

Miracles in Outline

This summary, with its page numbers, is based on the Touchstone edition of 1996 from Broadman & Holman.

Chapter I. The Scope of This Book

Whether one can decide whether miracles occur on the basis of experience.

Our senses are not infallible.

Our philosophy may exclude the supernatural.

Whether one can decide if miracles occur on the basis of history.

First, however, we have to decide whether miracles are possible.

Even then, history cannot provide sufficient evidence to prove miracles possible.

The result of historical inquiries also depends on the philosophical views we have.

“The philosophical question must therefore come first.”

An example from a commentary on John’s Gospel.

The author says that it predicts the execution of St. Peter.

People cannot predict the future.

Therefore, it was written after the execution of St. Peter.

The author assumes that real predictions are not possible, but he does not tell us about this assumption.

This book: a study preliminary to historical inquiry.

Chapter II. The Naturalist and the Supernaturalist

Definition of “miracle”: “an interference with Nature by supernatural power.”

Definition of “Naturalists” and “Supernaturalists.”

Naturalists: those who believe that nothing exists besides Nature.

Supernaturalists: those who believe that something else exists besides Nature.

Definition of Nature and Supernature.

The words “natural” and “Nature” are used with several different nuances.

“Nature” means what happens “of its own accord,” what you do not need to labor for.

Naturalists and Determinism

Naturalists believe that everything happens because it is interlocked with everything else.

Naturalists believe that there is no such thing as free will.

Therefore, for the Naturalist all events are determined.

An agreement between Naturalists and Supernaturalists.

Something exists in its own right.

Or, things fall into two classes.

That which exists on its own

That which is derivative.

Naturalism gives us a democratic picture of reality.

“Being on its own” resides in the total mass of things: “all citizens are equal”

Supernaturalism gives us a monarchical picture of reality.

“Being on its own” resides in One Thing, as in a monarchy it resides in the king.

This One Thing is on a different level from all other things.

Suspensions about the origin of Supernaturalism and Naturalism

Did Supernaturalism arise from the structure of monarchical societies?

Did Naturalism arise from the structure of modern democracies?

The two suspicions cancel each other out.

The One Self-existent Thing is what Supernaturalists call God.

Naturalism would admit to a God that arose from within Nature.

The difference:

“The Naturalist believes that a great process, or ‘becoming,’ exists ‘on its own’ in space and time, and that nothing else exists.”

“The Supernaturalist believes that one Thing exists on its own and has produced the framework of space and time and the procession of systematically connected events which fill them.” The framework is Nature.

So there might be several Natures, which may not occupy the same space and time as we do.

All derived from the same Supernatural source (the spiritual world or Narnia)

Like different novels from the same author.

Each Nature would be “supernatural,” i.e. beyond nature, in relation to the other Natures.

Contact between two of them would be a kind of miracle.

This does not prove that God interferes with the natural systems He has created.

If Naturalism is true, miracles are impossible.

We must choose between Naturalism and Supernaturalism.

Chapter III. The Cardinal Difficulty of Naturalism

Paragraph One

If anything exists that cannot be explained by the Total System, “then Naturalism would be in ruins.”

Everything must be explainable “in principle,” not necessarily in practical terms.

Paragraphs Two and Three

A non-argument: some think that the smallest units of matter move in a random fashion (“a lawless Subnature”). Lewis doesn’t go here.

This feature of quantum theory may change in the future. (There are deterministic but non-local theories of quantum mechanics, like David Bohm’s. However, these are especially difficult to reconcile with general relativity.)

Paragraph Four

Everything that we know we know from our senses or is inferred from our senses.

It’s a bit surprising that Lewis endorses such a strongly empiricist position here. He seems to limit the *a priori* to our knowledge of principles of inference. Surely he’s wrong: there are many things that we know apart from the senses (including the first principles of mathematics and ethics). The most plausible interpretation is that Lewis is arguing *ad hominem*: the naturalist must assume that all of our knowledge is derived from the senses. Most naturalists have been

empiricists, but it isn't in fact obvious that they must be. Natural selection could explain our having some innate knowledge.

If naturalism itself were known, it would have to be known by inference, so if naturalism and inferential knowledge were incompatible, this would make naturalism self-defeating.

Paragraph Five

This means that all knowledge depends on the validity of reasoning.

Knowledge is impossible without valid insight into realities beyond our minds, in particular, insight into real necessities and necessary connections (musts) beyond our minds.

Paragraph Six

Knowledge of the universe is impossible without valid insight into realities beyond our minds. If thinking about the universe is invalid, then we can't know anything valid or true or with certainty about the universe, including that the universe is the Total System.

This point holds up, even if Lewis were to abandon the empiricism of Paragraph Four: if naturalism is known, it must be known by inference.

Paragraph Seven

Professor Haldane supports this.

Paragraphs Eight, Nine, and Ten

Naturalism involves the same difficulty.

The two meanings of the word *because*.

Cause and Effect: the lobster made grandfather ill.

Ground and Consequent: the reason we concluded that grandfather is ill.

Cause and Effect: dynamic connection

Ground and Consequent: logical relation between beliefs and assertions

Paragraph Eleven

The validity of reasoning depends on Ground and Consequent.

Paragraphs Twelve

Events in Nature operate with Cause and Effect.

Thinking is an event in Nature, so it must operate with Cause and Effect.

Paragraph Thirteen

Therefore, both Cause and Effect, on the one hand, and Ground and Consequent, on the other hand, must apply to thinking.

This acknowledges Anscombe's principal objection to the first argument: that Lewis overlooked the possibility that the same process might be non-rational at one level of description (movements of particles) but rational at another level of description (in terms of beliefs and inferences).

Paragraphs Fourteen and Fifteen

However, the two systems are distinct. The act of assuming a cause invalidates, in most minds, the validity of the effect. (**for example?**)

Note how cautious Lewis is in his claims: “we behave in disputation as if they were mutually exclusive,” “popularly treated as raising a presumption that it is groundless,” “the most popular way of discrediting a person’s opinions,” etc. At best we have a presumption of conflict, and that presumption might itself be merely a piece of conventional wisdom.

Paragraph Sixteen

Sometimes an event causes by mere Association; this is both Cause and Ground (as when parsnips remind Lewis of his first school).

This is where Lewis most clearly states Anscombe’s objection: the possibility that the same pair of mental events might stand simultaneously in both the cause/effect and premise/conclusion relations.

Paragraph Seventeen

However, this is untrue. The thought of parsnips didn’t actually cause the thoughts about the first school. A thought can cause another thought by merely being seen to be a ground (or reason) for it.

Lewis’s response to Anscombe is to focus on our knowledge of logical relationships. The mere fact that the content of one belief entails the content of another belief caused by the first does not make the transition a case of rational inference. To rationally infer q from p, it is not enough that p logically entail q and that my belief in p causes my belief in q: the causal connection must involve my knowing that p entails q. Even this wouldn’t be a sufficient condition, but it is surely a negative one.

So, now the crucial question is this: is naturalism compatible with our knowledge of logical connections?

Paragraph Eighteen

Thoughts can be true or false.

Acts of inference (if A, then B) must be real insight, or there is no human knowledge.

Paragraphs Nineteen and Twenty

The character of knowing is determined by the truth it knows.

For the Naturalist, mental processes do not produce truth because there was no Designer.

