

Book Reviews

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Edith M. Humphrey, *Further Up and Further In: Orthodox Conversations with C.S. Lewis on Scripture and Theology*. (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2017). \$28 (paperback), 275 pp.

For those who are active in Orthodox Christian circles, this book is a significant event indeed. Up until this point, from 1963 to 2017, there has been no full-length treatment of C.S. Lewis by an Orthodox author, much less a scholarly author like Dr. Humphrey. There have been shorter and insightful pieces—by Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, Dr. Andrew Walker, Dcn. Christopher Jensen, amongst others—but nothing that I am aware of from a press with academic standing. Simply for publishing the very first book on Lewis within Orthodox circles, she makes an important start. The puzzle of this is only compounded by the fact that the Lewis corpus has enjoyed sustained popularity decade after decade within Orthodox readership; his books are regularly in parish bookstores, and were ironically noted as the bestselling books in the Russian Orthodox Cathedral in London.

This gives the author effectively an open field to examine whatever she wishes. So how does she structure the book? She initiates what she terms a 'conversation' with Lewis, using him as a guide, to the topics suggested by a range of Lewis's books, mostly his fiction. Two Narnia tales, *The Pilgrim's Regress*, *Till We Have Faces*, *That Hideous Strength*, and *The Great Divorce*, are her selections from his fiction. Additionally, she offers full chapter treatments of *An Experiment in Criticism*, *The Abolition of Man*, and *Miracles*. The chapters, at first, read like self-contained treatments of the respective books, at least until the layering of themes becomes satisfyingly apparent.

This is not a short book (275 pages in small font) and this is a large number of dense books to select. The field only becomes more populated when each chapter includes a non-Lewisian prompt or author as a considerable part of the conversation. Thus, Fr. Alexander Schmemmann's *For the Life of the World* appends a discussion of the sacramentality of Lewis's worlds in *The Magician's Nephew* and *The Silver Chair*. Rudolph Bultmann and *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian World View* (1984) by Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh are the intellectual foreground for her discussion of *Miracles*. Elsewhere, the preaching of Jonathan Edwards launches her consideration of the glimpse of hell we see in those 'men without chests' in *That Hideous Strength*. Almost every chapter incorporates an unexpected, though not unhelpful, ancient, medieval, or modern author.

However, it is scripture itself which emerges as the clear lens by which the Humphrey examines Lewis's books. Considering that Dr. Humphrey is a scholar of New Testament scripture, it is not surprising that here the most valuable connections are made. For instance, the sacrifice of Achan and his family in the book of Joshua initiate the discussion about the way in which sacrifice—and the curses and blessings involved in such sacrifice—help us understand the paradoxical nature of human sacrifice in *Till We Have Faces*. In a different chapter, Psalm 73 provides the language for a believer's faithful wrestling with the justice of God in the face of overwhelming suffering; both for us today and Orual in her complaint against the gods. Humphrey's examination of *The Great Divorce*, additionally, makes fascinating connections to a long scriptural genre that depicts the suffering of the damned in sources as unfamiliar as *The Apocalypse of Peter* and *4 Esdras*. Her panoptic facility with scripture means that St Paul anticipates the 'liberation of creation' shown in the characters of *The Great Divorce*: St. Paul to the Ephesians and Corinthians provides the keys to the archetypal presentation of gender and sex for Mark and Jane in *That Hideous Strength*; and the ascetic life urged by Christ and St. Paul show that asceticism is necessary in all family life, as seen in Orual's ascetic, visionary, trials.

The strength of the author's habit of amplifying, explaining, and elucidating themes within Lewis's work by means of Scripture leads one to ask where the specifically Orthodox approach might be apparent. In two places, it is certainly clear. Her use of *The Life of Anthony* by St. Athanasius for *Till We Have Faces*, Paul Evokimov for *That Hideous Strength*, and St. Athanasius again for comparative models of the atonement give a sense of the theological approach of the author. She is repeatedly at pains to articulate the mystery at work in perennial theological *topoi* such as faith and works in salvation, sacrifice and victory in the atonement, submission and equality between the sexes, to name a few—but only to a point. Several chapters have a refreshing habit of not trying to solve these topics, but to present the rich considerations that Lewis, the scriptures, the church fathers, and contemporary Christians have to say about them, and then list 'boundaries' which can corral the discussion. There are few theological polemics in the book.

In fact, there are so few that it makes this reviewer wonder about further fields to explore from an Orthodox Christian vantage point. Dr Mark Edwards perceptively noted in his essay "C.S. Lewis and Early Christian Literature" that Lewis shows remarkable unfamiliarity with many patristic authors or church fathers. What is one to make of this, or how true is it? As fully versed as Lewis is in classical and medieval authors, are Lewis's ties to the patristic tradition really as limited as St. Augustine, St. Athanasius and handful of others? One is tempted to comb through his library at the Marion E. Wade Center. A fuller sense of his potential knowledge of St. Irenaeus, Origen, St. Maximus, or even St. John Chrysostom would open fruitful ques-

tions about how Lewis read scripture himself, how Lewis understood the fall (and the innocence of Adam and Eve), how he articulated on his own such a rich depiction of *theosis*, and so forth.

Even on the biographical level, there are treasures here unexplored. In someone so startlingly ecumenical for his period, one would love to know how much the interactions with Nicholas Zernov, the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, and sundry Orthodox clergy, laity, and monastics affected Lewis, if at all. We know of at least two essays by Lewis which were given for just such an Orthodox audience at Oxford. We also know of his first-hand experience of Greek Orthodoxy with his and Joy's final holiday in Greece during the Paschal season. As readers of Lewis today, we benefit from examining this 'mere Christian'—as this book does with joy and pious care—from every possible angle.

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