

CLIVE STAPLES LEWIS

By
GEORGE F. CASSELL



CHICAGO LITERARY CLUB • 1950

COPYRIGHT 1950 BY THE CHICAGO LITERARY CLUB



CLIVE STAPLES LEWIS

SEVERAL years ago a little book came to me, sent by a friend who indicated in a note that preceded its arrival that, if I did not know even the title of it, he wished to take up that deficiency in my store of information and that, if I had not read it, he would be pleased if I would read it and let him know what I thought of it—of its theme and content, of its manner of handling the theme, of the purpose of it, of its literary style. He intimated, too, that not to have read it, or to be eager to read it at once, might carry a condemnation equivalent at least to that which would attach to ignorance of the names of the ten largest universities in the United States of America given in the correct descending order of student enrolment, together with the names and titles of their respective heads.

Slyly he suggested that inasmuch as, at the time of his writing, well over thirty-five years had passed since I had been granted—I am confident that “granted” is the word that was used; at any rate, it was a word that indicated that the piece of parchment which was with great dignity extended to me was a pure and undefiled gift—granted, I

say, the diploma which purported to certify to my finishing the undergraduate work required for the obtaining of such largess, I might look upon the spending of several hours on the little book as that much graduate work engaged in for love and not for credit. Nor was this flattering, for I remembered the remarks of a splendid teacher of mine of time before. He said that, in going from one class to another, he could not, for years, remember whether his next group was to be a graduate or an undergraduate class until this phenomenon became apparent to him, and he no longer needed to worry about the matter or to look up the course numbers. If he entered a classroom and said, "Good morning," and the students replied, "Good morning," he knew that he was in the happy presence of undergraduates; if he entered a room and lightly said, "Good morning," he knew that he was addressing graduate students if they all pulled out their notebooks and carefully inscribed in them, "Good morning."

And I was conscious, too, of the guilt I felt at having received the type of education which my unenlightened university made necessary my receiving at that time, a type which the same university has now made clear was as dangerous to me as was the letting of blood in the medieval years to a patient enduring the unhappinesses of anemia. The college authorities had insisted upon my earning credits to a given number—What was it? Thirty-six for twelve quarters? We were a confused lot! If we *earned* enough credits, we were *given* a diploma! In the midst of such loose thinking on the part of a faculty whose collective abilities were acclaimed as possibly unequalled in the country, and whose reputations and achievements are still held in many places—not fatu-

ously, I trust—as outstanding, it is not to be wondered at that my generation and I were badly imposed upon and suffered great frustration. Our education had not been properly motivated. It provided no real synthesis of the materials poured into us. The courses we took were not correlated and integrated. Its School of Education, a very, very young child, must have merely prattled what it said; but, since it was too young to say much, we were spared such prattling as came years later when out of its maturity it told teachers of secondary-school students such things as that the real job of educators was to take the student where the school found him, all unworthy though he was, and to carry on from there; and, having preached the doctrine, to demonstrate its application by dropping a weak student in his first year of college work with a pious, “Thank God, I’m rid of him.” It is wicked for a high-school teacher to say of a seventeen-year-old boy, “He’s just a flunker; he isn’t high-school material; what am I supposed to do with him?” It is virtuous and meet to say of an eighteen-year-old college boy, “He can’t carry my course; he should be dropped at once.”

We were innocent young people too. We expected to go to work, and indeed most of us had to if we desired to live, for we were of a period in which, being not either in the cradle or at the side of the grave, we did not expect a guaranteed security, biologically, financially, and emotionally, or an appropriate compensation if in a world of bright and glorious free enterprise society failed to provide us an articulated place in the niche in which our prognostic and aptitude tests revealed to society that we should grow and flower. We were unfamiliar, I am sure,

with the phrase "vocational competency," although I am equally sure that we would have coveted it and its fulfilment at the hands of our college. But somehow, hazily, and I am sure the haze is our fault, we get the impression now that vocational purposes should not be tolerated in a select school of higher learning, in a congregation of scholars; and we are further bemused at the knowledge that the same school offers training whereby a man may make a living in medicine, in education, in commerce, in law, in theology (a first in vocations), or in one of a number of other fields. And we have heard of a Meatpackers Institute!

