

Michael Gorman's Narrative Spiritual Theology and C.S. Lewis' Logic of Cruciformity: A Conversation Across Generations and Disciplines

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“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Galatians 2:19b-20 (NRSV)
See Matt 10:38, Mark 8:34-35,
Luke 9:23-24, Rom 6:11-14, Rom
7:4-6, Rom 8:12-13, Rom 12:1-2,
Gal 5:24, 1 Peter 2:24, etc.

Cruciformity: (from cross-shaped) argues that Christian spirituality is *formed* by the image of the cross, but also that spiritual *formation* is defined by *conformity* to Christ on the cross. In this imitation practice, the believer is drawn into the original drama, what Gorman calls the “narrative” theology of cruciformity: “To be in Christ is to be a living exegesis of the narrative of Christ, a new performance of the original drama of exaltation following humiliation....”

Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 92

MICHAEL J. GORMAN

Cruciformity

Paul's Narrative
Spirituality of
the Cross



Narrative Spirituality: “a spirituality that tells a story, a dynamic life with God that corresponds in some way to the divine ‘story.’” Paul is deeply invested in narrating his own story of encounter with Christ and life in the spirit, but he also uses what Gorman calls “narrative patterns about the significance of the cross.” There is in Paul’s call to conform to the crucified Christ “a dynamic correspondence in daily life to the strange story of Christ crucified as the primary way of experiencing the love and grace of God.” Paul’s project unifies the story of the cross with the story of Christian life by “re-presenting in living form the word of the cross.” Gorman emphasizes that Paul’s letters are themselves not projects of systematic theology but are deeply invested in pastoral concern rooted in what Eugene Peterson calls “spiritual theology.”

Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 5-7; 30

20th ANNIVERSARY EDITION

with a foreword by Nijay K. Gupta
and an afterword by the author

MICHAEL J. GORMAN

CRUCIFORMITY



PAUL'S NARRATIVE SPIRITUALITY
of the CROSS

from the author of *The Message*

EUGENE H. PETERSON



**CHRIST PLAYS IN
TEN THOUSAND PLACES**

a conversation in spiritual theology

Spiritual theology “is the attention that we give to the details of living life on this way.”

It “represents the attention that the church community gives to keeping what we think about God (theology) in organic connection with the way we live with God (spirituality).”

Eugene Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology*, 13, 16

The goal of spiritual theology is “not to reflect on Christian doctrines *per se* but on their implications for the Christian life.”

Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology*, 9

**SPIRITUAL
THEOLOGY**

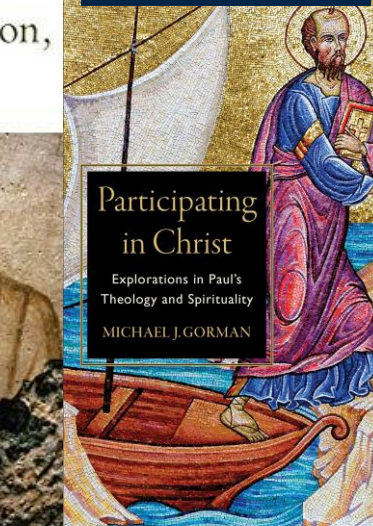
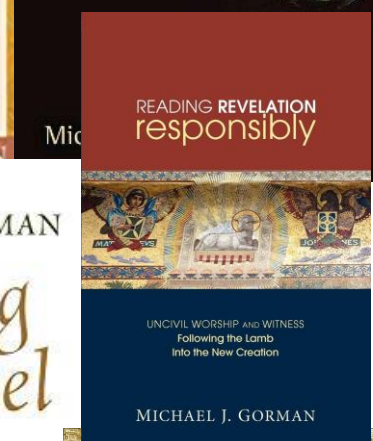
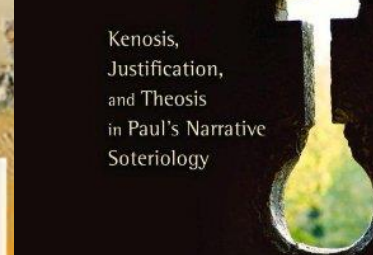
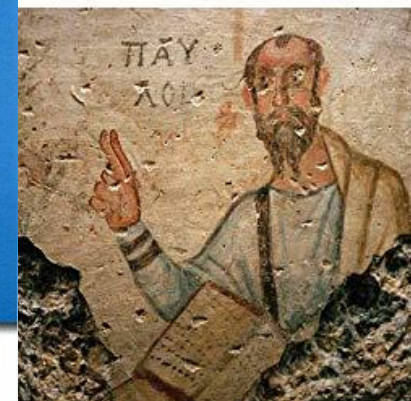
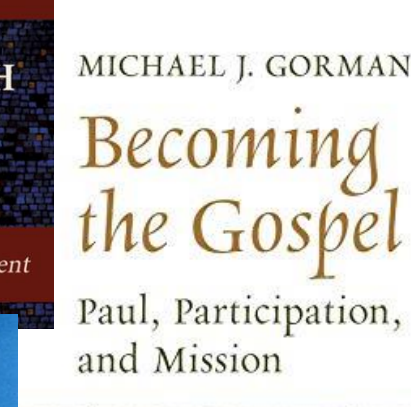
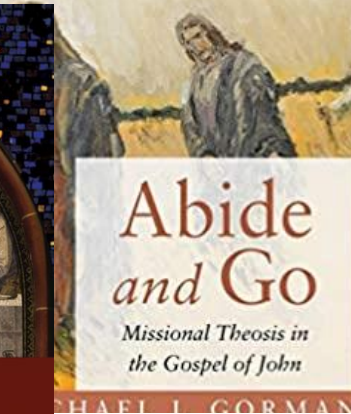
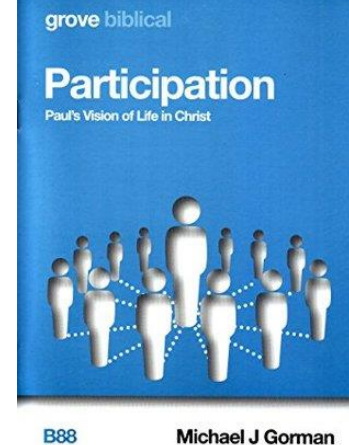
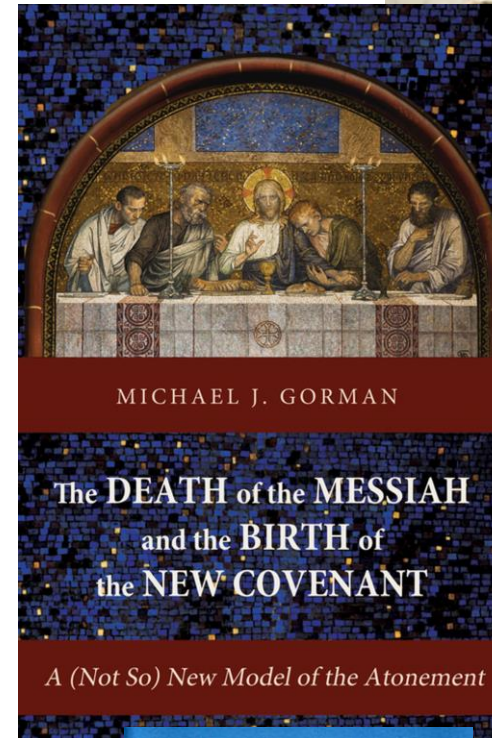


