

## **Pursuing Moral Goodness: C. S. Lewis's Understanding of Faith**

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One of the wonderful qualities of C. S. Lewis's writings in the area of moral philosophy is that his comments typically strike us as so intuitively right. We read Lewis's analysis in *The Great Divorce* of the deep motivations of various characters, and we think to ourselves, "Yes, I know someone just like that!" Or we read Lewis's description in *The Abolition of Man* of our universal experience of the Tao, and we find ourselves saying, "Yes, that just *has* to be the way things are."

At the same time, Lewis occasionally makes a comment that strikes us as quite unexpected, if not shocking. It is not that we immediately think that the remark must surely be incorrect. Rather, the remark seems to cry out for further explanation. Here is one such remark, in which he challenges the neat distinction between "Christian" and "non-Christian."

The world does not consist of 100 per cent Christians and 100 per cent non-Christians. There are people (a great many of them) who are slowly ceasing to be Christians but they still call themselves by that name: some of them are clergymen. There are other people who are slowly becoming Christians though they do not yet call themselves so.<sup>1</sup>

Our immediate reaction to Lewis's remark may be to think that something is surely amiss. After all, with respect to people's affiliations with the Christian religion, it seems natural to think of people as being in one of two categories: those who *are* Christians and those who *are not* Christians. Perhaps we might think of a person as slowly and thoughtfully considering *whether* to take the step of becoming a Christian. But Lewis is not making this claim. He is making the stronger, and more controversial, claim that some people are actually in a *process of becoming* Christians—even if they do not know it! Correspondingly, other people are slowly *ceasing to be* Christians—again, even though they do not realize it. Are we to conclude that a person's status as a Christian is somehow a matter of degree?

Without further explanation, Lewis's comments will probably remain very counterintuitive to many readers. The key to understanding these comments is to see how they fit into Lewis's overall understanding of the nature of faith. Unfortunately, Lewis did not provide a philosophically detailed definition of faith. He did not offer a systematic discussion of what it means for a person to "put one's faith in God."<sup>2</sup> So the best procedural avenue available to us is to ask the question: What account of faith does Lewis *need* to be committed to if his comments on "becoming a Christian" are to make sense? In the discussion that follows, I outline an account of the nature of faith that differs in some important respects from the understanding of

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<sup>1</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> The closest Lewis came to such a discussion was his theological reminder in *Mere Christianity*, book 3, chap. 12, that faith works hand in hand with serious moral effort. Lewis emphasizes that true faith can come only when one tries one's hardest to obey God's law, recognizing in the end that one's best efforts result in failure. However, in this chapter his discussion of faith does not address our question of what exactly a person decides *to do* when one decides to put one's faith in God—nor does it provide us the key for making sense of the original quotation from the previous paragraph.

faith popularly defended within many contemporary Christian circles.<sup>3</sup> I argue that this alternative account of faith is in a number of ways preferable to the more popular, contemporary account. And along the way we shall see how Lewis provides clues in his writings strongly suggesting that he meant to endorse an account of faith much along the lines of the one I outline.

### **Faith is not Simply Belief**

The first step in outlining our alternative account of faith is to see how it differs from *belief*. Historically, belief has been a central element of quite a number of theologians' descriptions of faith. For example, at the beginning of the third century, Clement of Alexandria stated that faith is "the assent of piety... The exercise of faith directly becomes knowledge."<sup>4</sup> In the thirteenth century Thomas Aquinas defined the inward act of faith as the act of "believing" or "thinking with assent."<sup>5</sup> And in modern times it is common practice to refer to people of faith simply as "believers." However, if we equate *faith* with *belief*, we open the door to some very problematic scenarios.

Consider the example of Abraham from the Old Testament. When God stated to Abraham that his offspring would be as numerous as the stars, Abraham responded by following God's directions to uproot his family and move to a not-yet-identified foreign land. Abraham's response is extolled by the writer of the book of Hebrews—and by the Christian tradition throughout history—as the kind of response we should seek to emulate. But what exactly was the nature of Abraham's response?