Moreover, it is no wonder that we let war come upon the earth. We did not properly receive—and we did not receive it because it was not offered us apparently—a general education. Some of us had what was strangely called a classical education. Before we left college we had not read all the Great Books, although many of us had read some of them which were not written in English in the language in which they were written, together with a number of those which were written in English. And most of us, perhaps because we had perverse parents and misled teachers who did not disdain chapel exercises, were well read in *the* Great Book.

Well, the promised little book came to me, only one hundred and sixty short pages in length. It was called *The Screwtape Letters* and was written by a man of whom and of whose work I knew nothing at the time, Mr. C. S. Lewis, Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford. My copy was published by the Macmillan Company of New York and indicated that between March, 1943, and Sep-

tember of the same year it had run through six reprints. (By 1947 it had gone through twenty British and fourteen United States printings.) The strange title of the book and the evidence of its enthusiastic reception interested me, and so did the text as I read it.

Screwtape is an old and experienced devil who is interested in saving souls from heaven and for hell. He has on earth a young nephew named Wormwood, ambitious to further the purposes of his uncle and his uncle's master. He is ambitious, too, to advance in the ranks of the "lowerarchy," to whose works he has committed himself. Wormwood is presently interested in winning to his everlasting perdition a young man who is not easily saved for hell, a "patient" as he calls him. Accordingly, Screwtape writes a series of letters to his nephew, advising and counseling and instructing him on methods and approaches. He is much more wise and subtle than the younger operator. He reminds him over and over again that the surest road to hell is not the road of spectacular wickedness but the easy, sloping, gradual road. But after all his labors, and despite his uncle's aid, Wormwood loses his patient, who is "snatched into salvation by a bomb during an air raid in London."

I closed the book, feeling that the comments which appeared on the flaps of its dust cover were quite appropriate. In the *Spectator* W. J. Turner wrote: "At every point these letters reveal a penetrating understanding of good and evil, and I do not hesitate to compare Mr. Lewis's achievement with *Pilgrim's Progress*." Dr. George A. Buttrick of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church of New York City said: "There is shrewd insight into human foibles and human worth. There is a sharp puncturing of

modern skepticisms; and, by indirection, there is a brilliant apologia for Christianity. I have been carrying the book with me, and, like a pest, reading it at anyone who will listen."

The comment of the *Times Literary Supplement* (London) was: "Brilliantly successful." The *Glasgow Herald* called the book "this excellent tract for the times." C. E. M. Joad said, "Mr. Lewis possesses the rare gift of being able to make righteousness readable." And the following approval appeared in the *Manchester Guardian*: "In a book of any length satire easily topples over into farce, and any levity in the treatment of such a subject would be fatal. Mr. Lewis never fails. The book is sparkling yet truly reverent, in fact a perfect joy and should become a classic."

It is easy, then, to understand why Lewis placed on a flyleaf in the book without comment Thomas More's observation: "The devill—the proude spirite—cannot endure to be mocked," and this bit from Luther: "The best way to drive out the devil, if he will not yield to texts of scripture, is to jeer and flout him, for he cannot bear scorn."

You will be patient with me, then, if I read to you several short passages of advice or explanation or argument written by Screwtape.

"The man who truly and disinterestedly enjoys any one thing in the world, for its own sake, and without caring twopence what other people say about it, is by that very fact fore-armed against some of our subtlest modes of attack. You should always try to make the patient abandon the people or food or books he really likes in favour of the 'best' people, the 'right' food, the 'important' books. I

have known a human defended from strong temptations to social ambition by a still stronger taste for tripe and onions.