Lewis’s point here is an important and plausible one. In order for a state to constitute knowledge of some thing X, there must be some connection between the state of X and my supposed knowledge of it. A full explanation of how it is that I believe what I do about X must include some reference to X’s really being that way, or else my belief is at best a case of accidentally true opinion, not knowledge. Lewis is proposing some kind of causal or explanatory theory of

knowledge: S knows that p only if the fact that p is an essential part of any adequate (causal) explanation of S's believing that p.

Lewis doesn't yet mention a designer – that comes in the next paragraph.

Paragraph Twenty-One

For the Naturalist, reason is a latecomer to Nature, arriving by natural selection.

So, if the Naturalist is to explain our logical knowledge, he must do so in terms of natural selection.

Paragraph Twenty-Two

Lewis claims that natural selection cannot explain the origin of 'knowledge' or 'insight', and (I think) that Lewis means knowledge or insight into the principles of logic (or other fundamental principles of reasoning).

Lewis argues that non-rational association would serve us just as well, in relation to the goal of survival, as would real insight into logical connections. In other words, nature cares that our beliefs be useful – it is completely indifferent to the issue of whether the beliefs were produced by real insight into logical connections. Such insight would contribute nothing to our reproductive fitness. Hence, we have no reason to believe that evolution would produce it.

There may be, implicitly, a further argument here, one to the effect that Naturalism cannot account for the existence of epistemic normativity: facts about what it would be right or correct to think (evaluating thoughts from a purely rational or epistemic point of view – not pragmatically). Everything in a deterministic system just is what it is – there doesn't seem to be any room for facts about how things are supposed to be (especially if these norms are supposed to be prior to and independent of human practices or decisions).

Paragraphs Twenty-Three and Twenty-Four

Can repeated experience give rise to inference (a form of reason)?

The connection of smoke with fire, for example, is not inference, but mere behavioral expectation, as in animal behavior. Inference is seeing that it "must" be so, that it is axiomatic, that it is true.

Neither natural selection nor trial and error learning can, by themselves, generate logical insight.

Paragraph Twenty-Five

The Naturalist sees all inference as arriving from Cause and Effect, but he does not explain inference through Ground and Consequent, i.e. that it "must" be so, that it is true.

Paragraph Twenty-Six

The Naturalist may claim that we just can't yet see how it happened. But we will.

But this suggests if useful, then true.

"If useful, then true" is an inference.

You cannot use inference to prove that “if useful, then true” is true.

Lewis once again, as he did in the original version (paragraph 14), attempts to shift the burden of proof onto the Naturalist, as though the Naturalist had to prove the validity of inference from his assumptions. The crucial claim comes at the end: “If by treating it (reason) as a mere phenomenon you put yourself outside it, there is then no way, except by begging the question, of getting inside again.”

Lewis comes quite close in this paragraph to Alvin Plantinga’s later “Evolutionary Argument against Naturalism.” If we suppose Naturalism to be true, then we have good grounds for suspecting that our logical inferences “are not real insights at all,” because the Naturalist’s evolutionary account “suggests” that this is so. Once grounds for a global doubt about reason are in place, it is impossible to dispel that doubt by means of arguments or reasons, without simply begging the question. The only way to avoid such skepticism is to avoid believing in any account of the world that makes the doubt plausible in the first place.

Paragraph Twenty-Seven

One may give up all claims to truth.

Then no more theology.

Then no more metaphysics.

Paragraph Twenty-Eight

Then, also, no more Naturalism, which also cannot be true.

Naturalism is not mere practice.

Naturalism is reached only by inference.

If inference, or truth claims, is invalid, then so also is Naturalism.

Then the Naturalist cannot say, “There is nothing except this.”

These two paragraphs are similar to the original paragraph 16.

Paragraph Twenty-Nine

The Theist does not see reason as late, a product of natural selection, and merely useful.

Reason is older than Nature.

Reason is from God.

The processes within Nature that led to reason, if there were any, were intelligently designed!

This explains how the theist avoids the slippery slope into global skepticism. There is no *prima facie* challenge to the rationality of human inference on theistic grounds.

Paragraph Thirty

The act of knowing is, therefore, beyond Nature, and, in a sense, super-natural or above the natural, or “this side of Nature.”

Paragraph Thirty-One

This is because reason is given before Nature.

Inference is prior to Nature.

This suggests a more direct argument against the Naturalist: a kind of ‘transcendental’ argument for supernaturalism. Logical facts are non-natural facts. The fact that $p \& q$ entails p does not consist in any arrangement of particles, or other facts about the disposition of elements in the System of Nature. However, the Naturalist insists that the human mind exists within Nature, which is a causally closed system. Hence, logical facts cannot impinge upon the human mind. However, this means that all of our logical beliefs fail to constitute knowledge, since the Naturalist cannot admit that there is any causal/explanatory relation between the logical facts and our logical beliefs. Our logical beliefs are totally explained by natural facts, which do not include any of the logical facts (including the peculiar kind of ‘necessity’ they involve).

This argument extends to other beliefs involving the first principles of reason – arithmetical beliefs, beliefs about causation, beliefs about the simplicity of the world as a guide to theoretical truth.

The Original Pre-Anscombian Chapter III. The Self-Contradiction of the Naturalist

There are sixteen paragraphs in the original, but thirty-one paragraphs in the revised version. A comparison of the number of words shows that the original, excluding the Richards quotation, has 2,944 words, while the revised version has 4,900 words. The first six paragraphs are identical to the revised chapter.

Paragraph Seven

In paragraph seven, we see our first digression from the revised version of the chapter. Thought is valid only under certain conditions.

An example of Ground and Consequent. Topic: a dangerous black dog.

An example of Cause and Effect.

Paragraph Eight

One explanation substantiates the fear of the black dog.

One explanation discredits the fear of the black dog.

The first example is a rational cause, while the second is an irrational cause.

Paragraph Nine

Rule: “No thought is valid if it can be fully explained as the result of irrational causes.”

Marxism and Freudianism have had it “all their own way,” thinking that traditional beliefs are the result of irrational causes.

The main weakness of the argument is that Lewis has over-generalized from his examples. In the case of the phobia about black dogs, the explanation in terms of irrational causes excludes the possibility of rational explanation (in terms of evidence and reasons): if the man fears black dogs because of a bad childhood experience, then this cause cannot simultaneously be a case of the man’s fearing black dogs on the basis of good evidence. However, if a belief can be fully explained in terms of the ‘irrational’ causes of blind movements of particles, it isn’t obvious that such an explanation (really non-rational rather than irrational) excludes the possibility of an

equally valid explanation in terms of reasons: the movement of particles in this way might just be the way in which good evidence is reasonably moving the man to belief.

Paragraph Ten

This principle of irrationality applies to human reason as a whole.

This seems undeniable: if a theory entails that human thought as a whole is the product of irrational causes (in the strong, exclusionary sense), then such a theory is epistemically self-defeating.

Paragraph Eleven

If the mind is a product of the Total System, and the Total System is not rational, then all thoughts are the results of irrational causes and therefore valueless. Then Naturalism is also valueless.

This is the crux of the argument. Lewis needs to show that it is impossible for a system of irrational causes to constitute rationality in particular cases.