As a way of answering this question, let us consider a thought experiment. Let us suppose (contrary to fact) that God, instead of appearing to Abraham, had instead appeared to someone named "Abruhum" and had made Abruhum the same promise that was made to Abraham. Let us also suppose the following background information about Abruhum. Abruhum had decided early in life that he was going to spend his life cheating people out of money. Thus we suppose that he is a perfect scoundrel. Upon hearing God's testimony to him, he might then have thought to himself, "I do *believe* that God will in fact give me many descendants, and this will greatly help in my goal of cheating people. For if my descendants are in places of power, I'll be less likely to be punished or held accountable for my unlawful acts!" In such a case, Abruhum, eager to cheat people in whatever land he finds himself, might have been happy to demonstrate *trust*—to act on the assumption that God's statement is true—following God's call to move to a not-yet-identified foreign land where his household will prosper.

What this thought experiment shows is that a person can have true beliefs about God and God's commands—and can even exhibit trust in God—and yet still be an absolute scoundrel. Why is the response of Abruhum not a virtuous one? Well, in our thought experiment, the ultimate *purpose* we imagine Abruhum as seeking to achieve is not a virtuous one. His ultimate purpose, again, is to cheat people out of money. And this is certainly not the kind of purpose God invites people to join him in pursuing. We shall return to this issue of purposes in the next section. Let us first look at another biblical passage that touches on the nature of faith—this time from the New Testament.

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<sup>3</sup> I have given a fuller discussion and analysis of this alternative account of faith in Kevin Kinghorn, *The Decision of Faith: Can Christian Beliefs Be Freely Chosen?* (London: T & T Clark, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Clement of Alexandria *Stromata*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. and trans. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, vol. 2 (Albany, Ore.: Sage Software, 1996), book 2, chap. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Bros., 1947), 2-2.2.1; 2-2.2.2. For Aquinas, the "outward" act of faith is confession.

The Gospel of Matthew records Jesus making reference to people who profess to perform acts of faith in his name but who do not, through these actions, participate in the kind of relationship into which God invites people.

Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day many will say to me, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?” Then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; away from me, you evildoers.” (Matthew 7:21-23).

The people described here do use the name of Jesus when praying to God and when performing acts that they themselves no doubt consider to be acts of faith. Yet, Jesus does not consider their actions to be acts of virtuous faith. Why? Perhaps their ultimate purpose in prophesying in Jesus’s name is to manipulate people. Perhaps their ultimate purpose in working to facilitate miraculous healing in others is to draw undue attention to themselves. There may be any number of reasons that account for the lack of virtuous faith on the part of these individuals who see themselves as doing acts of service in the name of Jesus. Yet, the reasons will all have to do with the *purposes* they ultimately seek to achieve. So again we find that the nature of the purposes one seeks to pursue—as opposed to the true beliefs one holds—seems key in determining whether one enters into a positive relationship with God (cf. James 2:19, “even the demons believe”).

### **Faith and the Pursuit of Godly Purposes**

At this point we should clarify exactly what it means to “pursue a purpose.” Purposes are linked to goals. To pursue a purpose is to pursue a goal. Some purposes are consistent with the purposes Jesus pursued and encouraged others to pursue. Other purposes are not. For example, Jesus pursued the purposes of helping the poor, comforting those who mourn, extending mercy to others, promoting peace and so forth. He invited others to join him in these pursuits. On the alternative account of faith I am proposing, the exercise of faith is not at its heart the holding of certain true *beliefs about* God. Rather, it is more a matter of what *purposes* one chooses to pursue.

