

From the
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of
C. S. LEWIS

Selections from Writers Who
Influenced His Spiritual Journey



Compiled by
JAMES STUART BELL
with Anthony P. Dawson

A WRITERS' PALETTE BOOK

INCLUDING THE WRITINGS OF

G. K. CHESTERTON | GEORGE MACDONALD | J. R. R. TOLKIEN | DOROTHY L. SAYERS

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A SHAW BOOK

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FOREWORD

Jim Bell and Tony Dawson have compiled a selection of readings that will nourish the spiritual and intellectual hunger of healthy souls in several ways. First, these readings are in and of themselves a superb tonic to refresh the thirsty soul. Second, these selections reveal much about C. S. Lewis's inner life. Included here are samplings from the massive collection of authors whose writings shaped one of the most influential writers of the twentieth century. Finally, these splendid readings serve as an introduction to a large group of writers whose works enriched Lewis's soul. I would expect many readers to discover for the first time some of the authors who profoundly shaped Professor Lewis's mind and heart. For people who are unfamiliar with many of the authors included here, this book will be the beginning of a delightful educational journey.

In brief, I have found this book to be at once a unique and rich selection of daily readings. It should have a wide audience and a long life.

—Lyle W. Dorsett, professor of Christian Formation and
Ministries, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois

SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks go to Professor Jerry Root, Lewis scholar at Wheaton College, for his keen insights into Lewis. We would also like to express our gratitude to Corey Thomas, Marjorie Lamp Mead, and the staff of the Marion E. Wade Center for their kind and invaluable assistance as we consulted books from C. S. Lewis's library. We also want to thank Anna Thiel for proofreading the manuscript; her careful attention to detail and insightful comments proved most helpful.

INTRODUCTION

When I wrote my master's thesis on C. S. Lewis twenty-five years ago at University College Dublin, I thought there had already been an exhaustive study of possible spiritual and literary influences on this towering twentieth-century shaper of Christian thought. Yet still today, readers and scholars pour out a perpetual torrent of books, articles, and graduate theses, continuing to speculate on these same influences. This proves there is still much to be learned about the origins of Lewis's intellectual and spiritual backgrounds. Yet, except for the scholars doing the research, most of us are probably not familiar with these sources of his inspiration.

The "Hound of heaven" pursued the self-described "most reluctant convert in England" using the arguments of friends and other factors to draw him, but it was primarily the Christian wisdom of the ages that brought Lewis to his knees and caused him to grow spiritually. Lewis would agree with the statement that great thinkers stand on the shoulders of giants. His conversion to Christianity began by acknowledging respect for those writers he considered truly great (people like George MacDonald, G. K. Chesterton, Samuel Johnson, Edmund Spenser, and John Milton) in spite of the fact that they were Christians.

Lewis would later admit that without these and other profound spiritual influences he could not be the kind of Christian he was, nor could he have the impact on the world with his own writings that he did. If that is so, these writings should have intrinsic value for all of us, as well as help us better understand the spiritual formation of C. S. Lewis himself.

To truly understand Lewis and his works we need to get behind his role as Christian apologist to his interest in philosophy and literature, in reason and romanticism. Lewis was not a one-dimensional reader. His eclectic tastes

ranged over a wide variety of genres and time periods. He was a fan of science fiction and fantasy writers as well as Aristotle, Shakespeare, and Augustine. In Lewis's world, myth and allegory mix with precise logic in philosophical debate. Scholars continue to explore how these influences fit together, but there is no magic formula; Lewis was a complex figure who didn't quite fit the trends of his own generation and is able to speak to the needs of each succeeding one.

This volume doesn't attempt to "figure out" C. S. Lewis but to provide a smorgasbord of the content and style of those who have shone forth as messengers of light in his life. In meditating upon these passages we get short impressions of what Lewis valued; these works in many cases affected his thinking, writing, and behavior. They give us a glimpse of the inner world that provided the fuel for his stunning works of theology, poetry, science fiction, fantasy, literary criticism, letters, and children's literature.