"It remains to consider how we can retrieve this disaster. The great thing is to prevent his doing anything. As long as he does not convert it into action, it does not matter how much he thinks about this new repentance. Let the little brute wallow in it. Let him, if he has any bent that way, write a book about it; that is often an excellent way of sterilising the seeds which the Enemy plants in a human soul. Let him do anything but act. No amount of piety in his imagination and affections will harm us if we can keep it out of his will. As one of the humans has said, active habits are strengthened by repetition but passive ones are weakened. The more often he feels without acting, the less he will be able ever to act, and, in the long run, the less he will be able to feel."

"The truth is, I slipped by mere carelessness into saying that the Enemy really loves the humans. That, of course, is an impossibility. He is one being, they are distinct from Him. Their good cannot be His. All His talk about Love must be a disguise for something else—He must have some real motive for creating them and taking so much trouble about them. The reason one comes to talk as if He really had this impossible Love is our utter failure to find out that real motive. What does He stand to make out of them? That is the insoluble question. I do not see that it can do any harm to tell you that this very problem was a chief cause of Our Father's quarrel with the Enemy. When the creation of man was first mooted and when, even at that stage, the Enemy freely confessed that he

foresaw a certain episode about a cross, Our Father very naturally sought an interview and asked for an explanation. The Enemy gave no reply except to produce the cock-and-bull story about disinterested love which he has been circulating ever since. This Our Father naturally could not accept. He implored the Enemy to lay His cards on the table, and gave Him every opportunity. He admitted that he felt a real anxiety to know the secret; the Enemy replied 'I wish with all my heart that you did.' It was, I imagine, at this stage in the interview that Our Father's disgust at such an unprovoked lack of confidence caused him to remove himself an infinite distance from the Presence with a suddenness which has given rise to the ridiculous enemy story that he was forcibly thrown out of Heaven. Since then, we have begun to see why our Oppressor was so secretive. His throne depends on the secret. Members of His faction have frequently admitted that if ever we came to understand what He means by Love, the war would be over and we should re-enter Heaven. And there lies the great task. We know that He cannot really love: nobody can: it doesn't make sense. If we could only find out what He is *really* up to! Hypothesis after hypothesis has been tried, and still we can't find out. Yet we must never lose hope; more and more complicated theories, fuller and fuller collections of data, richer rewards for researchers who make progress, more and more terrible punishments for those who fail—all this, pursued and accelerated to the very end of time, cannot, surely, fail to succeed."

"No nation, and few individuals, are really brought into the Enemy's camp by the historical study of the

biography of Jesus, simply as biography. Indeed materials for a full biography have been withheld from men. The earliest converts were converted by a single historical fact (the Resurrection) and a single theological doctrine (the Redemption) operating on a sense of sin which they already had—and sin, not against some new fancy-dress law produced as a novelty by a ‘great man,’ but against the old, platitudinous, universal moral law which they had been taught by their nurses and mothers. The ‘Gospels’ come later and were written not to make Christians but to edify Christians already made.

‘The ‘Historical Jesus’ then, however dangerous he may seem to be to us at some particular point, is always to be encouraged. About the general connection between Christianity and politics, our position is more delicate. Certainly we do not want men to allow their Christianity to flow over into their political life, for the establishment of anything like a really just society would be a major disaster. On the other hand we do want, and want very much, to make men treat Christianity as a means; preferably, of course, as a means to their own advancement, but, failing that, as a means to anything—even to social justice. The thing to do is to get a man at first to value social justice as a thing which the Enemy demands, and then work him on to the stage at which he values Christianity because it may produce social justice. For the Enemy will not be used as a convenience. Men or nations who think they can revive the Faith in order to make a good society might just as well think they can use the stairs of Heaven as a short cut to the nearest chemist’s shop. Fortunately it is quite easy to coax humans round this little corner. Only today I have found a passage in a

Christian writer where he recommends his own version of Christianity on the ground that 'only such a faith can outlast the death of old cultures and the birth of new civilisations.' You see the little rift? 'Believe this, not because it is true, but for some other reason.' That's the game."

