

ABSTRACT

Participating in Creation

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Owen Barfield has often been presented as an intellectual opponent of C. S. Lewis, but this fails to account for the complementary themes that appear in the works of these two friends, particularly themes regarding humanity in the New Creation. Owen Barfield constructs an account of human history in terms of humanity's relationship to nature, tracing patterns and themes that lead up to and then grow out from the Incarnation of Christ. On the other hand, C. S. Lewis writes often about the New Creation, but he consistently emphasizes the mystery of what is to come. By applying Barfield's idea of the evolution of consciousness to the questions Lewis raises regarding the New Creation, this thesis aims to demonstrate the rich themes that the works of these two writers draw out from one another. To this end, the thesis will begin with an explanation of Barfield's *Saving the Appearances*, followed by an application of Barfield's understanding to Lewis's treatment of the New Humanity in *Mere Christianity*, interpreted according to Lewis's other works both in fiction (*The Chronicles of Narnia* and *That Hideous Strength*) and in nonfiction (*Mere Christianity* and *Miracles*). This application leads to an expansive and imaginative understanding of the New Creation as both a present and a future reality.

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INTRODUCTION

Of Wizards and Other Questions

C. S. Lewis tells a particular story—a fairy-tale by his own reckoning—of a struggle between a well-organized scientific and industrial organization called the N.I.C.E., headquartered at a place called Belbury, and a small group of others who oppose them, led by Ransom the Director and stationed at a manor called St. Anne’s-on-the-Hill. This story appears in *That Hideous Strength*, the third and final work in Lewis’s science-fiction series. As the struggle between St. Anne’s and Belbury unfolds, hidden powers are revealed on both sides, including angels, devils, and the wizard Merlin. To prepare the reader for the unusual turns his story will take, Lewis introduces it as a fairy-tale, remarking that fairy-tales are designed to begin in ordinary contexts but find their way to fantastic events: “This is a ‘tall story’ about devilry, though it has behind it a serious ‘point’ . . . In the story, the outer rim of that devilry had to be shown touching the life of some ordinary and respectable profession.”¹ While the profession that he chooses is his own, his main task is not a commentary on professorship but rather an illustration of the dangers of any attempt to make the world increasingly scientific without heeding what may be lost in the process. On its own, the story is compelling, if a little unusual, and the point is well made. However, a few key scenes and characters provide Lewis with an opportunity to explore some rather abstract theological ideas.

¹ C. S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 7.

Two of the characters in Lewis's tale are Dr. Cecil Dimble and his wife, Mrs. Margaret Dimble, who are old friends of Ransom and who live with him at the Manor at St. Anne's. Cecil Dimble takes an imaginative view of the world's history, which corresponds well with his scholarship on historical Britain. Therefore, when the events of the novel begin to grow fantastic, Cecil reflects often on the strange matters he encounters. In one instance, the members of the N.I.C.E. awaken the wizard Merlin, expecting to make use of his power to their own ends, but the magician eludes them and takes up with Ransom at St. Anne's. Lewis includes a particular conversation between the Dimbles regarding the arrival of Merlin among them, a conversation which explores some of the possibilities—and also some of the dangers—of the magic of the past as it relates to the present time. That conversation is presented below nearly in its entirety, for the simple reason that it exemplifies very clearly the treatment of these themes within Lewis's work. The conversation begins when Margaret asks whether Merlin will be of any use to their cause, and Cecil responds,

“He's going to be able to *do* things, if that's what you mean. In that sense there's more danger of his being too much use than too little.”

“What sort of things?” asked his wife.

“The universe is so very complicated,” said Dr. Dimble.

“So you have said rather often before, dear,” replied Mrs. Dimble.

Here the two joke around for a few lines before both growing silent, until Mrs. Dimble raises the point again:

“But about Merlin?” asked Mrs. Dimble presently.

“Have you ever noticed,” said Dimble, “that the universe, and every little bit of the universe, is always hardening and narrowing and coming to a point?”

His wife waited as those wait who know by long experience the mental processes of the person who is talking to them.

“I mean this,” said Dimble, in answer to the question she had not asked.

“If you dip into any college, or school, or parish, or family--anything you like--at a given point in its history, you always find that there was a time before that point

when there was more elbow-room and contrasts weren't quite so sharp; and that there's going to be a time after that point when there is even less room for indecision and choices are even more momentous. Good is always getting better and bad is always getting worse: the possibilities of even apparent neutrality are always diminishing. The whole thing is sorting itself out all the time, coming to a point, getting sharper and harder. Like in the poem about Heaven and Hell eating into merry Middle Earth from opposite sides . . . how does it go? Something about 'eat every day . . . till all is *somethinged away*.' It can't be *eaten*, that wouldn't scan. My memory has failed dreadfully these last few years. Do you know the bit, Margery?"

"What you were saying reminded me more of the bit in the Bible about the winnowing fan. Separating the wheat and the chaff. Or like Browning's line: 'Life's business being just the terrible choice.'"

"Exactly! Perhaps the whole time-process means just that and nothing else. But it's not only in questions of moral choice. Everything is getting more itself and more different from everything else all the time. Evolution means species getting less and less like one another. Minds get more and more spiritual, matter more and more material. Even in literature, poetry and prose draw further and further apart."

Mrs. Dimble with the ease born of long practice averted the danger, ever present in her house, of a merely literary turn being given to the conversation.

"Yes," she said. "Spirit and matter, certainly. That explains why people like the Studdocks find it so difficult to be happily married."

"The Studdocks?" said Dimble, looking at her rather vaguely. The domestic problems of that young couple had occupied his mind a good deal less than they had occupied his wife's. "Oh, I see! Yes. I dare say that has something to do with it. But about Merlin: what it comes to, as far as I can make out, is this. There were still possibilities for a man of that age which there aren't for a man of ours. The earth itself was more like an animal in those days. And mental processes were much more like physical actions. And there were--well, Neutrals, knocking about."

"Neutrals?"

"I don't mean, of course, that anything can be a *real* neutral. A conscious being is either obeying God or disobeying Him. But there might be things neutral in relation to us."

"You mean *eldils*²--angels?"

"Well, the word *angel* rather begs the question. Even the *Oyéresu*³ aren't exactly angels in the same sense as our guardian angels are. Technically, they are Intelligences. The point is that while it may be true at the end of the world to describe every *eldil* either as an angel or a devil, and may even be true now, it was much less true in Merlin's time. There used to be things on this earth pursuing

² In *That Hideous Strength*, the *eldila* are supernatural interstellar beings, often likened to angels.

³ The *Oyéresu* are powerful *eldila* that rule over the planets in the solar system. Each *Oyarsa* loosely corresponds with one of the deities with which the planets are associated in mythology.

their own business, so to speak. They weren't ministering spirits sent to help fallen humanity, but neither were they enemies preying upon us. Even in St. Paul one gets glimpses of a population that won't exactly fit into our two columns of angels and devils. And if you go back further... all the gods, elves, dwarfs, water-people, *fate, longaevi*. You and I know too much to think they are just illusions."

"You think there are things like that?"

"I think there were. I think there was room for them then, but the universe has come more to a point. Not all rational things perhaps. Some would be mere wills inherent in matter, hardly conscious. More like animals. Others--but I don't really know. At any rate, that is the sort of situation in which one got a man like Merlin."

"It all sounds rather horrible to me."

"It was *rather* horrible. I mean even in Merlin's time (he came at the extreme tail end of it), though you could still use that sort of life in the universe innocently, you couldn't do it safely. The things weren't bad in themselves, but they were already bad for us. They sort of withered the man who dealt with them. Not on purpose. They couldn't help doing it. Merlinus is withered. He's quite pious and humble and all that, but something has been taken out of him. That quietness of his is just a little deadly, like the quiet of a gutted building. It's the result of having laid his mind open to something that broadens the environment just a bit too much. Like polygamy. It wasn't wrong for Abraham, but one can't help feeling that even he lost something by it."

"Cecil," said Mrs. Dimble, "do you feel quite comfortable about the Director's using a man like this? I mean, doesn't it look a little bit like fighting Belbury with its own weapons?"

"No. I *had* thought of that. Merlin is the reverse of Belbury. He's at the opposite extreme. He is the last vestige of an old order in which matter and spirit were, from our modern point of view, confused. For him every operation on Nature is a kind of personal contact, like coaxing a child or stroking one's horse. After him came the modern man to whom Nature is something dead--a machine to be worked, and taken to bits if it won't work the way he pleases. Finally come the Belbury people, who take over that view from the modern man unaltered and simply want to increase their power by tacking on to it the aid of spirits--extra-natural, anti-natural spirits. Of course they hoped to have it both ways. They thought the old *magia* of Merlin, which worked in with the spiritual qualities of Nature, loving and reverencing them and knowing them from within, could be combined with the new *goeteia*--the brutal surgery from without. No. In a sense, Merlin represents what we've got to get back to in some different way."⁴

Throughout this conversation, Dr. Dimble presents a view of history in which the past was very unlike the present. Lewis has raised the problem of how one could account

⁴ Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*, 280-283.

for the difference of the past if it were to appear on the doorstep of the present—in the sake of Merlin, quite literally. On one hand, the concept of a truly magical past captures Lewis’s imagination, but on the other hand Lewis consistently frames such concepts as primarily imaginative. While Dr. Dimble explains his view of the changing universe, Mrs. Dimble expresses various doubts about the view itself or about its ramifications. In this way, combined with the overall fantastic tone of the novel, the reader is invited to imaginatively but seriously consider these ideas, so that by seeing the fantastic applied to their own world, they might understand their world more clearly.

Lewis ends the conversation between Dr. Dimble and his wife with a comment about Merlin, the wizard out of the past whose relation to nature was closer and more physical than that of modern man. Dimble says, “In a sense, Merlin represents what we’ve got to get back to in some different way.”⁵ Lewis does not in *That Hideous Strength* explain what that different way might be.

At times, Lewis raises questions he cannot answer to his own satisfaction, and he is often content to explore these questions in fictional settings or else to pose them as thought experiments in his nonfiction writings. However, Lewis’s friend Owen Barfield found himself drawn to some of these same questions, and he explores them eagerly. By drawing out these perspectives that Barfield views as probable and Lewis views as possible, a richer view of the insights of both authors can be found.

One such area that Barfield and Lewis explore is the philosophy of the New Creation, and particularly humanity’s place in it. Lewis discusses the New Creation explicitly in several of his works, including *Mere Christianity* and *Miracles*, as well as

⁵ Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*, 283.

illustrating his understanding of it in his fantasy stories, including *That Hideous Strength* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. For his part, Barfield constructs a historically minded account of the development of human consciousness in his *Saving the Appearances*. Barfield's account departs from the more orthodox positions and accessible arguments of Lewis, but his position finds its footing in the doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ and the recreation of humanity that results from it. The "evolution of consciousness" that Barfield espouses can be explored within the framework of Lewis's understanding of the New Creation, and in this framework, it can remain firmly rooted in the stability of Lewis's arguments. In return, by emphasizing an anthropocentric view of history within the Old Creation, within the New Creation, and in the transition between the two, Barfield's perspective strengthens Lewis's insights about the New Creation as it pertains to mankind.

CHAPTER ONE

Evolution of Consciousness

Barfield's evolution of consciousness is the idea that humanity's perspective on the world has changed from original participation, by which man was created to directly experience meaning in the world around him as revelation from God, to final participation, for which man is being remade according to the incarnated Creator. In original participation, man need not think about meaning or seek to make sense of nature. He may still do so, but his direct perception of God's creation would be according to God's will and revelation. This, according to Barfield, is what was intended for man and woman when they were placed in the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve sinned, they chose to perceive the world in a way that did not align with God's will, and their original participation in Creation was broken. But original participation did not cease. Rather, man's direct perception of meaning and spirituality in the world continued, causing him to perceive a world that was intensely spiritual. Over time, man developed ways of separating himself from nature, cutting himself off from that original participation. This separation, Barfield suggests, was effected gradually, reaching its culmination at the Scientific Revolution, but it was not the Scientific Revolution that caused its completion, but rather the Incarnation of God.⁶

This evolution of consciousness is an account of human history in terms of man's participatory relation to nature and to God. Participation, for Barfield, is the key to

⁶ Owen Barfield, *Saving the Appearances* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965), 183-186.

understanding humanity's changing experience throughout history. Though this participation has changed forms, he suggests that it has always existed, continuing even through the present time. The main difference between the participation of the past and that of the present is that participation was once a conscious experience, whereas now it is barely acknowledged, usually being denied entirely.

Barfield takes the term "participation" from the anthropologists Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and Émile Durkheim, along with the idea of "collective representations."⁷ These two concepts make up the main substance of Barfield's argument, so they are worth exploring in detail. However, in order to make sense of these ideas as Barfield presents them, his broader view of human perceptive experience must first be established.

Barfield recognizes that man experiences the world around him by merit of his senses. These senses are stimulated by elements of the world he inhabits, and these sensations form an experience within him, perceived as phenomena. However, these phenomena are not the world itself, and they should not be conflated with it. The image or sound or taste of an object in the mind of a beholder is not the object. These phenomena are rather representations of the objects perceived. Barfield uses rainbows to illustrate this distinction:

Look at a rainbow. While it lasts, it is, or appears to be, a great arc of many colours occupying a position out there in space. It touches the horizon between that chimney and that tree; a line drawn from the sun behind you and passing through your head would pierce the centre of the circle of which it is part.

