

The Great Divorce - Facilitator Notes

Preface - The Marriage of Heaven & Hell

Lewis opens the book by referring to “*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*” by William Blake (1790’s). Jack says that the temptation to wed the two is perennial, to turn evil into good without renunciation. Instead, getting to Heaven requires that we will let go of some things: “*You cannot take all luggage with you on all journeys;...If we insist on keeping Hell (or even Earth) we shall not see Heaven: if we accept Heaven we shall not be able to retain even the smallest and most intimate souvenirs of Hell.*” However, what we must give up will ultimately have been utterly insignificant! Not only that, when we look back, Earth will be seen to be a preliminary region of either Heaven or Hell.

Jack ends by emphasizing that this story is simply a fantasy, “*an imaginative supposal*”, which he is using to communicate spiritual truths. It is **not** a strict theology of what happens to us after death.

Questions

Q1. *What was the inspiration behind this book?*

Q2. *In what ways do you think people imagine we can wed Heaven and Hell?*

Q3. *From Mere Christianity, how did Lewis understand the nature of evil? How does this demonstrate the problem with trying to wed Heaven and Hell?*

Q4. *What does Lewis mean when he says that we can't take all luggage on all journeys? To what is he referring when he talks about leaving behind a "right hand" or "right eye"? How does this relate to the conception of the Christian transformation described in Mere Christianity?*

Q5. *According to Lewis, if we go off-track, what must we do to get to our destination? If we get the wrong answer to a sum, what should we do?*

Q6. *What will happen if we insist on keeping Hell, or even Earth?*

Q7. *From where did Lewis get the idea of unbreakable matter?*

Q8. *Is Lewis describing what he believes the afterlife is like?*

Chapter 1 - Waiting for the bus

We open with Lewis standing in a bus queue. He’s been wandering in continual twilight through **The Grey Town** in the rain. Other than the bus queue, the town appears to be deserted.

As he joins the queue, a couple argue and they both leave.

The Short Man in front of him makes a disparaging comment about “*the sort of society*” in the bus queue. After Lewis fails to respond to the slight, **The Big Man** punches **The Short Man** who limps away.

Next, a young, seemingly androgynous, couple leave arm in arm, *“it was clear that each for the moment preferred the other to the chance of a place in the bus”*.

A woman four places ahead complains *“We shall never all get in”*. A man offers to change places with her for five shillings, but he then double-crosses her. The rest of the group throw her out of the line.

We get the impression that events like this continue to happen for some time until *“the queue had reduced itself to manageable proportions long before the bus appeared”*. The bus is a stunning vehicle, driven by a driver who is *“full of light”*. To our protagonist’s puzzlement, the driver’s appearance raises the ire of those in the queue. They all push and shove to get into the bus but, in the end, there is plenty of room for all.

Our man sits at the back of the bus, a good distance away from the others, but is immediately joined by **“a tousle-headed youth”** who sees in our protagonist a kindred spirit. He comments on his bewilderment at the other passengers, saying they *“won’t like it at all when we get there, and they’d really be much more comfortable at home”* where *“they’ve got cinemas and fish and chip shops and advertisements and all the sorts of things they want”*. He says he ought to have taken the bus as soon as he arrived, but he’d *“fooled about trying to wake people up”*. It becomes clear that this man is a poet and, to our protagonist’s horror, he is about to show him some of his poetry... It is at this point Lewis realizes that the bus is now airborne and he looks out of the window to see the Grey Town disappearing below into the rain and the mist.

Questions

Q1. *What words would you use to describe The Grey Town?*

Q2. *What do you make of the different members of the queue? The arguing couple, The Short Man, The Big Man, The Androgynous Couple, The woman who pays to change places with the man who cheats her...*

Q3. *In what way do the characters in the line each display one of the Seven Deadly Sins? Envy, Gluttony, Greed, Lust, Pride, Sloth, Wrath*

Q4. *In what ways are the members of the bus stop similar? In what ways are they different from each other?*

Q5. *Why do you think the line for the bus is so short? Why do people so easily leave the line?*

Q6. *Why do you think the members of the queue react so badly to the driver?*

Q7. *Do you think the tousle-headed youth represents anyone in particular?*

Q8. *Why does the tousle-headed youth think that the others would be happier staying in the town?*

Q9. *Who do you think Cyril Blellow was?*

Chapter 2 - The bus ride

The **Tousle-Headed Poet** explains that his parents never appreciated him. The schools he attended, the education system in general and capitalism all failed to recognize his genius. During the War, he was a conscientious objector and moved to America. After money troubles and poor treatment by a girl, he

jumped under a train. He is convinced that, while all the others would return, he would stay at their destination and finally receive the recognition he deserved.

A fight breaks out in the bus. Nobody is hurt, but when it is over, our protagonist finds himself at a different seat with a new companion, an **Intelligent Man** with a large nose and bowler hat. His new companion explains to him why the town seems so empty, that everyone there is so quarrelsome that they keep moving further and further away from each other.

Some residents of the town are identified: Tamberlaine, Genghis Khan, Julius Caesar, Henry the Fifth and Napoleon. Some had gone to visit **Napoleon**, a journey which took fifteen thousand years. They found a huge house in the middle of nowhere with Napoleon *“Walking up and down-up and down... never stopping for a moment...muttering to himself all the time. ‘It was Soult’s fault. It was Ney’s fault. It was Josephine’s fault...’”*

At this point, the **Intelligent Man** shares his plan. He says *“there’s no proper economic basis for any community life. If they needed real shops, chaps would have to stay near where the real shops were... It’s scarcity that enables a society to exist”*. His solution is to *“come back with some real commodities”* which he could sell, forcing people to live nearby. This would also provide *“safety in numbers”*, particularly when the dusk eventually turns to night... The **Big Man** and the others tell the **Intelligent Man** to shut up, under threat of violence.

A nearby passenger, *“A fat clean-shaven man”*, tells Lewis that *“there is not a shred of evidence that this twilight is ever going to turn into a night. There has been a revolution of opinion on that in educated circles”*, arguing instead that it is a precursor to the dawn. He rejects the **Intelligent Man**’s *“earth-bound”* desire for *“real commodities”*.

The greyness outside begins to subside and the bus is fulfilled with light. Our protagonist goes to open the window, but it is forcefully shut by the **Intelligent Man**. The **Big Man** encourages him to hit Lewis. The cruel light reveals the *“distorted and faded”* faces. Then Lewis then sees his own reflection in a mirror...