In the Chronicles of Narnia, Lewis addressed this very question of whether a virtuous response to God is primarily a matter of correct beliefs about God or, alternatively, the pursuit of godly purposes. In his stories about Narnia, Aslan represents the one true God. By contrast, Tash is the “false God” of the Calormenes, whose character is evil and of whom Aslan says, “We are opposites.” In *The Last Battle*, Aslan adopts an attitude of approval and reconciliation toward a soldier in the Calormene army, explaining why the soldier’s deeds have, in the final analysis, been deemed noble. He says of Tash:

I and he are of such different kinds that no service which is vile can be done to me, and none which is not vile can be done to him. Therefore if any man swear by Tash and keep his oath for the oath’s sake, it is by me that he has truly sworn, though he know it not, and it is I who reward him. And if any man do cruelty in my name, then, though he says the name Aslan, it is Tash whom he serves and by Tash his deed is accepted.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Last Battle*, in *The Complete Chronicles of Narnia* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), chap. 15, p. 517.

Of course, there may be some poetic license within children's stories. Did Lewis himself ever explicitly endorse the view that deeds performed in the name of "another God" would be accepted by Jesus Christ? The answer is yes. In a 1952 letter to "Mrs. Ashton," Lewis writes:

I think that every prayer which is sincerely made even to a false god or to a very imperfectly conceived true God, is accepted by the true God and that Christ saves many who do not think they know Him....In the parable of the Sheep and the Goats [Matthew 25:31-46],...those who are saved do not seem to know that they have served Christ.<sup>7</sup>

When Lewis speaks of "keeping an oath for the oath's sake" and "sincerely making a prayer," he is talking (even though he does not explicitly use this expression) in terms of a person's *purposes*, or the goals one seeks to achieve. Lewis's point seems to be that faithfulness to one's promises and earnestly seeking after one's Creator are purposes that God wants us to pursue. And when we do pursue these purposes, we are following the one true God—whether we know it or not.

At this point, Lewis's picture of faith stands in need of a bit of refinement. If by coincidence a person just happens to pursue the purposes God pursues, this does not automatically mean one is *following* God or establishing any kind of real *relationship* with God. What is needed in Lewis's line of reasoning is a further premise about how we come to have moral beliefs about what purposes we should pursue. The Christian tradition has always understood our conscience, especially then properly tuned, to yield moral beliefs that are somehow "put there" by God through the activity of the Holy Spirit. It is Jesus who is recorded in the Gospel of John as clarifying the Holy Spirit's role as the one who "will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you" (John 14:26). If certain moral beliefs, or "promptings," do come from God, then we can plausibly describe these beliefs as a form of divine communication to us. When we then follow the leading of our moral beliefs about helping the poor, extending mercy to others and the like, we are responding to the leading of God. While the Christian tradition has more commonly spoken in terms of God "writing his law on our hearts,"<sup>8</sup> it is open to us to re-describe this activity as God inviting us to join him in pursuing certain purposes.

This construal of moral beliefs as divine communication could readily be adopted by Lewis to strengthen the connection he (rightly) wants to make between pursuing godly purposes and following after God. Indeed, in Lewis's discussion of the Tao, we find the resources for explaining how all people have the opportunity to respond to God by pursuing godly purposes. Though Lewis uses the language of the "law of Human Nature" or the "moral Law," he emphasizes that our grasp of basic, objective moral values is common historically within all cultures. If we add the theological point that these basic moral values are a kind of divine communication to all people, then we have a way to explain how all people from all cultures have the opportunity to respond to the call of God.

### **Can We Choose Our Beliefs?**

In noting the universal opportunity for people to pursue godly purposes in accordance with their consciences, we are led to a very important advantage that our alternative account of faith has over more traditional accounts focusing on a person's beliefs. Most of the Christian tradition

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<sup>7</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, ed. W. H. Lewis and Walter Hooper (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1993), p. 428.

<sup>8</sup> This phrase follows the wording of biblical passages such as Jeremiah 31:33; Romans 2:15; Hebrews 8:10; 10:16.

historically has stressed that the exercise of faith is a *voluntary* decision people make. And it is this decision (or the failure to make this decision) for which God will one day hold all people accountable.