⁷ Despite being indebted to their concepts, Barfield is careful to distance himself from Lévy-Bruhl's and Durkheim's arguments and conclusions, as well as from many of those in their tradition, especially Carl Jung. On page 33, Barfield writes: "If I have drawn heavily on these two writers, I have done so by way of illustration rather than argument. It is not very difficult to see what they mean and, by seeing what they mean, the reader may possibly be helped to see what *I* mean." He cites Lévy-Bruhl's *Les Fonctions Mentales dans les Sociétés Inférieures*, translated into English under the title *How Natives Think*, and Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*.

And now, before it fades, recollect all you have ever been told about the rainbow and its causes, and ask yourself the question *Is it really there?*

You know, from memory, that if there were a hillside three or four miles nearer than the present horizon, the rainbow would come to earth in front of and not behind it; that, if you walked to the place where the rainbow ends, or seems to end, it would certainly not be “there.” In a word, reflection will assure you that the rainbow is the outcome of the sun, the raindrops and your own vision.⁸

A rainbow is a clear example of something that exists because it is seen. This is not to say that unless there is an observer, there is nothing at all in place of the rainbow. But there is only a *rainbow* when someone experiences it. The phenomenon—that is, the arc of concentric colors that is called a “rainbow”—is a representation in an observer’s mind of light interacting with water droplets. Without the observer, there still exist light and matter, but there is no rainbow.⁹ Such light and matter, without an observer to perceive one aspect of them or another, Barfield calls either “the particles”¹⁰ or “the unrepresented.”¹¹ It is the unrepresented world that human beings perceive, but that perception occurs as a series of representations, meaning that the unrepresented can never be perceived as such.

The rainbow, however, is merely an example, as Barfield maintains that every phenomenon experienced by man is a representation dependent on his experience. Barfield asserts generally that “whatever may be thought about the ‘unrepresented’ background of our perceptions, the *familiar* world which we see and know around us—the blue sky with white clouds in it, the noise of a waterfall or a motor-bus, the shapes of

⁸ Barfield, 15.

⁹ Barfield, 16.

¹⁰ Barfield, 16.

¹¹ Barfield, 17.

flowers and their scent, the gesture and utterance of animals and the faces of our friends—the world too, which... experts of all kinds methodically investigate—is a system of collective representations.”¹² Human beings cannot know the world *per se*; rather, they know it by means of the representations constructed from their perceptions.

When representations exist not only in the mind of one individual but are also perceived and communicated by a community of individuals, these are called “collective representations.”¹³ Collective representations are formed when individuals within a community support or contest one another’s representations, gaining a general consensus as to the nature of the world they perceive: “Besides producing representations in perception and memory, men reproduce them in their language and art; it is, indeed, in this way that the representations become collective. Through language and traditional art we come without effort to share in the collective representations of our own age and our own community.”¹⁴ Members of a community can refer to their common language and experience because of this collective reference frame, their particular system of collective representations that make up the phenomenal world they perceive. This phenomenal world is distinct from the phenomenal worlds of other communities that may have different collective representations, and none of these can rightly be considered identical to the unrepresented world that exists independently of mankind.

Within one’s own community, the distinction between the phenomenal world and the unrepresented world need not often be attended to because everyone shares the same

¹² Barfield, 18.

¹³ Barfield, 19.

¹⁴ Barfield, 72-73.

collective representations. However, the distinction becomes important if the collective representations of one community do not match the collective representations of another.¹⁵ While this disparity does occur among separate cultures in our own day, Barfield suggests that it exists much more significantly between our present age and ages past.

The key difference that Barfield cites between the collective representations of the modern West and those of past civilizations is the experience of participation:

It is further maintained by some [anthropologists] that the most striking difference between primitive figuration¹⁶ and ours is, that the primitive involves ‘participation,’ that is, an awareness which we no longer have, of an extra-sensory link between the percipient and the representations. This involves, not only that we think differently, but that the phenomena (collective representations) themselves are different... *We* can only remind ourselves of that participation by beta-thinking¹⁷ and we forget it again as soon as we leave off. This is the fundamental difference, not only between their thinking and ours, but also between their phenomena and ours.¹⁸

When he refers to “an extra-sensory link between the percipient and the representations,” he is referring to the role of the observer in the formation of phenomena. In the case of

¹⁵ Barfield, 28.

¹⁶ For his purposes, Barfield divides the mental activities relevant to his discussion into three categories, which he calls “figuration,” “alpha-thinking,” and “beta-thinking,” terms he says he chooses in order to “avoid confusion.” Firstly, “figuration” is an unconscious mental activity that refers to the experience of some *thing*, which he distinguishes from sensation: “mere sensations must be combined and constructed by the percipient mind into the recognizable and nameable objects we call ‘things.’ It is this work of construction which will here be called *figuration*.” Secondly, “Alpha-thinking,” unlike figuration, involves “thinking *about*” representations. It is “to treat [representations] as independent of ourselves... and to speculate about or to investigate their relations *with each other*.” Lastly, “beta-thinking,” which he likens to reflection, is considering “the *nature* of collective representations as such, and therefore about their relation to our own minds. We can think about perceiving and we can think about thinking.” So figuration is unconsciously organizing or recognizing perceptions as particular things, alpha-thinking is thinking about these things, and beta-thinking is thinking about thinking. Having established definitions for these three terms, Barfield makes use of them throughout this work (*Saving the Appearances*, 24-25).

¹⁷ See note 10 for an explanation of beta-thinking.

¹⁸ Barfield, 34-35.

the rainbow that was discussed above, the one who sees a rainbow participates in the rainbow, because without such an observer, there is not the phenomenon of a rainbow, only unrepresented light. In this way, mankind participates in the phenomenal world, constructing a world out of perception, but he does so in community, resulting in the collective representations already discussed. Barfield concludes that if communities of people are perpetually aware of and attending to this participation, their perception will be fundamentally different from communities who believe themselves to be passive observers, with no active role in the nature they observe. That is the difference, he believes, between peoples of the past and modern Western peoples.

In Barfield's scheme, the collective representations of the West, and also therefore its art and language, are defined by the ignorance of participation: "It is characteristic of our phenomena—indeed it is this, above all, which distinguishes them from those of the past—that our participation in them, and therefore also their representational nature, is excluded from our immediate awareness. It is consequently always ignored by our 'common sense' and sometimes denied even in theory."¹⁹ What he calls "common sense" suggests that the world perceived is the world as such. In the present day, the notion that the perceivable world, in being perceived, may differ from the simply existing world does not enter into the thought or experience of anyone in the Western world without active reflection or beta-thinking, as Barfield calls it.

Modern people in the West, Barfield claims, falsely consider their collective representations to represent the world as such, whereas in fact, "Actual participation is... as much a fact in our case as in that of primitive man. But...we are unaware, whereas the

¹⁹ Barfield, 40.

primitive mind is aware of it.”²⁰ If collective representations and participation are the foundations of human experience and communication, then for a community to become convinced that it does not participate in the phenomenal world is for that community to develop a system of collective representations and a corresponding language that are imbued with a false understanding of their own perception. He attributes this delusion to the modern West, going so far as to call it idolatry.

Barfield attributes the beginning of the Western collective representations to the assertion made by certain astronomers that Copernicus’ heliocentric model of the universe was the *truth* of celestial movement:

The real turning-point in history of astronomy and of science in general or something else altogether. It took place when Copernicus (probably—it cannot be regarded as certain) began to think, and others, like Kepler and Galileo, began to affirm that the heliocentric hypothesis not only saved the appearances,²¹ but was physically true. It was this, this novel idea that the Copernican (and therefore any other) hypothesis might not be a hypothesis at all but the ultimate truth, that was almost enough in itself to constitute the “scientific revolution”....

When the ordinary man hears that the Church told Galileo that he might teach Copernicanism as a hypothesis which saved all the celestial phenomena satisfactorily, but “not as being the truth,” he laughs. But this was really how Ptolemaic astronomy had been taught! In its actual place in history it was not a casuistical quibble; it was the refusal (unjustified it may be) to allow the introduction of a new and momentous doctrine. It was not simply a new theory of the nature of the celestial movements that was feared, but a new theory of the nature of theory; namely, that, if a hypothesis saves all the appearances, it is identical with truth.²²

²⁰ Barfield, 40.

²¹ “Saving the appearances,” as used by Barfield, references a common idiom that referred to the formation of hypotheses. A hypothesis was an account intended to make sense of or reconcile notable beliefs or observed phenomena, so the “appearances” were “saved” if an account satisfactorily explained the relevant observations.

²² Barfield, 50-51.

This “new theory of the nature of theory” marks the beginning of the way of thinking familiar to modern Western people. Before the Scientific Revolution, hypotheses were intended to tell stories, to give account of events and histories, and in the telling of these stories one may become acquainted with the truth to which they refer. Hypotheses were true if they “saved the appearances” according to “fundamental principles” of “true knowledge.”²³ Galileo, on the other hand, suggested that the truth of a hypothesis could be ascertained by observation, setting up the interpretation of observation as a means of constructing truth. Barfield points to this as the turning point from collective representations dominated by participation to collective representations believed to be objective.

The Scientific Revolution, as it pertains to Barfield’s evolution of consciousness, was the period in which mankind began viewing the world in terms of theory and alpha-thinking, defining perceived reality according to beliefs held about the things perceived. The systematization of alpha-thinking that resulted from the Scientific Revolution caused the collective representations to reflect the technological and scientific innovations that were taking hold of the Western imagination at the same time. Models and machines became representations of scientific progress, and these representations quickly dominated the consciousness of the West:

Geometry, applied to motion, produces the machine. Years ago the Arabs had used the Ptolemaic hypothesis, to make machines or models of the planetary system purely for the purpose of calculation. *Our* collective representations were born when men began to take the models, whether geometrical or mechanical, literally. The machine is geometry in motion, and the new picture of the heavens as a *real* machine, was made possible by parallel developments in physics, where the new theory of inertia (in its early form of “impetus”) assumed, for the first time in the history of the world, that bodies can go on moving indefinitely without

²³ Barfield, 47.

an animate or psychic “mover.” It was soon to be stamped indelibly on men’s imaginations by the circumstance of their being ever more and more surrounded by actual artificial machinery on earth. The whole point of a machine is, that, for as long as it goes on moving, it “goes on by itself” without man’s participation. To the extent therefore that the phenomena are experienced as machine, they are believed to exist independently of man, not to be participated and therefore not to be in the nature of representations. We have seen that all these beliefs are fallacious.

All this is not of course to say that science to-day conceives of nature as a machine, or even on a mechanical model. It is to say that the ordinary man has been doing just that for long enough to deprive the phenomena of those last representational overtones... which still informed them in the Middle Ages, and to eliminate from them the last traces of original participation. In doing so he has produced the mechanomorphic collective representations which constitute the Western world to-day.²⁴

Barfield does not suggest that the aim of science is to mechanize the universe, but he does suggest that the effect of science on the common collective representations has been to mechanize the universe in the minds and perceptions of Western people. When the science and technology that arise from systematic alpha-thinking dominate the thinking of an entire people, the collective representations change. When those collective representations cease to be rooted in conscious alpha-thinking, instead moving to the unconscious domain of figuration, the phenomena themselves are affected. For example, when there are no telescopes, anyone can watch celestial movements and wonder at their causes, but as soon as a scientific understanding and the accompanying models of planetary motion pervade the common experience of the night sky, people gradually begin to view celestial objects according to the science and the models. Once it becomes subconscious for a community to think of the planets in these terms, they will experience a bright planet in the night sky as an instance of the model they have learned. Their very experience of the planet—that is, the phenomenon they perceive—has changed according

²⁴ Barfield, 50-52.

to their belief about it. When this happens on a large scale, awareness of participation disappears, and in its place is a system of collective representations that are mistaken for objective perception of objects.²⁵

Before all of this, participation was experienced at one point by all human societies, and Barfield calls this participation “original participation,”²⁶ meaning by “original” simply that it was the first form of participation and the starting point of his account of the evolution of consciousness. In original participation, man was continuously conscious of his own participation in nature, an awareness that affected his entire experience. The human consciousness perceived that mankind was very like nature, so that just as perceiving the bodies and movements of other human beings indicates an unseen spirit or will even today, so perceiving the bodies and movements of nature indicated unseen spirits and wills in original participation. Man’s body was a

²⁵ One of the most notable examples of this process is the effect Darwinism on modern science. Owen Barfield dedicates a chapter of *Saving the Appearances* to “Pre-History,” arguing that scientific accounts of the history of the universe, especially accounts of that history before the appearance of human records, cannot be accounts of the universe *per se* since scientific accounts are always accounts of collective representations as they appear to those studying them. Because phenomena are dependent upon the collective representations of those who study them, the evolutionary scientific accounts really describe what phenomena would have appeared “if human beings with the collective representations characteristic of the last few centuries of western civilization had been there” (*Saving the Appearances*, 37). He does not say this makes them useless, but it does make them idolatrous. Others who have studied Barfield have taken up this point more directly. R. H. Barfield—brother to Owen Barfield—in his essay titled “Darwinism,” uses Owen Barfield’s arguments to challenge the contemporary Darwinism and Neo-Darwinism of his time. He does not seek to challenge the concept of evolution—in fact, he believes evolution to be a fact beyond doubt—but rather the assumption that natural selection is the primary motivator for all of evolution, that chance and favorability account for all the phenomena that appear in the world. He argues that this assumption lacks sufficient evidence to be as foundational as it is, yet he points out that the assumption has taken hold of the general imagination and worked its way into the collective representations of mankind, being “so common, so subconscious, and its acceptance so universal in almost all popular scientific and pseudoscientific writings, that it is difficult to specify explicit examples any more than it would be easy to find explicit evidence of belief in Newton’s theory of gravitation” (Barfield, R. H., 71). Whether or not it was true, Darwinism, especially at the time that Owen and R. H. Barfield were writing, had become such a foundational idea to scientific thought that it had worked its way into the collective representations of scientists and non-scientists alike, forming what Owen Barfield would call an idol.