Questions

Q1. What is the sin of the tousel-haired poet? What is he expecting to find in Heaven?

Q2. According to the Intelligent Ghost, why does The Grey Town seem so empty?

Q3. What solution does the Intelligent Ghost present?

Q4. What spiritual lesson can you draw from the way houses are constructed in The Grey Town and their poor function?

Q5. How would you describe the outlook of the *“fat clean-shaven man”*?

Q6. What does the light reveal?

Chapter 3 - Arriving

The bus climbs over a cliff and travels across *“a level, grassy country through which there ran a wide river”* where it lands. All the passengers push and shove to get out.

Lewis leaves the bus where *"the light and coolness that drenched me were like those of summer morning, early morning a minute or two before the sunrise"*. He has the sense of *"being in a larger space...which made the Solar System itself seem an indoor affair"*. This gives him a feeling both of freedom, but also of exposure to possible danger.

Looking at his fellow-passengers, Jack sees them as almost transparent. The *"grass did not bend under their feet: even the dew drops were not disturbed"*. At this point he realizes that *"the men were as they always had been"* and that *"it was the light, the grass, the trees that were different; made of some different substance, so much solidier than things in our country that men were ghosts by comparison"*. He tries to pluck a daisy and fails, it being *"heavier than a sack of coal"*. One ghost runs back into the bus, screaming *"I don't like it!"*.

The Big Man asks the Driver when they've got to go back, but he replies that they can stay as long as they please. One of the quieter and more respectable ghosts comments to Lewis that personally he left the Grey Town to get away from this riff-raff!

Our protagonist looks around and sees some great mountains with *"cities perched on inaccessible summits"*. In the same way that the Grey Town seemed to be frozen in time, here the light does not change, with *"the promise or the threat of sunrise"*.

He then sees *"bright"* people coming to meet them, whose *"strong feet sank into the wet turf"*. Some of these people are naked, others robed, but it seemed to make very little difference, *"the naked ones did not seem less adorned, and the robes did not disguise in those who wore them the massive grandeur of muscle and the radiant smoothness of flesh"*. Although some had beards, they all seemed ageless. Two more ghosts scream and hide in the bus. The remaining phantoms huddle close together.

Questions

Q1. How is this new land described? What do you think is the significance of these descriptions?

Q2. What does Lewis come to realize about himself and the other passengers?

Q3. What does the Bus Driver say about their stay in this new land?

Q4. What annoyed the Respectable Ghost?

Q5. How are the "bright" people described? What do you think is the significance of this?

Q6. Why do some of the phantoms hide in the bus?

Chapter 4 - Getting your rights

Anticipating *"affecting scenes"*, our protagonist wanders away from the group. He discovers that the grass, *"hard as diamonds"*, makes progress slow and painful. He is followed by **The Big Ghost** and one of the solid people. It turns out that, on earth, the ghost was the boss of the bright, solid man, who is named Len. Len had murdered a common acquaintance, a man called Jack. The **Big Ghost** is horrified Len has been allowed into this land. Len explains that his victim is there too and that he will see him soon.

The **Big Ghost** then asks Len if he's ashamed of himself, to which Len replies *"Not as you mean. I do not look at myself. I have given up myself"* and explains that this began following the murder. **The Big Ghost** asks Len why *"a bloody murderer"* is here, while he had been living in the Grey Town. Len says that,

although he'll come to understand, it'll be difficult to comprehend for the time being, so best to not bother about it.

But the **Big Ghost** says *"I gone straight all my life. I don't say I was a religious man and I don't say I had no faults, far from it. But I done my best all my life, see? I done my best by everyone, that's the sort of chap I was. I never asked for anything that wasn't mine by rights"* Len explains that the situation is far better than he thinks, saying *"I haven't got my rights, or I should not be here. You will not get yours either. You'll get something far better. Never fear."* The **Big Ghost** says he's *"not asking for anybody's bleeding charity"*, but Len exhorts him to do just that: *"Ask for the Bleeding Charity. Everything is here for the asking and nothing can be bought."*

At this point, we begin to see that the **Big Ghost** is not going to accept a Heaven where someone like Len is also welcome. Len attempts to correct this attitude without much success. He points out that the **Big Ghost** was neither a decent man, nor did he even *"do his best"*. The **Big Ghost** was hard on his employees, as well as on his wife and children. Len goes on to explain that murdering Jack wasn't actually the worst thing he did: *"I murdered you in my heart, deliberately, for years. I used to lie awake at nights thinking what I'd do to you if ever I got the chance"*. He explains that, because of this, he has been sent to the **Big Ghost** to ask for his forgiveness and to serve him for as long as he would like.

The **Big Ghost** angrily tells Len to stay out of his *"private affairs"*, even though Len says that *"There are no private affairs"*. It is at this point the **Big Ghost** declares that he's not going to go to the mountain at all: *"Tell them I'm not coming, see? I'd rather be damned than go along with you"*

Questions

Q1. What do we learn about the relationship between the Big Ghost and the solid person who meets him? Who is Jack?

Q2. Why is the Big Ghost surprised to see Len?

Q3. Why does Len say he isn't ashamed? What virtue is he displaying?

Q4. On what basis does the Big Ghost think he should be granted admission? According to Len, would he get in on that basis?

Q5. What does Len say is the worst thing he's ever done? Why is it worse than killing Jack?

Chapter 5 - Finding Truth

Two lions arrive, *"playing some solemn romp"*. Feeling nervous, Jack leaves. By the river, he finds one of the Bright People, a man named Dick, talking to the **Episcopal Ghost** Lewis had met earlier.

Dick and the **Episcopal Ghost** were friends on earth. The ghost reminisces about the conversations they used to have. He comments that his friend *"became rather narrow-minded towards the end"*, believing in a literal Heaven and Hell, but he assumes that he's now *"broadened out again"*. In response to this, Dick asks the ghost if he knows where he thinks he's been living. The ghost is scandalized when Dick refers to the Grey Town as *"Hell"* (but if he chooses to never go back, he may call it *"Purgatory"*). The **Episcopal Ghost** asks why he was sent to the Town and is told that it was because he was an apostate.