In explaining how faith is voluntary, many Christian writers have assumed that the choice “to believe” is a viable choice people can freely make. For example, Augustine cited the apostle Paul as an example of one who “refused to believe” but was turned by Christ into a “willing believer.”<sup>9</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, in referring to the religious beliefs central to being a Christian, declared that an individual “may believe if he wills it.”<sup>10</sup> And Vatican II, following Aquinas,<sup>11</sup> described the person of faith as one who is “freely assenting to the truth revealed by [God].”<sup>12</sup>

But there is a major problem looming. On closer analysis we find that a logical contradiction exists in the idea of “choosing to believe” something. To see the problem, suppose I told you that page 55 of this book is written in a pink font color. You might take my word for it and believe that this is true. Thinking it would be quite something to own a book with a page bizarrely written in pink, we imagine that you *believe* that it is written in pink, and you *desire* that the page be written in pink.

When you reach page 55, you see that the ink is black, just like every other page. I was only pulling your leg. What happens to you desire? Well, nothing. You can still *desire* that the page be written in pink ink. You can even choose to *imagine* that it is written in pink. But what you will not be able to do is *believe* it is written in pink—and this is because beliefs have a certain connection to the truth that our desires and imaginations do not. Our beliefs are *representational* in nature; they represent what we think is already true of the world. To hold a belief is to think that the propositional content of that belief represents some fact about the actual world.<sup>13</sup> Now, if I could somehow *choose* to believe something, I would realize that my belief stems from my own sovereign *choice*—and that the belief does not necessarily have any connection with facts about the actual world. But now we have a big problem. For, if I realize that my *belief* does not necessarily have any connection with what is true about the actual world, then it is not a belief in the first place!

Another way of making the point is to observe that our beliefs are our “maps” of the world. Just as a map represents what is true of the actual world, so, hopefully, do our beliefs. Imagine if a mapmaker were to *choose* where to put the borders of the fifty states. Suppose he said to himself, “I think I’ll put Florida up here today, and I’ll put Kansas on the East Coast, and I’ll make Wyoming the shape of an oval.” If a mapmaker realized that the map before him was simply the product of his own *choices*, and did not therefore necessarily represent the *actual* physical borders of the fifty states, then he could not consider it a genuine map. Similarly, if a person knows that his belief is merely the product of his own choice, then it simply cannot be an actual *belief*. So we have a logical contradiction in the idea of “choosing to believe” something.

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<sup>9</sup> Augustine *On The Predestination of the Saints*, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. P. Schaff, trans. P. Holmes, R. E. Wallis and B. B. Warfield, 1<sup>st</sup> ser., vol. 5 (Albany, Ore.: Sage Software, 1996), chap. 4 (2).

<sup>10</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, ed. Walter Lowrie, trans. David Swenson (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 190.

<sup>11</sup> See Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologica* 2-1.4; 2-2.2.9; 2-2.5.2.

<sup>12</sup> *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter Abbott, trans. And ed. Joseph Gallagher (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1996), p. 113.

<sup>13</sup> By “propositional content” I mean, roughly, a statement that begins with the word *that*. Thus, in describing the content of your beliefs, we refer to your beliefs *that* you are holding a book, *that* page 55 is written in black ink, *that* the earth is round, and so forth.

The involuntary nature of our beliefs poses an enormous obstacle to anyone wishing to hold both that faith is voluntary and that faith is fundamentally about a person's decisions to believe the truth about God. Our alternate account of faith, however, does not face this obstacle. For on our alternate account, faith is not characterized in terms of what a person chooses to believe. Rather, the exercise of faith is more a matter of what purposes a person chooses to pursue, given what one believes. And there are no logical problems with the idea that people can freely choose to pursue one purpose over another purpose.

Lewis placed a great deal of emphasis on the voluntary nature of our response to God. He famously referred to the gates of hell as being "locked from the inside," explaining: "There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'Thy will be done.' All that are in Hell chose it."<sup>14</sup> If our philosophical arguments against "choosing to believe" are correct, then Lewis's emphasis on moral freedom gives him a significant reason for adopting an account of faith that emphasizes the pursuit of purposes over the holding of true beliefs.