A SYSTEMATIC
STUDY OF THE
CHRISTIAN LIFE

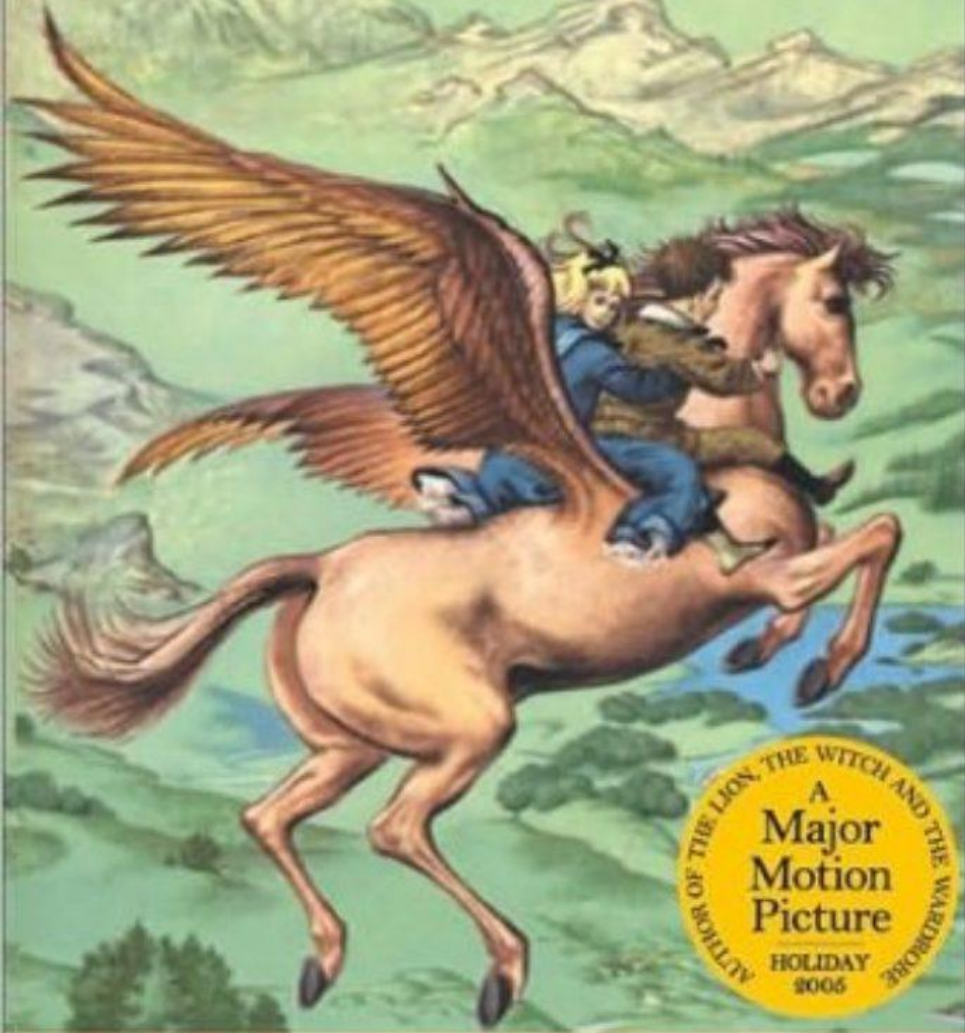
SIMON CHAN

Major Ideas:

- recognizable narrative patterns (e.g., “Christ crucified”)—13 narrative patterns
- crucified God → cruciform God
- as we are “co-buried and co-crucified with Christ” so we are “co-formed with his death and will be co-formed with his resurrection in glory” (46)
- reshapes *imitatio Christi* motif: “The process of ‘imitation’ is therefore better called Christ's formation in believers (Gal. 4:19), and the result, believers' conformity to Christ, especially to his cross (Phil. 3:10).... Cruciformity is an ongoing pattern of living in Christ and of dying with him” (48-49)
- thus, adds “power” to “faith, hope, and love”
- further work extends his thinking eucharistically, communally, missionally, resurrectional cruciformity, theoformity