Paragraph Twelve (Paragraph twelve of the original version includes the mention of Professor Haldane, which appears in paragraph seven of the revised version.)

Haldane's words reiterate the assertion that all thought, including beliefs, are the result of irrational causes.

With a subtle difference, however. Haldane notes that if my thoughts are caused by non-rational processes, I have no reason for supposing those beliefs to be true. He does not say that he has conclusive reason for supposing those beliefs to be irrational.

Paragraph Thirteen

Some may say that thoughts produced by irrational causes may just happen to be true by accident.

Then natural selection would weed out the people who have less useful thoughts.

Lewis admits that such a process would result in beliefs that are 'tolerably reliable'.

Paragraph Fourteen

One must start by assuming that inference is valid, or you can't know about such things as the struggle for existence.

A useful thought must be, at least partly, true. But this assumes the validity of an inference, which you are trying to prove.

Lewis seems to lose track of the flow of the argument here. The naturalist does not have the burden of proving that inference is valid. Lewis has the burden of showing that, on naturalist assumptions, all inference is invalid.

Paragraph Fifteen

All arguments about the validity of thought assume the validity of thought.

The Freudian proves that all thoughts are due to complexes, except the thoughts the Freudian is using to make that statement. The Marxist proves that all thoughts result from class conditioning, except the thoughts that the Marxist has about the thoughts caused by class conditioning. It is better to admit that logical thought is self-evident and to be assumed in all discourse.

It's a little unclear what Lewis means by 'the validity' of thought. There are a number of alternatives: (1) some thought is based on rational inferences, (2) some thought is true, (3) some thought constitutes genuine knowledge. It's probably the first that he has in mind, given the context.

Paragraph Sixteen

Some Naturalists say that thoughts work, but aren't true. (Compare this with paragraph 27 in the revised version.)

If the Naturalists don't say that Naturalism is true, then we have no quarrel with them. And yet Naturalists seem to claim to give a true account of real things.

All excellent points. To adopt such rank pragmatism is for the naturalist to abandon the field of truth to the supernaturalist.

Chapter IV. Nature and Supernature

Acts of reasoning come from beyond nature because it is in a different class from non-rational events.

Nature cannot produce rational thought, perhaps because reason shows intelligence and intelligent design. Reason organizes the unorganized.

Reason and Nature are in an unsymmetrical relationship like father and son.

Some are guilty of wishful thinking, i.e. that the world is full of "tidiness and harmony."

Reason is not a part of Nature, but it could come from "some other Reason." Either our reason exists on its own, or our reason comes from a Reason that exists on its own.

That Reason, in short, is God, "an eternal, self-existence, rational Being."

Human thought is not God thinking through me, but God-inspired thought.

"I am attempting no full doctrine of man." Man's "rationality is the little tell-tale rift in Nature which shows that there is something beyond or behind her."

Reason, like the water lily in the pond, is attached to something other than itself.

Chapter 2 held out hope that a Naturalist could believe in an Emergent God rather than a supernatural God, one that emerges from nature.

However, if that Emergent God is the product of an accidental arrangement of atoms, then its thoughts have no validity. It is merely a product of mindless nature.

Couldn't dualism be true, that God and Nature both exist on their own and independent of each other? But we know that they have a certain relation, at least in every human mind.

Reason, "spearhead of the Supernatural," "a beam of light" that illuminates, unifies, and develops. The mere physical state produces disorder. Reason's invasion of Nature is like "the arrival of a king." Nature seems to have been "designed" for the role of subject!

There are three options: (1) Nature produced God, but that includes the impossibility of Nature producing valid thought; (2) Dualism, which "seems to make the problem of evil easier," but it too fails; (3) God created Nature, since Nature seems to "obey the laws of rational thought" (design!) and since our imagining is a kind of creating.

God's creation of Nature seems "overwhelmingly probable."

Chapter V. A Further Difficulty in Naturalism

Note the quotation which shows the contradiction in Karl Marx's writings, which sometimes come from an atheistic and deterministic perspective and at other times assume a highly moral position, as though there were clear, objective ethical principles. This chapter will address the belief by Lewis that moral judgments have no standing without the existence of God.

"...the claim of Reasoning to be valid is the only one which the Naturalist cannot deny without ... cutting his own throat."

We make moral judgments either for rational reasons or for another reason. Lewis thinks that moral judgments are based on rational reasons and that such fundamental ideas are self-evident, we "just see" them.

The "further difficulty" (chapter title) for Naturalism is that we assume that the other person's views are worthless if they can be accounted for by some non-moral or non-rational cause. Even the Freudians and the Marxists have assumed this with great success.

"...what discredits particular moral judgments must equally discredit moral judgment as a whole. If the fact that men have such ideas as *ought* and *ought not* at all can be fully explained by irrational and non-moral causes, then those ideas are an illusion."

One then cannot explain how any particular moral judgment could be right. Naturalistic statements are merely statements about the speaker's feelings and have no inherent validity.

Some Naturalists even admit that there is no such thing as good and evil, that all such values are hallucinations.

Most Naturalists who think this do not stick with it because you find them advocating for various positions that they think are good. To be consistent, they must admit that even their views are neither good nor bad, but mere preferences. They sometimes forget to be consistent.

Some argue that they have discovered, very objectively, what types of behavior will preserve the human race, but even this claim assumes that life is better than death and that we ought to care for the lives of our descendants. Those are moral judgments and can't be explained by behaviorism.

“If we are to continue to make moral judgments ... then we must believe that the conscience of man is not a product of Nature.” “...moral judgment is a kind of Reasoning.”

The next chapter will deal with some misunderstandings that may have arisen.

Chapter VI. Answers to Misgivings

Paragraph One

Some ideas are often given as proofs of Naturalism.

For example, rational thinking is conditioned by the brain.

For example, moral ideas are related to one's general situation.

But, in fact, these examples are “exactly what we should expect.”

Paragraph Two

Rational and moral elements come from the Supernatural working into Nature.

Human reason shares in eternal Reason.

True, rational thought “always involves a state of the brain” and “a relation of atoms,” but it still reflects Supernature.

Paragraph Three

Another misgiving: if something is true, such as God, shouldn't it be obvious?

First notice two things.

Paragraph Four

Some things we don't even notice because they are so obvious, just as the fact that we are using our eyes when we read a book.

Paragraph Five

The Supernatural has been forgotten exactly “because it is so near and so obvious.” They have been thinking about Nature, but they forgot that they have been *thinking*. “...one's own thinking cannot be merely a natural event...” Something other than Nature exists.

Thinking about specific things, i.e. “truncated thought,” causes one to forget where thinking itself came from.

Paragraph Six

The second consideration is that until modern times mystics and philosophers passed their thinking to people through authority and tradition. Either humanity made a huge mistake or God is doing a daring experiment, intending all people to understand such thinking.

Paragraph Seven

In short, the supernatural element is present in every rational person. That is a miracle. Human reason and morality are proofs of the Supernatural.

Paragraph Eight

Nature is one result of the Supernatural. From here on, the word Miracle will be used to refer to “the working out of the general character which He gave to Nature as a whole in creating her.”

Chapter VII. A Chapter of Red Herrings

Paragraph One

The existence of God does not prove that miracles happen. Those who exclude miracles do so either because they think that the character of God excludes them or because they think that Nature excludes them.