Having recognized the advantage our alternative account of faith has in terms of preserving a role for voluntary choice in the exercise of faith, we should also deal with a couple possible objections to this account. First, one might object that, notwithstanding the philosophical arguments that belief is involuntary, we are commanded throughout the New Testament *to believe*. However, this objection makes an unwarranted assumption that the New Testament speaks of "belief." In point of fact, the New Testament texts, which were originally written in Greek, speak of *pistis*. The etymology of *pistis* is different from the English word "belief." Indeed, this Greek word is used in a wide variety of contexts throughout the New Testament to denote, in various places, belief, trust, obedience, commitment, faithfulness and a number of other concepts. Thus, we must be careful what we read into English translations of biblical passages stating that salvation awaits those who "call on the name of the Lord," or who "believe in him," or who "believe that Jesus is the Christ." The New Testament encourages us to have *pistis*; and we must not simply assume that the ancient Greek word *pistis* has the exact same meaning as the modern English word "belief." Unfortunately for our philosophical discussion, the New Testament writers were (understandably) more concerned with encouraging their readers to follow Christ than with providing a philosophically subtle account of what this "following" consists in. Our alternative account of faith construes this "following" in terms of joining God in pursuing the purposes he invites us to pursue with him. And this seems at least as plausible an interpretation of *pistis* as is an interpretation of *pistis* as "belief"—particularly in light of our previous discussion of Matthew 7, where Jesus rejects the response of some who profess belief in his name.

A second possible objection to our alternative account of faith is that it smacks of works righteousness. By linking faith with the pursuit of purposes, the objector might claim, faith ends up being something *we* do. Salvation thus becomes something we can *earn*. This objection, however, relies on an entirely mistaken understanding of the Christian view of heaven. For Christians, heaven is not understood to be a wondrous place because there are wonderful, external things like exotic foods or sexual pleasures available there. Rather, Christian doctrine is that we are created in the image of a trinitarian God and that our ultimate fulfillment comes only by being in proper *relationship* with God and others. For Christians, what is so great about heaven is that our relationships with God and others are as they should be. So the objector is mistaken in thinking that our alternate account of faith makes salvation a reward for something

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<sup>14</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce: A Dream* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), p. 72.

we do (pursued godly purposes). When we respond to God's invitation to join him in pursuing godly purposes, our response *is an act of relating* to God. Salvation and the attainment of heaven are not *additional rewards* we earn because we have responded to God's invitation and thereby related to him. Rather, the relationship *is* the reward. Heaven provides us a place where this relationship can flourish for eternity.

In keeping with Christian doctrine, we can readily agree with our objector on the point that God's initial invitation to a relationship with him is entirely an unmerited offer. And we can agree that God's grace must renew our thoughts and desires so that we are able to see his offer for the wonderful thing it truly is. However, we should not concede to the objector that our salvation is something *in addition to*, and *as a reward for*, the relationship we participate in as we respond to God.

### **The Possibility of Implicit Faith**

So far in our analysis of religious faith, we have provided a basis for C. S. Lewis's claim that "the world does not consist of 100 per cent Christians and 100 per cent non-Christians." Unlike the either-or nature of *belief*—we either believe that Jesus is the Christ or we do not—the pursuit of godly *purposes* is something that happens in degrees. Christians do not (typically, at least) pursue with perfect consistency only those purposes that are godly and self-giving. Even mature Christians can be prone to moments of stubbornness or stinginess. So our alternative account of faith can make perfect sense of Lewis's claim that the exercise of Christian faith is a matter of degree. Indeed, Lewis *needs* something much like our alternative account if his affirmations about people "becoming Christians" and "slowly ceasing to be Christians" are to make sense.