²⁶ Barfield, 41.

representation of himself, and likewise were all bodies in nature. Human consciousness was not perceived as unique, but only one point at which consciousness appeared. In this way, man perceived nature as a system of representations, “on the other side” of which teemed a rich, powerful, and dangerous spiritual world.²⁷ The direct perception of such a spiritual world is the fundamental experience of original participation.

For people who perceive all things in nature as representations of spiritual beings, forces, or wills, the creation of idols, totems, and household gods is entirely natural. To participating consciousness, idols are focusing points for the supernatural, physical manifestations of spiritual existence.²⁸ However, unlike the non-participation of the modern West, which has developed from beliefs about the universe derived from observation and alpha-thinking, original participation does not stem from a belief in spiritual realities or supernatural beings, but simply from direct experience. Barfield rejects the notion that ancient peoples held particular *beliefs* that caused them to fill the world around them with spirits; whether accurately or inaccurately, they simply *perceived* the world as spiritual. There was no philosophical or scientific theory of representation in early cultures, but evidence of original participation, and the making of images as an expression thereof, can be found in some form across early cultures.²⁹

Eventually, two historical currents gradually arose, moving against original participation. One of these currents was the development of alpha-thinking that culminated in the philosophical traditions of the Greeks and Romans. Alpha-thinking—

²⁷ Barfield, 30-33, 42.

²⁸ Barfield, 33.

²⁹ Barfield, 28-32.

that is, thinking about things—requires the treatment of things in nature as objects and therefore as distinct from oneself, which is subtly antithetical to original participation:

For alpha-thinking, as I have defined it, is a thinking *about* collective representations. But when we think ‘about anything,’ we must necessarily be aware of ourselves (that is, of the self which is doing the thinking) as sharply and clearly detached from the thing thought about. It follows that alpha-thinking involves *pro tanto* absence of participation. It is in fact the very nature and aim of pure alpha-thinking to exclude participation. When, therefore, it is directed, as it has to be to start with, on phenomena determined by original participation, then, at first simply by being alpha-thinking, and at a later stage deliberately, it seeks to destroy that participation. The more so because (as we shall also see), participation renders the phenomena less predictable and less calculable.³⁰

The more that a community thinks of things as distinct from the self, the more they open the door for representations that do not assume participation. This trajectory, which found its footing in the philosophy of the Greco-Roman tradition,³¹ reached its natural culmination at the non-participation resulting from the Scientific Revolution.³²

The other current that moved against participation began in the people of Israel, whose law forbade the making of idols and graven images, despite their natural tendency to do exactly that. This current is distinct from the other in that there was no clear basis for the rejection of the participatory practice of idolatry except for a divine command. Whereas the Greek philosophers found that by considering the universe (alpha-thinking), they could learn or at least speculate about truth and divinity, the Hebrew people were taught how to interpret nature according to its position as Creation. Alpha-thinking is founded upon the idea that nature is distinct from the thinker, which leaves open the

³⁰ Barfield, 43.

³¹ Barfield, 104-105.

³² Barfield, 61-62.

possibility of conflating Creation and Creator. On the other hand, the Hebrew perspective is founded upon the idea that nature is distinct from the Creator: “Here, too, the appearances are indeed grounded in divinity; but they are not grounded in the same way. They are not appearances—still less, ‘names’—*of* God. They are things created *by* God.”³³ Considering the example of the Psalms, Barfield writes, “Everything proclaims the glory of God, but nothing represents Him. Nothing could be more beautiful, and nothing could be less Platonic.”³⁴ Despite the differences between these two cultural trajectories, they share in common the effect of breaking down the apparently natural human tendency for participation.

These two trajectories intersect when the Romans conquer the land of Israel, and at this point of intersection, Jesus is born, ushering in a new kind of participation. Barfield considers the Incarnation to be the turning point between original participation and a new kind of participation, which he calls “final participation.”³⁵ Final participation exhibits the qualities of both of the trajectories that had moved against original participation. Like the Hebrew perspective, final participation insists that the Creator is distinct from Creation, even though all of Creation may point to the Creator. At the same time, like the alpha-thinking of the Greco-Roman philosophical tradition, final participation requires that man be distinct from Creation, even while he is a part of it.³⁶ This form of participation becomes possible when the Creator takes Creation onto

³³ Barfield, 108.

³⁴ Barfield, 108.

³⁵ Barfield, 137.

³⁶ Barfield, 156-158.

himself.³⁷ When God participates in humanity, it changes humanity's relationship to nature. While in original participation man participates in nature—that which has been created—in final participation man participates in the act of creation. From the perspective of human beings in original participation, nature exists *between* human perception and supernatural reality, but when the Creator takes on humanity, the human race suddenly shares in the same relation to Creation that the Creator does.³⁸ The human perspective is now the Creator's perspective, and neither the human race nor the rest of Creation is unchanged by this shift: "Original participation fires the heart from a source outside itself; the images enliven the heart. But in final participation—since the death and resurrection—the heart is fired from within by the Christ; and it is for the heart to enliven the images."³⁹ As a result of the Incarnation, humanity takes on what Barfield terms a "directionally creator relation to nature,"⁴⁰ and the phenomenal world is enlivened anew according to the new humanity. This directionally creator relation, and final participation with it, requires the view of nature as distinct from the self that was brought about by alpha-thinking, and it also requires man to recognize the revelation of God that was given to the Hebrew people.

Though the idolatry of original participation is far less prevalent in the modern West than in the ancient world, Barfield argues that refusal to accept final participation is idolatry in its own right. He defines idolatry as "the valuing of images or representations

³⁷ Barfield, 170.

³⁸ Barfield, 169-170.

³⁹ Barfield, 172.

⁴⁰ Barfield, 132. Barfield admits to disliking this phrase but insists there is no better English term.

in the wrong way and for the wrong reasons” and an idol as “an image so valued.”⁴¹ To participate in Creation is to participate in giving meaning to what God has created, and in final participation, this is a conscious process that takes place according to the New Creation of which Christ is the first fruits.⁴² Humanity is in fact being remade according to that New Creation, so non-participation, where it appears in the modern world, is nothing more than a deception. Barfield maintains that the non-participatory scientific understanding of history propounded in modern times, in which modern man can construct a true understanding of the universe based on his observations of phenomena, is baselessly arrogant in its assumption that modern collective representations are inherently true. He holds this view because he rejects the idea that “out of all the wide variety of collective representations which are found even to-day over the face of the earth, and the still wider variety which history unrolls before us, God has chosen for His delight the particular set shared by Western man in the last few centuries.”⁴³ That arrogant self-deception is idolatry because it makes use of the creative faculties given by God to humanity to create a phenomenal world on one’s own terms, believing the phenomena to be significant in themselves rather than because of the creative work of God in which humanity participates. Reflecting upon this modern idolatry in art and poetry, Barfield writes, “Instead of setting out to smash the idols, we have tamely concluded that nothing can now be art which in any way reminds us of nature—and even that practically anything can be art, which does not. We have learned that art can represent nothing but

⁴¹ Barfield, 110.

⁴² Barfield, 126-127.

⁴³ Barfield, 38.

Man himself, and we have interpreted that as meaning that art exists for the purpose of enabling Mr. Smith to ‘express his personality.’”⁴⁴ Just as other forms of idolatry involve crafting images to revere as significant apart from God, so this new, more subversive form of idolatry involves crafting images, ostensibly apart from the Creation of God. Therefore, the use of scientific alpha-thinking to create representations, models by which people can form false phenomenal worlds and that are perceived as and believed to be ultimate, accompanied by art that reflects these personal phenomenal worlds, comprises a systematic idolatry that takes hold of the collective representations of modern people.⁴⁵

The alternative, then, is final participation. For Barfield, final participation is the aim of human development, the end of the evolution of consciousness. By it, humanity is made new according to the Incarnation of the Word, and with humanity, all of Creation. When the Word became flesh, man, who had once participated in nature, could now participate in divinity, because divinity chose to share in man’s created nature. Man is remade into the image of the Creator because the Creator assumed man’s nature. In this way, man is capable not only of participating in the significance of creation, but also in its signification.

⁴⁴ Barfield, 131.

⁴⁵ Barfield has a great respect for Romantic poetry as a foretaste of final participation and a “symptom of iconoclasm,” but considers it an immature expression of participation, perhaps excepting Coleridge. Asking what nature represents to those Romantics (Barfield specifically mentions Wordsworth) who experience nature as “alive” but not as significant, Barfield suggests, “It is because of its failure to answer this question that the true, one might say the tremendous, impulse underlying the Romantic movement has never grown to maturity; and, after adolescence, the alternative to maturity is puerility” (*Saving the Appearances*, 130-131). The scholar R. J. Reilly argues that Barfield’s criticism of Romanticism as immature stems from Barfield’s belief in the significance of time versus the Romantic notion of timelessness: “If romanticism was to fulfill its promise it had to see time as real yet not wholly different from timelessness, for it had to ‘save the appearances’ of Christianity, and Christianity means Christ and the problem of history, the junction of time and timelessness.” Barfield cannot take time as illusion because Christ came at a specific point in time. “If Christ is both symbolic and real,” Reilly writes, “his context (time, history) must also be both symbolic and real.” Therefore, though Romanticism shows signs of iconoclasm, it does not succeed in breaking down the idols.

CHAPTER TWO

Qualities of the New Creation

Introduction

The writings of C. S. Lewis span a variety of genres, but whether he was writing fiction or essay, fairy-tale or apology, he often explored ideas in his writing that he found compelling, even if in some cases he would not fully commit himself or his arguments to them. In this way, Lewis often considers tangentially the views central to his friend Owen Barfield's philosophy, treating them with respect and keen interest, but never embracing them as Barfield did. Still, in many ways Lewis's works echo or resonate with Barfield's views, and an analysis of certain points of overlap will strengthen the themes of both authors, adding depth to Lewis and stability to Barfield.

In his apologetics, Lewis seeks to remain more grounded, but he still makes use of imaginative reasoning for the purposes of explanation or illustration. The viewpoints that lie at the foundation of Barfield's philosophy were indeed thought-provoking for Lewis, so they appear throughout his arguments. Still, though he explores and makes use of the concepts of participation and an evolution of humanity's relationship to nature, he does not place these at the center of his philosophy. Instead, he uses these as building blocks upon the views he does consider foundational, so that the more speculative ideas ultimately point to truths greater than themselves.

In *Miracles*, Lewis argues firmly for a particular view of the world in which God has acted in creation throughout history. His action in creation led very purposefully to a

particular event in history, the Incarnation of Christ, and by that event, creation was made new. Lewis's historical consideration of God's intervention in creation harmonizes with Barfield's historical consideration of man's relationship to the natural world. Both authors conclude that the movement of history culminated in the Incarnation of God, and henceforth all creation was made new.

While Lewis's apologetic works primarily focus on the world and the time period in which he lived (the non-participatory world, for Barfield), he explores the possibility of past and future participatory worlds in his fantasy stories. In this way, in his fiction, Lewis applies ideas that are somewhat fantastic to fantastic worlds, and by doing this he fleshes out the merits of these ideas and also enchants the worlds he builds. In a world of magic, he can make use of images and worldviews he does not necessarily adhere to, ascribing their otherworldliness to the magical landscape of that other world and thereby demonstrating the generality of the beliefs he considers foundational without compromising them in the pursuit of interesting speculations.

In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Lewis crafts a world that is both childlike and mature, whimsical and grounded, introducing Christian themes in that world while insisting that they be applied in this one. In *That Hideous Strength*, he brings magic to this world, with its science and art that are detached from nature. By doing so, he considers the possibility that there may be—or may once have been—magic already in the world, while also illustrating the relation of non-magical humanity to the world.