We start with the second exclusion, which is more popular.

Paragraph Two

The first red herring is that miracles are contrary to the laws of nature.

Paragraph Three

By the laws of nature such a person means the observed course of nature. Mere experience or experiments “can tell us what regularly happens in Nature.”

Paragraph Four

Mere experience cannot tell us if something is possible. Experience or experiment only finds out what regularly happens in Nature. Those who believe in miracles do not deny this regularity, but they believe that there are exceptions to “what regularly happens in Nature.” Lots of stories of miracles exist, suggesting there are such exceptions.

Paragraph Five

Belief in miracles is thought to have arisen in times when people did not know about the laws of Nature. This is nonsense, as the case of Joseph proves. It’s precisely because he knew the laws of generation that he resolved to put Mary away. A virgin birth is contrary to the laws of Nature, as Joseph knew. This is true, unless the laws of Nature were being overruled by something beyond nature. When Joseph understood what had happened, he accepted it as a miracle. When miracles surprise people, it is because they happen contrary to the normal, suggesting the supernatural. “And how can anything be seen to be an exception till the rules are known?”

Paragraph Six

If miracles were normal, then science would gradually render such belief more difficult. Science has rendered impossible belief in man-eating ants, magnetic islands, mermaids, and fire-breathing dragons. Those events were never put forward as the supernatural, but as the natural. Increasing knowledge of Nature can never make the supernatural more or less credible.

Paragraph Seven

The second red herring is that people believed in miracles in the past because they had a false conception of the universe. They had thought that the Earth was large and man important, but now we know that both are infinitesimally small.

Paragraph Eight

The immensity of the universe is not a recent discovery. Ptolemy knew this seventeen hundred years ago.

Paragraph Nine (68)

The real question is why this old argument should suddenly enjoy “a brilliant career.”

Paragraph Ten

Since this argument allegedly shows Christianity to be false, we need to know what the universe would have looked like if Christianity were true. In reality, both the emptiness of space other than Earth and the existence of creatures other than on Earth have been used as arguments against Christianity. If the first, then our life is an accident, but if the second, then we are not unique. This argument does not depend upon any particular form for the universe.

Paragraph Eleven

We know we are finite. We also know that we are derivative, either derived from Nature or from God. There is something which exists in its own right, i.e. either God or Nature. In comparison, we must feel our own existence unimportant. Christianity was never intended to dissipate this feeling, but to intensify it.

Paragraph Twelve

Christianity does not teach that everything was made for man, but that God became a man for us. The size of the universe does not affect this doctrine.

Paragraph Thirteen (71)

To dismiss the Incarnation, we have to know (1) that there are rational creatures on other planets, (2) they have fallen and need redemption, (3) their redemption must be the same as ours, and (4) that such redemption has been withheld. We know none of this.

Paragraph Fourteen

Size has nothing to do with importance. We do not claim to merit the love of God.

Paragraph Fifteen

It seems strange to consider Earth more important than Andromeda, but we also know that taller men are not more important than shorter men. Size seems to make sense only when the difference in size is great, and this stems from emotion rather than reason.

Paragraph Sixteen (72)

We think poetically, turning quantity into quality. It's our imagination that allows the size of Nature to awe us.

Paragraph Seventeen

Perhaps only in modern times has the imagination become more sensitive to bigness, which explains why size has only now become an argument against Christianity. Brightness appealed to the ancient and medieval man more than size did.

Chapter VIII. Miracles and the Laws of Nature

Does Nature exclude the possibility of miracles?

Three ways of looking at the Laws of Nature

1. Brute facts whose reason or purpose we cannot discover.
2. Applications of the law of averages.
3. Necessary truths

The first theory gives no assurance against miracles, nor does the second. Even a coin being tossed could be a loaded coin, in which case the law of averages would not apply. We can see how the law of averages could be interfered with.

The third theory “seems at first sight to present an insurmountable obstacle to miracle” (77). But this theory also assumes no interference, including that from God. And yet “all interferences leave the law perfectly true” (78). A physicist does not know whether a “supernatural power might be one of the new factors” (79) that interferes.

“The necessary truth of the laws, far from making it impossible that miracles should occur, makes it certain that if the Supernatural is operating they must occur” (79).

What are the laws of Nature? They have never caused anything. “They produce no events; they state the pattern to which every event ... must conform...” (80).

“It is therefore inaccurate to define a miracle as something that breaks the laws of Nature.” It feeds new material into Nature. “The moment it [the miracle] enters her realm it obeys all her laws. Miraculous wine will intoxicate, miraculous conception will lead to pregnancy, inspired books will suffer all the ordinary processes of textual corruption, miraculous bread will be digested” (81). Miracle is not suspending laws but “feeding new events into that pattern” (81).

“Its cause is the activity of God: its results follow according to Natural law” (82). Some have “mistaken a partial system within reality, namely Nature, for the whole” (82). “The great complex event called Nature, and the new particular event introduced into it by the miracle, are related by their common origin in God, and doubtless, if we knew enough, most intricately related in His purpose and design, so that a Nature which had had a different history, and therefore been a different Nature, would have been invaded by different miracles or by none at all” (82). “...you must go back as far as their common Creator to find the interlocking” (82)!!!

“...miracles, if they occur, must, like all events, be revelations of that total harmony of all that exists. Nothing arbitrary, nothing simply ‘stuck on’ and left unreconciled with the texture of total reality, can be admitted” (83). “...they ... must ... assert all the more the unity and self-consistency of total reality at some deeper level” (p. 83).

Chapter IX. A Chapter Strictly Not Necessary

This chapter deals with objections from the other side, but first Lewis writes about an objection he had as an atheist. He had “passionately desired that Nature should exist ‘on her own.’” He did not want Nature to lose that spontaneity. The idea that Nature had been “arranged” (read “designed”) could not be borne by Lewis.

“Nature” is only a word for “everything,” but she is a creature with good points and bad points. Those facts run throughout all of Nature, with good points and bad points visible everywhere. Among the positive things is “the freedom to be a consistent, positive thing with its own inimitable flavor.” Among its positives and negatives are “the horrors of parasitism and the glories of motherhood.”

“... only Supernaturalists really see Nature.” “You must have tasted, however briefly, the pure water from beyond the world before you can be distinctly conscious of the hot, salty tang of Nature’s current” (89). Nature is not the ultimate reality.

Chapter X. “Horrid Red Things”

Many think that the supernatural would not invade Nature. However, in Christianity “the Miracles, or at least some Miracles, are more closely bound up with the fabric of the whole belief than in any other.” The loss of the miraculous would not hurt Hinduism or Islam, since they do not depend upon the miraculous. Many skeptics think that the increase of knowledge has disproved such concepts as a local heaven, a flat earth, and a God who is a Father and can have children.

Page 93 (paragraph 3 of the chapter) contains a brief characterization of Lewis’ former tutor W.T. Kirkpatrick as a hard, satirical atheist and former Presbyterian who doted on James Fraser’s *The Golden Bough* and who filled his home with publications from the Rationalist Press Association, but who taught Lewis to think. He is aware of the charge against Christians that they rig their theology to backtrack on whatever science discovers and to wander only in areas where science has not yet ventured or has not yet discovered the truth. In fact, Lewis says that liberal Christianity “has constantly played just the game of which the impatient skeptic accuses it.” However, there is a difference between the core of Christianity and its various expressions, the latter of which are inessential.