The ghost indignantly asks *"Do you really think people are penalised for their honest opinions? Even assuming, for the sake of argument, that those opinions were mistaken."* He declares that *"They were not only honest [opinions] but heroic. I asserted them fearlessly. When the doctrine of the Resurrection ceased to commend itself to the critical faculties which God had given me, I openly rejected it. I preached my famous sermon. I defied the whole chapter. I took every risk."* Dick points out that nothing was risked and the inevitable happened: *"popularity, sales for your books, invitations, and finally a bishopric"*.

Len explains their *"opinions were not honestly come by"*. They adopted a certain current of ideas because they *"seemed modern and successful"*. He asks his ghostly friend *"When, in our whole lives, did we honestly face, in solitude, the one question on which all turned: whether after all the Supernatural might not in fact occur? When did we put up one moment's real resistance to the loss of our faith?"* He says that they were *"playing with loaded dice... errors which are sincere in that sense are not innocent."*

The Bright One tells him *"You have seen Hell: you are in sight of Heaven. Will you, even now, repent and believe?"* The ghost affirms that he already believes, saying his *"religion is a very real and a very precious thing"*.

Dick invites him to the mountains, but the ghost says he will only do so with some assurances: *"a place where I shall find a wider sphere of usefulness-and scope for the talents that God has given me - and an atmosphere of free inquiry"*. Dick promises him no such thing, *"No sphere of usefulness: you are not needed there at all. No scope for your talents: only forgiveness for having perverted them. No atmosphere of inquiry, for I will bring you to the land not of questions but of answers, and you shall see the face of God."*

The ghost protests that *"there is something stifling about the idea of finality... what is more soul-destroying than stagnation?"* The Spirit responds *"There was a time when you asked questions because you wanted answers, and were glad when you had found them... Thirst was made for water; inquiry for truth. What you now call the free play of inquiry has neither more nor less to do with the ends for which intelligence was given you than masturbation has to do with marriage."* Regarding this statement as obscene, the ghost responds saying *"that question-and-answer conception of thought only applies to matters of fact. Religious and speculative questions are surely on a different level."*

Dick asks the ghost if he even believes that God exists, to which the ghost asks *"What does Existence mean?"*

Dick then asks if he still even desires happiness, but while the ghost is dispensing his own wisdom on the subject, he suddenly remembers that he's later presenting a paper at the Grey Town's Theological Society, asking what Jesus' opinions would have been if he hadn't been tragically killed at such a young age. It is at this point the Spirit leaves him and the ghost returns to the bus humming a hymn to himself.

Lewis tries walking on the river's hard water and falls flat on his face due to the water's motion.

Questions

Q1. *What do you think is the significance of the lions?*

Q2. *What do we learn about the background of the ghost and the spirit in this chapter?*

Q3. *Why is the ghost's criticism of the spirit's "narrow" opinions ironic?*

Q4. *What is the ghost's sin?*

Q5. *How do the ghost and the spirit each regard the ghost's beliefs?*

Q6. *What are the ghost's demands for Heaven?*

Q7. *What would you regard as the ghost's essential resistance to the spirit and to Heaven?*

Q8. *Why do you think the chapter ends in the way it does?*

Chapter 6 - The Apple Thief

Lewis walks upstream on the hard water for an hour, but only advances “a couple of hundred yards”. The dangerous foam forces him to leave the water and walk on the large flat stones on the bank.

After hearing “an immense yet lovely noise [which] vibrated through the forest”, he eventually arrives at a massive waterfall which “was like giant’s laughter”. Lewis comments that his senses “were now receiving impressions which would normally exceed their capacity”.

He then notices a hawthorn bush which “seemed to be behaving oddly”. It turns out to be Ikey, **The Intelligent Ghost**, from the bus who had wanted to setup a shop in **The Grey Town**. He was trying to move covertly, but making slow progress. He arrives at a tree, but the wind dislodges apples which land both around and on him!

Recovered, **The Intelligent Ghost** attempts to fill his pockets with the apples. However, “his ambitions were gradually forced down” to the smallest apple he could find. Bent double by the weight, “inch by inch, still availing himself of every scrap of cover, he set out on his *via dolorosa* to the bus, carrying his torture”.

A great voice suddenly speaks, saying “Fool. Put it down”. Jack realizes that that the waterfall itself was speaking, “a bright angel who stood, like one crucified, against the rocks and poured himself perpetually down towards the forest with loud joy”. The giant tells him to put the apple down since “There is not room for it in Hell”. Instead, he invites him to remain in Heaven and “learn to eat such apples” and tells him that “the very leaves and the blades of grass in the wood will delight to teach you.” The Ghost either doesn’t hear the angel, or chooses to ignore him and continue on his journey back to the bus...

Questions

Q1. *Why do you think Lewis’ senses are increasing in capacity?*

Q2. *What is The Intelligent Ghost so afraid of?*

Q3. *What is The Intelligent Ghost trying to do? What problems does he have?*

Q4. *How can the waterfall also be an angel?*

Q5. *What does the angel tell The Intelligent Ghost to do instead?*

Chapter 7 - The Hard-Bitten Ghost

Feeling uncomfortable beside the Water-Giant, Lewis makes his way downstream again. He meets a “tall...a lean **Hard-Bitten [Ghost]**...” leaning against a tree.

The Ghost asks Lewis if he’s going back but Lewis says he’s unsure. The Ghost explains that he’s “seen about all there is to see” and just came up to “have a look around” so he’ll be going back shortly. He explains he visited all the sites on earth: “Pekin... Niagara Falls, the Pyramids, Salt Lake City, the Taj Mahal” and didn’t think much of any of them, claiming that they were “All run by the same people...a World Combine”.

He’s been disappointed with Hell, saying “They lead you to expect red fire and devils and all sorts of interesting people sizzling on grids... but when you get there it’s just like any other town”. He’s also disappointed with Heaven, claiming that there’s no possibility of staying since “You can’t eat the fruit and you can’t drink the water and it takes you all your time to walk on the grass... All that idea of staying is only an advertisement stunt.”

After **The Hard-Bitten Ghost** complains how uncomfortable Heaven is, Lewis says “There seems to be some idea that if one stays here one would get...acclimatised.” The Ghost says he’s been told that lie his entire life: in the nursery he was told that if he were good, he’d be happy, at school they said Latin would get easier, he was told his marriage would would “settle down”, and during the World Wars he was promised peace. He cynically asks Lewis what he would think of a hotel which told you that you’d eventually grow to enjoy eating bad eggs!