I now want to focus on Lewis's claim that people can become Christians "though they do not yet call themselves" Christians. Can a person become a Christian without knowing it? Clearly, if faith is a matter of having true beliefs about God, then such a scenario is impossible. However, as we shall see, we have the resources in our alternative account of faith to make sense of Lewis's claim here.

Perhaps the best way to begin is to think for a moment about the Old Testament patriarchs such as Abraham and Moses. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews extols these two figures as having the kind of faith toward which we should all strive. And the Christian tradition has always understood various Old Testament figures as having a place in heaven. Yet during their earthly lives these early people of faith did not know of the person and atoning work of Jesus Christ. So how do we reconcile the fate of the Old Testament patriarchs with the Christian doctrine that *all* people must explicitly plead the cross of Christ before full and final reconciliation with God can occur?

The church fathers gave much consideration to this question, and their consensus was that the Old Testament patriarchs learned the truth about the person and work of Jesus Christ sometime *after* their lives on earth. They were then able to explicitly plead the cross of Christ as atonement for their sins; and at that point—and only at that point—were they fully and finally reconciled to God. We should not think of the Old Testament patriarchs as *wrestling* with this decision. Instead, their explicit decision to embrace Christ was inevitable, given the kinds of people they were. And their fixed, godly character was a product of their repeated decisions on earth to pursue certain purposes—purposes that, again, Hebrews 11 describes as exemplifying the exercise of virtuous faith. Admittedly, the Old Testament patriarchs did not in their earthly lives exercise *explicit* Christian faith. Without explicit beliefs about the person and work of

Christ, this would have been impossible. Still, they were able to exercise what we might call *implicit* Christian faith.

The idea of implicit faith has a long history within the Christian tradition. Justin Martyr, a second-century church father, described Christ as “the Word (Logos) of whom all humankind partakes.” In referring to those who came before Christ, Justin stated, “Those who lived by reason (*logos*) are Christians, even though they have been considered atheists: such as, among the Greeks, Socrates, Heraclitus and others like them.”<sup>15</sup> Thomas Aquinas, in describing how our faith as Christians resembles the faith of those before Christ, commented that “whatever those who lived later have believed, is contained, albeit implicitly, in the faith of those Fathers who preceded them.”<sup>16</sup> And John Calvin, while affirming that the piety of godly Old Testament characters “must have been the result of faith,” explained that “their faith was not explicit either as to the person of Christ, or the power and office assigned him by the Father.”<sup>17</sup>

Lewis would, I believe, have been very attracted to the idea that implicit faith involves *becoming the kind of person* who—like the Old Testament patriarchs—would explicitly plead the cross of Christ once the truth about Christ became known. Lewis put a great deal of emphasis on the continual moral transformation that Christ seeks to bring about in the life of each person.

“Make no mistake,” He says, “if you let me, I will make you perfect. The moment you put yourself in My hands, that is what you are in for. Nothing less, or other, than that... Whatever suffering it may cost you in your earthly life, whatever inconceivable purification it may cost you after death, whatever it costs Me, I will never rest, nor let you rest, until you are literally perfect.”<sup>18</sup>

Lewis’s understanding of salvation as fundamentally a process of transformation gives us, I think, a decisive reason for thinking that he would prefer to think of faith as the pursuit of godly purposes rather than the holding of true beliefs. Think for a moment if God *were* to grant access to heaven to all those who simply held true beliefs about the person and work of Christ. For those in this group who did not pursue the godly purposes that the redeemed in heaven pursue, God would need to radically overhaul their moral character. Given the value that Lewis placed on moral freedom, he would surely find such a scenario deeply problematic. On the other hand, consider the person who already *does* pursue godly purposes, but who *does not* hold true beliefs about Christ. Once such a person comes to see the truth about Christ—and makes the inevitable, positive response to Christ—that person will naturally fit in quite well with the heavenly community. No radical reversal of one’s moral direction and orientation will be needed. Thus, with Lewis’s emphasis that a relationship with God involves ongoing moral transformation, he needs an account of faith in which faith is conceptually connected with moral transformation. And this is precisely what our alternative account of faith provides. To say that a person is pursuing godly purposes with increasing consistency is, after all, another way of saying that a person is growing toward Christian perfection.