Clear thinking and imagining are two different things, with the latter often conjuring up images that are ludicrously false. When Lewis thinks of London, the thinking is clear and the imagining is unusual. A young daughter thought that poison was red, but she did not know that her image was wrong, even though some of what she thought about poison was correct. Likewise, when Lewis imagines London as Euston Station, he knows that his imagining is not factually correct. Therefore, thinking may be sound when accompanied by false images and even when accompanied by false images mistaken for true ones.

We also need to realize that nearly everyone speaks in metaphor, since most words have their origin in metaphor, such as the words *grasp*, *point*, and *follow*. “... if we are going to talk at all

about things which are not perceived by the senses, we are forced to use language metaphorically” (97). “... all speech about supersensibles is, and must be, metaphorical in the highest degree” (97).

Lewis summarizes this chapter thus far: “(1) That thought is distinct from the imagination which accompanies it. (2) That thought may be in the main sound even when the false images that accompany it are mistaken by the thinker for true ones. (3) That anyone who talks about things that cannot be seen, or touched, or heard, or the like, must inevitably talk as *if they could be seen or touched or heard ...*” (97f.).

Next Lewis applies these points to the Christian creed. Christians often have crude pictures in their minds when they speak the words of the creed. This does not make the statement in the creed false. Though Christians may picture an earthly Father, they still know that God has no body. It won’t work to get rid of the pictures, because people will simply substitute other pictures that are often even more absurd, including those proposed by atheists and agnostics.

So the absurdity of the images does not imply the absurdity of the doctrines. But did the early Christians actually believe these things? Even if some early Christians imagined God having a right hand, that would not negate the actual belief behind that image of a right hand. The doctrine still remains. A literal understanding of some image does not negate the doctrine behind it. The New Testament writers were not writing to satisfy philosophical speculation, but to satisfy those who believed in God or might believe in God. A careful look at the New Testament writings shows that they did not intend certain images to be taken literally. For example, a study of the nature of the Son shows Him to be far more complex than a young physical man.

While there may be an earlier tradition, we have no evidence of that. And, in fact, Judaism studiously avoided literal representations of God. There we find lofty descriptions of God, a God who actually made the sky in which the literalists picture God living. In fact, the ancient writers did not make the distinction between material and immaterial.

Some say that primitive man could not conceive of God as pure spirit, but if he couldn’t conceive of pure spirit, neither could he conceive of pure matter. (JH: This is based on a Darwinian and developmental view of man). Supposedly the contrast between the spiritual and the material was not present in man’s early history. While Lewis concedes this, he does not regard the lack of such thinking as unspiritual. “... it is quite erroneous to think that man started with a ‘material’ God or ‘Heaven’ and gradually spiritualized them” (104). Too often people read back into the ancient people what they think must have been thought or believed. Christian and Jewish doctrines “have always been statements about spiritual reality, not specimens of primitive physical science” (104).

Some think that “metaphorical” means that whatever is stated is hardly even meant. However, to say that one’s heart was broken would then mean that one feels cheerful. This is nonsense. Those doctrines which are metaphorical contain something which is just as supernatural after the imagery is removed as it was before. There still is an uncreated reality which caused the universe to be, which is a Trinity, and which entered the universe by becoming one of its own creatures in the Incarnation and there produced historical events that the natural universe does not produce.

The supernatural is described in literal speech, so we may indeed interpret much that is said about it as metaphorical, but the historical events are on a different plane. About historical events we can speak literally; they are perceived by the senses of men. When we start calling such events metaphorical, we are explaining away rather than explaining. “The assertion that God has a Son was never intended to mean that He is a being propagating His kind by sexual intercourse: and so we do not alter Christianity by rendering explicit the fact that ‘sonship’ is not used of Christ in exactly the same sense in which it is used of men” (106f.). But the statement that Jesus literally turned water into wine was meant literally; it is “within the reach of our senses and our language” (107). “My heart is broken” is metaphorical, and “My shoelace is broken” is literal. If my shoelace is intact, then I am either lying or mistaken. “The accounts of the ‘miracles’ in first-century Palestine are either lies, legends, or history” (107). If they are lies or legends, then Christianity is false. None of this chapter addresses the probability or improbability of Christian claims, but the chapter removes a misunderstanding about metaphorical language.

Chapter XI. Christianity and “Religion”

Christians say that God has done miracles, while the popular view in the world says that God wouldn't. This popular view is Pantheism, which does not admit to a personal God who does concrete things. Many people prefer a vague spiritual force.

Some think that religion originated in an evolutionary way by people inventing spirits to explain natural phenomena. The more enlightened the person the less manlike their understanding of these spirits. In the end, they have an abstraction. While Pantheism is congenial, that doesn't make it true. It has been around almost as long as we have because it is the natural bent of the human mind. Only Christianity is a formidable opponent to Pantheism.

People used to believe that atoms were hard pellets on the analogy of grains of sand. Then scientists actually found out how atoms were structured and the distance between its parts, destroying the old theory. Pantheism is like the old theory about atoms—it makes sense until you learn its real nature. Some think that Christianity is like the old theory about atoms, while Pantheism is the true account. It's actually the other way around. Both say that God is everywhere, but they mean different things by it. Both religions say that we are dependent on God and are related to Him, but they mean different things by it. Christianity keeps the creature distinct from the Creator, while Pantheism does not. If God is everywhere, then Pantheism thinks God is in both evil and good and therefore indifferent to both. Christians say this is too simple. Both Christians and Pantheists think that God is beyond personality, but in different ways. We can see that “if there is something beyond personality it *ought* to be incomprehensible in that sort of way” (113). The Pantheist actually conceives of God in way that makes Him sub-personal. Lewis seems to be saying that to conceive of God as doing miracles requires a proper conception of God.

“At every point Christianity has to correct the natural expectations of the Pantheist and offer something more difficult, just as Schrödinger has to correct Democritus” (114). Schrödinger (1887-1961) is one of the fathers of quantum mechanics, whereas Democritus (ca. 460-370 B.C.)

thought that atoms were indivisible. Things are usually more complicated than they appear, and the same is true of Christianity.

The mystics have it all wrong. Concrete things do exist, and the Laws of Nature do not adequately account for them. If God is the source of all concrete things, then God Himself must be concrete. Abstract things do not produce concrete things. Meter does not produce poems; it's the other way around. Bookkeeping does not produce money; it's the other way around.

God is "a particular Thing." He is. He is the Creator, distinguished from all created things. He has always existed, and there is no ground on which to say "that He does not do miracles" (118). Why do mystics deny this? The analogy of the erudite limpet (limpet = mollusk) suggests something similar to the mystic, since the limpet will catch glimpses of what man is like and describe man in terms of what he is not. Later limpets conclude that man is amorphous jelly that exists nowhere in particular and takes no nourishment, based on a partial and faulty description of man. Likewise, our prophets and saints, because most of what they think of God is intuition, which catches only the fringes of God, describe God based on statements of what He is not. When we remove all seemingly human qualities, which are our only way of comparing, we have nothing left. Lewis has read William Blake, whose writings suggest that God is "the source of all other facthood" (121). God must not be thought of as a featureless generality. If He exists, He is the most concrete thing of all (cf. *The Great Divorce*). He is not too indefinite, but too definite for language. Our lives are the metaphors which are less real than God. We reject some Old Testament image "not because the images are too strong but because they are too weak" (122, cf. "The Weight of Glory" and *Perelandra*).