The Magician's Nephew
C. S. LEWIS



ATTORNEY OF THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE
A
Major
Motion
Picture
HOLIDAY
2005

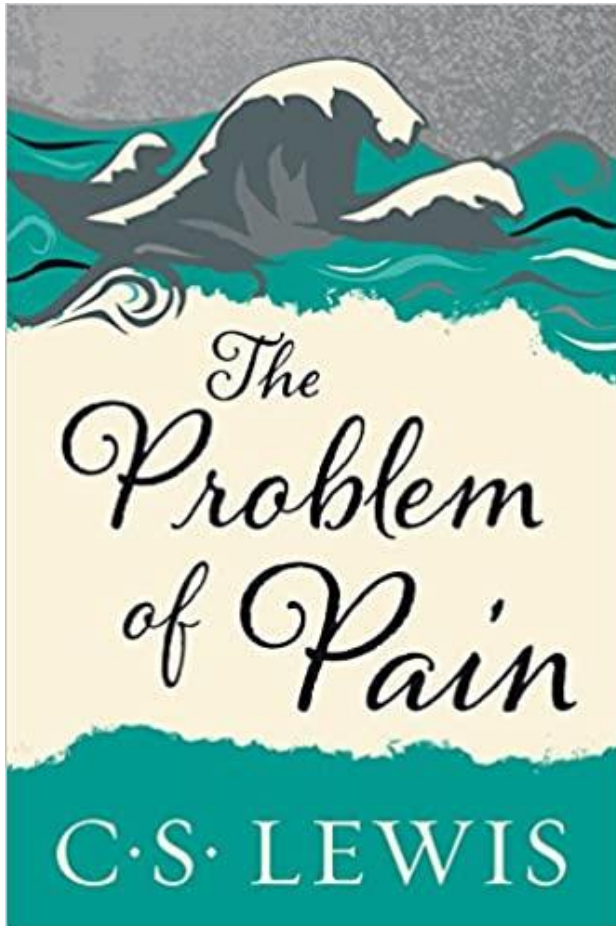
The Chronicles of Narnia
FULL-COLOR COLLECTOR'S EDITION

“For what you see and hear depends a good deal on where you are standing”

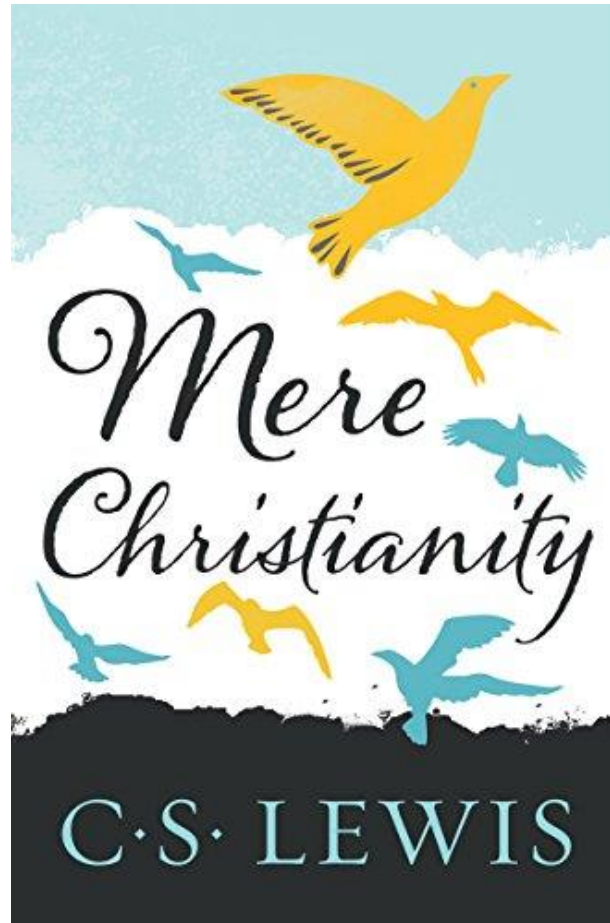
Lewis, *Magician's Nephew*, 116



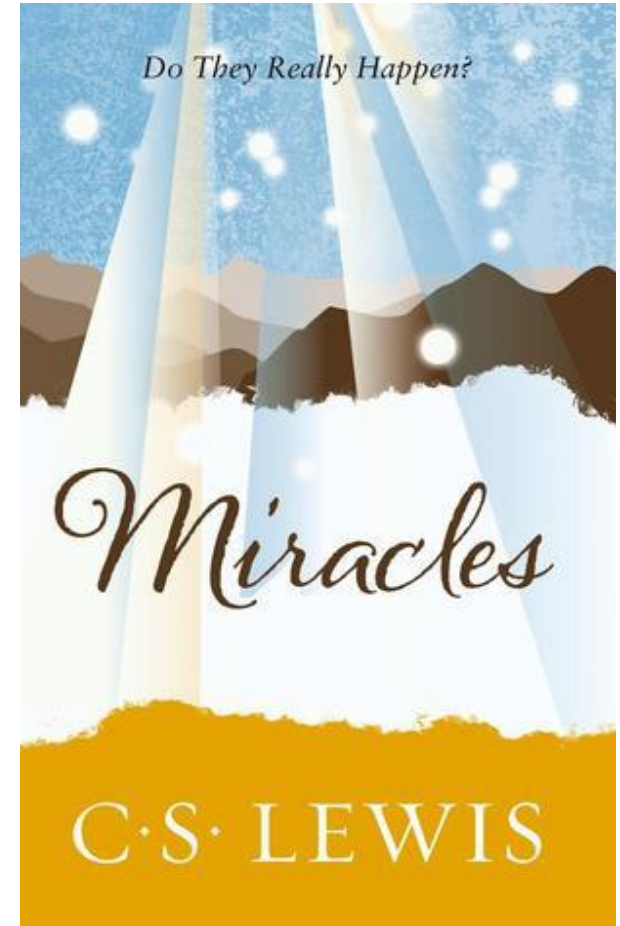
Lewis the Apologist?



