

C.S. LEWIS AND THE CHURCH

Essays in Honour of Walter Hooper

T&T CLARK THEOLOGY



Edited by
JUDITH WOLFE
BRENDAN N. WOLFE



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Published by T&T Clark International
A Continuum Imprint
The Tower Building, 11 York Road, London SE1 7NX
80 Maiden Lane, Suite 704, New York, NY 10038

www.continuumbooks.com

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 10: 0-567-04736-9 (Hardback)
ISBN 13: 978-0-567-04736-6 (Hardback)

Typeset by Free Range Book Design & Production Limited
Printed and bound in Great Britain by the MPG Books Group

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List of Abbreviations of Works by C.S. Lewis

AOL	<i>The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977 [1936])
CLI	<i>Collected Letters, Vol. I</i> , ed. Walter Hooper (London: HarperCollins, 2002)
CLII	<i>Collected Letters, Vol. II</i> , ed. Walter Hooper (London: HarperCollins, 2004)
CLIII	<i>Collected Letters, Vol. III</i> , ed. Walter Hooper (London: HarperCollins, 2006)
DI	<i>The Discarded Image</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964)
ECI	<i>C.S. Lewis: Essay Collection: Faith, Christianity and the Church</i> , ed. Lesley Walmsley (London: HarperCollins, 2002)
ECII	<i>C.S. Lewis: Essay Collection: Literature, Philosophy and Short Stories</i> , ed. Lesley Walmsley (London: HarperCollins, 2002)
EIC	<i>An Experiment in Criticism</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961)
GD	<i>The Great Divorce: A Dream</i> (London: HarperCollins, 2002 [1946])
HHB	<i>The Horse and His Boy</i> (London: HarperCollins, 1998 [1954])
LB	<i>The Last Battle</i> (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1954)
LM	<i>Letters to Malcolm, Chiefly on Prayer</i> (London: Collins, 1983 [1964])
LWW	<i>The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe</i> (London: HarperCollins, 1998 [1945])
MC	<i>Mere Christianity</i> (New York: Macmillan, 1960 [1943]).

Mir	<i>Miracles</i> (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1947)
MN	<i>The Magician's Nephew</i> (London: HarperCollins, 1998 [1950])
OHEL	<i>English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama</i> (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954)
OSP	<i>Out of the Silent Planet</i> (London: Bodley Head, 1938)
PC	<i>Prince Caspian</i> (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1951)
Per	<i>Perelandra</i> (London: Bodley Head, 1943)
PP	<i>The Problem of Pain</i> (Glasgow: Collins, 1983 [1940])
PPL	<i>Preface to Paradise Lost</i> (London: Oxford University Press, 1960 [1942])
PR	<i>The Pilgrim's Regress</i> (Glasgow: Fount, 1980 [1933])
RP	<i>Reflections on the Psalms</i> (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1958)
SBJ	<i>Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life</i> (Glasgow: Collins, 1982 [1955])
SC	<i>The Silver Chair</i> (Glasgow: Fontana Lions, 1981 [1953]).
SIL	<i>Spenser's Images of Life</i> , ed. Alastair Fowler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967)
SL	<i>The Screwtape Letters</i> (Glasgow: Collins, 1982 [1942])
SLE	<i>Selected Literary Essays</i> , ed. Walter Hooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969)
SMRL	<i>Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature</i> , ed. Walter Hooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966)
SW	<i>Studies in Words</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967)
THS	<i>That Hideous Strength: A Modern Fairy-Tale for Grown-Ups</i> (London: Bodley Head, 1945)
TWHF	<i>Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold</i> (Glasgow: Collins, 1985 [1956])
VDT	<i>The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'</i> (London: HarperCollins, 1998 [1952])

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Introduction

Oxford, 1963, and a Young Boswell

Andrew Cuneo

*I simply took for granted that book knowledge
would not help me so much as
a living or still surviving voice
– Papias, second-century Christian author*

‘With what jealous care I would have Boswellised him.’¹ So said Warren Lewis, C.S. Lewis’ brother, in a fit of despair that he had not recorded more of his talented younger brother’s deeds. No one was better qualified to do so, insofar as he knew his brother matchlessly – and was a historian by trade. But in the course of history, it turns out that it was an American who would fulfil that vocation. I do not think it a stretch to say that the friend and editor of C.S. Lewis to whom this book is dedicated, Walter Hooper, has done more in his own steady way than Boswell himself. Thirty-four posthumous books by Lewis have been edited by him – and counting: Walter Hooper has decisively kept the interest and enthusiasm for C.S. Lewis well stocked for nearly five decades. That there *is* a C.S. Lewis legacy is for the most part due to Hooper’s work; that several generations of readers have a living link to C.S. Lewis is due to his generosity. I know of no twentieth- or twenty-first-century editor who has done anything comparable.