People don't want to leave their abstract notion of God for the living God because that image demands nothing and does nothing. "... there is no manner of security against miracles. One may be in for *anything*." He is not a tame lion.

Chapter XII. The Propriety of Miracles

Although God can do miracles, that doesn't mean He will. Kings really should not break their own laws

School children writing Latin poetry are forbidden to write "a spondee in the fifth foot." And yet Virgil does, just as the great poets use bad rhymes and other license is allowed in other occupations. Even Shakespeare does in *The Winter's Tale*.

"In other words, there are rules behind the rules, and a unity which is deeper than uniformity." To distinguish between a mistake and a just license is possible only when one understands the real meaning of the entire work. In the same manner, miracles are not mistakes or improprieties, but reflections of the deepest unity of God's creation.

Bergson illustrates this concept well with the illustration of people who think that painting is made up of little colored dots put together. Since paintings are the result of a turn of the wrist, an exception to the rule of dots is not a violation of the law of dots. Nor is a miracle a violation of

the pattern in nature. “If miracles do occur then we may be sure that *not* to have wrought them would be the real inconsistency” (130).

Dorothy Sayers’ book, *The Mind of the Maker*, compares God’s relation to the world with an author’s relation to a book. An author should not use the miracle or the unexpected fortune to get a character out of a tight spot. Unusual events are permissible if that “is what you are really writing *about*...” Modern suspicion against miracles assumes that the miracles are invented in order to get the characters out of a difficulty with an event that does not belong in the story. The Resurrection is not that sort of a difficulty. “If they [miracles] have occurred, they have occurred because they are the very thing this universal story is about” (131). “Death and Resurrection are what the story is about ... hinted on every page, met ... at every turn, ... even ... muttered ... between such minor characters ... as the vegetable” (131). The story is not really about “time and space and economics and politics,” but death and resurrection.

Chapter XIII. On Probability

A quotation on probability from David Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature* begins the chapter.

There is nothing impossible or ridiculous about miracles. But “most stories about miraculous events are probably false: if it comes to that, most stories about natural events are false.” (132)

If the historical evidence is good, then we can accept the story. But how much evidence is necessary to accept the story, or, what is the criterion of probability?

Most modern historians will admit no miracle if there is a possible natural explanation. But this is madness unless we know for certain that miracles are more improbable than the most improbable natural event.

There are different kinds of improbability. In one sense, all miracles are improbable because of their rarity, but that doesn’t make the story of a miracle incredible. (133)

Ever since Hume’s *Essay*, most statements about miracles have been considered to be the most improbable. Hume claims that “probability rests on what may be called the majority vote of our past experiences.” (134) Hume goes farther, stating that the unanimous vote of the past is against miracles. Therefore, “if ... they have never happened, why then they never have.” ☺ (134) We know them to be false only if all reports are false, and all reports are false only if we know that miracles never occurred. This is circular reasoning! (134f.)

Another objection from Hume takes us deeper into the problem. Probability depends on the Uniformity of Nature. But we know the uniformity of nature from belief or an assumption, not from experience since we cannot observe all events. We often assume that the future will resemble the past, but that’s an assumption, not proof. Even Hume knew this (136).

Two questions that are the same:

“Do miracles occur?”

“Is Nature absolutely uniform?”

Hume treats them as two different questions, answering the second as “yes,” which is then his ground for answering the first as “no.”

Lewis’s question about miracles is asking about the validity of the framework of nature. (136) Hume’s reasoning leads us nowhere.

Therefore, we need to look for “some quite different kind of Probability.” (137) So let’s ask why people believe in the Uniformity of Nature. There are three reasons, two of them irrational. First, because of habit; new situations are expected to resemble old ones. Second, we can’t do anything about the predictability of Nature, so we don’t bother with it. Uniformity comes to dominate our minds as a result. These two reasons are irrational. Third, as Eddington said, “We are influenced by some innate sense of the fitness of things.” (138) An unpredictable universe would be repugnant to us. This is faith, or preference, but can we trust it? Does it correspond to external reality? (139)

The answer depends upon your beliefs, or metaphysic. If Nature is all that exists, there is no room for a miracle. But there is also no reason to trust the conviction that Nature is uniform. “Our repugnance to disorder is derived from Nature’s Creator and ours.” (39)

Sciences require a metaphysic of this sort. Whitehead produced the expectation of order, which made possible the birth of science. (139f.) If you admit the existence of God, you risk a few miracles. If you make Nature absolute, then you can’t believe it to be uniform.

“... no one really thinks that the Christian doctrine of the Resurrection is exactly on the same level with some pious tittle-tattle about how Mother Egaree Louise miraculously found her second best thimble by the aid of St. Anthony.” (141) The criterion is fitness.

In the next three chapters, Lewis will present the central miracles of the Christian faith so as to demonstrate their fitness.

Chapter XIV. The Grand Miracle

“The central miracle ... is the Incarnation.” All other miracles relate to this miracle and not in an arbitrary way.

It is improbable by Hume’s standards. While the Christian explanation for the Incarnation is improbable, any other explanation is even harder. They are still unable to explain the depth of Christ’s moral teaching and the megalomania that must be His if he is not God.

The illustration of a novel or a symphony (145). If a lost piece of music were discovered and alleged to be the missing piece of a symphony, we could tell if that were the case. The Incarnation is like this. “We believe that the sun is in the sky at midday in summer not because we can clearly see the sun ... but because we can see everything else” (145).

What does it mean that God became a man? How can an eternal Spirit unite with a natural human organism to make one person? But people are already a combination of Nature with something more than natural (the act of reasoning). Hence our human nature is “a faint image of the Divine Incarnation itself...” (147) But it’s always the greater descending to the lesser, not vice versa.

“In the Christian story God descends to reascend” (147). “But He goes down to come up again and bring the whole ruined world up with Him” (148). This is a familiar pattern, “a thing written all over the world” (148). It appears in vegetable life, animal generation, and in our moral and emotional life, i.e. death and rebirth. “... go down to go up...” (149). “The pattern is there in Nature because it was first there in God” (149).

Some may think that religion was drawn from the “annual drama” of death and rebirth rather than the other way around, with Christ as another corn-king. In one sense that’s true. The early church seems to have overlooked the rich imagery and association with the corn-king. “The very thing which the Nature-religions are all about seems to have really happened once...” (151), but it happened where there was no trace of Nature-religion. The explanation: Christians claim that “the one true God is He whom the Jews worshipped as Jahweh ...,” “the God of Nature, her glad Creator” (151). Not a pantheistic religion nor a Nature God. He is the “inventor, maker, owner, and controller” (152) of nature.

Christ “is like the Corn-King because the Corn-King is a portrait of Him” (153). The Corn-King is derived from the facts of nature, and those facts came from her creator, Jesus Christ. But the Hebrews were not to worship a nature god because they were only like God rather than the thing itself.

Our democratic natures don’t like the idea of a chosen people. A person was chosen (Abraham), then his nation of descendants (Israel) was chosen, from whom a remnant was also chosen, then Mary was chosen. Nature operates this way—selectiveness and enormous wastage (154). But this is because nature is fallen (156, top paragraph).