In both *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *That Hideous Strength*, Lewis's philosophical speculations provide a compelling basis for creative world-building and storytelling in fantasy, but he changes tack in his nonfiction writing. Especially in his

apologetics, his speculations become illustrations of larger points. Rather than speculating freely and masking possible mistakes behind the genre of fantasy or the perspectives of specific characters, when Lewis crafts an argument, his philosophical meanderings clearly tie back to the points he believes to be foundational. In this way, Lewis makes great use of many of the same arguments that Barfield does, but the key difference lies in what each author marks as the foundational points of argument.⁴⁶

The Next Step of Evolution

In the final chapter of *Mere Christianity*, Lewis places the idea he has been developing of the New Creation in terms of the process of Evolution. By doing so, he is applying the theological concept of the New Creation to a scientific framework that will be more readily understood by his readers. This establishes the context in which he will explore the qualities of the New Creation as opposed to the Old Creation:

Everyone now knows about Evolution (though, of course, some educated people disbelieve it): everyone has been told that man has evolved from lower types of life. Consequently, people often wonder ‘What is the next step? When is the thing beyond man going to appear?’ Imaginative writers try sometimes to picture this next step—the ‘Superman’ as they call him; but they usually only succeed in picturing someone a good deal nastier than man as we know him and then try to make up for that by sticking on extra legs or arms. But supposing the next step was to be something even more different from the earlier steps than they ever dreamed of? And is it not very likely it would be? Thousands of centuries ago

⁴⁶ In an essay titled “Lewis, Truth, and Imagination,” Barfield wrote of Lewis as being “in love” with imagination, and therefore as having a tendency to “protect and insulate imagination” lest it suffer harm. As imagination’s lover, Lewis could enjoy her company and her many qualities, but he could not philosophize about her and kept her hidden away from his philosophizing. This metaphor is Barfield’s explanation for why such an imaginative thinker as Lewis never set out a theory of imagination, and in fact did not allow significant overlap between his imaginative works and his apologetic works. Because Barfield’s philosophy is entirely based upon a theory of imagination, he seems to have been baffled by Lewis’s separation of philosophy and imagination. However, as much of this thesis sets out to demonstrate, Lewis’s imaginative works serve as explorations of philosophical ideas, and his philosophical works are inundated with imagination. Though Barfield saw it as an unnatural separation, it could also be argued that Lewis simply saw the two as simply different modes of expressing the same or a similar intention, as when a bilingual person speaks one language at home and another language in the workplace. Lewis writes something to this effect in his preface to *That Hideous Strength* when he informs his readers that though he is writing a fairy tale, the point of that tale is one for which he has already argued in *The Abolition of Man*.

huge, heavily armoured creatures were evolved. If anyone had at that time been watching the course of Evolution he would probably have expected that it was going to go on to heavier and heavier armour. But he would have been wrong. The future had a card up its sleeve which nothing at that time would have led him to expect. It was going to spring on him little, naked, unarmoured animals which had better brains: and with those brains they were going to master the whole planet. They were not merely going to have more power than the prehistoric monsters, they were going to have a new kind of power. The next step was not only going to be different, but different with a new kind of difference. The stream of Evolution was not going to flow on in the direction in which he saw it flowing: it was in fact going to take a sharp bend.

Now it seems to me that most of the popular guesses at the Next Step are making just the same sort of mistake. People see (or at any rate think they see) men developing great brains and getting greater mastery over nature. And because they think the stream is flowing in that direction, they imagine it will go on flowing in that direction. But I cannot help thinking that the Next Step will be really new; it will go off in a direction you could never have dreamed of. It would hardly be worth calling a next step unless it did. I should expect not merely difference but a new kind of difference. I should expect not merely a change but a new method of producing the change. Or, to make an Irish bull, I should expect the next stage in Evolution not to be a stage in Evolution at all: should expect that Evolution itself as a method of producing change will be superseded. And finally, I should not be surprised if, when the thing happened, very few people noticed that it was happening.

Now, if you care to talk in these terms, the Christian view is precisely that the Next Step has already appeared. And it is really new. It is not a change from brainy men to brainier men: it is a change that goes off in a totally different direction—a change from being creatures of God to being sons of God. The first instance appeared in Palestine two thousand years ago. In a sense, the change is not ‘Evolution’ at all, because it is not something arising out of the natural process of events but something coming into nature from outside. But this is what I should expect. We arrived at our idea of ‘Evolution’ from studying the past. If there are real novelties in store then of course our idea, based on the past, will not really cover them. And in fact this New Step differs from all previous ones not only in coming from outside nature but in several other ways as well.⁴⁷

Lewis goes on to explain five ways that the “New Step” differs from previous ones. The five ways that the Next Step of Evolution, the next part of the history of Creation, differ from the previous steps are listed as follows:

⁴⁷ Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 218-220.

- 1) “It is not carried on by sexual reproduction.”⁴⁸ This addresses the natural history of the human race into which Christ was born and contrasts the propagation of the Old Humanity with that of the New.
- 2) “The new step, the step from being creatures to being sons, is voluntary.”⁴⁹ This opens the door for discussions of human choice and the significance of choice in humanity’s recreation.
- 3) “[Christ] is not merely a new man, one specimen of the species, but *the* new man. He is the origin and centre and life of all the new men.”⁵⁰ This emphasizes the centrality of Christ in Creation and roots the recreation of mankind in the person of Christ.
- 4) “This step is taken at a different speed from the previous ones.”⁵¹ This raises the question of change, for in discussing the rate of change, the beginning and the direction of that change must be first addressed.
- 5) “The stakes are higher.”⁵² This points out that the infinite reward of New Creation entails the possibility for an equally infinite loss, should the New Creation be refused.

Lewis introduces the familiar notion of Evolution to make his depiction of the qualities of the New Creation more accessible to modern readers. Similarly, Lewis’s

⁴⁸ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 220.

⁴⁹ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 221.

⁵⁰ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 221.

⁵¹ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 221.

⁵² Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 222.

understanding of the New Creation can serve as a more familiar context in which to explore Barfield's. The remainder of this chapter will pursue two aims. The first aim will be to explore the qualities of the New Creation by interpreting them according to other works by Lewis, including both the fantasy style of *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *That Hideous Strength* and the apologetic style of *Miracles*. The second aim will be to expand upon this New Creation by applying Barfield's concepts of participation, representations, and the evolution of consciousness to Lewis's understanding. The first aim is intended to strengthen the foundation of Lewis's understanding, in order that the image of the New Creation might remain grounded while being expanded according to the second aim. By interpreting Lewis's five aspects of the Next Step according to Lewis's other writings, both apologetic and fantasy, and by applying Barfield's evolution of consciousness to Lewis's five aspects of the Next Step, a more expansive view of the New Creation can be constructed that may apply to both the present day and to the future that is to come.

First Way: No Sexual Reproduction

The first difference that Lewis establishes between the "New Step" of evolutionary progression and the former steps is that the New Step does not rely on sexual reproduction. The New Step began with the Incarnation of Christ, which very specifically did not involve sexual reproduction, and it has ever since been propagated throughout the generations according to means other than sexual reproduction. Lewis argues that despite the period of historical evolution in which sex was the primary mode of evolutionary development, beginning with the conception of Christ, "though it

continued to exist, [sex] ceased to be the main channel of a development.”⁵³ The New Creation enters the Old at the Incarnation of Christ, firmly rooted in the human history that preceded that event, but nevertheless marking the introduction of a new kind of human history.

Both Barfield and Lewis construct historical accounts that lead up to the birth of Christ. Barfield’s account of human consciousness is fundamentally chronological, and he describes the cultural trajectories of two very different nations that intersect just before the birth of Christ. In *Miracles*, Lewis discusses the historical significance of sexual reproduction further, showing that the genealogical history of mankind and the New Creation of God converged in the Virgin Mary. Together, these two genealogical accounts provide a rich image of the work God did through history leading up to Christ, and with this image as a background, the distinct quality of the New Creation stands out all the clearer.

Barfield’s account begins with original participation, but the development away from original participation shows God’s preparation for the Incarnation. Much of this account has already been stated in the previous chapter, but certain particulars ought to be restated here for the sake of clarity.

In man’s early days, he experienced the world a certain way. That is, he experienced the world as something very like himself, filled with subjects that think and act, and objects, or phenomena, which are expressions of these subjects and possibly a means of communication with them.⁵⁴ “Original participation” is Barfield’s term for this

⁵³ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 220.

⁵⁴ Barfield, 30-33.

way of experiencing the world.⁵⁵ Perhaps this original participation was the intention of God in creating man, and it would have been a medium for God's revelation to him. If not for the introduction of sin into the created world, man may have learned to receive the revelation of God in creation directly, without need for prophets, Scripture, or the Incarnation of the Word. Perhaps those means of revelation would still have been given, or perhaps there would then have been other means than those attested in our history. In any case, sin was introduced into the world, and man could no longer properly experience Creation in this way. After the fall of Adam and Eve, man was cut off from making proper use of original participation on account of his sin.⁵⁶

Original participation, which sin had rendered ineffective as a means of understanding revelation, was then gradually abandoned throughout human history, but this trend occurred very slowly. Barfield observes that in the last few centuries B.C., only two cultures had succeeded in eliminating original participation to any significant degree. These two cultures were the Greco-Roman philosophical tradition and the Jewish nation. The Greeks and the Jews did not eliminate original participation together, nor even did they do so similarly. Rather, these two peoples developed distinct ideologies for different reasons, ideologies which launched them on separate trajectories against original participation and which only intersected after both had solidly abandoned it.

The Greco-Roman trajectory involved the development of thought, culminating in the philosophy, science, and mathematics of the Greeks and Romans. Barfield refers to "thinking about things" as "alpha-thinking," specifically denoting a subject's conscious

⁵⁵ Barfield, 41-42.

⁵⁶ Barfield, 185.

consideration of objects.⁵⁷ Inherent in the consideration of objects is the treatment of them as meaningfully other than oneself, so that the more thinkers in that tradition thought about things, the more they separated themselves from those things in their own perception, creating a subject-object relation that is contrary to original participation.⁵⁸ These philosophical ideas were by no means universal among the Greeks or the Romans who came after them, but they comprised a solid foundation for many generations of alpha-thinkers, at least down to Aquinas, to consider a world in which they were present, but in which they were more like observers than like fundamental components.⁵⁹

During the same centuries in which alpha-thinking was gradually taking root among particular cultures, there was a different trajectory against original participation taking place in another part of the pre-Christian world, in the people of Israel. For most of their history, the Hebrew people were not a very great or influential nation. However, Barfield notes that, culturally, the people of Israel differed from every other contemporary nation in one significant way: they categorically rejected idolatry.⁶⁰ The crafting of idols was part and parcel of life and community identity for every nation and tribe that came into contact with the children of Abraham. According to Barfield, idolatry is central to original participation, meaning that for those with a participating perception of reality, building idols or images of some kind is not merely a belief system, but the most natural thing in the world for them to do. Therefore, Barfield calls it “the unlikeliest

⁵⁷ Barfield, 24-25.

⁵⁸ Barfield, 96-98.

⁵⁹ Barfield, 98-99.

⁶⁰ Barfield, 109-111.

thing to have happened”⁶¹ that a nation like Israel would *decide* to reject the central metaphysical reality of every culture they were surrounded by. Yet this is exactly what happened. Under the leadership of Moses, the codified religious identity of the Hebrew people included as one of its central tenets the command, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.”⁶² One might suppose that the Israelites were just a bit unusual by some inexplicable apathy towards idols, but this is refuted by their own history, for “what is the Old Testament but the tale of their long struggle against that very sin, their repeated relapses and their final victory?”⁶³ Barfield points out that the command not to create idols, which today often seems among the easiest to follow of the Ten Commandments, is the very command Israel most often violates. They were commanded to destroy all idols, on the simple basis that they were idols, but they were by nature inclined to participation, which is naturally put into practice by the creation of idols. Despite their natural inclination towards participation and idolatry, the central tenet of their culture was that the LORD is God, and no other.

Similarly, Barfield argues that the revelation of the Divine Name indicates that God would become man, because יהוה comes from the Hebrew for “I am.” According to Barfield’s interpretation, even though God reveals his name using human language, no human could properly utter this name unless they were identified with יהוה himself, which means that the people to whom this name was revealed were the people to whom God

⁶¹ Barfield, 109.

⁶² Exodus 20:4, King James Version.

⁶³ Barfield, 109.

would reveal himself in human form in order that it may be properly uttered.⁶⁴ This is in part the reason for the gravity of the command, “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.”⁶⁵ Barfield suggests that in the commands that forbade crafting graven images and taking the Divine Name in vain, Israel was intended to understand that God was preparing them to be his entrance point into humanity, and that their identity as a people was to be found in that fact.⁶⁶ False images, even those intended to honor the LORD, were to be destroyed so that the true image of God would be recognized when he appeared.⁶⁷ Notably, Lewis makes the same observation: “The Hebrews throughout their history were being constantly headed off from the worship of Nature-gods; not because the Nature-gods were in all respects unlike the God of Nature but because, at best, they were merely like, and it was the destiny of that nation to be turned away from likenesses to the thing itself.”⁶⁸ Images and idols, despite their central role in all of the surrounding cultures, were outlawed for the Israelites because they cheapened the true image of God that was to appear among them. The command to shun all idolatry and the command to revere the divine name were both intended to prepare Israel for the Incarnation of God among them, but by the time Israel learned not to create or worship carved images, they had also lost

⁶⁴ Barfield, 112-115.

⁶⁵ Exodus 20:7, King James Version.