"The real trouble about the set your patient is living in is that it is *merely* Christian. They all have individual interests, of course, but the bond remains mere Christianity. What we want, if men become Christians at all, is to keep them in the state of mind I call 'Christianity And.' You know—Christianity and the Crisis, Christianity and the New Psychology, Christianity and the New Order, Christianity and Faith Healing, Christianity and Psychological Research, Christianity and Vegetarianism, Christianity and Spelling Reform. If they must be Christians let them at least be Christians with a difference. Substitute for the faith itself some Fashion with a Christian colouring. Work on their horror of the Same Old Thing.

"The horror of the Same Old Thing is one of the most valuable passions we have produced in the human heart—an endless source of heresies in religion, folly in counsel, infidelity in marriage, and inconstancy in friendship."

"Only the learned read old books and we have now so dealt with the learned that they are of all men the least likely to acquire wisdom by doing so. We have done this by inculcating The Historical Point of View. The Historical Point of View, put briefly, means that when a learned man is presented with any statement in an ancient author, the one question he never asks is whether it is

true. He asks who influenced the ancient writer, and how far the statement is consistent with what he said in other books, and what phase in the writer's development, or in the general history of thought, it illustrates, and how it affected later writers, and how often it has been misunderstood (specially by the learned man's own colleagues) and what the general course of criticism on it has been for the last ten years, and what is the 'present state of the question.' To regard the ancient writer as a possible source of knowledge—to anticipate that what he said could possibly modify your thoughts or your behaviour—this would be rejected as unutterably simple-minded. And since we cannot deceive the whole human race all the time, it is most important thus to cut every generation off from all others; for where learning makes a free commerce between the ages there is always the danger that the characteristic errors of one may be corrected by the characteristic truths of another. But thanks be to our Father and the Historical Point of View, great scholars are now as little nourished by the past as the most ignorant mechanic who holds that 'history is bunk.' "

Having duly thanked my friend for the pleasure his kindness had given me, I thought that it would be of interest to learn something of Screwtape's creator. He is Clive Staples Lewis, born on November 29, 1898, in Belfast, Ireland, and still living. Early in life he deserted the Church of Ireland, which is affiliated with the Anglican church, to become an atheist. He had a brief period of service as a second lieutenant in France in the first World War and was wounded in the back by a British shell which fell short. In 1918 he became a scholar at Univer-

sity College, Oxford. His graduation from Oxford was with honors. He accepted a lectureship at University College in 1924, and in 1925 he became Fellow and Tutor of Magdalen College, Oxford, where since that time he has been a special lecturer on English literature and has done a considerable amount of research in Anglo-Saxon and medieval materials. Bit by bit, "after years of much reading and association with many men of varied philosophies without any sudden awakening or 'rebirth,'" he has reasoned his way back to a full acceptance of Christianity, has become a member of the Church of England, and has developed into an outstanding lay crusader of the faith, one of the most heard and most read men in England. On his mother's side his family goes back to the first Norman invaders. His paternal grandfather was pure Welsh, in which fact might possibly lie the explanation of his evangelical zeal and of the courage he displayed when in World War II he did what few chaplains would dream of trying to do—gave lectures on elementary theology at RAF bases in England. And he was as gladly received in this service as he is acclaimed today, whether he is lecturing on Chaucer or on any other subject, as the most popular lecturer in Oxford.

In his private life he is reported to be practically a recluse, shy and sensitive. The story is told that he is likely to lock himself in his study whenever it is reported that a woman was on her way to visit the college. But both these estimates would seem to be in need of revision in the light of his well-known habit of visiting with his friends, discussing poetry, theology, and nonsense over his tea or his beer at his favorite pub, and by his own statement:

"The pleasant story about my locking myself in my

room when a woman invades the college precincts is—I regret to say—pure bosh. For one thing women are wandering through the ‘college precincts’ the whole blessed day. For another, having taken female pupils of all ages, shapes, sizes, and complexions for almost 20 years, I am a bit tougher than the story makes out. If I ever have fled from a female visitor it was not because she was a woman but because she was a *bore*, or because she was the fifteenth visitor on a busy day.”