After mentioning other conspiracy theories, the Ghost goes on to claim that both Heaven and Hell are run by the same people. It’s an elaborate joke. He argues that Heaven and Hell can’t be at war, otherwise Heaven “would attack and sweep the Town out of existence”.

After complaining that there’s nothing to do either in Heaven or Hell, Lewis asks the Ghost would he would *like* to do, but he says “it’s up to the Management to find something that doesn’t bore us... it’s their job”. He goes on to say that the same thing was wrong on earth with “the parsons and moralists” who “keep on asking us to alter ourselves”, but “if...[they] are so clever and so powerful, why don’t they find something to suit their public?”

As the Ghost gets ready to leave, he asks Lewis if he’s coming. Lewis cheekily responds that “There doesn’t seem to be much point in going anywhere on your showing”. After commenting that, at least it’s not raining here, **the Hard-Bitten Ghost** says it will eventually and, when it does, each raindrop “will make a hole in you, like a machine-gun bullet”. Adamant that “they” won’t catch him that way, the Ghost leaves.

Questions

Q1. *What do you make of the Hard-Bitten Ghost?*

Q2. *Why do you think the Ghost was so unimpressed with everything on earth?*

Q3. *Why is the Ghost so unimpressed with Hell?*

Q4. *Why is the Ghost so unimpressed with Heaven?*

Q5. *Why does he reject the idea that the Ghosts will become soldier over time?*

Q6. *Why does the Ghost not think Heaven and Hell are at war? Why does he think they are colluding?*

Q7. Why does the Ghost not suggest anything he'd like to do?

Chapter 8 - The Self-Conscious Ghost

After his interaction with **the Hard-Bitten Ghost**, Lewis is left sitting on a stone by the river feeling utterly miserable at the thought that **the Solid People** may, in fact, be malevolent, and he wrestled with the question as to why **the Solid People** did not do more to help those in **the Grey Town**. Could it be that they just came down to the plain to mock the ghosts?

He thinks of the punishment of Tantalus in deepest Hades, who is made to stand in a pool of water underneath a fruit tree's branches, with the fruit always just out of reach and the water receding before he could drink it. He thinks of [Revelation 14:11](#). He thinks of William Cowper who, upon realizing that he is dreaming and is, in fact, doomed to perdition says "These are the sharpest arrows in His quiver".

The sense of danger he felt upon coming to this land returns with full force. "Terror whispered, 'This is no place for you'". He walks away from the river towards a thicket of trees in the hope of some kind of safety.

Thirty minutes later, he comes into "a little clearing with some bushes in the centre". A Ghost enters, "a well-dressed woman...but its shadows of finery looked ghastly in the morning light". She tries to hide by pressing herself against the bushes.

One of the Bright People enters and the Ghost squeals at him to go away. The ghost points out that she's heading in the wrong direction, away from the mountains. He suggests that she could lean on him in the journey to ease the hurt of her feet.

The ghost responds that she can't go "out there among all those people, like this" and says she'd "never have come at all if I'd known you were all going to be dressed like that". When asked to explain herself she says "How can I go out like this among a lot of people with real solid bodies? It's far worse than going out with nothing on would have been on earth. Have everyone staring through me."

The Solid Person explains that "we were all a bit ghostly when we first arrived, you know. That'll wear off. Just come out and try." The ghost says she'd "rather die". She says she wish she'd never been born and asks "What are we born for?", to which the ghost responds "For infinite happiness... You can step out into it at any moment"

The ghost continues to protest, but the Solid Person compares shame to liquids too hot to touch, but not too hot to drink: "Shame is like that. If you will accept it-if you will drink the cup to the bottom-you will find it very nourishing: but try to do anything else with it and it scalds."

Although momentarily tempted to trust the Solid Person, but returns to her complaining. The Spirit asks "Could you, only for a moment, fix your mind on something not

yourself?" but to no avail. He therefore blows a horn which results in "A herd of unicorns came thundering through the glades: twenty-seven hands high the smallest of them and white as swans but for the red gleam in eyes and nostrils and the flashing indigo of their horns" The Ghost screams and Lewis says he thinks she makes a bolt towards the Spirit, but he himself fled from the scene.

Questions

Q1. Why is Lewis feeling dejected at the beginning of this chapter? What questions does he have?

Q2. What is the problem with the Ghost he sees in this chapter? What is her primary concern?

Q3. What does the Solid Person offer to the Ghost? What does he say will happen in time?

Q4. Why does the Solid Person call the unicorns?

Chapter 9 - Meeting The Teacher

Lewis meets another of the Bright Spirits, his hero, the Scottish writer and theologian, George MacDonald. He is invited to sit and talk awhile. After expressing his admiration for MacDonald, Lewis asks him about the Ghosts: "Do any of them stay? Can they stay? Is any real choice offered to them? How do they come to be here?". MacDonald reminds him of "the Refrigerium", which is mentioned in Prudentius and by Jeremy Taylor, where the damned have holidays, either to Heaven or back to Earth. If they go back to earth, they play tricks on mediums, spy on their children, haunt a house they formerly owned and "literary Ghosts hang about public libraries to see if anyone's still reading their books." The Emperor Trajan came to visit this land and chose to remain.

Lewis expresses his surprise that there "really [is] a way out of Hell into Heaven". MacDonald tells him it depends what he means: "If they leave that grey town behind it will not have been Hell. To any that leaves it, it is Purgatory... Ye can call [this land] the Valley of the Shadow of Life. And yet to those who stay here it will have been Heaven from the first. And ye can call those sad streets in the town yonder the Valley of the Shadow of Death: but to those who remain there they will have been Hell even from the beginning." He tries to explain that "both good and evil, when they are full grown, become retrospective". Lewis asks if, therefore, it is correct to say "that Heaven and Hell are only states of mind". MacDonald sternly rejects it. Hell is indeed a state of mind, "every state of mind, left to itself, every shutting up of the creature within the dungeon of its own mind - is, in the end, Hell. But Heaven is not a state of mind". However, "Heaven is reality itself. All that is fully real is Heavenly".

Lewis asks if there is a real choice after death, since this doesn't accord with either Catholic or Protestant theology. MacDonald dismisses this question, telling Lewis that he was not brought here "to study such curiosities. What concerns you is the nature of the choice itself: and that ye can watch them making." Lewis asks what the Ghosts are choosing when they go back. MacDonald says that "There is always something they insist on keeping, even at the price of misery... Ye see it easily enough in a spoiled child that would sooner miss its play and its supper than say it was sorry and be friends. Ye call it the Sulks. But in adult life it has a hundred fine names...Self-Respect... and Proper Pride."