⁶⁶ Barfield, 112-115.

⁶⁷ Barfield, 157-158.

⁶⁸ Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 186-187.

sight of their identity as the hearers of the divine name and as the people with whom God dwelt.⁶⁹

Around this time, when any hint of idolatry or any use of the Divine Name had become dangerous and blasphemous, the Romans conquered the land of Israel, and so the two trajectories were brought together for the first time.⁷⁰ These two cultures—in many respects diametrically opposed⁷¹—shared this peculiar feature, this momentum against original participation, not found among any of their contemporaries. And at that junction, an angel appeared to a young Virgin, telling her she would bear a Son.

While Barfield's account focuses on original participation as the measure of historical progression, Lewis's *Miracles* includes an account of a historical progression that follows God's creative will and according to which God forms all people, his focusing on the historical significance of human reproduction: "Behind every spermatozoon lies the whole history of the universe: locked within it lies no inconsiderable part of the world's future."⁷² In the natural process of reproduction, the connection of two cells marks the continuation of history, for history is made up of men and women whose lives each began in this way. For Lewis, the act of parenthood is always in the hand of God: "The human father is merely an instrument, a carrier, often an unwilling carrier, always simply the last in a long line of carriers—a line that stretches back far beyond his ancestors into pre-human and pre-organic deserts of time, back to the

⁶⁹ Barfield, 157.

⁷⁰ Barfield, 169-170.

⁷¹ Barfield, 112.

⁷² Lewis, *Miracles*, 224.

creation of matter itself. That line is in God's hand. It is the instrument by which He normally creates a man."⁷³ Throughout history, each new soul is created according to a natural process, a process upheld by the will of God. Every single person from Adam to Mary, was connected by this particular natural phenomenon.

To marry the genealogical perspectives of Barfield and Lewis is to enliven an image of God's work through the human race, and in particular the people of Israel. If every person born was in the hand of God, then the selection of the people of Israel is all the more significant. The history which culminated in the Blessed Virgin, a young Jewish girl in an Israel occupied by Rome, was never without God's intervention. God did not simply seize upon a fitting moment when Hebrew and Greco-Roman non-participation intersected; instead, the history of man was his creation, never beyond his will or his activity. Thereby, and by no mere coincidence, Christ was born at a specific moment, and "at the right time Christ died for the ungodly."⁷⁴

Lewis takes the image further, pointing out that the conception of Christ was unlike other conceptions, distinct from the unbroken lineage of creation. On one hand, the line of history narrowed to a point at the Blessed Virgin Mary, but on the other, God did not create Jesus as he had created the rest of mankind. Lewis continues,

But once, and for a special purpose, He dispensed with that long line which is His instrument: once His life-giving finger touched a woman without passing through the ages of interlocked events. Once the great glove of Nature was taken off His hand. His naked hand touched her. There was of course a unique reason for it. That time He was creating not simply a man but the Man who was to be Himself: was creating Man anew: was beginning, at this divine and human point, the New Creation of all things. The whole soiled and weary universe quivered at this direct

⁷³ Lewis, *Miracles*, 225.

⁷⁴ Romans 5:6, English Standard Version.

injection of essential life—direct, uncontaminated, not drained through all the crowded history of Nature.⁷⁵

Barfield has directed the attention of his readers to the historical trajectories that culminated in the Incarnation of Christ; Lewis, in turn, reminds that at the Incarnation, God did something new. As God declared through the prophet Isaiah,

Behold, I am doing a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.
I, I am he
who blots out your transgressions for my own sake,
and I will not remember your sins.⁷⁶

The birth of Jesus was at once firmly historical and entirely unique. God’s work of redemption was carried out through the people of Israel, but when the Son of God became man, this was the start of a New Creation.

Second Way: Voluntary

The second way according to Lewis that the New Step of Evolution differs from those that have come before is that it requires a choice: “At the earlier stages living organisms have had either no choice or very little choice about taking the new step... But the new step, the step from being creatures to being sons, is voluntary.”⁷⁷ He clarifies this by pointing out that it is voluntary in one way but not in another: “It is not voluntary in the sense that we, of ourselves, could have chosen to take it or could even have imagined it; but it is voluntary in the sense that when it is offered to us, we can refuse it. We can, if

⁷⁵ Lewis, *Miracles*, 225.

⁷⁶ Isaiah 43:19, 25, English Standard Version.

⁷⁷ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 221.

we please, shrink back; we can dig in our heels and let the new Humanity go on without us.”⁷⁸ The New Step of Evolution, which for Barfield is final participation, must be actively chosen. Whereas in the last section it was shown that the New Humanity is not propagated through the former means, here Lewis suggests that it is propagated at least in part according to choice. Man is made new only when he chooses to accept this recreation.

In Barfield’s view, final participation, by which the New Men participate in Creation, requires a conscious choice regarding one’s perception of the world. When Lewis claims that “the new step... is voluntary,” the obvious interpretation of his point, at least to a student of Christian theology, involves repentance and justification from sin. Indeed, St. John the Apostle writes, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”⁷⁹ Taking a simple soteriological interpretation of this verse and of its application to Lewis’s argument may be sufficient, but Barfield goes further than this. Barfield argues that inherent in recreation is a change in the nature of perception, and therefore, inherent in repentance is a voluntary change of the mind’s direction toward a “directionally creator relation” to Nature. He makes this connection explicit when he refers to “that change of direction of the whole current of man’s being—the *metanoia*, or turning about of the mind, for which the heart’s name is ‘repentance.’”⁸⁰ For Barfield, the recreation of mankind takes place in

⁷⁸ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 221.

⁷⁹ 1 John 1:9, English Standard Version.

⁸⁰ Barfield, 180.

the whole self, so if the repentance of the heart is voluntary, then so is the *metanoia* of the mind.

This *metanoia* refers specifically to a turning of the mind toward participation in the New Creation, choosing to attend to Creation according to the recreation of Christ.⁸¹ In both Lewis and Barfield, the theme of choosing how to perceive the world comes up again and again. However, Barfield considers this *metanoia* to be the primary responsibility of man in his recreation (he must choose to turn toward final participation), whereas Lewis treats the choice as one for or against refusal (he may refuse the recreation being offered to him). Even though Lewis does not place the turn toward participation at the center of his soteriology, his understanding of life in Christ still necessarily involves choosing how to perceive the world.

In his fiction, Lewis demonstrates, rather than explains, the virtues of choosing to perceive the world according to faith. In one memorable scene in *The Silver Chair*, a pessimistic marshwiggle named Puddleglum is trapped underground with two human children from our world and a Narnian prince.⁸² The Queen of the Underland uses enchantments and clever lies to persuade them that there are no such things as sun, sky, or the great Lion Aslan, and that their memories and beliefs about such things are nothing more than dreams, fantasies of the imagination. Right when it seems that all four heroes will succumb to the witch's enchanting lies, Puddleglum gathers himself and courageously stamps out the Queen's enchanting fire with his bare feet, declaring,

⁸¹ Barfield, 179.

⁸² Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Silver Chair* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2010), 628-634.

Suppose we *have* only dreamed, or made up, all those things—trees and grass and sun and moon and stars and Aslan himself. Suppose we have. Then all I can say is that, in that case, the made-up things seem a good deal more important than the real ones. Suppose this black pit of a kingdom of yours *is* the only world. Well, it strikes me as a pretty poor one. And that’s a funny thing, when you come to think of it. We’re just babies making up a game, if you’re right. But four babies playing a game can make a play-world which licks your real world hollow. That’s why I’m going to stand by the play-world. I’m on Aslan’s side even if there isn’t any Aslan to lead it. I’m going to live as like a Narnian as I can even if there isn’t any Narnia.⁸³

This marshwiggles chooses the world he hopes for over the world he can see, but for Lewis, this choice represents something much more significant than merely a mythical creature’s steadfastness. To anyone who believed the Queen’s lies, as Puddleglum himself nearly does, the choice to “stand by the play-world” is nothing more than naïveté, a refusal to accept the world as it really is. Puddleglum’s decision is a choice of faith over sight, a choice to make sense of the world based on what he hopes for instead of what his understanding—deceived as it is—tells him to expect. He would not have been the first in Underland to accept the lies of the Queen,⁸⁴ but he chose instead to perceive the world according to his hope. Of course, there really was a Narnia, and so Puddleglum’s defiance of understanding in favor of faith is not naïve, but rather results in liberation from a lie for himself and for his companions. By choosing to subject his understanding to his faith, he sees the truth more clearly.

On the other hand, Lewis writes of some who lack the wisdom of Puddleglum, who delude themselves in their desire to avoid delusion. In *The Last Battle*, a group of Dwarfs submit to orders to sell themselves into hard slavery in a foreign land, orders they

⁸³ Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Silver Chair*, 633.

⁸⁴ Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Silver Chair*, 621.

believe come from Aslan.⁸⁵ When the imposter Aslan is unmasked before them, they vow never to be deceived again, declaring, “The Dwarfs are for the Dwarfs.”⁸⁶ Later, having been cast through a stable door, which by Aslan’s magic was a gateway into the foothills of his own country, the Dwarfs believed themselves to be trapped in a stable, even though they were surrounded by beautiful open countryside. When the Queen Lucy begs Aslan to help the poor wretches, he responds,

“Dearest,” said Aslan, “I will show you both what I can, and what I cannot do.” He came close to the Dwarfs and gave a low growl: low, but it set all the air shaking. But the Dwarfs said to one another, “Hear that? That’s the gang at the other end of the Stable. Trying to frighten us. They do it with a machine of some kind. Don’t take any notice. They won’t take *us* in again!”

Aslan raised his head and shook his mane. Instantly a glorious feast appeared on the Dwarfs’ knees: pies and tongues and pigeons and trifles and ices, and each Dwarf had a goblet of good wine in his right hand. But it wasn’t much use. They began eating and drinking greedily enough, but it was clear that they couldn’t taste it properly. They thought they were eating and drinking only the sort of things you might find in a Stable. One said he was trying to eat hay and another said he had got a bit of an old turnip and a third said he’d found a raw cabbage leaf. And they raised golden goblets of rich red wine to their lips and said “Ugh! Fancy drinking dirty water out of a trough that a donkey’s been at! Never thought we’d come to this.”

But very soon every Dwarf began suspecting that every other Dwarf had found something nicer than he had, and they started grabbing and snatching, and went on to quarrelling, till in a few minutes there was a free fight and all the good food was smeared on their faces and clothes or trodden under foot.

But when at last they sat down to nurse their black eyes and their bleeding noses, they all said: “Well, at any rate there’s no Humbug here. We haven’t let anyone take us in. The Dwarfs are for the Dwarfs.

“You see,” said Aslan. “They will not let us help them. They have chosen cunning instead of belief. Their prison is only in their minds, yet they are in that prison; and so afraid of being taken in that they cannot be taken out. But come, children. I have other work to do.”⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Last Battle*, 705.

⁸⁶ Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Last Battle*, 707.

⁸⁷ Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Last Battle*, 747-748.

The Dwarfs needed only change the basis of their perception, and they would see clearly that they were free, in the presence of Aslan, and blessed with a great feast. Instead, they cleverly learned to explain all evidence of their true situation in terms of their perceived misfortune and isolation. Having cut themselves off from any need for faith, they found themselves trapped in their own minds, still believing they had constructed an ideological freedom for themselves. Where Puddleglum chose to hope in what he could not see, consequently discovering that the darkness of Underland had all along been the deception, the Dwarfs chose to fixate upon only what they could see, consequently missing out on the hope that would otherwise have been revealed to them.

Barfield believes that the very same has happened to modern man, who disavows participation in favor of scientific materialism. For Barfield, not only is participation a fact, regardless of one's beliefs about it, but it is also a mechanism by which mankind will be recreated according to Christ. Therefore, by rejecting any notion of participation, of identity with the act of creation, the modern man has cut himself off from enjoying the New Creation. However, this need not be the case:

The ousting of participation is not a *logical* consequence of a more accurate observation of the mechanical element in any representation; it is a practical one. If we are present at a church service, where a censer is swinging, we may either attend to the whole representation or we may select for attention the actual movement to and fro of the censer. In the latter case, if we are a Galileo, we may discover the law of the pendulum. It is a good thing to discover the law of the pendulum. It is not such a good thing to lose, for that reason, all interest in, and ultimately even perception of, the incense whose savour it was the whole purpose of the pendulum to release. Participation ceases to be conscious precisely because we cease to attend to it. But, as already pointed out, participation does not cease to be a fact because it ceases to be conscious. It merely ceases to be what I have called "original" participation.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Barfield, 81.