Lewis called himself a "dinosaur" who was a repository of the old Western values, one who upheld the legacy of classic Western civilization. In today's postmodern environment this vanishing world is dismissed or vilified. Yet as Lewis knew, the flowering of the best of Christian culture took place prior to the Enlightenment. These writers were in turn influenced by the Greek and Roman cultures that preceded them.

So I believe that from these readings we can obtain clearer insight into C. S. Lewis as well as feed our imaginations and intellects upon those whose talents produced works of theology and literature that contain timeless standards. Many will discover a world they never knew existed and would never enter save for the high recommendation of their trusted friend Lewis. So come along with me and walk the same pilgrim path as our great spiritual mentor and drink from the fountain that blessed those who have gone before us, giving them strength and refreshment for the journey.

—JAMES STUART BELL

NOTE TO READER

Scholars tend to make subjective value judgments about the degree to which various authors influenced Lewis. It is not our purpose to quantify or rank the influence of any of these writers.

At times Lewis in his own writings clearly states that an author had a favorable impression on him. At other times he quotes an author with approval or to support a point. These writers have (to the best of our knowledge) been included in this volume.

In Lewis's professional capacity as literary critic, he dealt with authors who made a positive contribution to the field. Other authors he may have simply enjoyed for his own reading pleasure. With this in mind, we have included writers who are consistent with Lewis's own viewpoint and whose works are found in his personal library, housed at the Marion E. Wade Center in Wheaton, Illinois. Many of these volumes have been annotated and the marginalia betray a positive bias.

We have included some works that played a role in the evolution of his thought that he may, in turn, have left behind. We have not included writers he was familiar with but was either neutral or hostile toward throughout his life. Finally, we have attempted to please those who are aficionados of the complete range of "Lewisiana" as well as those who are familiar only with his popular works.

Please note that we have assigned categories to the selections to help identify some of the themes that would attract Lewis in his reading and research. They are somewhat arbitrary and subjective but will help avoid a random approach and allow readers to gravitate to their initial areas of interest.



“FOLLOW AFTER AGAPE”

God's Love

Julian of Norwich

Revelations of Divine Love

He showed me a very lofty spiritual delight in my soul, and in it I was completely filled with everlasting certitude, firmly sustained, without any painful dread. This feeling was so glad and so spiritual that I was entirely at peace, at ease and at rest, so that there was nothing on earth that could have disturbed me.

This lasted only for a while. Then I was transformed and left to myself in depression, weary of my life and irked with myself, so that I kept the patience to go on living only with difficulty. There was no comfort and no ease for me, except faith, hope, and charity, and these I had in reality, though I had very little feeling of them.

And immediately after this our Lord again gave me comfort and rest of soul in delight and certitude, so blessed and so mighty that no dread, no sorrow, no bodily or spiritual pain that could be suffered should have caused me distress.

And then the pain returned to my feelings, again followed by the joy and delight—first the one and then the other, at, I suppose, about twenty different times. In the time of joy I could have said with Saint Paul, “Nothing shall separate me from the love of Christ.” And in the pain I could have said, “Lord, save me! I perish!”

This vision was showed to me to teach my understanding that it is profitable for some souls to experience these alterations of mood—sometimes to be comforted and sometimes to fail and to be left to themselves. God wills that we know that he keeps us ever equally safe, in woe as in well-being.

Julian of Norwich (1342–?)—An English Benedictine nun, Julian of Norwich was very ill on May 8–9, 1373, and was visited with sixteen visions of God’s love. She became a recluse and spent twenty years meditating on these visions, after which she wrote the *Revelations*.

George MacDonald

Unspoken Sermons

Love is one, and love is changeless.

For love loves unto purity. Love has ever in view the absolute loveliness of that which it beholds. Where loveliness is incomplete, and love cannot love its fill of loving, it spends itself to make more lovely, that it may love more; it strives for perfection, even that itself may be perfected—not in itself, but in the object. As it was love that first created humanity, so even human love, in proportion to its divinity, will go on creating the beautiful for its own outpouring. There is nothing eternal but that which loves and can be loved, and love is ever climbing towards the consummation when such shall be the universe, imperishable, divine.