The Problem of Pain (1940, read to the Inklings at the outbreak of WWII)



Mere Christianity (1952, comprising his BBC talks in 1941-44)



Miracles (1947, complete by 1945 with a second edition in 1960)

The Macdonald conception of death—or, to speak more correctly, St Paul's—is really the answer to Morris.... All [Morris] has done is to rouse the desire: but so strongly that you must find the real satisfaction. And then you realise that **death is at the root of the whole matter**, and why he chose the subject of the Earthly Paradise, and how the true solution is one he never saw.

Lewis Collected Letters I 1970.



C.S. Lewis

COLLECTED LETTERS

Family Letters 1905-1931

VOLUME I

Edited by Walter Hooper

How deep I am just now beginning to see:
for I have just passed on from believing in
God to definitely believing in Christ—in
Christianity. I will try to explain this another
time. My long night talk with **Dyson and
Tolkien** had a good deal to do with it....
P.S. I have just finished *The Epistle to the
Romans*, the first Pauline epistle I have ever
seriously read through. It contains many
difficult and some horrible things, but **the
essential idea of Death** (the Macdonald idea)
is there alright.

Lewis Collected Letters | 1975.

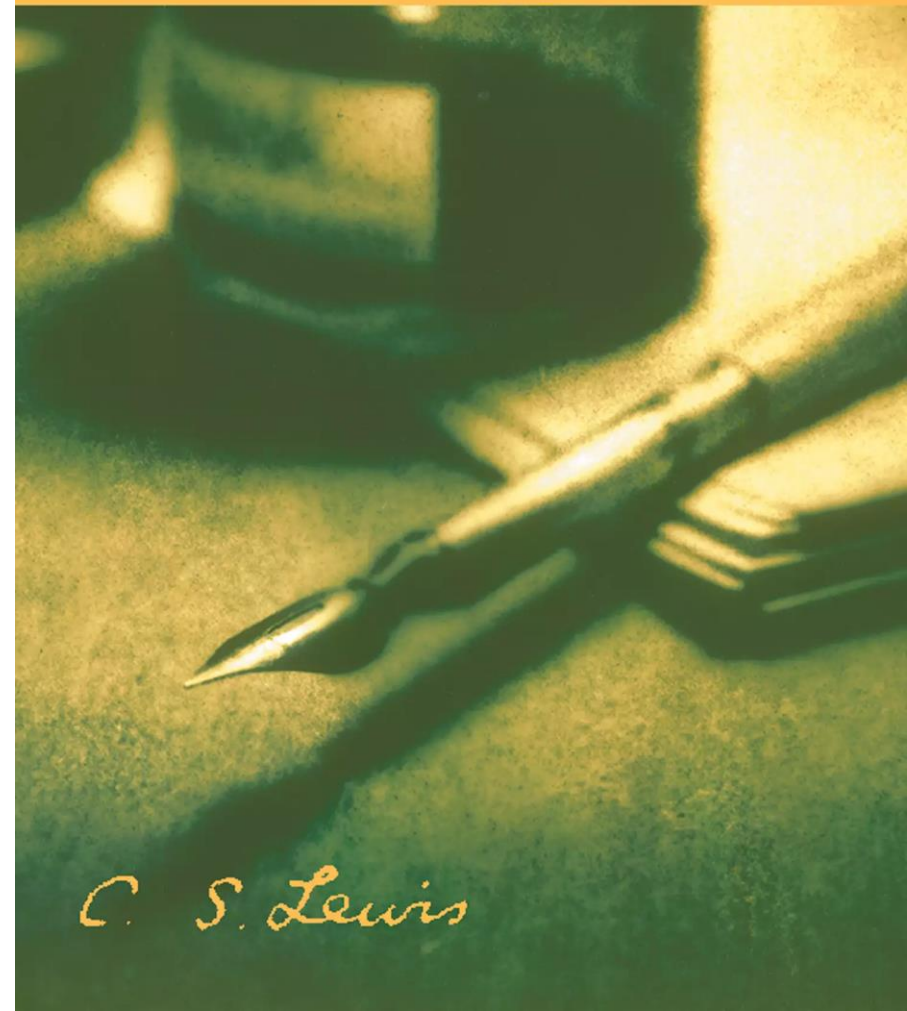
C. S. LEWIS

EDITED BY WALTER HOOPER

COLLECTED LETTERS

VOLUME 1

Family Letters 1905–1931



C. S. Lewis



BOTH SIDES OF THE WARDROBE

C. S. Lewis, Theological Imagination, and Everyday Discipleship

EDITED BY
ROB FENNELL

C.S. Lewis' "Logic of Cruciformity" in *The Problem of Pain*

Divine Principle: The principle of self-surrender, of self-death, is not merely a Christian theological principle or even a human principle. It is a divine principle, beginning in God's relationship with God's self. Jesus is in full surrender to God.

Divine Pattern: Therefore, in following the principle at play in all being, "the proper good of a creature is to surrender itself to its Creator—to enact intellectually, volitionally, and emotionally, that relationship which is given in the mere fact of its being a creature." Because it is the pattern of the Divine, it should also be the pattern of the believer. This surrender is the proper vocation of all.

Divine Paradox: Ironically, the act of self-death is an affirmation of true selfhood: "From the highest to the lowest, self exists to be abdicated and, by that abdication, becomes the more truly self..." Every rebirth is preceded by death.