In other words, a person may choose what aspects of Creation to attend to and how to attend to them. Choosing to attend to only the mechanism of the world leads to a decreased perception of other, perhaps more important, aspects of reality. That being said, studying the mechanism of the world is not inherently problematic, for Barfield also believes that it is entirely possible to give attention to “more accurate observation of the mechanical element” of nature while maintaining the context of participation. He cautiously speculates on a “possibility which was never realized,” that at the end of the Greco-Roman period,

‘there was a chance’ that the requisite transition should be accomplished with relative smoothness and without the loss [of participation] being first experienced to the full. For by that time there had appeared many Christened minds, which were capable of holding together, as it were in tension, the non-representational religious consciousness characteristic of the Jews and the representational consciousness derived from Greece and Rome. Dionysius the Areopagite taught that God was at once ‘anonymous’ and ‘polyonymous’—nameless and many-named. And his treatise on the *Divine Names*, to which I have already referred, took deep hold of medieval thought. Aquinas’s philosophy seemed on the threshold of effecting this transition gently. For, while his participation by composition (subject and predicate, form and matter) is specifically Aristotelian and looks backward to original participation, his hierarchical participation *per similitudinem*, derived in part from Dionysius, looks rather forward to the ‘final’ variety.⁸⁹

Had the views of Aristotle, Dionysius, and Aquinas continued to characterize the collective representations of the West, Barfield believes that there may never have been need for a period like the modern one, in which participation is believed false and representations are idols. Therefore, the choice of mankind remains whether to accept the New Creation, which, in Barfield’s view, is effected in humanity as final participation, or to remain in the idolatry of the modern day.

⁸⁹ Barfield, 173.

Lewis's nonfiction also emphasizes the significance of choice in interpretation, by demonstrating that sometimes focusing on what cannot be true can bring one further away from what is true. While discussing the miracles in Scripture that demonstrate the quality of the New Creation, Lewis draws attention to the troublesome nature of the account of the Ascension of Christ after his Resurrection.⁹⁰ The resurrected Christ appeared to his disciples on multiple occasions, and on those occasions he spoke with them, he ate with them, and he allowed them to touch him, but he also seemed to them to appear and to disappear, ignoring locked doors, and finally to ascend into the heavens before their eyes. Lewis finds this last event troublesome in its apparent conflation of the spiritual reality of Heaven and the spatial natural world, as if Heaven were really a local place hovering above the earth. He points out that while "increased distance from the centre of this planet could not *in itself* be equated with increase of power or beatitude,"⁹¹ the witnesses of the Ascension do not seem to treat it as metaphorical, but rather as an actual instance of their Lord floating into the sky. That being said, Lewis is careful to disentangle the literalness of the modern perspective from the experience of the disciples, who assumed that Heaven was in fact in the heavens:

When they looked up at the blue sky they never doubted that there, whence light and heat and the precious rain descended, was the home of God: but on the other hand, when they thought of one ascending to that Heaven they never doubted He was 'ascending' in what we should call a 'spiritual' sense. The real and pernicious period of literalism comes far later, in the Middle Ages and the seventeenth century, when the distinctions have been made and heavy-handed people try to force the separated concepts together again in wrong ways.⁹²

⁹⁰ Lewis, *Miracles*, 242.

⁹¹ Lewis, *Miracles*, 255.

⁹² Lewis, *Miracles*, 257.

When Christ departed from the earth, He did not simply vanish (if he had, the witnesses would likely not have called it an ascension),⁹³ but a critical reader who accepts that Christ's resurrected body was in fact corporeal may reject the notion that he literally floated into space. However, Lewis suggests that someone who rejects the account of the eyewitnesses on logical grounds may be, though more factually accurate, less true to the event and to what it reveals about Christ than someone who believes Heaven is in the sky and that Christ was simply lifted bodily from earth to Heaven: "The ancients in letting the spiritual symbolism of the sky flow straight into their minds without stopping to discover by analysis that it was a symbol, were not entirely mistaken. In one way they were perhaps less mistaken than we."⁹⁴ While those who witnessed the Ascension conflated the physical and spiritual heavens, "probably every Christian now alive finds a difficulty in reconciling the two things he has been told about 'heaven'—that it is, on the one hand, a life in Christ, a vision of God, a ceaseless adoration, and that it is, on the other hand, a bodily life."⁹⁵ Lewis maintains that this chasm between the spiritual and the physical is only temporary, that as in Christ's resurrected body, in the New Creation the two aspects of Creation will be unified.⁹⁶ Many, in seeking to understand the New Creation, have discerned spiritual truths about it, but as for the union of the spiritual with the physical, Lewis denies that this has yet been grasped by human intellect. "Mystics have got as far in contemplation of God as the point at which the senses are banished," he writes. "The

⁹³ Lewis, *Miracles*, 254-255.

⁹⁴ Lewis, *Miracles*, 258-259.

⁹⁵ Lewis, *Miracles*, 259.

⁹⁶ Lewis, *Miracles*, 259.

further point, at which they will be put back again, has (to the best of my knowledge) been reached by no one. The destiny of redeemed man is not less but more unimaginable than mysticism would lead us to suppose—because it is full of semi-imaginables which we cannot at present admit without destroying its essential character.”⁹⁷ The New Creation will be made complete such that the rift between spiritual and physical will be healed.⁹⁸

In the meantime, the interpreter of such events as the Ascension is faced with a choice. As Lewis presents it, the best understanding as yet available to human intellect requires the complete separation of spirit and nature, but this is only an imperfect, limited understanding. In fact, despite their erroneous belief in a local heaven above the earth, the first Christians understood the Ascension better than those who insist upon a more accurate understanding of heaven for its own sake. As quoted above, Barfield argues, “It is a good thing to discover the law of the pendulum. It is not such a good thing to lose, for that reason, all interest in, and ultimately even perception of, the incense whose savour it was the whole purpose of the pendulum to release.” In the same way, Lewis demonstrates that it is good to discern spiritual realities of the New Creation, but it is not such a good thing to lose, for that reason, all awareness of the physical reality that is fundamentally inseparable from the spiritual.

Central to Barfield’s understanding of participation is imagination, so that in final participation, the imagination participates in the act of Creation that was initiated by the Incarnation of the Creator. To interpret the world according to the new life in Christ is to

⁹⁷ Lewis, *Miracles*, 260.

⁹⁸ Lewis, *Miracles*, 259.

give life to representations and images, and in this is humanity's role in bringing about the New Creation: "Henceforth the life of the image is to be drawn from within. The life of the image is to be none other than the life of imagination. And it is of the very nature of imagination that it cannot be *inculcated*. There must be first of all the voluntary stirring from within. It must be, not indeed self-created, but certainly self-willed, or else—it is not imagination at all."⁹⁹ Imagination is a quality of thought that depends upon the thinker. Whereas original participation was a natural, virtually unavoidable condition of human consciousness in the Old Creation, final participation, which for Barfield is the primary quality of human consciousness in the New Creation, is something to which mankind is now invited but which can also be refused.

Bringing together Lewis and Barfield on this point constructs a wide view of the centrality of humanity's choice in the New Creation. The recreation offered to mankind by Christ involves a change in the whole self. Lewis emphasizes that this change comes about entirely according to God's effort, yet people may choose, if they will, to reject it. Barfield emphasizes that the change occurs not only in the heart but also in the mind, that *metanoia* goes along with repentance. With Barfield's view in mind, examples can be found in Lewis's fantasy of the difference between one who has submitted to understanding according to God's will versus those who have not. Both authors make clear that understanding must be voluntarily submitted to Christ for recreation, and that this voluntary submission requires great faith.

⁹⁹ Barfield, 179.

Third Way: Christ as the New Man

The third way that Lewis describes the Next Step of Evolution as different from the former steps is that it is centered upon one man, in whom all others are made new. Lewis writes, “I have called Christ the ‘first instance’ of the new man. But of course He is something much more than that. He is not merely a new man, one specimen of the species, but *the* new man. He is the origin and centre and life of all the new men. He came into the created universe, of His own will, bring with Him... the new life.”¹⁰⁰ The Incarnation of Christ was the central point of the New Creation, the event which began the Next Step of Evolution. Everything which came before led up to it, and everything which has come since is directly rooted in it.

To call the Incarnation a “step of evolution” is to severely understate the fact. Steps of evolution, historically speaking, occur all the time. The Incarnation, however, was a step unlike all the others, a step by which all things are made new. In the section of *Mere Christianity* quoted in the introduction to this chapter, Lewis argues that the Next Step of Evolution is “not only going to be different, but different with a new kind of difference.”¹⁰¹ The Incarnation not only changed the created world, it changed the whole nature of the created world. In the concluding chapter of *Saving the Appearances*, Barfield describes the difference between final participation and original participation in similarly radical terms, offering the human perspective on the change that occurred at the Incarnation: “We have seen something of the change in the nature of all imagery and representation, which takes place with the transition from original to final participation.

¹⁰⁰ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 221.

¹⁰¹ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 219.

But ‘transition’ is a misleading word for the violent change in the whole *direction* of human consciousness which, in the last resort, this must involve.”¹⁰² When he speaks of the “direction of human consciousness,” he refers to the relationship of mankind to nature. In original participation, mankind was aware of their identity with nature, and they may have perceived that there existed on the other side of creation a Creator.¹⁰³ At the Incarnation, however, the Creator took on humanity, so that humanity is made new, in a relation to Creation that Barfield calls “directionally creator,” clarifying that “what so stands is not my poor temporal personality, but the Divine Name in the unfathomable depths behind it.”¹⁰⁴ The directionally creator relation of man to Nature is a result of the Creator’s taking on humanity: “In one man the inwardness of the Divine Name had been fully realized; the final participation, whereby man’s Creator speaks from within man himself, had been accomplished. The Word had been made flesh.”¹⁰⁵ The Incarnation of the Creator rearranges the relationship of man to nature, with the result that even without a change in the elements of nature, the whole of Creation has been radically changed. The change is so radical that Barfield and Lewis both struggle to put it to words, with Barfield calling the change “violent” and Lewis calling the result of the change “different with a new kind of difference.” Yet both authors portray the Incarnation as a central point of the movement of history, toward which the significance of all events before it narrowed, and out from which the significance of all events since has expanded.

¹⁰² Barfield, 179.

¹⁰³ Barfield, 42.

¹⁰⁴ Barfield, 132.

¹⁰⁵ Barfield, 170.

Lewis describes this initial narrowing in *Miracles*, claiming that God's plan is carried out according to it. Discussing the "Selectiveness" of God's plan, in which God singled out a particular people to carry out his will for the human race, Lewis writes,

[Christianity] does not tell of a human search for God at all, but of something done by God for, to, and about, Man. And the way in which it is done is selective, undemocratic, to the highest degree. After the knowledge of God had been universally lost or obscured, one man from the whole earth (Abraham) is picked out. He is separated (miserably enough, we may suppose) from his natural surroundings, sent into a strange country, and made the ancestor of a nation who are to carry the knowledge of the true God. Within this nation there is further selection: some die in the desert, some remain behind in Babylon. There is further selection still. The process grows narrower and narrower, sharpens at last into one small bright point like the head of a spear. It is a Jewish girl at her prayers. All humanity (so far as concerns its redemption) has narrowed to that.¹⁰⁶

God's will for the redemption of humanity involves continual narrowing and selection; a few are used for the redemption of all. Anticipating that this Selectiveness may offend the sensibilities of modern people, Lewis follows the above section with a justification for it, pointing out that all of Nature seems to follow the same pattern of selection.¹⁰⁷ In Lewis's view, God used this narrowing of Creation to bring about his plan. Thereby, the narrowing is not a series of random changes or a coincidental pattern of events, but a purposed momentum, drawing out and clearly defining Creation to prepare it for a particular moment, when he would enter into it for its recreation.

Barfield also indicates that the Incarnation is the central point of history, the vertex to which all things led and out from which all things proceed. One of the aspects of Christianity that he finds especially radical compared with other religions is its acceptance of history and time in general, and of a particular historic event—that is, the

¹⁰⁶ Lewis, *Miracles*, 187-188.

¹⁰⁷ Lewis, *Miracles*, 190-194.

Incarnation—in particular.¹⁰⁸ He believes this to be complementary with the modern evolutionary understanding of history:

I believe that the blind-spot which posterity will find most startling in the last hundred years or so of Western civilization, is, that it had, on the one hand, a religion which differed from all the others in its acceptance of time, and of a particular point in time, as a cardinal element in its faith; that it had, on the other hand, a picture in its mind of the history of the earth and man as an evolutionary process; and that it neither saw nor supposed any connection whatever between the two.¹⁰⁹

He continues this note of incredulity regarding the supposed incoherence of the evolutionary outlook and the Christian faith: “When the horizon of time expanded suddenly in the nineteenth century, one would have expected those who accepted evolution and remained Christians, to see the incarnation of their Saviour as the culminating point of the history of the earth—a turning-point of time to which all at first led down and from which all thereafter was to lead upward.”¹¹⁰ To Barfield, this is obvious. If evolution is a fact of Creation, and if the Creator took Creation onto himself, becoming incarnate, then this must be the most significant moment of history. All history before that event prepared for it, and all history since that event recalls it.

Since the Incarnation is the central point of history, to which the narrowing of Creation was leading, the narrowing does not continue forever, but it does extend beyond the moment of the Incarnation. In the conversation from *That Hideous Strength* that was quoted in the Introduction to this thesis, Dr. and Mrs. Dimble discuss the narrowing of Creation, not as something that occurred only in the past but as something that continues.

¹⁰⁸ Barfield, 165-166.

¹⁰⁹ Barfield, 167.

¹¹⁰ Barfield, 168.