From this man has come an amazing number of lectures, broadcasts, pamphlets, and books in a very short period of time. They have had arresting and stimulating titles, and their content is arresting and stimulating: *The Screwtape Letters*; *Out of the Silent Planet*—one of a trilogy, the other members of which are *Perelandra* and *That Hideous Strength*; *The Problem of Pain*; *The Case for Christianity*; *Christian Behavior*; *The Great Divorce*, which has nothing to do with our extensively discussed modern social phenomenon; *The Abolition of Man*; *Beyond Personality*; *Miracles*.

Three of these books may be classified as fiction, one as dealing with social philosophy, and the rest as having to do with theology. In addition, he has produced miscellaneous works, including a half-dozen volumes of literary criticism. With them and through his broadcasts, his lectures, and his essays this modern fighter for the faith has come out from his academic tower to enter into combat with the cynics of these present years urged by a purpose and a skill which is attracting increasing tens of thousands in England to attend and admire the fray, perhaps to believe in his cause. In less than six years something

over a million copies of his books have been sold—books on such themes!—and his broadcasts, broadcasts on religious subjects, have had on the average six hundred thousand listeners each! In astonishment, some reviewers and commentators have said things like these:

Special gift for dramatizing Christian doctrine.

Has a talent for putting old-fashioned truth into modern idiom.

A strictly unorthodox presentation of strict orthodoxy.

Lewis is one of a growing band of heretics among modern intellectuals; an intellectual who believes in God.

With crudition, good humor, and skill Lewis is writing about religion for a generation of religion-hungry readers, brought up on a diet of "scientific jargon" and Freudian clichés.

Writes as a layman to laymen.

Has a sense of humor.

Has not confined himself to the straightforward, frontal attack. He has more than one weapon in his armory.

Lewis bridges the gap between the low-brows and the high-brows. He is a multiple-threat apologist: if he can't lead you to the baptismal font by outright argument, he'll use satire and irony; and if that doesn't work, he'll write fables and allegories to catch you off guard.

Of course not all is rapt praise or approval. On the other side of the jousting field are the many who feel that his one-man crusade is a sorry spectacle, that his mount is not a secure one, that his armor must be highly vulnerable in spite of its brightness. Listen to two of their countercalls sounding across the field:

C. S. Lewis, the Oxford don, the pious paradox-monger and audacious word-juggler, will surely meet his match one of these days and be subjected to a severe debunking operation.

And this one, prepared for the rooting section of the opposition:

He is asking for it. Oh, for a Huxley, or a Heine, or an Ingersoll, to expose his tricks and call his bluffs.

This latter appeared in the *American Freeman* of December, 1947, from the reactions of Victor S. Yarros, surely our own most highly regarded Victor, who, according to our *Year Book*, has been a member of the Chicago Literary Club in an unbroken succession of years since 1903, respected, admired, and honored.

Perhaps you would find a few short passages from his writings indicative of his method and style and not regret the listening to them. This comes from the Preface to *The Great Divorce*, a call to a definite choice:

"Blake wrote the Marriage of Heaven and Hell. If I have written of their Divorce, this is not because I think myself a fit antagonist for so great a genius, nor even because I feel at all sure that I know what he meant. But in some sense or other the attempt to make that marriage is perennial. The attempt is based on the belief that reality never presents us with an absolutely unavoidable 'either-or'; that granted skill and patience and (above all) time enough, some way of embracing both alternatives can always be found; that mere development or adjustment or refinement will somehow turn evil into good without our being called on for a final and total rejection of anything

we should like to retain. This belief I take to be a disastrous error. You cannot take all luggage with you on all journeys; on one journey even your right hand and your right eye may be among the things you have to leave behind. We are not living in a world where all roads are radii of a circle and where all, if followed long enough, will therefore draw gradually nearer and finally meet at the centre: rather in a world where every road, after a few miles, forks into two, and each of those into two again, and at each fork you must make a decision. Even on the biological level life is not like a pool but like a tree. It does not move towards unity but away from it and the creatures grow further apart as they increase in perfection. Good, as it ripens, becomes continually more different not only from evil but from other good.