Selectiveness, but not favoritism (154). Some are chosen for the sake of the unchosen. A deep-rooted principle in Christianity is *vicariousness*. This is also a characteristic of nature. “In social life without Vicariousness there would be no exploitation or oppression; but also no kindness or gratitude” (157). (JH: This is neither Democrat nor Republican, but nearly Republican at its start and nearly Democrat at its end.) **Four principles thus far in this chapter:** the composite nature of man, the pattern of descent and re-ascension, selectiveness, and vicariousness. Nature religions (e.g., the worship of Dionysus) affirm these principles, Life-force philosophy gives them a transcendent prestige and makes them a god, and some, such as Buddhism or Hinduism, negate them. The Christian doctrine does none of these. We cannot indulge or become either a hero or a parasite. Rather, love makes the difference. Love (the fourth of Lewis’s four loves) transforms those four principles. “Nature is being lit up by a light from beyond Nature” (159).

“... Nature is infected with evil” (159). Therefore, Christianity involves redemption. God created Nature “such as to reach her perfection by a process in time” (160). The earth was at first “without form and void” and then brought by degrees to its perfection. “... from the formless to

finished” (160). It happened because of sin. “Nature has all the air of a good thing spoiled” (161). Free will is made possible. No automata, but also the possibility of a Fall. Is man the most important thing in nature? Yes is not a bad answer, and it may be that man is the only rational creature in nature. But we don’t know. It is odd, but true, that because of this Fall man is “the very species in which Mercy will descend” (162). As we rise, we will draw all of nature up with us because we are connected to the Lord of Nature. This is true vicariousness.

Some Christians think that the Incarnation would have happened even if the Fall had not. In that case, it would still have universal significance (163).

“God never undoes anything but evil, never does good to undo it again” (163). And there are no accidents or loose ends. (JH: 1 Peter 5, “He that exalts himself...”)

Lewis thinks that God’s Incarnation was unique, even if there have been other rational creatures and other falls.

Christian doctrine includes a particular view of death. The Stoics thought that death didn’t matter, and moderns think that death is the greatest of all evils. In Christianity, however, death “is the triumph of Satan, the punishment of the Fall, and the last enemy” (165). But also, death is “God’s great weapon” and the means he came to conquer sin.

“... the Grand Miracle...” (166)

Human death is the result of human sin. Redemption makes no sense if man is merely an organism of nature. But man is a natural organism and a supernatural spirit. The struggle, or “state of war” (168), between our two natures was not always so. There was once a time when it was not so, and there will be such a time again. Two things especially suggest this: coarse jokes and the feeling that the dead are uncanny (169). In the first place, we find our animality objectionable or funny. That couldn’t be unless there were a quarrel between our physical nature and our spiritual nature. Dogs don’t see anything funny about being dogs (169). The same is true of death, i.e. that it reflects an original quarrel. “But once accept the Christian doctrine that man was originally a unity and that the present division is unnatural, and all the phenomena fall into place” (169). All of this has to do with the sense in which death is the triumph of Satan.

Death is also the means of redemption. It’s spiritual jiu-jitsu. We must surrender to death, which now becomes our servant. We must also accept death in order to turn it into “a means of eternal life” (172). One who was perfectly a man did this, both defeating death and redeeming it. “He tasted death on behalf of all others” (172). “In science we have been reading only the notes to a poem; in Christianity we find the poem itself” (173). “It has little to say to the man who is still certain that everything is going to the dogs, or that everything is getting better and better, or that everything is God, or that everything is electricity” (173).

Chapter XV. Miracles of the Old Creation

Mythological miracles do not fit well into their stories, but Christian miracles do. This is because Christian miracles show a world invaded by the God of Nature who has power over nature. This

makes Christian miracles different from most other miracles. There is no obligation for a Christian to disprove miracles outside the Christian records, and, in fact, some of them probably happened. However, Christian miracles have a greater probability because of their connection to one another and to “the whole structure of the religion they exhibit” (175). For example, Buddha taught that we should escape from Nature, which he taught was an illusion, so he wouldn’t have done miracles.

The miracles of Christ can be classified in two ways, one of which is the following: (1) Miracles of the Old Creation, and (2) Miracles of the New Creation. “... in all these miracles alike the incarnate God does suddenly and locally something that God has done or will do in general” (177). However, he will also use the former classification in the rest of the chapter: (1) Miracles of Fertility, (2) Miracles of Healing, (3) Miracles of Destruction, (4) Miracles of Dominion over the Inorganic, (5) Miracles of Reversal, and (6) Miracles of Perfecting or Glorification. Lewis will not address the question whether Christ could do these miracles because He was God or because He was perfect man.

Miracles in the Bible “do close and small ... what God at other times does so large ...” (178) And “they anticipate powers which all men will have when they also are ‘sons’ of God ...” (178) Christ is the first of this kind.

Miracles of Fertility: water into wine “proclaims that the God of all wine is present” (179). God constantly turns water into wine, but on one occasion he short circuited the process. The bread and fish were turned into much bread and much fish. God does this every year, but the temptation to turn stones into bread was not quite in that style. In the same way the great draft of fishes was God doing “close and small ... what He has always been doing in the seas, the lakes and the little brooks” (180). Likewise the Virgin Birth is a miracle, though some draw the line there. God did not “commit adultery with the wife of a Jewish carpenter” (181), for God is involved “in the conception of every child ... [and] every animal” (181). On one occasion “the great glove of Nature was taken off His hand. His naked hand touched her” (182). This was because He was creating “the Man who was to be Himself” (182), He “was beginning the New Creation of all things” (182). “He is doing now, small and close, what He does in a different fashion for every woman who conceives” (183).

Miracles of Healing: Many admit that they happened, but deny that they were miraculous. They say that the diseases disappeared by the power of suggestion. However, “there is a sense in which no doctor ever heals” (184). Here Lewis is probably relying somewhat upon R.E. Havard, for the magic is in the body’s healing power and the body is healed by removing what hinders it. The power behind all healing is God’s power.

Miracle of Destruction: the withering of the fig tree has bothered some, but it is “an acted parable, a symbol of God’s sentence on all that is ‘fruitless’,” including unbelieving Judaism in that day. But it also does “small and close what God does constantly and throughout Nature” (185). All trees die because of what God ceases to do to it.

Miracles of Dominion over the Inorganic: Christ stills the storm, doing what God has often done before. Christ walks on water, but this is a miracle of the New Creation, a foretaste of what is still future.

Miracles of Reversal: the dead are raised, “playing backwards a film that we have always seen played forwards” (187).

Miracles of Perfecting: the Transfiguration, the Resurrection, and the Ascension are miracles of the New Creation. The Captain is ahead of us.

Chapter XVI. Miracles of the New Creation

An apostle in the first century had to be a man who was an eyewitness of the Resurrection. The Resurrection is the central theme of the Christian sermons in the book of Acts. The miracle of the Resurrection came first, then the Gospels. Then Jesus appeared to disciples on several occasions after the Resurrection. The Resurrection was the state of having risen, which is connected to the Ascension. The Resurrection is not evidence for survival, but evidence for victory over death and the beginning of the New Creation.