Therefore all that is not beautiful in the beloved, all that comes between and is not of love's kind, must be destroyed.

And our God is a consuming fire.

George MacDonald (1824–1905)—Scottish Congregationalist pastor, novelist, myth maker, and poet, MacDonald had a profound influence on C. S. Lewis. Lewis said that MacDonald's *Phantastes* “baptized my imagination.”

Joy Davidman

Smoke on the Mountain

For many contemporaries God has dwindled into a noble abstraction, a tendency of history, a goal of evolution; has thinned out into a concept useful for organizing world peace—a good thing as an idea. But not the Word made flesh, who died for us and rose again from the dead. Not a Personality that a man can feel any love for. And not, certainly, the eternal Lover who took the initiative and fell in love with *us*.

Is it shocking to think of God as a pursuing lover? Then Christianity is shocking. If we accept the supernatural only as something too weak and passive to interfere with the natural, we had best call ourselves materialists and be done with it—we shall gain in honesty what we lose in respectability. Here's a test to tell if your faith is anything more than faith-and-water. Suppose that tonight the Holy Spirit lifts you high into space, speaks a message to your conscience, then invisibly tucks you back into your safe little bed again. Will you consider the possibility that this experience is genuine? Or will you conclude at once that you must be crazy, and start yelling for a psychiatrist?

And here's a more practical test—since, in all probability, very few of us will be lifted from our beds tonight. Do you think that Christianity is *primarily* valuable as a means of solving our “real” problem—i.e., how to build a permanently healthy, wealthy, and wise society in *this* world? If you do, you're at least half a materialist, and someday the Marxists may be calling you comrade.

So strong is the materialist climate of opinion that even convinced Christians sometimes feel compelled to defend Christianity against the charge of “otherworldliness”—to slight its value as the passport to heaven in favor of its usefulness as a blueprint for remodeling earth. Yet we must not blame our

earthiness entirely upon Western scientific progress, as if materialism had waited for Edison to invent it. By no means. The Rome of Lucretius, the Athens of Epicurus—even the Israel of Ecclesiastes—were hardly without their materialist philosophers. Devotion to the prince of this world is one of the ancient temptations, and perhaps our remote ancestors had no sooner invented the slingshot than they reared back on their hind legs and proclaimed that their technical progress had now enabled them to do without religion. The choice before us today is just what it always was—whether to be worldly or otherworldly; whether to live for the unloving self or to live for the love of God.

Joy Davidman (1915–1960)—Poet, author, and the wife of C. S. Lewis, Davidman is the mother of David and Douglas Gresham. C. S. Lewis dedicated his novel *Till We Have Faces* to her and wrote *A Grief Observed* upon her death.

Anders Nygren

Agape and Eros

In the Synoptic Gospels, and still more in Paul, “love” has a definite religious and ethical quality of its own, in itself and quite independently of its object. Hence Paul can say without further qualification: “Follow after Agape” (1 Cor. 14:1). He has no need to specify the object to which this love is to be directed. He knows nothing of any distinction between a true and a false Agape. The moment that love shows itself to be Agape-love its ethical and religious legitimacy is for him beyond doubt. Such love is an outflow of the Divine love whatever its object may be. In John the position is substantially similar. Here also Agape possesses its own definite quality, and we have no need to ask what its object is in order to be able to determine its quality. Hence it can be said of Agape without further qualification: “Agape is of God; and everyone that loves is begotten of God, and knows God. He that loves not knows not God; for God is Agape” (1 John 4:7f.). Here we have the high-water mark of the Johannine conception of Agape. God and Agape are one. Agape as such, regardless of the object to which it is directed, is participation in the life of God: Agape is born of God.

Anders Theodor Samuel Nygren (1890–1978)—Swedish Lutheran minister and educator, Nygren was a prolific author whose works have been translated into ten languages. Nygren served on the World Council of Churches central committee from 1948 to 1954 and was later bishop of Lund.

