



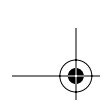
PREFACE



All things, in their way, reflect heavenly truth,” C. S. Lewis wrote in his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, “the imagination not least.” Of the countless people in the twentieth century who wrote about Christianity, no one was more imaginative in approach or more careful to take the imagination into account than Lewis. I have shown in another book that imagination is central to his life: “except for salvation,” I said there, imagination is “the most important issue in Lewis’s thought and life.” That is as true for his religious thinking and writings as for his literary studies and his stories and poems, as the chapters that follow demonstrate. This book deals with Lewis’s imaginative theology, the great contribution made by his Christian writings.

Christianity is not just about facts and reasons and how the intellect processes them. Reason and the intellect are important for faith; Lewis calls them the organ of truth, and Christianity is about the Truth. But imagination, he adds, is also vital, as “the organ of meaning.” The imagination—through the images we form and the way we relate them to each other—enables us to grasp the meaningfulness of the Truth we apprehend. The revelation of God, both in the Bible and in Christianity generally, demands “a response from the whole man,” Lewis says; it “cannot be grasped by the intellect alone.” Fostering the



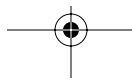
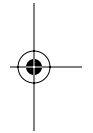


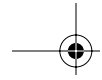
role of imagination for readers in a holistic response to God's revelation—enabling them to “see” more clearly, enhancing their vision and way of visioning what the Christian life can and should be—was always one of the aims in his books and essays on Christianity.

This book explores twelve central issues that appear as major, recurring themes throughout Lewis's nonfiction and fiction. Its focus is not how to become a Christian, but how to grow in faith, in understanding of God and in practical living as a Christian. Lewis is often praised as the most important Christian apologist—defender of the faith—of the twentieth century. But equally important in his Christian writings, he was a teacher, always seeking to help believers achieve growth in their Christian lives. This book explores that side of Lewis's work.

The first chapter raises a question that supplies a foundation for all of the later chapters: “Is your Lord large enough?” Growth in the Christian life starts with and depends on an expanding, deepening understanding of God and one's relationship to God. Lewis says repeatedly that our understanding of God is influenced by the images we form as we try to imagine the unimaginable. For our God to become bigger, our mental conceptions of God must grow as we change and mature. The chapters that follow show how mental images affect our growth in various areas of the Christian life, in both our relationship to God and our relationships with other people.

This book can be read individually for personal growth or personal devotions, or to gain a deeper understanding of Lewis's thought and writings. Appendix A on Lewis's life and appendix B on his religious/philosophical thinking are intended to provide a framework for grasping his life and work as a whole. But the book's format also permits, even encourages, its use in classes or discussion groups. Growth in the Christian life is attained best in community, by talking about crucial issues with other Christians, not just meditating on them by oneself.





Preface

A further aim of the book, for those who find value in these topics and what Lewis says about them, is to send them to Lewis's books, or back to Lewis's books, where they will find these and other similar topics covered in a variety of ways (through stories and poems, as well as nonfiction). To assist those who want to range more widely, two appendixes offer guidance toward further reading and study: appendix C is a list of works by Lewis, arranged alphabetically by types and then also in order of publication, to show at a glance how the books relate to others chronologically, and appendix D is a bibliography of some of the many books written about Lewis.