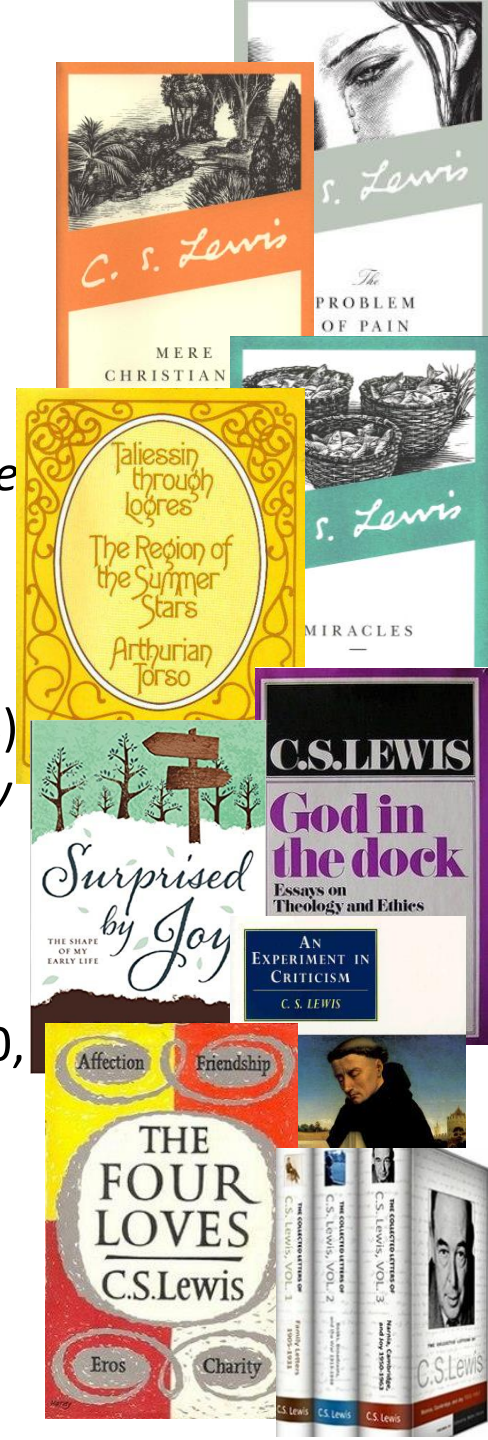
Divine Provision: We follow Christ into this fundamentally human activity. "Our highest activity must be response, not initiative."

Divine Premise: The premise of Lewis' logic of cruciformity is the Fall of humanity. Lewis argues that paradisaic humanity is not the prototype of perfection, but of surrender. The Fall, in Lewis' logic, must have been the desire "to be on their own, to take care for their own future, to plan for pleasure and for security" —to be self other than Self.

Divine Possibility: The believer's life changes as a result of the self-abdication. "The sacrifice of Christ is repeated, or re-echoed, among His followers in very varying degrees, from the cruellest martyrdom down to a self-submission of intention..." Death leads to resurrection.

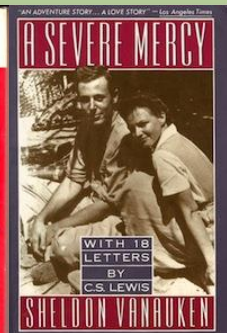
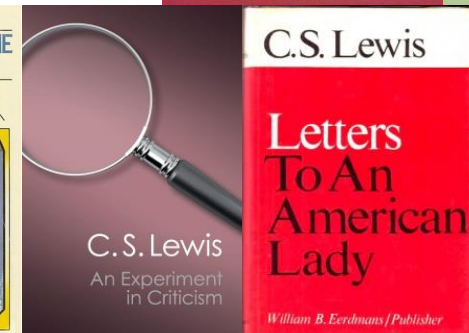
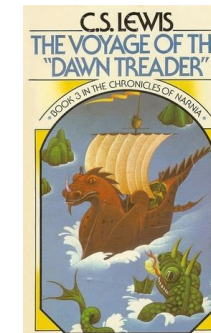
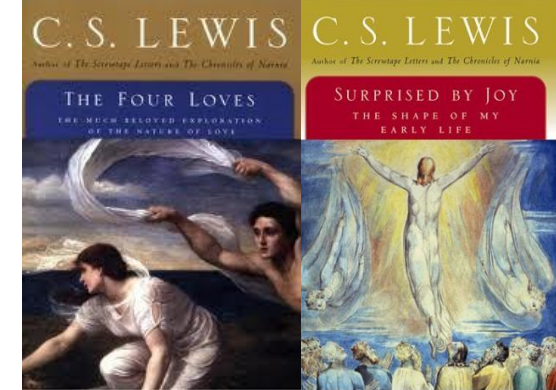
A Black and Scarlet Cord Through All The Greater Myths

- “The Son of God suffered unto the death, not that men might not suffer, but that their sufferings might **be like His**” (Epigraph to *The Problem of Pain*)
- “Our attempts at this dying will succeed only if we men **share in God’s dying**, just as our thinking can succeed only because it is a drop out of the ocean of His intelligence: but we cannot share God’s dying unless God dies; and He cannot die except by being a man (*Mere Christianity*, 58)
- “bodily Death, the monster, becomes blessed **spiritual Death to self**” (*Miracles*, 156)
- “All conversion involves **death and re-birth**” (*Arthurian Torso*, 347)
- “the **self-rejection will turn out to be also a self-finding**” (“Religion Without Dogma”, 388)
- “**Total surrender** is the first step toward the fruition of either [nature or art]” (*Surprised by Joy*, ch. 9; see *An Experiment in Criticism*)
- “that man himself must undergo some sort of death if he would truly live” (*Reflection on the Psalms*, ch. 10)
- “every **merely natural love has to be crucified before it can achieve resurrection**” (Feb 10, 1955 letter to Sheldon Vanauken)
- “nothing will rise which hasn’t in some degree shared the Crucifixion” (Lecture 4 of *The Four Loves*)
- “the mystery of Death” wherein “the secret of secrets lies hid” is “**the very formula of reality**” (*Collected Letters II*, 185-186)