My own first sighting of Walter Hooper took place at the Oxford University C.S. Lewis Society in 1993, which is relatively late in the scheme of things Lewisian. There was a soft-spoken black-haired man in the front row, answering seemingly every question when the rest of us were at a loss. It was in the course of the years to follow

1 Clyde S. Kilby and Marjorie Lamp Mead (eds), *Brothers and Friends: An Intimate Portrait of C.S. Lewis* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982), p. 270.

that an important lesson took shape in my mind: I began to learn that C.S. Lewis was not a ‘subject’, an academic hypostasis, but a real person about whom it mattered to get things right – and it mattered to no one more than to Walter Hooper. I could no longer simply say what my opinion of Lewis was, willy-nilly, or offer a new ‘reading’ of Lewis’ books or (worse) his personal character, like a literary theorist or a biographer with undiplomatic immunity. No, this was too important. C.S. Lewis was a living man about whom statements of truth or falsehood, kindness or cruelty, mattered. About academic subjects one can say just about anything these days: about an immortal soul, a friend of many, one has instead to use the golden rule.

So it was that I began to see how rich a connection to the man C.S. Lewis Walter Hooper represents. It was later, when working on the (then) unpublished letters of C.S. Lewis, that I saw just how warm the letters from Lewis to Hooper were, and who it was that changed the entire course of Hooper’s life. I began to write down Hooper’s anecdotes, his memories, ask him questions about Lewis.² With the recent publication of Hooper’s own memories in *Mere Christians* and *C.S. Lewis: Views from Wake Forest*, many of those memories have come out in his own voice. I hope he will not mind my sharing more of them in the course of the chapter that follows.

What follows, then, is a brief of the interactions between Hooper and Lewis in the early years, and one that deserves a longer treatment when history and another writer pay the deserved compliment.

The Letters between Lewis and Hooper

As personal as the relationship between Walter Hooper and C.S. Lewis became, it notably began with books and letters. Having recently graduated from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and then entered the US Army, Hooper first wrote to Lewis in late 1954 to express his admiration for his clear explanation of the Christian faith. Hooper wrote this because he had just finished *Miracles* – amidst army basic training, where breaks were limited to ten minutes for cigarettes, and sleep was cruelly restricted to the hours from 11.30 pm to 4.30 am. Reading *Miracles* sounds unremarkable until one

2 All anecdotes in this chapter are from conversations with Mr Hooper over the course of the past ten years.

considers how many other cadets were reading in such circumstances. There is even an echo of Lewis himself reading and writing poetry in the trenches: a vocation hinted at in the use of spare time. In any event, Hooper's reading was squeezed into these windows of sanity, and he made it through what is not Lewis' easiest book.³ What had he said to Lewis in his first letter? Unsurprisingly, considering the circumstances, Hooper wrote that while he had been a Christian already when reading *Miracles*, he nevertheless felt like Tom Sawyer who, when lost in a cave, with dwindling supplies of food, was only too happy to see a chink of light in dark circumstances.

Lewis' first letter back to Hooper on 30 November 1954, polite and modest as it was, was not the decisive event it may appear now (however much the letter meant to the recipient). Indeed, it is two years before one sees another letter from Lewis to Hooper, dated 2 November 1956. At that point, Hooper was teaching sixth-grade students in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, while simultaneously working on his Master's degree. Under Hooper's inspiration, his young students had put on a very good production of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, repeated it over the course of a few days, and then written to tell the author about it. Teacher and students to this day remember 'our letter from C.S. Lewis', as well as the calamine lotion slathered over the White Witch's face to make it pale and unnatural.⁴ *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* has been around for so long that it is easy to forget that Hooper was effectively creating one of the earliest stage versions of a book only six years off the press.