Dr. Dimble remarks to his wife “that the universe... is always hardening and narrowing and coming to a point.”¹¹¹ He later expounds upon this when he writes: “Everything is getting more itself and more different from everything else all the time. Evolution means species getting less and less like one another. Minds get more and more spiritual, matter more and more material. Even in literature, poetry and prose draw further and further apart.”¹¹² Dimble asserts that the world has come more to a point specifically since the time of Merlin, but that it has always been doing that, growing narrower and narrower. For Dimble, the very passage of time is marked by this narrowing, in which things in creation become less ambiguous and contrasts become sharper. Therefore, it is not something that simply reverses at the Incarnation, but which carries long afterward, even characterizing the passage of time.

However, Lewis’s explanation of Merlin through Dimble does imply a turning point, a reversal of the narrowing. Referencing the participation of the past, Dimble mentions that Merlin “came at the extreme tail end of it.”¹¹³ That relationship between man and nature has ended. At the end of the conversation, however, he makes another comment that does not get discussed further: “In a sense, Merlin represents what we’ve got to get back to in some different way.” The universe has not necessarily stopped narrowing altogether, but there has been some turning point, moving now toward something different—“different with a new kind of difference,” as Lewis described it in

¹¹¹ Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*, 280.

¹¹² Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*, 281.

¹¹³ Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*, 282.

Mere Christianity.¹¹⁴ Merlin's world is left in the past, but "in some different way," it is also the direction in which things are now moving. The narrowing occurred continuously and inexorably throughout history, but in some way that narrowing has reversed, replaced with an expansion into something new.

Dimble's last suggestion of getting back to the same thing in a different way is very like what Barfield advocates, because in his understanding, participation is the quality both of the former world and the future one, the world of Merlin and the New Creation. Participation is something that has been lost, something that ought to be recovered in some way, though he also maintains that this recovery will not simply revive the old world of original participation: "Once again, it is a lost world—although the whole purpose of this book is to show that its spiritual wealth can be, and indeed, if incalculable disaster is to be avoided, must be regained. No good can come of any attempt to hark back to the original participation from which it sprang."¹¹⁵ Barfield insists that there is no returning to original participation, and that neither should such a return be desired. Instead, he advocates a return to participation that looks completely different from original participation, and he calls this new participation "final participation." For Barfield, human history is expanding towards final participation, in which mankind returns to participation in a way that is completely unlike original participation, in a way that centers upon the Incarnation of the Creator.

Like Barfield, Lewis insists that the old natural order foreshadowed the new, and the Old Creation will therefore not be eliminated, but rather fulfilled, by the New

¹¹⁴ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 219.

¹¹⁵ Barfield, 85.

Creation. Reflecting upon Christ's Resurrection, his resurrected body, and the Ascension, Lewis writes:

It says—He says—that He goes “to prepare a place for us.” This presumably means that He is about to create that whole new Nature which will provide the environment or conditions for His glorified humanity and, in Him, for ours.... It is not the picture of an escape from any and every kind of Nature into some unconditioned and utterly transcendent life. It is the picture of a new human nature, and a new Nature in general, being brought into existence.

The New Nature will be in many ways very like the Old. Here, Lewis and Barfield agree, even if they may disagree on the specifics of that resemblance.

In addition, Lewis and Barfield agree that the New Creation is centered upon mankind because of the Incarnation. Lewis argues that even if man was not the most important part of Creation before, the Incarnation made it so: “Once the Son of God, drawn hither not by our merits but by our unworthiness, has put on human nature, then our species (whatever it may have been before) does become in one sense the central fact in all Nature: our species, rising after its long descent, will drag all Nature up with it because in our species the Lord of Nature is now included.”¹¹⁶ Even though he does assert that the redemption of mankind is central to the New Creation, Lewis prefers not to speculate on the exact expression of the New Creation. Barfield, on the other hand, claims that final participation is the means by which the Old Creation is made new, at least in its relation to humanity. Because the phenomenal world is the world known to people, as people are renewed, so is the phenomenal world.¹¹⁷ While Barfield confidently asserts that participation is the link between the Old Creation and the New Creation, and

¹¹⁶ Lewis, *Miracles*, 198.

¹¹⁷ Barfield, 144.

it is the quality of that participation that makes the difference, Lewis maintains more cautiously that the New Nature remains a mystery to those who have not yet experienced it.

Lewis expresses his caution in *Miracles* while musing about the possibilities of the New Creation. He warns his readers not to suppose the possibility of accurately predicting the qualities of the New Creation, other than to admit ignorance: “It must indeed be emphasized throughout that we know and can know very little about the New Nature. The task of the imagination here is not to forecast it but simply, by brooding on many possibilities, to make room for a more complete and circumspect agnosticism.”¹¹⁸ Lewis will not profess to know what can only be guessed at, and yet he still finds the guessing valuable. This gets at a fundamental difference between Lewis’s approach to making sense of the New Creation and Barfield’s. Lewis never attempts to construct a definite image beyond what he can be sure of, but Barfield sets out to explain all the phenomena of the past, present, and future. The participation that Barfield uses as the basis for his evolution of consciousness is for Lewis a useful thought experiment for the illustration of his arguments or else a fascinating concept to explore in his fantasy stories. Lewis’s approach is the safer one, but considering Barfield’s approach as possibility does expand the imaginative understanding of the New Creation, an effect Lewis himself predicts: “It is useful not because we can trust these fancies to give us any positive truths about the New Creation but because they teach us not to limit, in our rashness, the vigour and variety of the new crops which this old field might yet produce.”¹¹⁹ To Lewis,

¹¹⁸ Lewis, *Miracles*, 250.

¹¹⁹ Lewis, *Miracles*, 250.

Barfield's claims about the New Creation are a valuable exercise of the imagination, but they claim more than he is willing to categorically grant.

Despite their differences, both authors agree that the Incarnation of Christ is the beginning of the New Creation and the fulfillment of the Old, that the person of Christ is the first of the "New Men" and the one in whom all are made new. In Christ, a new type of life is created, a "violent transition" to a "different kind of difference." Speaking of this New Life, Lewis writes, "Everyone who gets it gets it by personal contact with Him [Christ]. Other men become 'new' by being 'in Him.'"¹²⁰ The New Creation, which, as has already been shown, is marked not by the sexual reproduction of the Old Creation but by the voluntary acceptance of God's redemptive mercy, was brought about in the man Jesus Christ, and all who are made new are made new through Him.

Fourth Way: A Different Speed

Taking the evolutionary perspective of history that Lewis sets out in *Mere Christianity*, the length of human history before the Incarnation outweighs the length of human history since the Incarnation by untold thousands of years. With that in mind, the rate by which the New Creation, the Next Step in Evolution, has impacted Nature is extremely rapid. This is the fourth way that Lewis considers the Next Step different from the former ones: "Compared with the development of man on this planet, the diffusion of Christianity over the human race seems to go like a flash of lightning—for two thousand years is almost nothing in the history of the universe."¹²¹ Barfield makes the same

¹²⁰ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 221.

¹²¹ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 221.

observation as Lewis: “Moreover, having regard to the antiquity now attributed to the earth and man, one would have expected them [Christians] to feel that we are still very near to that turning-point, indeed hardly past it; that we hardly know as yet what the Incarnation means; for what is two thousand years in comparison with the ages which preceded it?”¹²² Being still so near the turning point, it is unclear just how quickly the New Creation is replacing the Old. Barfield and Lewis do not find a consensus on this point, but they share a common wonder at the momentum of recreation.

The wonder that both Lewis and Barfield experience in regard to the expansion of the New Creation has to do with the fact that the changes wrought by the recreation of humanity and Nature can be observed in recent history and in our own time. The world is changing, or is already changed, and the violent transition (as Barfield called it) from original participation to final, from Old Creation to New, has a clear impact on the phenomenal world inhabited by people who are being made new.

Both Barfield and Lewis explore the changes being wrought upon the Old Creation, but where Barfield stakes his entire philosophy on the difference between original participation and final participation, Lewis makes use of fiction in order to explore the possibilities of the changing quality of Nature without making definitive judgments about them.

Lewis explores the changing of Nature in *That Hideous Strength*, in the conversation already discussed between Dr. Dimble and his wife Margaret. In their conversation, Mrs. Dimble wonders about the presence of Merlin, who has joined those at

¹²² Barfield, 168.

St. Anne's who are opposing the efforts of the N.I.C.E. to use invention and technology to harness spiritual forces for their own means.

Throughout this conversation, Dr. Dimble presents a view of history very similar to Barfield's. For one thing, he describes the quality of Nature in the time of Merlin, saying, "The earth itself was more like an animal in those days. And mental processes were much more like physical actions."¹²³ This conflation of the mental and physical is essentially what Barfield's original participation involved, but for Barfield, the earth was more like an animal *because* mental processes were more like physical actions. In original participation, the relation between man and nature is very close, because man identifies himself with nature.¹²⁴ When man sees himself as part of nature, his phenomenal world reflects that participation. Merlin comes from a participated world, so his mental processes are rooted in the physical world. His magic comes from making use of that participation to cause effects in the world around him. This also alienates him from those he meets in the modern day, for his perception of the world and his consequent physical relation to it are wildly unlike theirs.¹²⁵

Most likely, Lewis would not treat Merlin's magic as a real phenomenon outside of the fairy-tale setting, but he also does not introduce the idea as wholly ridiculous, rather offering through Dr. Dimble an explanation that would be appropriate if Merlin in

¹²³ Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*, 281.

¹²⁴ Barfield, 32.

¹²⁵ Daniel J. Smitherman suggests that the turning point of this change occurred in the philosophy of René Descartes. Smitherman argues that Descartes was a realist, meaning that he believed abstract concepts to reflect an objective reality. At the same time, Smitherman argues that "Descartes undoubtedly confused notions that today are much more sharply distinguished: mathematical concepts and perceptual abstractions on the one hand, and perceptual experience on the other" (Smitherman, 118). Though Descartes treated his philosophy as a pursuit of objective truth, influencing generations after him to do the same, he still conflated the abstract and the tangible in ways characteristic of participation.

fact appeared in the modern day, wielding the magical powers of a legendary wizard. According to Barfield's view, Merlin comes from a world in which original participation was still possible, and he took advantage of that participation to produce what seems like magic to those at St. Anne's and Belbury alike. For Lewis, Merlin's use of magic is primarily a plot device, justified according to speculative philosophical musings, but Barfield attributes the magic of the past to the changes in humanity's relation to nature, changes which can be observed even in our own day upon some reflection. Barfield and Lewis may not agree on the distance between the phenomenal world and the unrepresented world (the world simply as it is, apart from human observation), but they do seem to agree that the world may have undergone changes.

From Barfield's point of view, the perceptions of people, and thereby the phenomenal world, can be seen changing even in modern times, and by extrapolating this back into the past, taking into account the rapid rate at which the New Creation has changed the old, an account of Merlin as legitimately magical does not seem entirely absurd. One such perceptive change occurs in the realm of the senses, which are the primary point of contact between the world and human experience. The vast majority of human beings have five distinct senses, but comparing the senses of sight and touch show that the five senses are not equal within the realm of experience. For a modern Western person, the phenomenal world may be far more visual than tactile. That is, the world is perceived visually until it is touched, not usually the other way around. Some elements of experience will showcase this more clearly than others. Trees, for example, are primarily visual phenomena, as are stars, animals, and many other people, because the main way that these phenomena meet the senses of an observer is visually. Of course, not all

phenomena are visual. Someone with back pain may perceive their own spine well enough, but that is one phenomenon that is primarily felt, not seen. Similarly tactile may be heat and cold, objects like beds and blankets, and the act of embracing friends or loved ones. But such a person in the twenty-first century West will not experience all phenomena the same way as someone in another time or another culture. Even among people of the same time and place, a piano might be primarily tactile to a beginner learning scales, aural to a seasoned composer, and visual to a historian of musical instruments. The fundamental sensory quality of the relationship between an object in nature and a person will vary among individuals.

This discrepancy is only increased throughout history and across cultures. Many today may experience their own faces as visual phenomena, but before mirrors and cameras became commonplace, only Narcissus would have primarily experienced his own face by means of sight. On the whole, it would seem that Western society has become more and more visually oriented, aided by the prevalence of modern technological innovations. In general, mountains and canyons are scenic backdrops to be gawked at, almost never climbed by necessity as they once would have been. Horses are not often ridden, but admired from afar, though once the physical trust between horse and rider was imperative for many people. On the other hand, one reverse of this trend may be art. In a culture where most art is either iconography or idolatry, the merits of the art depend mostly on the interpreter, whereas in a culture where art is primarily a means of individual expression, its merits depend mostly on the artist. Therefore, where artistry becomes more about the artist than the interpreter, the collective experience of art becomes more tactile and less visual. Still, in most cases, many will prefer visual

experience to tactile experience. Even for those things ordinarily experienced as tactile, such as personal internal body structure or invisible concepts like heat, oxygen, and energy, some people—and possibly most people—will likely have a preference for visual representations, so that if prompted to “think of your spine,” they may picture images they have seen of spines in textbooks or in doctors’ offices instead of the sensations of movement or pain in their own bodies, or if prompted to “think of electricity,” they may picture lightbulbs, lightning bolts, or even lightning bolt-shaped symbols instead of the feeling of static electricity or the quaking thunder that accompanies true lightning. Where once most interaction with nature was fundamentally tangible, it is now increasingly less common to perceive the world in terms of physical relation to it, and more common to perceive it in terms of images, real or imagined. Assuming Barfield’s supposition that human beings can only know the world by way of the phenomenal world, such a significant change in the quality of perception will change the quality of the phenomenal world and the human experience of it.