Lewis then asks if people are lost through "the undignified vices...mere sensuality". MacDonald agrees that there are. He says that such people begin by "pursuing a real pleasure...But the time comes on when, though the pleasure becomes less and less and the craving fiercer and fiercer, and though he knows that joy can never come that way, yet he prefers to joy the mere fondling of unappeasable lust and would not have it taken from him"

MacDonald tells the story of "Sir Archibald" who visited Heaven but who returned to the Grey Town. On earth he'd been interested in nothing but survival. He dies and comes to the plains of Heaven "[But] this country was no use to him at all. Everyone here had 'survived' already... His occupation was clean gone". MacDonald points out that "if he would only have admitted that he'd mistaken the means for the end and had a good laugh at himself he could have begun all over again like a little child and entered into joy. But he would not do that". When Lewis expresses amazement at this, his teacher asks him if he's met men "who got so interested in proving the existence of God that they came to care nothing for God Himself..."

[or] a lover of books...[who] had lost the power to read them? Or an organiser of charities that had lost all love for the poor?"

Lewis now asks about the objection of **The Hard-Bitten Ghost**. If the Solid People are full of love, why do they not rescue the Ghosts in Hell? He's told he will understand this better later, but that for the time-being, he must understand that they "have come further for the sake of the Ghosts than ye can understand...". Additionally, he says that it would do them not good to go further, even if it were possible, since "The sane would do no good if they made themselves mad to help madmen." Jack asks about those who never even get into the bus, but is told that "everyone who wishes it does. Never fear". MacDonald says that there are only two kinds of people in the end, those who say to God says "Thy will be done" and those to whom God says "Thy will be done". He says that "All that are in Hell, choose it. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find. To those who knock it is opened."

At this point, they hear a Ghost complaining at enormous speed to one of the Solid People. The Solid Spirit tried to speak, but never gets in a word. Afterwards, Lewis says he thinks that such a woman "doesn't seem..to be the sort of soul that ought to be even in danger of damnation. She isn't wicked: she's only a silly, garrulous old woman who has got into a habit of grumbling". MacDonald says the issue is "whether she is a grumbler, or only a grumble. If there is a real woman - even the least trace of one - still there inside the grumbling, it can be brought to life again". Leaning on MacDonald's arm, they walk away.

Lewis asks MacDonald about the earlier incident with the Unicorns and he replies that "Ye will have divined that he meant to frighten her; not that fear itself could make her less a Ghost, but if it took her mind a moment off herself, there might, in that moment, be a chance. I have seen them saved so."

They see many more ghosts. The most pitiful one they saw was a female Ghost who "supposed herself still capable of attracting the Solid People... If a corpse already liquid with decay had arisen from the coffin, smeared its gums with lipstick, and attempted a flirtation, the result could not have been more appalling"

They meet several Ghosts who come to Heaven "only in order to tell the Celestials about Hell... as if to tinge Heaven with infernal images and colours". Some were even more extreme, wanting "to extend Hell, to bring it bodily, if they could, into Heaven... [some] urged the blessed spirits...to seize Heaven 'for their own'... planning Ghosts who implored them to... smooth out the horrible grass and moss and heather with asphalt. There were materialistic Ghosts who informed the immortals that they were deluded: there was no life after death, and this whole country was a hallucination. There were Ghosts, plain and simple: mere bogies". Finally, there were "in which hardly a trace of the human form remained; monsters who had faced the journey...only to spit and gibber out in one ecstasy of hatred their envy and (what is harder to understand) their contempt, of joy". MacDonald says that he'd even seen that kind converted, while those less obviously damned have gone back.

While standing by some bushes, they see one of the Solid People talking with a Ghost who had been a famous artist. **The Artistic Ghost** is intent on painting the view, but the Solid Spirit, himself a former artist, tells him that "Looking comes first." The Spirit explains that during his early days of painting, his ghostly friend's success in painting was that he could convey glimpses of Heaven, but here he has the thing itself! However, after spending longer in this country, "there'll be some things which you'll see better than anyone else. One of the things you'll want to do will be to tell us about them. But not yet..."

As the ghost relentlessly ask about painting, the Solid Spirit tells him how "Every poet and musician and artist, but for Grace, is drawn away from love of the thing he tells, to love of the telling... They sink

lower-become interested in their own personalities and then in nothing but their own reputations". The ghost assures him that this will not be a problem for him. The Spirit says that any traces of this will be cured when he comes to the fountain in the mountains, "When you have drunk of it you forget forever all proprietorship in your own works. You enjoy them just as if they were someone else's: without pride and without modesty". As they start moving towards the mountain, the ghost reassures himself with the fact that in Heaven "there'll always be interesting people to meet..." but is disappointed to find out that his friend doesn't know whether Claude or Cezanne will be there. He is told that there are no "famous" people in Heaven, at least in earthly terms. The ghost then comforts himself by saying "One must be content with one's reputation among posterity..." but then is horrified to discover that they are both forgotten on Earth. The Ghost returns to the Grey Town, determined to maintain his legacy.

Questions

Q1. How does MacDonald explain the presence of the ghosts in Heaven?

Q2. In what way is evil retrospective?

Q3. Are Heaven and Hell states of mind?

Q4. According to MacDonald, what's the same basic reason why ghosts return to the Grey Town?

Q5. Why did Sir Archibald return to the Grey Town?

Q6. Lewis asks why Heaven doesn't invade Hell. What is George's response?

Q7. Why does Lewis think the Complaining Ghost unworthy of Hell? How does MacDonald respond? What does he say about those who go to Hell?

Q8. What do you make of the female ghost who tries to attract the Solid People?

Q9. They meet a number of ghosts who come to Heaven with the express purpose of bringing Hell there. What is their motivation?

Q10. Why does the Solid Spirit urge the Artistic Ghost to refrain from painting for the time-being?

Q11. Why is the Artistic Ghost disappointed with Heaven?

Q12. Why does the Artistic ultimately leave Heaven?