A brief letter from Lewis to Hooper on 2 December 1957 indicates Hooper's ripening desire to visit both England and Lewis. Hooper's

- 3 A very engaging account of Hooper's reading *Miracles* is told by him in 'My Original Encounter with C.S. Lewis' in Mary Anne Phemister and Andrew Lazo (eds), *Mere Christians: Inspiring Stories of Encounters with C.S. Lewis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), pp. 139–42. Once basic training was over, the same booksellers who found *Miracles* for Hooper also helped him progress through an unusual sequence of Lewis' writings: *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Arthurian Torso*, *Poetry and Prose in the Sixteenth Century*, and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. The apparent randomness was itself a kind of serendipity; Hooper could enjoy the books with a liberal appetite and not worry about which apologetics book, or novel, was best, or what should come next in a carefully scheduled syllabus of 'great books'.
- 4 The Bodleian Library in fact has a copy of the programme from this production. Evidently, the students played the score of the 'Flight of the Bumblebee' during moments of busy action and scene changes.

own brother had spent time in Europe on a Fulbright Scholarship and had also visited England; his brother's experience made the idea seem at least feasible to Hooper. But it was not yet to be. Instead, the next two years would see Hooper very unhappily situated at Virginia Theological Seminary preparing for ordination in the Episcopal Church. It was only to be a deferral of ordination, however. He found that the somewhat fanatical devotion to psychoanalysis exercised upon the ordinands made life impossible there. Few innocent statements were free from analysis (not even 'good morning'), and the thirteen ordinands were required to meet with a staff psychologist twice a week for 'discussion' that simply floundered for new content. The situation became so absurd that both Hooper and the staff psychologist eventually left. It was not until Hooper later moved to England that Austin Farrer would encourage him to finish his theological training, which he did, in a more traditional fashion, at St Stephen's House in Oxford.

The intervening years of 1960 to 1962 were some of his last full years in America. Now, Hooper was much more pleasantly engaged as the head of the English Department in a private boys' school and then as an Instructor in English at the University of Kentucky. It was a life with many academic satisfactions: Hooper was working on his doctorate in English on Arthurian literature, teaching during the year at Kentucky to make money, and building up material for a book on C.S. Lewis for the Twayne's English Author Series.⁵ It was surely a disappointment, then, for Lewis to write to Hooper on 2 July 1962 that 'a man is ill advised to write a book on any living author' – in fact, Hooper had written several chapters already.⁶ But the letter did have a positive result: it prompted Hooper to follow Lewis' advice and get in touch with Chad Walsh, who had already written his *C.S. Lewis: Apostle to the Skeptics*; Walsh turned out to be an invaluable resource as well as a permanent friend.

The bibliography of all of Lewis' works that Hooper had been constructing for the Twayne volume grew even further when he met with Walsh. Hooper spent several days with Walsh in late 1962 at Beloit College and Walsh shared with Hooper the letters

5 Hooper had been interested in this project alongside a friend who was working on the Twayne volume for Yeats. Neither volume for this somewhat obscure series was completed, it turns out; the Twayne volume on Lewis did not appear until J.R. Christopher authored it in 1987.

6 *CLIII* 1355.

he had received from both Lewis and Austin Farrer. From this encounter, Hooper was encouraged to write to Lewis yet again, this time conferring with Lewis to see whether his own bibliography of Lewisiana was complete (the bibliography ran to at least seven pages). Lewis in reply offered his corrections to Hooper's bibliography by gently correcting titles, and reiterated his sincere invitation to come to the Kilns.⁷ Already Lewis could write to Hooper, without excessive exaggeration, 'you are now a very much better C.S.L. scholar than I am!'.⁸ Importantly, this was the last letter between the two before they met each other.

The oft-recounted first meeting of Hooper and Lewis on 7 June 1963 in Oxford at the Kilns does not require retelling, but it was, of course, pivotal. On Hooper's initial meeting of Lewis, the famous author who had 'wholly forgotten' about his own writings met the omnivorous collector who could not stand for anything of Lewis' to go unknown.⁹ Moreover, and unknown to Hooper, Lewis had just (again) been deserted by his usual secretary, his brother Warnie, because of the latter's alcoholism. Without his brother's help, Lewis had to deal daily with merciless amounts of correspondence. More still, in that same vexed summer, Lewis would suffer a heart attack, coma, and near death while Warren was gone. To have Hooper enter Lewis' life at this delicate point, and then reside in Oxford for the summer of 1963, has the makings of a recipe. It is tempting to call it Providential; at the very least it was a meeting of quite complementary figures. It brought together the author who had intentionally neglected his own work with the student of Lewisiana who reclaimed Lewis' past work with scrupulous accuracy.