When they saw the resurrected Jesus, the writers of the New Testament did not believe they were being haunted by a ghost or that they had had a vision of a soul in heaven. The disciples thought they had seen the first instance of a solid man raised from the dead. The risen Christ has some similarities to a ghost, but He asserts that He is truly physical. We tend to expect a reversal of the Incarnation in a purely spiritual resurrection, but we have actually seen a body. It has eaten broiled fish. The body was seen on several occasions and not recognized as Jesus, so it wasn't a hallucination.

“If the story is true, then a wholly new mode of being has arisen in the universe” (194). The body of Jesus is both like and unlike His former body. It is different in space and time, but it can eat and be touched. It has a history, and it has a future in the Ascension. Some call references to a vertical ascent and a sitting in a chair too primitive and embarrassing. But we can't drop the Ascension if the resurrection really occurred. An “objective entity must go somewhere” (195f.). If it was a vision, it was the most deceptive vision on record. If the body was real, then the Ascension is a logical explanation for its disappearance.

A new Nature has been brought into existence that involves a whole new universe. Precursors to the New Nature are flowers before spring and Law before Gospel. Walking on water allows Nature to be altered to do whatever spirit pleases. Lazarus was merely restored to the same existence he had before, a “simple reversal.” But it is anticipatory, belonging to the New Creation. The resurrection of Christ, however, is different because the post-resurrection existence of Christ is “a new and more glorious mode of existence.”

Entropy is the rule in human existence. The fall of Humpty Dumpty presupposes a time when he will reach the ground and also a time when he was seated on the wall. Christians claim that there was once a time when things were fine, Humpty Dumpty was not falling, and that things will be

well again. Since science “is based on observation,” science knows nothing of that earlier time or that later time.

The Transfiguration of Jesus is “an anticipatory glimpse of something to come” (200). However, we “can know very little about the New Nature” (201). Time may be different in another world, as also might other parts of Nature. While some parts of the story of Christ’s resurrection are metaphorical, other parts are not, such as the appearances of Jesus, the eating, the touching, and the claim to be corporeal.

This idea of a New Nature is shocking because of the influence of the philosopher Immanuel Kant. We can believe in the idea that “this present Nature is all that there is” (202). We can also believe in a spiritual reality above this present Nature. But we cannot imagine anything in between or anything else. There is no rational ground for rejecting a reality with more than two levels. “... there might be Natures piled upon Natures to any height God pleased...” (203).

We don’t lose our understanding of the top floor, the Divine Life. Some things, such as Christ sitting at the right hand of God, must be understood metaphorically. However, in some sense, “Christ withdrew into some different mode of being about six weeks after the Crucifixion” (204). If not the Ascension, i.e. rising into the air, then by what means or in what way was Christ supposed to leave this world?

And what is meant by heaven? Lewis lists four senses of the word *heaven*, but he insists that those early disciples were not unspiritual and that they saw something at the Ascension. They certainly did not believe that a spiritual heaven was in the sky. And since God made both the sky and us, He knew what the sky would mean to us. He also knew what people would think when Jesus ascended, and He wouldn’t have wanted Jesus to descend into the earth.

We sometimes have difficulty with two ideas. One is that heaven is a life in Christ, and the other is that it is a bodily life. At times, the body seems almost irrelevant. This difficulty was planned, and the New Creation may have come to heal that mental difficulty. The Sacraments may give us a glimpse of what this healing will look like, as also may the use of sensuous imagery by great poets, the best instances of sexual love, and experiences of beauty. Finally, we cannot fully imagine what it will be like in heaven.

Life in the New Creation will not be a sexual life, but that life will be something better. When Nature and Spirit are fully harmonized, the New Nature will be perfect. Nature and Spirit, matter and mind, fact and myth, the literal and the metaphorical will be one, “remarried,” “rushing together.” (212) Christianity also teaches that Nature is good and part of spiritual blessings. In the resurrection of the body it affirms that heaven involves both mind and body. “We desire, like St. Paul, not to be unclothed but to be re clothed” (213).

So what? It is more important to think one charitable thought than to understand all this about Nature and spiritual matters. But since this is a book about miracles, these matters are connected to the idea that heaven is not merely a state of mind but an action in Nature. The God of Christians is “the God of corn and oil and wine ... He has become Himself incarnate” (214). We learn to manage our physical bodies so that we may one day manage the spiritual body.

Chapter XVII. Epilogue

The preliminary study of miracles is over, and now it's time to look at the New Testament. Watch out for New Testament scholars, who operate with naturalistic assumptions. This happens because all people have a tendency toward Naturalism. Sometimes we work so hard at being fair that we become unfair toward the testimony of the New Testament itself. Therefore, be on your guard against arguments that don't depend upon historical or linguistic knowledge, "but on the concealed assumption that miracles are impossible, improbable, or improper" (216). It comes from a tendency toward "everythingism" and results in one extreme or the other—Pantheism or Naturalism. Everythingism comes from a totalitarian age.

Some people, when they return to the world, leave behind the edge of belief in favor of the "real" world around them and conclude with Matthew Arnold, "Miracles don't happen." This is something we should anticipate. Rational thought cannot always be on guard, and when it ceases then imagination and the "spirit of the age" take over. Beliefs and feelings only follow reason after long training. But don't rely on feelings. Secondly, we will probably never see a miracle happen. "They come on great occasions..." (220).

Appendix A: On the Words "Spirit" and "Spiritual"

This appendix deals with the Natural and the Supernatural in man, although the supernatural in man is created by God and so in that sense is actually natural. Life can be described as absolutely supernatural or, in a different sense, as beyond all and every nature. Like angels, humans can offer their nature back to God by their own free will. This is a higher kind of life that is available only to those who voluntarily surrender themselves to it; it is the absolutely supernatural. The rational part of man is already supernatural, but it has not necessarily surrendered itself to God.

"When devotional writers talk of the 'spiritual life'... they mean this absolutely supernatural life that comes through voluntary surrendering to the life of Christ. However, the words *Spirit* or *Spiritual* are used to describe the relatively supernatural element in man, not just the voluntary surrendering of man.

There are five senses of the words *spirit*, *spirits*, *spiritual*: (1) the chemical sense, (2) the obsolete medical sense of the body have fluids or spirits in it, (3) spiritual as the opposite of material, (4) the relatively supernatural element in man that comes via creation, the rational element (the most useful way of using the word), and (5) the life that comes from voluntary surrender. In this last sense the *spiritual* is always good.

We need to know the different meanings of words we use. We could use soul (noun) and psychological (adjective) for sense three, spirit and spiritual for sense four and regenerate (adjective) for sense five (no noun works, but he could have used regeneration). The regenerate person will be "harmonized with his spirit by the life of Christ that is in him" (225). That's why Christians believe in the resurrection of the body as a good thing rather than the body as an encumbrance.

Appendix B: On “Special Providences”

Some events are providential. The weather at Dunkirk was providential in a way in which weather is normally not providential. Providence fits between the miraculous and the natural event. Lewis wants to abandon the idea that any event is “specially providential.” All events are equally providential because God directs the course of all events at every moment. Things are natural, not because they fall outside God’s providence, but because they fit within the pattern of laws.

The false picture of Providence sees every event as resulting from a previous event. This is a Deistic approach. Hence, since God decreed both the first event and all subsequent events, all events are providential. