesus ruined, for ourselves, in these our days, beyond all hope repair?

[1] ... a real Incarnation of God in man can only mean Incarnation in some particular human nature. ... [T]he Revealer could not but imagine, think, feel and will the deepest truths and facts of His mission with Jewish categories, images, emotions.

[2] ... A proximate sharp testing awaits His hearers; but it will be a testing of, at best, an entire long life of persistent faithfulness.

[3] ... [T]he Kingdom, with its categories of intense proximity, suddenness and cataclysm, soon ceased to be central, even in the minds of Christians, for the

simple reason that the given visible world persisted in lasting; that the vehemence of this group of teachings could not be maintained for long, if the gentler characteristics of the other group of teaching – equally the utterance of Jesus Himself – were to have their full realisation: and that Jesus Himself had given unequivocal indications as to how he would envisage, how He would organise, permanent Christian institutions, did the permanence of the world require – as, in fact, it was now requiring – a corresponding permanence of the Christian organisation.

[4] ...[T]he Suffering of the Messiah, and the Return of this same Messiah in Power and Majesty ... first appear at Caesarea Philippi in a close interconnection; let us always keep them thus, as but two constituents of one great fact and law ... Without the Cross, Jesus could not ask as much of us, His followers, as He actually does; without the Crown, He would but teach an heroic Stoicism.

— 124-130, “The Apocalyptic Element”

... Doubtless God, in His intrinsic nature, is non-successive, is outside Time; doubtless men themselves, in rare moments, can and do experience something like an arrest, an overleaping of succession; and indeed unless man possessed some such faculty, he could not so vividly apprehend God and religions as do all the Mystics. But ... [M]an never does nor can get away, for long, from all succession ...

... [N]othing could be more anti-mystical than is the Proximate Futurism of the authentic Jesus. This Proximate Futurism stands out massively against all pure Immanentism, all Evolution taken as final cause and not merely as instrument and method. ... [T]he magnificent massiveness of the anti-Pantheism here, is a permanent service to religion of the very first magnitude.

... There is God, at bottom unchanging, an overflowing richness of ever simultaneous life. And there is man capable of, called to, about to be tested concerning, stability – a persistent successiveness of devoted life. The suddenness is only in the testing and in conversions to a persistent devotedness; and the very Suddenness, in these cases, springs from the need to express a junction between the Simultaneity of God and the Successiveness, however steady, of man. Thus the two points essential to every real Mysticism are secured, but this in such a combination with other conditions as to render impossible all direct derivation of pure Mysticism or Pantheism from the historical Jesus.

... The Unincarnate God has ... a wider range, though a less deep message, than the Incarnate God; and these two Gods are but one and the same God ... [This affords] a full Christian justification for the successive enlargements of man’s conception of the world of time and space, and of man’s own and of God’s own relation to this same world. ... Such an expansion appears imperative if the deep and tender universalism of the Gospel is not itself to come to appear a parochial sentimentalism. ... [S]urely, a religion is doomed which can furnish no emotion appropriate to what I see and surmise every time I look up at the stars at

night. ... Even in the Synoptic Gospels alone we get adumbrations and pictures of differing historical provenance and which are more or less incapable of complete harmonisation ... We see from these facts how wide was the freedom and how rich the choice for the Christian Church in its development of a Christian Eschatology.

We can, next, note that all the Christian Eschatological views fall, roughly, into two classes – *the Renovated Earth, the Millenarian Expectation*; and *Heaven, Purgatory, Hell*, which, more and more in the great orthodox Christian bodies, have, in practice, supplanted the former. ... The Heaven class has more and more come to be felt by Christians of delicate spirituality and wide general cultivation to be the simpler, the more spiritual view, indeed to be the one which most adequately draws out the deepest implications and needs of Theism in general and of Jesus's own great central teachings in particular. ...