'Student of Lewisiana' is perhaps the wrong phrase, because even the initial meeting of Hooper and Lewis displays the shoots of friendship. Their talk after three pots of tea that day played with American euphemisms, yes; but their conversation also played with distinctions so typical of Lewis. Hooper asked in this meeting what

7 These bibliographies continued to appear later in much expanded forms. An early excellent bibliography of Lewis' writings appears in *Light on C.S. Lewis* (1967), where Hooper had the advantage of looking in Lewis' own files, and then there is the most current published bibliography in *C.S. Lewis: A Companion and Guide* (1997).

8 *CLIII* 1393.

9 Lewis had written Hooper that his bibliography contained 'a good many things I had wholly forgotten'; *CLIII* 1393.

Lewis thought was his best book and Lewis replied, '*Perelandra*'. But when Lewis asked Hooper which book he liked the most, Hooper answered '*That Hideous Strength*'. 'Oh I agree,' Lewis added, 'I like *That Hideous Strength* more than anything. But there's a difference between what you *like* and what you think is *best*.' The tutor is still there in such remarks, and the simple distinction suggests the simple truth that readers do not always like what is an author's best – and questions whether they even ought to (*caveat magister*). The practical joke about 'bathrooms' that Lewis played on Hooper during their meeting broke the ice; it also inaugurated a *sense of play* between the two men which was to continue throughout the summer and which is laced through just about all the anecdotes involving the two men.

In fact, Lewis enjoyed the meeting so much that he invited, and expected, Hooper to come to Inklings meetings forthwith; they would end up meeting about three times a week early that summer. No commentator on Lewis has yet said what such invitations actually implied. That Hooper admired Lewis was plain from the early correspondence; that Lewis also greatly enjoyed Hooper is a fact carelessly overlooked – especially for a famous author who had considerable powers of evasion which he used at need.¹⁰ One would be wrong to sketch that summer as Hooper chasing his revered author about Oxford. Rather, as a consequence of Lewis' own interest, Hooper enjoyed a good deal of personal time with Lewis before, during, and after Lewis' hospitalization. A typical meeting, Hooper recalls, was to join Lewis Monday mornings en route to the Lamb & Flag pub, then drive with him (in Dr Havard's car) to the Trout Inn for sandwiches and beer, and further conversation.¹¹ As suggested earlier, their playfulness was never distant from the literary talk. On their first excursion to the Trout, for example, Lewis brought up his deceased wife Joy for the first time with Hooper, whose southern manners were impeccable. Lewis noted that his wife used to remark that men in the southern American states 'lorded' it

10 One example shows both the openness and the guardedness of Lewis. While in the Army in 1954, Hooper recalls having met another Army chaplain who, while in England, boldly knocked on Lewis' door in Oxford and asked if Lewis could 'preach to the troops' which the chaplain was then supervising. Lewis proceeded to look in his diary until the chaplain observed aloud, 'a name like yours could draw thousands'. At that point, Lewis stood up and closed the door on the unexpected visitor, who had unfortunately said precisely the wrong thing.

11 What did Lewis like to drink? 'Best bitter' (a medium-dark ale). What did Hooper like to drink? Anything that Lewis did.

over their women while it was not so in the north, because women in the north were free from such domination. ‘Do you agree?’, Lewis asked the southern Hooper. ‘Well, I don’t want to criticize your wife,’ Hooper politely replied. Lewis wasn’t satisfied and pressed him, ‘Did she tell the truth, or is it false? You disagree, don’t you?’ ‘Strongly,’ said Hooper, only to add with good-natured regional honour: ‘I think she’s *totally* wrong.’ He then immediately ran into the pub to collect the drinks.