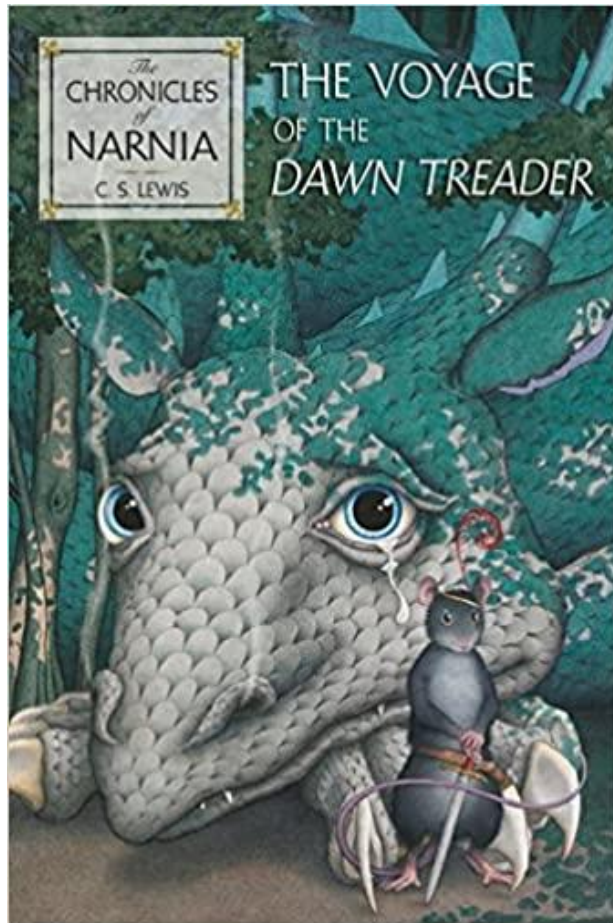


The Lost Manuscript at the Centre of the Whole Piece

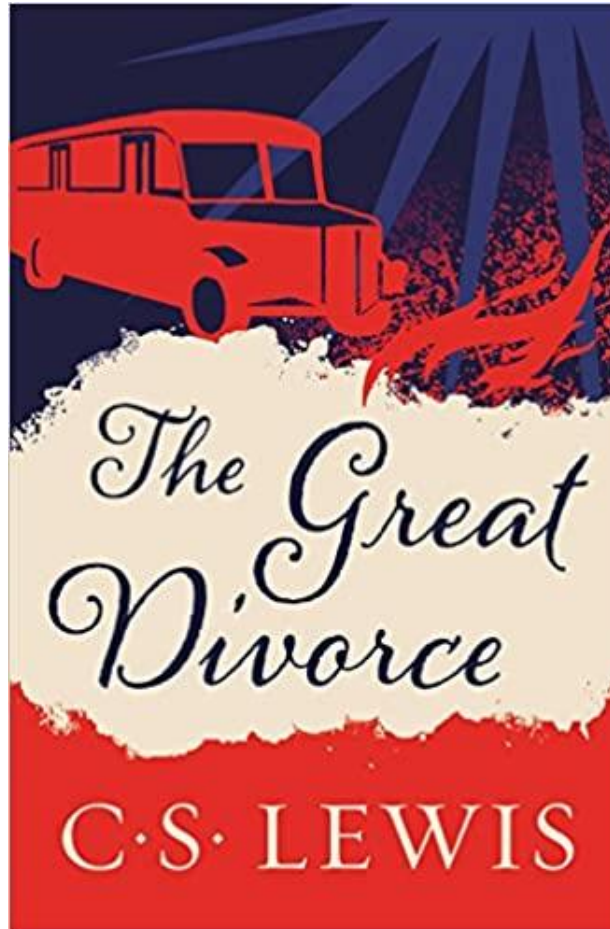
- The “Macdonald idea of death” is critical to Lewis’ conversion story
- Lewis’ apologetics trilogy follows a cruciform trajectory toward spiritual life
- Marriage, falling in love, and sex has a cruciform pattern (*Four Loves*; *A Grief Observed*)
- Cruciformity is the theological principle at the centre of his theological novellas (*The Screwtape Letters* and *The Great Divorce*)
- In nature, “Death and Rebirth” is “a thing written all over the world,” “the pattern of all ... life,” “a key principle...” (*Miracles* 136)
- In *An Experiment in Criticism*, true reception of art and literature is cruciform
- Lewis’ cultural criticism follows an inversive, cross-like pattern
- Lewis’ spiritual direction is cruciform (see *Letters to An American Lady* or Vanauken’s *A Severe Mercy*)
- At the centre of Lewis’ ideas of leadership is a “Theology of the Small” (See Lucy and Reepicheep in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*)
- The characters of his fiction undergo a kind of death that leads to resurrection (Ransom plays the role of Christ ... because in reality every real Christian is really called upon in some measure to enact Christ” (*Collected Letters* 3, 1004; cf. 313)
- This is “the great story on which the plot turns” (*Miracles* 119)