"I do not think that all who choose wrong roads perish; but their rescue consists in being put back on the right road. A wrong sum can be put right: but only by going back till you find the error and working it afresh from that point, never by simply *going on*. Evil can be undone, but it cannot 'develop' into good. Time does not heal it. The spell must be unwound, bit by bit, 'with backward mutters of dissevering power'—or else not. It is still 'either-or.'"

From *Christian Behavior* I have culled the following bits:

"The second thing to get clear is that Christianity hasn't got, and doesn't profess to have, a detailed political programme for applying 'Do as you would be done by' to a particular society at a particular moment. It couldn't have, of course. It is meant for all men at all times and the particular programme which suited one

place or time wouldn't suit another. And, anyhow, that is not how Christianity works. When it tells you to feed the hungry it doesn't give you lessons in cookery. When it tells you to read the Scriptures it doesn't give you lessons in Hebrew and Greek, or even in English grammar. It was never intended to replace or supersede the ordinary human arts and sciences: it is rather a director which will set them all to the right jobs, and a source of energy which will give them all new life, if only they will put themselves at its disposal."

"Although I've had to speak at some length about sex, I want to make it as clear as I possibly can that the centre of Christian morality is not here. If anyone thinks that Christians regard unchastity as *the* great vice, he is quite wrong. The sins of the flesh are bad, but they are the least bad of all sins. All the worst pleasures are purely spiritual: The pleasure of putting other people in the wrong, of bossing and patronising and spoiling sport, and back-biting; the pleasures of power, of hatred. You see, there are two things inside me, competing with the human self which I must try to become. They are the Animal self, and the Diabolical self. The Diabolical self is the worse of the two. That is why a cold, self-righteous prig who goes regularly to Church may be far nearer to hell than a prostitute. But, of course, it is better to be neither."

Lewis often uses analogy in making concrete some abstract idea. Take this concerning a spiritual rebirth, the doctrine of regeneration:

"It may be hard for an egg to turn into a bird: it would be a jolly sight harder for it to learn to fly while remain-

ing an egg. We're like eggs at present. And you can't go on indefinitely being just an ordinary, decent egg. We must be hatched or go bad."

He dares to compare God's love for man to the love a man has for his dog and indicates that man should be happy when God gives him spiritual discipline:

"It will be noted that the man takes all these pains with the dog only because it is an animal high in the scale—because it is so nearly lovable that it is worth his while to make it fully lovable. He does not house-train the earwig or give baths to centipedes."

Nor does Lewis, a bachelor, shy away from the topic of giving and taking in marriage in heaven:

"The letter and spirit of Scripture, and of all Christianity, forbids us to suppose that life in the New Creation will be a sexual life; and this reduces our imagination to the withering alternative either of bodies which are hardly recognizable as human bodies at all or else of a perpetual fast. As regards the fast, I think our present outlook might be like that of a small boy who, on being told that the sexual act was the highest bodily pleasure, should immediately ask whether you ate chocolates at the same time. On receiving the answer no, he might regard absence of chocolates as the chief characteristic of sexuality. In vain would you tell him that the reason why lovers in their carnal raptures don't bother about chocolates is that they have something better to think of. The boy knows chocolate; he does not know the positive thing that excludes it. We are in the same position. We

know sexual life; we do not know, except in glimpses, the other thing which, in Heaven, will leave no room for it."

And I cannot forego a paragraph from *The Abolition of Man*, a very short work which Lewis subtitles "Reflections on Education with Special Reference to the Teaching of English in the Upper Forms of the Schools." He calls a certain textbook "The Green Book" and its anonymous authors, Gaius and Titius. After taking apart the book and the methods it indicates, Lewis ends his first chapter, "Men without Chests," in this wise:

"The operation of *The Green Book* and its kind is to produce what may be called Men without Chests. It is an outrage that they should be commonly spoken of as Intellectuals. This gives them the chance to say that he who attacks them attacks Intelligence. It is not so. They are not distinguished from other men by any unusual skill in finding truth nor any virginal ardour to pursue her. Indeed it would be strange if they were: a persevering devotion to truth, a nice sense of intellectual honour, cannot be long maintained without the aid of a sentiment which Gaius and Titius could debunk as easily as any other. It is not excess of thought but defect of fertile and generous emotion that marks them out. Their heads are no bigger than the ordinary: it is the atrophy of the chest beneath that makes them seem so.