There is a distance inherent in visual experience and a closeness inherent in tactile experience, so that the preference for the visual is also a preference for distance. When Lewis describes Merlin’s interaction with nature, he uses terms of closeness: “For him every operation on Nature is a kind of personal contact, like coaxing a child or stroking one’s horse. After him came the modern man to whom Nature is something dead--a machine to be worked, and taken to bits if it won’t work the way he pleases.”¹²⁶ The character of Merlin in Lewis’s tale is a man out of the past, a man who lived in a different world than the one in which modern people find themselves. Taking Barfield’s view into

¹²⁶ Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*, 282-283.

account adds to the mystery and danger of the character of Merlin in Lewis's tale. When Merlin arrives in the modern, non-magical world of *That Hideous Strength*, he does not lose his magic, nor does he see the world as non-magical. This is consistent with Barfield's view that the phenomena perceived by man create the world he inhabits. Merlin and the Dimbles may be in the same place at the same time, but Merlin has brought with him the collective representations—and therefore the phenomenal world—of the past. Merlin does not find himself in a non-magical world, but in a world where all others seem to be blind to the magic. This blindness is not because of some shortcoming, but because the world has changed. They ought to be blind to that magic, now that “the universe has come more to a point.”¹²⁷

The New Creation may be replacing the Old extremely quickly, but that does not mean that humanity has yet arrived at its final condition. Furthermore, if nature's redemption is bound to man's, this means that nature too awaits the fulfillment of the New Creation. But this does not lessen mankind's responsibility. Even if, as Lewis suggests, “we are all still the ‘early Christians,’”¹²⁸ Barfield warns his readers not to become complacent in their responsibility to the New Creation, because it is coming faster and faster: “It may be objected that this is a very small matter, and that it will be a long time before the imagination of man substantially alters those appearances of nature with which his figuration supplies him. But then I am taking the long view. Even so, we need not be too confident... The pace of change has *not* remained the same. It has

¹²⁷ Lewis, *That Hideous Strength*, 282.

¹²⁸ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 221.

accelerated and is accelerating.” The New Creation has taken root, and therefore all things are being made new.

Fifth Way: Higher Stakes

The final way that the New Step of Evolution differs from the former are the stakes involved. Lewis writes in *Mere Christianity*,

By falling back at the earlier steps a creature lost, at the worst, its few years of life on this earth: very often it did not lose even that. By falling back at this step we lose a prize which is (in the strictest sense of the word) infinite. For now the critical moment has arrived. Century by century God has guided nature up to the point of producing creatures which can (if they will) be taken right up out of nature, turned into ‘gods.’ Will they allow themselves to be taken?¹²⁹

The stakes are now infinite because what is being offered is infinite. The Creator became a man, and Creation was made new in Him. In Him, mankind is made new, positioned in a “directionally creator relation” to nature, so that by the participation of the Creator in humanity, humanity participates in Creation through Him. But this involves the recreation of all things, so that the choice cannot be avoided whether to accept or refuse the new life being offered. If it is accepted, it means participation in the glorification of Christ; if it is refused, it means a loss that is just as infinite.

The New Creation is the fulfillment of the Old, but it is therefore impossible to continue to live according to the Old Creation. Discussing the parable of the sower in Mark 4, Barfield argues that the within the seed sown by the sower is the new life that is found in the New Creation.¹³⁰ In Barfield’s view, that new life, or at least the beginning of it, is available to mankind in the form of final participation, but for those who inherit

¹²⁹ Lewis, *Miracles*, 223.

¹³⁰ Barfield, 178-179.

the non-participatory collective representations—the idols, in Barfield’s view—of the modern West, iconoclasm must come before final participation will be possible.¹³¹ And iconoclasm must be chosen. Of this choice, Barfield writes, “There must be first of all the voluntary stirring from within. It must be, not indeed self-created, but certainly self-willed, or else—it is not imagination at all; and is therefore incapable of iconoclasm. Iconoclasm is made possible by the seed of the Word stirring within us, as imagination. From him that hath not this seed—of final participation—there shall be taken away, even that residue—of original participation—that he hath.”¹³² The participated world of the past is being replaced by a new kind of participation, with Christ as its cornerstone. Those who do not, by the Word of God, break down the images of a creation in which they are primarily observers and not participants will be cut off from the true Creation, New and Old alike.

For to rely on idols is to suppose to live independently of the will of God, but the consequence of doing so is separation from God. Barfield references Psalm 115,¹³³ which warns of the idols of the heathens:

Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.
They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not:
They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not:
They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither
speak they through their throat.
They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Barfield, 126-127.

¹³² Barfield, 179.

¹³³ Barfield, 176.

¹³⁴ Psalm 115:4-8, King James Version.

The psalmist recognizes that the idols of the surrounding peoples are empty, mere works of men's hands. Yet they are not altogether powerless, for they that make the idols are made like them—empty. The same theme is used by the prophet Isaiah, whom Jesus quotes when his disciples ask him why he speaks in parables:

This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:

“ ‘You will indeed hear but never understand,
and you will indeed see but never perceive.’
For this people's heart has grown dull,
and with their ears they can barely hear,
and their eyes they have closed,
lest they should see with their eyes
and hear with their ears
and understand with their heart
and turn, and I would heal them.”

But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.¹³⁵

According to the passage quoted from Isaiah, seeing, hearing, and understanding are correlative to turning to God to be healed. If those are the stakes, it is of utmost importance to discern what it is to see, and what it may be to see without seeing, or to hear without hearing or understanding. At the same time, Christ tells his disciples that they have been blessed with eyes that see and ears that hear. Those who are in Christ need not fear idols, for the idols are mere images made by human hands. The idols will pass away, along with those who made them and those who trust in them, but as Christ

¹³⁵ Matthew 13:13-17, English Standard Version. Barfield quotes the same passage from the King James Version on page 176.

told his disciples elsewhere, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”¹³⁶

On the other hand, Lewis describes the fate of those who are in Christ: perfection. In *Mere Christianity*, in the chapter titled “Counting the Cost,”¹³⁷ he argues that the command of Christ “Be ye perfect” is not a condition of salvation, but a description of it:

He is going to make us into creatures that can obey that command. He said (in the Bible) that we were “gods” and He is going to make good His words. If we let Him—for we can prevent Him, if we choose—He will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a god or goddess, a dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright stainless mirror which reflects back to God perfectly (though, of course, on a smaller scale) His own boundless power and delight and goodness. The process will be long and in parts very painful; but that is what we are in for. Nothing less. He meant what He said.¹³⁸

Humanity certainly has everything to lose by remaining in idolatry, but only because there is everything to gain by abiding in Christ. To be in Christ is to be remade by him according to the New Creation that he brought about. He will make humanity into “gods” inasmuch as they participate in his divinity, and this participation is freely offered to them, that they may accept or refuse it.

¹³⁶ Matthew 24:35, King James Version.

¹³⁷ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 201-206.

¹³⁸ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 205-206.

CONCLUSION

Returning from Narnia

When Lewis constructs the world of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, he makes a unique choice regarding the passage of time, which, besides acting as an unusual narrative device, offers the perspective of a full history of a magical world as viewed from the eyes of a few individuals from the non-magical twentieth century. The amount of time spent in this world and the amount of time spent in Narnia do not align, nor do they follow any fixed relation or ratio. In this way, when Lucy spends an entire evening in Narnia in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, her siblings think she has only been hiding in the wardrobe for a few moments,¹³⁹ and when she and her siblings return to Narnia after a year away, they find that centuries have passed and their old kingdom is in ruins.¹⁴⁰ In fact, the entire history of Narnia takes place in just a few decades of our world's time.

Narnia's rich history covers several eras and countless generations, but the Pevensie children witness several time periods during their adventures,¹⁴¹ and Professor Digory Kirke in one lifetime manages to be present for both the creation and the destruction of Narnia.¹⁴² From their point of view, Aslan allowed the entire history of Narnia to correspond to just a few decades of our world's history.

¹³⁹ Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, 120.

¹⁴⁰ Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian*, 324.

¹⁴¹ Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe; Prince Caspian; Voyage of the Dawn Treader; The Horse and His Boy; The Last Battle*.

¹⁴² Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Magician's Nephew; The Last Battle*.

For these Modern individuals, the world of Narnia provides depth and meaning to the world into which they were born, a world, according to Barfield, marked by the most significantly non-participatory culture that had ever been. The Pevensies lived in a world torn apart by war, and they saw the beginnings of the changes wrought by that era. Digory, on the other hand, was born into the Modern optimism of the late 19th century. As a child, he discovered Narnia, and he learned the mercy of Aslan,¹⁴³ but he never returned to that land of magic until the end of his life. In between those instances, he witnessed two World Wars, and as a Professor, he may have observed first-hand the decline of the optimistic Modern outlook. Additionally, in the middle of his life, he hosted a few children in his home, and he watched as Narnia was revealed to them. Digory spent his entire life knowing about this place called Narnia, this land of magic and imagination that was yet very real, and it seems to have defined his perspective on the world in which he spent the rest of his life. But unlike his uncle before him, the Professor didn't spend his whole life trying to tap into the other side. While Lewis tells only a little about Digory's life, we can gather from his steady employment and care for the people around him¹⁴⁴ that he was very committed to this world. His this-worldly life was defined by his awareness of Narnia, but he didn't need to commune with the naiads and dryads and fauns and centaurs in order to live well. Those things, Lewis seems to suggest, are beneficial for children, but they do not fit well into what was typically considered adult experience. For example, when the (adult) Telmarines stumble upon a doorway to the world of Narnia, they quickly set out to disenchant that magical world, causing

¹⁴³ Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Magician's Nephew*, 96-101.

¹⁴⁴ Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, 111.

generations of fear and hiding for the talking beasts of Narnia.¹⁴⁵ The world of magic was not meant for such as them. But those who enter Narnia as children, who are later called the “friends of Narnia,”¹⁴⁶ and Digory Kirke most clearly, demonstrate the importance of an imaginative, even magical, understanding of the world and of applying that understanding to this world, not as an escape, but as a means of living well within it.

Whether humanity has grown up, or else simply forgotten how to perceive the magic in this world, Aslan has taken them aside and told them that they cannot return to Narnia. They must return to their own world. With this, Barfield agrees. Enlivening the participation of the modern day, for him, does not involve a return to original participation, but something entirely new, something made possible by the Incarnation. Even so, mankind must never forget the enchanted world, nor how Aslan met them in Narnia or how God did in history. For the people of our time and our world, participation might not be magic wardrobes, enchanted rings, or being blown across an ocean by a lion’s breath, but there are, on occasion, transformative and even mystifying experiences in Nature, stories that grip the imagination, and a hope founded upon the Word of God.

The chronology of Narnia, combined with the theme of growing from children to adults, demonstrates the value of understanding this world with imagination and how that imagination can be closely tied to faith. As it turns out, adults who leave Narnia are never allowed to return to it. Lewis recognized that our world has been changing significantly in recent history. If once mature men and women could entertain thoughts of talking beasts and tree-spirits, in modern times, only children can take those thoughts totally

¹⁴⁵ Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian*, 338.

¹⁴⁶ Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Last Battle*, 695.

seriously. Even so, Professor Kirke held fast to his faith in Narnia, a faith that to some might be similarly childish, and his childlike faith formed a foundational part of his understanding of his own world.

At the end of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, when Aslan tells Lucy and Edmund that they will never return to Narnia, the children weep at the loss of the main way they have known Aslan:

“You are too old, children,” said Aslan, “and you must begin to come close to your own world now.”

“It isn’t Narnia, you know,” sobbed Lucy. “It’s you. We shan’t meet you there. And how can we live, never meeting you?”

“But you shall meet me, dear one,” said Aslan.

“Are — are you there too, Sir?” said Edmund.

“I am,” said Aslan. “But there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there.”¹⁴⁷

Some, perhaps Barfield among them, may feel that they see God best in an enchanted or participated world, but to Lewis, that is not the world that humanity is meant to stay in. Lucy and Edmund felt very at home and grown up on the Dawn Treader, but as they prepared to return, they became very aware of how childish they were. The disenchanting world may at times be far less inviting than what some imagine an enchanted world could be. But as Aslan told the children, mankind is meant to know Jesus in the world he has put them in, and He has promised that they will there be recreated according to Himself. And even as that meant different things for Digory than for the Pevensies, or for any of the others who made their way to Narnia, no one can know how God will meet them in this world. Lewis recognized some of the merits of Barfield’s perspective, but he consistently maintained that Narnia was not for those who have been called to a different

¹⁴⁷ Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 541.

world. While Barfield promotes a return to participation in a new form called “final participation,” which is made possible by the Incarnation of the Word of God, Lewis focuses upon the responsibility of man to the world he inhabits. Lewis does not believe that this world ought to be seen as fundamentally enchanted or participated, as Barfield did, but he does understand this world as deeply meaningful, an understanding rooted in faith and explored in imagination.

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