Chapter 10 - Spousal "Love"

Lewis recounts another overheard "conversation" between a Ghost and a female Spirit named Hilda. The ghost begins by saying that she would not dream of staying in Heaven if she were expected to meet Robert, her husband and Hilda's brother. She says that she forgives him "as a Christian...but there are some things one can never forget." She even seems puzzled as to how he came to be in Heaven at all.

She then begins to retell the story of her life with Robert. Her chief complaint was "The ingratitude! It was I who made a man of him! Sacrificed my whole life to him! And what was my reward? Absolute, utter selfishness". She explains that he was relatively poor man, completely lacking ambition, and that she was the one "who had to drive him every step of the way". She nagged him to take on extra work, which is regarded as nothing in comparison to her own workload, since she "I had to keep him going all

evening...draw him out of himself and brighten him up and make conversation". He didn't appreciate her flower arrangements, particularly when she spilled a vase on the manuscript of a book he was writing (something which she "cured him of...in the end")

She complained about Robert's attempts to "just slink off by himself every now and then to see what he called his old friends... and leave me to amuse myself!" Instead, she insisted that the friends come to the house instead. She both subtly manipulated her husband and made his friends feel uncomfortable, managing to drive them away by the end of their first year of marriage.

Upon receiving a promotion, Robert hoped for peace, but his wife now wanted to get a bigger house and was irritated that he doesn't seem thoroughly enthusiastic about the house-hunting process. She convinced him to buy a house they couldn't really afford, but she was excited that she could now "entertain properly". In contrast, she said that Robert "...just set himself to get old and silent and grumpy", even though he "hadn't always been like that". Robert would just sit there, hating her and she grew to hate him too. There appears to have been some issue with the "younger men who came to the house" who liked her better than her "old bear of a husband" and "used to laugh at him".

Towards the end of Robert's life, she bought a great Dane and forced him to walk it for his health. She kept hosting parties, "took him for the most wonderful holidays...[and] saw that he didn't drink too much". She even allowed him to take up writing again ("It couldn't do any harm by then"). But in the end, Robert had a nervous breakdown, but the ghost said her conscience is clear – she had done her duty.

Reconsidering, the ghost says that she will, in fact, meet Robert. If Heaven will give her "a free hand", she'll "take charge of him again...make something of him.... There's lots, lots, lots of things I still want to do with him". When Hilda tells her this is not possible, she becomes desperate: "Please, please! I'm so miserable. I must have someone to - to do things to.... No one minds about me at all [in Hell]. I can't alter them". The ghost snaps, saying "I hate you. How can I pay him out if you won't let me have him?". Lewis says that "The Ghost which had towered up like a dying candle flame snapped suddenly... and then there was no Ghost to be seen".

Questions

- Q1. How would you describe the ghost? How would you describe the husband?
- Q2. Why is the ghost reticent about meeting her husband? What does she think about forgiveness?
- Q3. How did she regard the relationship with her husband? What kind of relationship does Christianity imagine?
- Q4. What do you think was the ghost's motivation regarding her husband?
- Q5. What did she think of his desire to write a book?
- Q6. Why do you think Robert's ability to be a good host declined?
- Q7. Why does the ghost change her mind about seeing Robert? Under what condition? How does she respond?

Chapter 11 - Maternal "Love" and Lizards

Lewis then recounts “one of the most painful meetings” between a ghostly woman named Pam and a Bright Spirit, Reginald, her brother. The ghost is disappointed, expecting instead her son, Michael. Reginald tells her he’s far up in the mountains and explains that she would appear invisible to him at this point, but this would be remedied shortly: “As soon as it’s possible for him to see you, of course he will”. Reginald explains that the first step in this process is rather hard, that she will become solid enough “when you learn to want someone else besides Michael... the little germ of a desire for God that we need to start the process.”

Although rather annoyed at the thought of “religion and all that sort of thing”, she’s willing to do what’s necessary to see her son. Reginald explains this approach is futile, since she’s “treating God only as a means to Michael. But the whole thickening treatment consists in learning to want God for His own sake.” Pam replies that he “wouldn’t talk like that if you were a Mother”, but Reginald explains that she has reduced herself to being only a mother. She was “Michael’s mother only because you first exist as God’s creature”.

Pam then declares that “If [God] loved me He’d let me see my boy” and objects that God had let Michael die. Reginald explains that this was necessary, firstly for Michael’s sake since his mother could never make him truly happy, and secondly for her sake, in an effort to transform her “merely instinctive love...into something better... to love Michael as [God] understands love”. Since Pam’s maternal instinct “was uncontrolled and fierce and monomaniac”, God took him so that “in the loneliness, in the silence, something else might begin to grow.”

These critical comments about “Mother-love” are poorly received by the ghost, who declares it to be “the highest and holiest feeling in human nature”. Reginald responds that “no natural feelings are high or low, holy or unholy, in themselves. They are all holy when God’s hand is on the rein. They all go bad when they set up on their own and make themselves into false gods.” Pam is adamant that her “love for Michael would never have gone bad”. But Reginald points out that she must have met mothers who are united with their sons in the Grey Town but who are still unhappy. She had indeed, but is convinced that this would never happen with her and Michael.

Reginald says that living only for Michael’s memory was a mistake, and this made her husband (Dick) and her daughter (Muriel) miserable. Pam protests saying they didn’t care, but Reginald refutes this. Becoming melodramatic, Pam indignantly replies “Oh, of course. I’m wrong. Everything I say or do is wrong, according to you.” With mirth in his eyes, the Spirit says that this is “what we all find when we reach this country. We’ve all been wrong! ...There’s no need to go on pretending one was right! After that we begin living.”

Angry at the humour, Pam demands her son: “He is mine, do you understand? Mine, mine, mine, for ever and ever.” Reginald replies that “Everything will be yours. God himself will be yours. But not that way”. After pointing out that Michael was originally “an Accident”, Pam says “I hate your religion and I hate and despise your God. I believe in a God of Love.” Reginald points out that, she is the one who has love neither for him nor even for her own mother. When Pam thinks his feelings are hurt, the Spirit laughs and replies that she can’t hurt anyone in this country. Lewis tells us that “The Ghost was silent and open-mouthed for a moment; more wilted, I thought, by this reassurance than by anything else that had been said”

MacDonald leads Lewis away, saying that the conversation is likely to take a while, but that he can now see the choice that is presented to the ghosts. Lewis asks about natural feelings and MacDonald says that “There’s something in natural affection which will lead it on to eternal love more easily than natural appetite could be led on. But there’s also something in it which makes it easier to stop at the natural level

and mistake it for the heavenly... And if it finally refuses conversion its corruption will be worse... It is a stronger angel, and therefore, when it falls, a fiercer devil...". He explains that "Every natural love will rise again and live forever in this country: but none will rise again until it has been buried."