As with the change from Kingdom to Church, so with that from a Renovated Earth to Heaven, we may rest very sure that the deepest reasons and needs slowly determined the Church in this direction. In both, closely interrelated, cases we can, by living the spirit of Jesus, discover how preservative of precisely this spirit are these modifications of the letter. And especially does the great alternative of Heaven-Hell remain true to the whole gist and drift of Jesus's teaching and to the growth of this teaching from first to last, since this teaching was never simply a revelation of a divine cosmic process of universal redemption, but always a warning, an awakening to, a costly, profound alternative of, right or wrong self-determination in view of God's gift and God's call and testing. ... [T]he Millenarianisms of the last sixty years or so, have practically all been without precisely what gave greatness and depth to Jesus's entire Eschatology. ... [W]e will not wish, even if we could, to encourage an Immanentist Millenarianism, an outlook from which have disappeared Alternative, Choice, Preparation, Gift and God.

Indeed even the religiously intended, religious coloured Millenarianism, will not really work. ... Dr. F. Bradley has acutely pointed out that Human Perfection, taken thus absolutely, as a condition attainable suddenly, completely: that such an idea of progress is not a cause of an effect of Theism properly understood, but always its substitute. You can have as your centre God; or you can have as your centre such sudden and complete human Progress and Perfection: you cannot have both. But Theism remains fully compatible with man's indefinite improveableness, indeed improvement. Religious men, provided they care still more for direct spiritual conditions, cannot care too much for the social, earthly betterment of their fellows ... In this way our religion will be also thoroughly social; but it will bring to this its social outlook a special balance and sanity, a freedom from exaltations and cynicisms, and indestructible, sober, and laborious hopefulness, which, surely, constitute exactly the combination so much required and so rare to find.

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20. THE IRISHMAN'S STOVE

CSL – *The Abolition of Man*, chapter 3

» VON HÜGEL:

... [L]ater stages of religion do generally look upon the earlier stages as so many sheer idolatries; and ... the strongly religious man, as such, is generally reluctant to concede an element of truth to those earlier stages. ... Yet it is plain that, unless the Irishman's argument be sound that, because a certain stove will save him half his fuel, therefore two such stoves will save it all, there is no necessary consequence from such admixture of illusion with truth to the negation of every and all truth ...

— 35, "Religion and Illusion"

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21. REGENERATE SCIENCE

CSL – *The Abolition of Man*, chapter 3

» VON HÜGEL:

... much in recent science and philosophy, and in the general movement of men's minds and requirements, points to future developments when men at large will again see in Nature (now encouraged to do so by science and philosophy themselves) not finally a mechanism, nor a blind impulsion and warfare of forces, but once again, yet now much more deeply than ever, a world which (in proportion to its degree and scale of reality) is purposive – a world indicative of, because preparatory for, mind, love and will.

— 35, "Religion and Illusion"

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22. THE SALVATION OF EMETH THE CALORMENE

CSL – *The Last Battle*, chapter 10

» VON HÜGEL:

We religious men again will have to develop, as part of our religion, a sense, not simply of the error and evil, but also of the truth and the good, in any and every man's religion. We will have to realise, with Cardinal John de Lugo, SJ, (who

died in 1660), that the members of the various Christian sects, of the Jewish and Mohammedan communions, and of the non-Christian philosophies, who achieved and achieve their salvation, did and do so in general simply by God's grace aiding their good faith instinctively to concentrate itself upon, and to practise, those elements in the cultus and teaching of their respective sect, communion or philosophy, which are true and good and originally revealed by God. And, finally, we religious men, especially we Catholic Christians, will indeed never drop the noble truth and ideal of a universal unity of cultus and belief, of one single world-wide Church, but we will conceive this our deathless faith in religious unity as being solidly realisable only if we are able and glad to recognise the rudimentary, fragmentary, relative, paedagogic truth and worth in religions other than our own, – a worth which, as regards at least Judaism and Hellenism, the Roman Church has never ceased to practise and to proclaim.

— 63, “Religion and Reality”