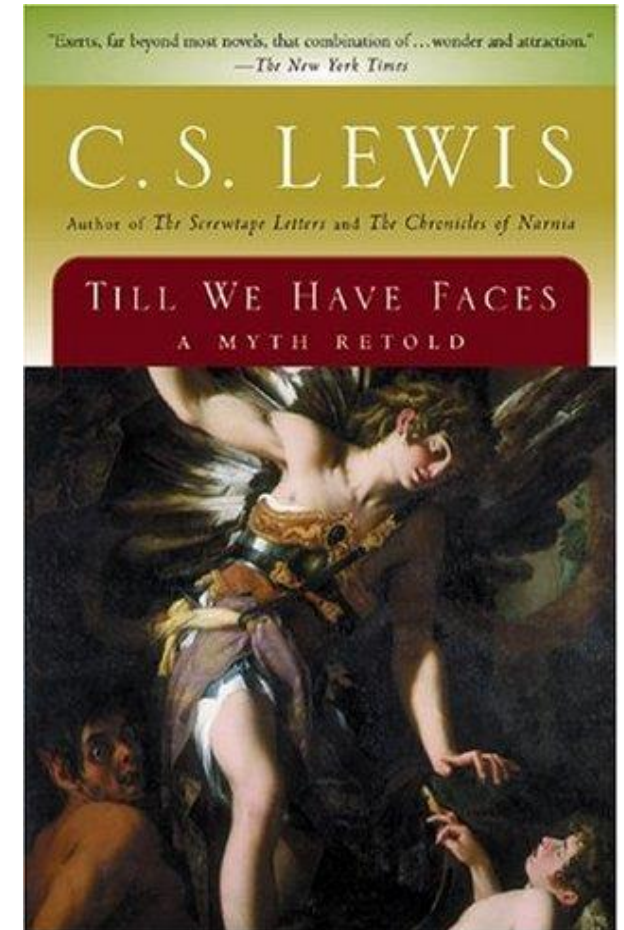
The Great Story on Which the Plot Turns: Characters