They then see a Ghost with a little red lizard sitting on his shoulder, whispering things in his ear. The Ghost angrily tells it to shut up, but the lizard continues unabated. The ghost turns to limp away from the mountains.

The ghost meets and angel. The ghost says that the lizard refuses to be quiet, so he's going home. The angel asks him if he would like to make the lizard quiet. When the ghost says he would, the angel steps forward to kill it, causing the ghost to retreat. The ghost downplays the issue. He says he was only thinking about silencing it. He procrastinates. He says he's sure it'll be quiet now and that the gradual process would be better. He complains of ill health. The Angel rejects all these excuses and repeatedly asks if he can kill the lizard. The ghost is convinced he'll die and says the angel is already hurting him. The Angel replies "I never said it wouldn't hurt you. I said it wouldn't kill you." The ghost complains that the Angel should have killed the lizard without asking, but the Angel responds "I cannot kill it against your will. It is impossible. Have I your permission?"

The Lizard starts chattering to the Ghost, saying that the Angel really can kill him and that, if this happens, the ghost would be all alone and that he promises to be good. Facing a life constantly harassed by the lizard, the ghost gives his permission. The Angel closes his hands around the reptile, the ghost screams and the lizard is flung with its back broken on the turf.

The Ghost begins to become more solid, "an immense man, naked, not much smaller than the Angel". At the same time, the lizard transforms into a great stallion. The man flings himself at the feet of the Angel and then rises, leaping on the horse's back and races off towards the mountain. Lewis says that "the whole plain and forest were shaking with a sound... the voice of that earth, those woods and those waters".

Lewis asks MacDonald "...does it mean that everything... that is in us can go on to the Mountains?". His Teacher responds that "Nothing... can go on as it now is... [it] will not be raised again if it submits to death... Flesh and blood cannot come to the Mountains. Not because they are too rank, but because they are too weak. What is a Lizard compared with a stallion? Lust is a poor, weak, whimpering whispering thing compared with that richness and energy of desire which will arise when lust has been killed."

Lewis tries to understand how "this man's sensuality proved less of an obstacle than that poor woman's [excess of] love for her son". MacDonald immediately rejects this, saying that "There was no excess, there was defect. She loved her son too little, not too much... it may well be that at this moment she's demanding to have him down with her in Hell. That kind is sometimes perfectly ready to plunge the soul they say they love in endless misery if only they can still in some fashion possess it" MacDonald says that Lewis must draw another lesson: "Ye must ask, if the risen body even of appetite is as grand a horse as ye saw, what would the risen body of maternal love or friendship be?"

Questions

Q1. *Why is the Motherly Ghost disappointed? What prevents her from growing solid?*

Q2. *Why are we told God took her son? How do you square this with "a God of love".*

Q3. What was wrong about Pam's relationship with her son. Why does MacDonald rebuke Lewis for saying that this mother has "an excess of love"?

Q4. What was wrong about Pam's relationship with her other family members?

Q5. How does this chapter relate to the material covered in "The Four Loves"? How can good things go wrong?

Q6. What does the lizard represent? Why does the ghost resist to its death? What excuses does the ghost make? Why is the ghost's permission required?

Q7. How does the lizard attempt to argue for its own survival?

Q8. What happens to the lizard? What does this mean? What does MacDonald mean when he says that everything must submit to death in order to live in this world?

Chapter 12 - The Lady

The branches of trees down one aisle of the forest dance with light and Lewis thinks there must be another river nearby. It turns out the light is coming from people in a procession. Lewis tells us that "If I could remember their singing and write down the notes, no man who read that score would ever grow sick or old". Behind them came a beautiful lady in whose honour all this was being done.

Lewis whispers to MacDonald, "Is it? ... is it?". His teacher responds that it's actually a lady from Golders Green named Sarah Smith, who is "one of the great ones" in this country. MacDonald identifies some of the people in the procession as angels, and others as "her sons and daughters" who were any child she met on earth. She is also surrounded by animals: cats, dogs, birds and horses. MacDonald explains that "Every beast and bird that came near her had its place in her love. In her they became themselves. And now the abundance of life she has in Christ from the Father flows over into them."

The Lady moves towards "two phantoms: a great tall Ghost, horribly thin and shaky", whom Lewis dubs "The Tragedian", who is being led on a chain by another Ghost who is "no bigger than an organ-grinder's monkey". When they meet, despite the Tragedian being the one who speaks, the Lady addresses only the Dwarf Ghost. She kisses him and asks for his forgiveness "For all I ever did wrong and for all I did not do right since the first day we met". The Dwarf shakes the chain and the Tragedian responds, saying he accepts her apology.

The Tragedian says that he's been thinking only about her "all these years...breaking your heart about me". In a small, bleating voice, the Dwarf Ghost asks if she missed him. When the Lady tells him that he'll understand it soon enough, the Dwarf and Tragedian speak in unison to each other, saying that she didn't answer the question. It is at this point that Lewis "realised then that they were one person, or rather that both were the remains of what had once been a person", Sarah's husband, Frank. The Dwarf and the Tragedian tell each other that "it would be rather fine and magnanimous not to press the point" but they aren't sure if she'd notice, recalling a time when they let her have the last stamp and she didn't "see how unselfish we'd been".

The Dwarf and the Tragedian are shocked to find out that the Lady has been happy in Heaven without him. The Tragedian asks her if she even knows the meaning of the word "Love"! The Lady responds: "How should I not?.. I am in love. In love, do you understand? Yes, now I love truly". Rather than being comforted by this, the Tragedian asks if this means she didn't love him on earth. The Lady says she did

but “only in a poor sort of way... mostly the craving to be loved... I needed you”. The Tragedian is horrified at the idea that she no longer needs him, even though she says that “We shall have no need for one another now: we can begin to love truly”.

The Tragedian, becoming even more melodramatic, laments “Would to God I had seen her lying dead at my feet before I heard those words”. The Lady tries to snap him out of it by saying to the Dwarf “Frank! ... Look at me... What are you doing with that great, ugly doll? Let go of the chain. Send it away. It is you I want. Don’t you see what nonsense it’s talking?”. Her message seems to get through and he starts to smile and grow a little bigger.