John Bunyan

Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners

I heard one preach a sermon upon those words in the Song 4:1, “Behold you are fair, my love; behold, you are fair.” But at that time he made these two words, “My love,” his chief and subject matter; from which, after he had a little opened the text, he observed these several conclusions: 1. That the Church, and so every saved soul, is Christ’s love, when loveless. 2. Christ’s love without a cause. 3. Christ’s love when hated of the world. 4. Christ’s love when under temptation, and under desertion. 5. Christ’s love from first to last. But I got nothing by what he said at present, only when he came to the application of the fourth particular, this was the word he said: If it be so, that the saved soul is Christ’s love when under temptation and desertion; then, poor tempted soul, when you are assaulted and afflicted with temptation, and the hidings of God’s face, yet think on these two words, “My love,” still.

So as I was a-going home, these words came again into my thoughts; and I well remember, as I came in, I said thus in my heart, What shall I get by thinking on these two words? This thought had no sooner passed through my heart, but the words began thus to kindle in my spirit, “You are my love, you are my love,” twenty times together; and still as they ran thus in my mind, they waxed stronger and warmer, and began to make me look up; but being as yet between hope and fear, I still replied in my heart, But is it true, but is it true? At which, that sentence fell in upon me, he “knew not that it was true which was done by the angel” (Acts 12:9).

Then I began to give place to the word, which, with power, did over and over make this joyful sound within my soul, You are my love, you are my love; and nothing shall separate you from my love; and with that, Rom. 8:39 came into my mind. Now was my heart filled full of comfort and hope, and now I could believe that my sins should be forgiven me; yea, I was now so

taken with the love and mercy of God, that I remember I could not tell how to contain till I got home; I thought I could have spoken of His love, and of His mercy to me, even to the very crows that sat upon the ploughed lands before me, had they been capable to have understood me.

John Bunyan (1628–1675)—Son of a tinker, Bunyan became a Baptist preacher and was imprisoned in Bedford, England, for twelve years for unlicensed preaching. While in prison he wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress*. C. S. Lewis's article on John Bunyan is published in *Selected Literary Essays*.

George MacDonald

Unspoken Sermons

For there can be no unity, no delight of love, no harmony, no good in being, where there is but one. Two at least are needed for oneness; and the greater the number of individuals, the greater, the lovelier, the richer, the diviner is the possible unity.

God is life, and the will-source of life. In the outflowing of that life, I know him; and when I am told that he is love, I see that if he were not love he would not, could not create. I know nothing deeper in him than love, nor believe there is in him anything deeper than love—nay, that there can be anything deeper than love. The being of God is love, therefore creation. I imagine that from all eternity he has been creating. As he saw it was not good for man to be alone, so has he never been alone himself;—from all eternity the Father has had the Son, and the never-begun existence of that Son I imagine an easy outgoing of Father's nature; while to make other beings—beings like us, I imagine the labor of a God, an eternal labor.

George MacDonald (1824–1905)—Scottish Congregationalist pastor, novelist, myth maker, and poet, MacDonald had a profound influence on C. S. Lewis. Lewis said that MacDonald's *Phantastes* “baptized my imagination.”

George Herbert

Love Bade Me Welcome

Love bade me welcome, yet my soul drew back
 Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
 From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
 If I lacked anything.
“A guest,” I answered, “worthy to be here”;
 Love said, “You shall be he.”
“I, the unkind, the ungrateful? Ah my dear,
 I cannot look on thee.”
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
 “Who made the eyes but I?”
“Truth, Lord, but I have marred them; let my shame
 Go where it doth deserve.”
“And know you not,” says Love, “who bore the blame?”
 “My dear, then I will serve.”
“You must sit down,” says Love, “and taste my meat.”
 So I did sit and eat.

George Herbert (1593–1633)—Anglican rector of the parish church of Bremerton, near Salisbury, Herbert was one of the seventeenth-century metaphysical poets.



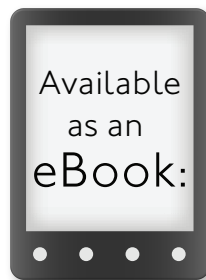
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