Eustace's Undragoning

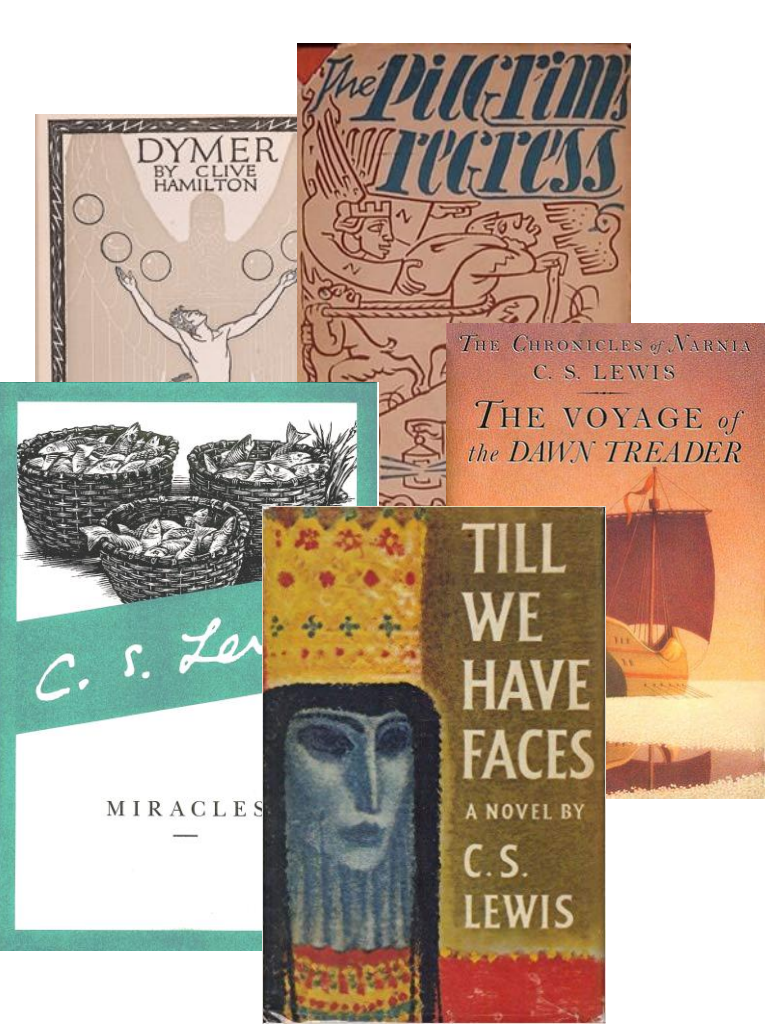


The Death of the Lizard

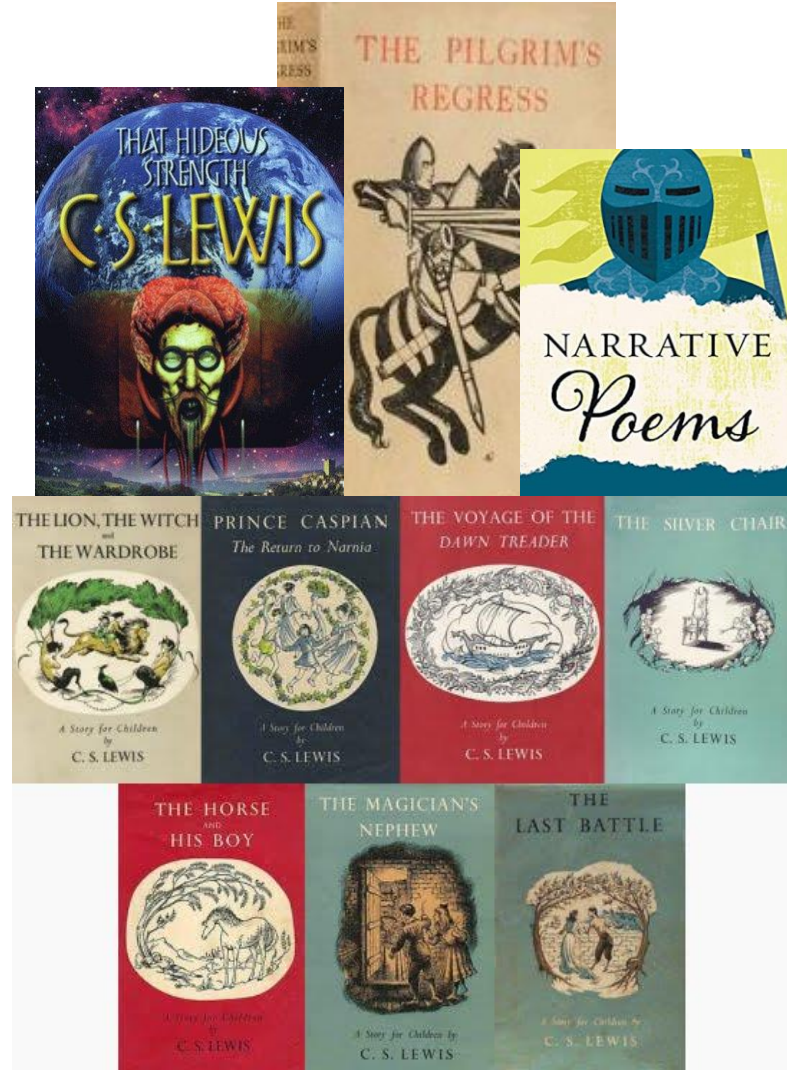


"Die before you die. There is no chance after" (279)

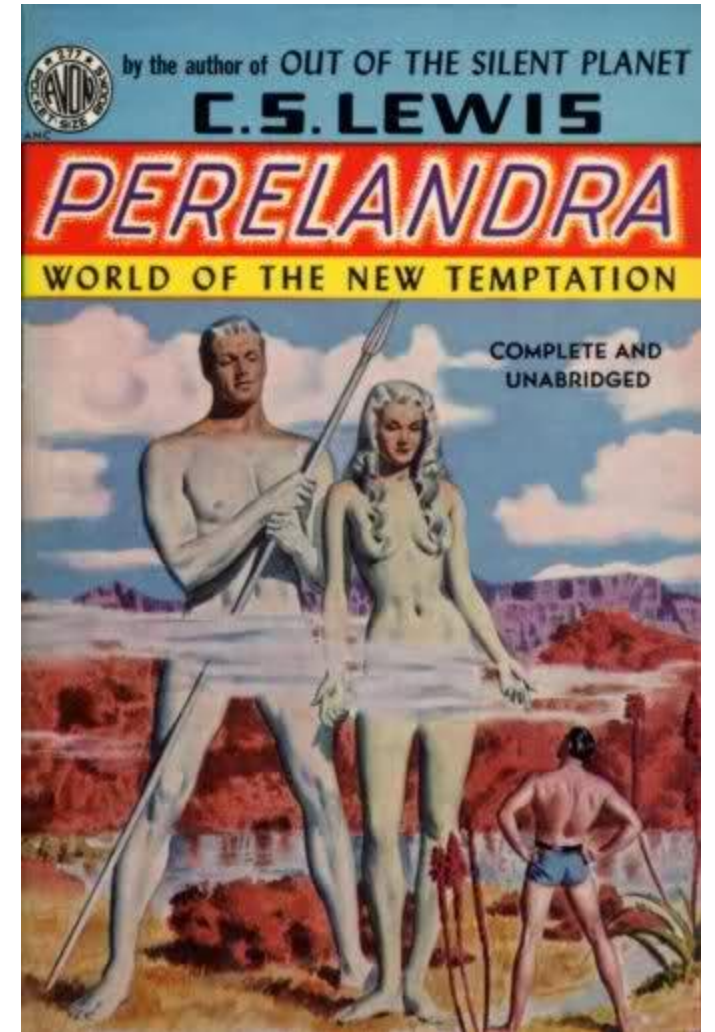
The Great Story on Which the Plot Turns: Form



Dive (Baptism)



The Fairy Tale



Patterns of Descent and Ascent

Some Implications of the Conversation ...

for Gorman's Project
for Lewis Studies

- Avoids reductionistic readings of Lewis (i.e., “apologist”)
- Provides a testable theory of reading Lewis as a spiritual theologian (and Gorman?)
- Demonstrates the often-intuited unity in the staggering diversity of Lewis’ work
- Gorman’s thought helps organize and extend Lewis’ work
- When read faithfully and with careful attention, there is in Lewis and Gorman’s spiritual theology a profound tool for biblically-founded and imaginative prophetic self-critique for socially-engaged Christians
- While Gorman’s thesis is testable in traditional ways—linguistic, exegetical, contextual, analytical, and methodological tests, or the degree of theological resonance among contemporary readers—this project demonstrates Gorman’s thesis in unusual ways:
 - Instinctively, a popular Christian thinker discerned a Pauline cruciformity and saw its deepest theological resonances as well as its implications for spiritual life
 - There are very specific links, like the “cruciform God,” extending *imitation Christi*
 - Lewis’ own narrative patterning is a helpful test of Gorman’s approach
- Shows that as a nonsystematic, often intuitive popular theologian, there is a cohesive centre to his thought embedded in narrative patterns in his religious and nonreligious nonfiction, as well as fiction and poetry
- Demonstrates success in using biblical studies tools to study a later figure
- Results in a successful cross-pollinated program of theology & literature

for Theological Method





**Questions? Queries? Querulous
Comments? Curiosities? Careful
Corrections? Points of Contact?
Questions that are Really
Comments?**

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C.S. Lewis' Logic of Cruciformity:
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