Questions

Q1. How would you describe the procession? What is Lewis’ suspicion regarding the identity of the lady?

Q2. Who are the ghosts in this chapter? Why are there two ghosts, one of them on a chain? Why are the ghosts shocked to find that the lady has been happy in Heaven?

Q3. How does the lady describe her love for her husband on earth? How is it different now in Heaven?

Q4. How does the lady try to snap Frank out of the melodrama? Why might this work?

Chapter 13 - The aftermath of the Tragedian

The Dwarf struggles against joy. It “was not the meeting [the ghost] had pictured; he would not accept it”. He tugs at the chain and the Tragedian acts offended, saying, “It is fortunate that you give yourself no concern about my fate. Otherwise you might be sorry afterwards to think that you had driven me back to Hell”. The Lady replies “Dear, no one sends you back. Here is all joy. Everything bids you stay”. Saying this does no good - the Tragedian says he still has some self-respect and the dwarf starts to shrink.

When the Lady tells the Dwarf to not “let it talk like that”, the “Tragedian caught her words greedily as a dog catches a bone”, complaining that she always had to be “sheltered”. The Lady explains that wasn’t what she meant, rather that she wanted him to “stop acting... He is killing you. Let go of that chain. Even now”.

Sarah tells Frank to stop “using...other people’s pity, in the wrong way...” . She explains that “Pity was meant to be a spur that drives joy to help misery. But it...can be used for a kind of blackmailing... [to] hold joy up to ransom”. This is something he did ever since he was a child. She asks him “Did you think joy was created to live always under that threat? Always defenceless against those who would rather be miserable than have their self-will crossed?” She explains that “you can no longer communicate your wretchedness... Our light can swallow up your darkness: but your darkness cannot now infect our light”.

The Dwarf and the chain having disappeared, for the first time the Lady addresses the Tragedian, asking who he is and where Frank has gone. She invites him to stay, but the Tragedian vanishes. The lady returns to her retinue who begin to sing a song: “The Happy Trinity is her home: nothing can trouble her joy...”

After departing, Lewis asks his teacher: “Is it really tolerable that she should be untouched by his misery, even his self-made misery?”. MacDonald asks him if he would prefer it if “he still had the power of tormenting her”. He talks about “The demand of the loveless and the self-imprisoned... to blackmail the universe: that till they consent to be happy (on their own terms) no one else shall taste joy... that Hell

should be able to veto Heaven... Either the day must come when joy prevails and all the makers of misery are no longer able to infect it: or else for ever... the makers of misery can destroy in others the happiness they reject for themselves”.

Lewis says he finds it horrible to say that pity must someday die. His teacher distinguishes between the action which will last forever and passion of pity which will come to the end. He says that the passion of pity “draws men to concede what should not be conceded” whereas the action “changes darkness into light and evil into good”. However, “we will not call blue yellow to please those who insist on still having jaundice”.

Lewis once again asks why the Spirits don't go down into Hell to rescue the damned. Going down on his knees and using a blade of grass as a pointer, MacDonald points to a tiny crack, saying, “...through a crack no bigger than that ye certainly came...”. The idea that the infinitely empty Grey Town is down in a little crack blows his mind, but Lewis now realizes that the Lady couldn't even fit into Hell. MacDonald concurs that “Hell could not open its mouth wide enough”. Referring to Jesus, MacDonald says that “Only the Greatest of all can make Himself small enough to enter Hell...” Lewis asks if He ever will descend again, but MacDonald explains that time doesn't work that way, but assures Lewis that “There is no spirit in prison to Whom He did not preach”.

Lewis asks MacDonald about his Universalist beliefs, but MacDonald says “it's ill talking of such questions...because all answers deceive. If ye put the question from within Time...the choice of ways is before you... But if ye are trying to leap on into eternity... then ye ask what cannot be answered to mortal ears. Time is the very lens through which ye see...something that would otherwise be too big for ye to see at all...[but] every attempt to see the shape of eternity except through the lens of Time destroys your knowledge of Freedom”

Questions

Q1. *Why does the ghost resist joy? What does the Tragedian threaten? How does the Lady respond?*

Q2. *What did the Tragedian hold love hostage? What does MacDonald say about pity?*

Q3. *How does the Lady respond to the Ghost's disappearance? Why is Lewis troubled by her reaction?*

Q4. *What does Lewis find out about Hell from MacDonald? Why couldn't the lady go there?*

Q5. *What does MacDonald say about time, freedom and predestination?*

Chapter 14 - The chessmen and the sunrise

Lewis suddenly sees a vision, “a great assembly of gigantic forms all motionless...standing forever about a little silver table...[where] there were little figures like chessmen who went to and fro doing this and that...[each the] puppet representative of some one of the great presences that stood by. And the silver table is Time. And those who stand and watch are the immortal souls of those same men and women”. This vision terrifies Lewis and asks MacDonald if “all that I have been seeing in this country false? These conversations between the Spirits and the Ghosts were they only the mimicry of choices that had really been made long ago?”. His teacher says that alternatively you might say they were “anticipations of a choice to be made at the end of all things”, but that it would be better to say neither. The point was that on this journey he had seen the choices a bit more clearly than on earth because “the lens was clearer. But it

was still seen through the lens. Do not ask of a vision in a dream more than a vision in a dream can give". It is at this point that Lewis realizes that he is not actually dead and only dreaming. MacDonald warns him that, when he tells others, to emphasize that it was only a dream.

The vision of the chessmen fades and he is back in the wood again. Standing with his back to the sunrise, Lewis seeing the land light up before him as the sun rises. Suddenly the air is filled with "hounds, and horns; ...ten thousand tongues of men and woodland angels and the wood itself sang". Screaming, Lewis buries his face in the folds of MacDonald's robe, but "The light, like solid blocks, intolerable of edge and weight, came thundering upon my head". In the next moment, the folds of MacDonald's garment become the folds of Lewis' ink-stained cloth which he had pulled down as he fell from his chair. The blocks of light turn out to only be the books which he had pulled from the table. He wakes up "in a cold room, hunched on the floor beside a black and empty grate, the clock striking three, and the siren howling overhead".

Questions

Q1. How do you understand the vision of the chessmen? How does Lewis now understand this journey? What warning does MacDonald give Lewis?

Q2. Why is Lewis terrified by the sun?