These and other meeting with the Inklings, even if they were at the later stage of what Humphrey Carpenter so engrossingly recounts, were rich and memorable. Friends of Lewis such as R.B. McCallum (Master of Pembroke College, Oxford), John Walsh (whom Lewis knew from both Cambridge and Oxford), Colin Hardie, and John Wain rounded out the more popular figures. While Walsh modestly notes that the conversation at these Inklings meeting was relatively unremarkable compared to most Oxford Senior Common Rooms, Hooper recalls an incident which would be rare most anywhere. Oxford’s yearly Encaenia ceremony happened to come up for discussion once – the honorary degree ceremony for distinguished recipients, containing speeches in Latin – as it was occurring the same day as an Inklings meeting. Colin Hardie was not there due to his attendance at the ceremony, and conversation turned to the doctoral recipient for that year. At that point, in the spirit of the event, Lewis began to speak aloud to McCallum in Latin and McCallum replied in kind. It was the first time that Hooper had heard Lewis speak in the ancient tongue, and he listened to the dons carry on in Latin for a considerable time. Even Oxford pubs sometimes afford sobering reminders about what constitutes a man of letters.¹²

- 12 Lewis’ capacious memory is well known, and this is not to suggest that Inklings meetings were always so graced by the Muses. It does highlight, though, the many ways in which Lewis characteristically took deep learning for granted and assumed it of other scholars. The conversation also explains the shock Lewis later expressed to Hooper that summer when the person of Bob Jones, Jr came up. (Lewis had taken Jones to the Eagle & Child pub when the latter had visited – much to the surprise of teetotaller Jones, who watched Lewis and friends drink and smoke.) Lewis was amazed to learn from Hooper that Bob Jones, Jr was the head of a university – Bob Jones University, of Bible Belt fame – and did not know Greek. How could the teetotaller Jones not know that the Greek words for ‘wine’ and ‘grape juice’ are different?, Lewis wondered aloud to Hooper. ‘I thought you said he was the head of a college.’ Fortunately, the charming McCallum was at no such loss in languages, even as a specialist in politics.

For the young Hooper, such company and such learning would naturally be a pleasure; but is it any surprise that he most remembers what good men were there and how much Lewis enjoyed them? Inklings sessions did revolve around Lewis, to be sure, as Lewis was the one to set the conversational ball rolling. Nevertheless, Lewis did not dominate and was happy to hear others converse. As Lewis often admitted in his writings, it was his greatest pleasure to listen and enjoy company with friends. And friends the Inklings were, despite later inflated accounts of rifts between members. Hooper's living recollections avoid some biographers' tendency to exaggerate the divide between Lewis and Tolkien, or Tolkien and Williams, or Tolkien and many of the other Inklings! His recollections remind us that the people involved in the Inklings were just that – people – complex, subtle, and multifaceted people.

So often Hooper has provided the living tradition that balances a written account. It is one thing to read about Tolkien's expressed dislike for the Narnia tales; it is another to learn that Tolkien still gave them as gifts to his own grandchildren. Or, to take another example, one clearly sees that John Wain's account of the Inklings in *Sprightly Running* is written with asperity. However, it was a hallmark of the Inklings to be able to give (and receive) fairly blunt criticism without endangering friendship.¹³ In fact, one might assert that it was on the basis of their friendship that they were able to be so frank about their literary opinions. They were glad to be critical *and* friends. Hooper tellingly remembers John Wain as a 'charming man', one whose harsh writings perhaps imply that he did not like Lewis, but whom he knew actually to admire him greatly. It was with dismay that Wain told Hooper of his last meeting with Lewis one Monday outside the Lamb & Flag: 'I had an idea it was my last meeting, but unfortunately a drunk came up and buttonholed Lewis and ruined it.' It was a *personal* loss for Wain, not the loss of the leader of an anti-modernist Christian cabal. Hooper shows, along with many others still living who knew Lewis and the Inklings personally, that it is often safest simply to ask those living what the real state of affairs was.

- 13 Just as Lewis could sustain criticism by Wain, so could McCallum sustain criticism from Lewis. There is the anecdote told by McCallum about when he once tried to write a novel in the Space Trilogy style and gave Lewis the manuscript. Lewis gave it back with the forthright disclaimer, 'I don't think we need to talk about this' – a harsh truth from a friend that McCallum had the humility to admit let him down lightly.