"And all the time—such is the tragi-comedy of our situation—we continue to clamour for those very qualities we are rendering impossible. You can hardly open a periodical without coming across the statement that what our civilization needs is more 'drive,' or dynamism, or self-sacrifice, or 'creativity.' In a sort of ghastly sim-

plicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful."

The recognized authority on the person, the writings, and the purposes of C. S. Lewis seems unquestionably to be Mr. Chad Walsh, professor of English at Beloit College. After writing a number of articles about Lewis which appeared in such magazines as the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Time*, *Christian Century*, and the *Catholic World*, Walsh, on academic leave of absence, went to England to learn and to study this new literary phenomenon. The resulting book—*C. S. Lewis: Apostle to the Skeptics*—was published by Macmillan in 1949. It is a fine, clean-cut presentation, evaluation, and criticism. One is constrained, however, to feel that Walsh, although admiring greatly Lewis's style and method, thinks of him more as a religious than as a literary phenomenon; and that conclusion, in spite of his great popularity and acceptance, seems to be sound. It is easy for a reader of Lewis to agree that he employs "keen social satire," "brilliant irony," "an urbane style," "a delightful sense of fantasy," "a happy knack of choosing the right analogy," "a high courage," "a flowing simplicity and an inevitability of phrasing." Easy, too, to agree that he has a "sharp, quick-moving mind, impatient of vagueness and half-formed ideas." But it is impossible to give serious attention to him without feeling that he is driven by evangelical zeal. Walsh presents in nice balance both aspects of the man when he says:

"Of all the writers advocating classical Christianity none combines versatility, literary skill, and psychological insight so richly as C. S. Lewis. He is peculiarly capable of reaching and influencing the people who will influence the masses day after tomorrow. If Christianity revives in England and America it will not be the work of one man—and perhaps not really the work of man at all. But the odds are that it will bear strong traces of the Gospel according to C. S. Lewis."

Believe me, gentlemen, I have not brought this review of a contemporary to the Chicago Literary Club with the idea that all or any of us are cynics and skeptics. Be that as it may be! Nor are you to read into my paper the notion that implicit in it is a missionary purpose in so far as the Club is concerned. The presentation came about purely in this very simple wise: I read a little book which I had not sought out; I read several other books by the same author because I found the first one interesting and stimulating; I was invited to give a paper for the 1949-50 season; I accepted the invitation without having in mind a definite subject; C. S. Lewis became my subject.

When, however, we turn away from reading that is largely vocational—lawyers from legal tomes, doctors from their specialties, clerics from eschatology, educators from standardized tests, scientists from their individual deities of precision—if we no longer read history and biography avidly and if we no longer keep up the pretense that poetry is part of the natural reading of men interested in literature, let us permit C. S. Lewis and others with like gifts to remind us that men still write using a style and discussing a subject matter that is clear

CLIVE STAPLES LEWIS

and clean; that the modern novelist or dramatist, for example, who frequently disturbs the muddy bottom of the pool and then invites us either to drink of dirty water or to swim in it is not the only type of person from whom we may receive invitations to refresh ourselves.

THIS PAPER WAS WRITTEN FOR THE CHICAGO LITERARY CLUB AND READ BEFORE THE CLUB ON MONDAY EVENING, THE TWENTY-EIGHTH OF NOVEMBER, NINETEEN HUNDRED AND FORTY-NINE. THIS EDITION OF TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTEEN COPIES WAS PRINTED BY THE CLUB FOR ITS MEMBERS IN THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER, NINETEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY.

[PRINTED
IN U.S.A.]