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<sup>15</sup> Justin Martyr *First Apology*, in *Fathers of the Early Church*, ed. Ludwig Schopp, trans. Thomas Falls, vol. 6 (New York: Christian Heritage, 1948). For Justin, living according to reason (*logos*) meant keeping the moral law that we recognize within the natural order.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologica* 2-2.1.7.

<sup>17</sup> John Calvin *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Albany, Ord.: Sage Software, 1996), 2.2.32.

<sup>18</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p. 172.

Returning to the precedent of the Old Testament patriarchs, one important implication we draw from their situation is that people can become more and more Christlike in character—and can exercise a kind of implicit faith in Christ—without having explicit beliefs as to who Christ is. And so our account of faith allows us to make sense of Lewis’s claim that people are often becoming Christians *without knowing it*. As people respond to their God-given moral intuitions, they respond to God’s invitation to join him in the pursuit of loving, self-giving purposes. Though they may *not recognize* their moral beliefs as in fact a divine invitation to them, they nonetheless can exercise a kind of implicit faith in Christ when they respond positively to this invitation.

### **An Enigma No More**

Let us end our discussion by again looking at the passage from Lewis with which we began.

The world does not consist of 100 per cent Christians and 100 per cent non-Christians. There are people (a great many of them) who are slowly ceasing to be Christians but they still call themselves by that name: some of them are clergymen. There are other people who are slowly becoming Christians though they do not yet call themselves so.

While initially enigmatic, every aspect of this quote becomes understandable once we assume an account of faith that centers on the pursuit of good purposes, rather than the holding of true beliefs. The extent to which Lewis himself thought through and meant to endorse our alternative account of faith is an open question. However, what is clear is that Lewis needs something akin to our account of faith if his overall moral and religious framework is to exhibit clarity and consistency.

Lewis died just weeks later, on 22 November, and the letters give a sense of how he spent his final days. Although he had invited Van Osdall, professor of chemistry at Ashland University, Ohio, to visit him in Britain, he had also told him of his serious physical decline: "My life has undergone a great change," he wrote. His faith was tested after Davidman's death, but Peterson argues that his beliefs held strong. His theological questions about her suffering and death drove him to understand his rational faith "a bit differently intellectually," he said. "One of these letters shows his faith wasn't destroyed. He was speaking out of the framework of faith." One day a young C.S. Lewis casually turned to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's death-dirge in the tradition of a northern epic poem, Tegner's *Drapa*. He read these words that forever changed him: "I heard a voice that cried, Balder the beautiful is dead, is dead." As a young man he was quite drawn to the experience of aesthetic pleasure. The pleasure of reading these words was quite different from other pleasures he had experienced as a youth, more "like a voice from far more distant regions." In his autobiography, Lewis goes on to describe his experience of reading Norse saga "Lewis's remorseless pursuit of clarity, his intense moral concern, [and] the peculiar hue of myth, faerie, and Eden which informs all his work...these are here, and in proportion to how one would find them if one were to read every work Lewis ever published."--The New York Times Book Review. C. S. Lewis (1898-1963) gained international renown for an impressive array of beloved works both popular and scholarly: literary criticism, children's literature, fantasy literature, and numerous books on theology. I have been reading CS Lewis for a number of years now including two daily devotionals (*A year with CS Lewis* and *The business of heaven*) and I can not stress enough how fantastic this anthology is! He is a blessing to those of us who want to explore the mysteries of faith. Read more. He [Lewis] was a great medieval and classical scholar who also wrote about Christianity to which he became a convert to the Anglican Communion, he also wrote a number of books about an imaginary country called Narnia, mainly for children, but very readable. He was kind and good and a splendid talker, in many ways rather like Dr. Johnson "in bulk as well as in wit and learning."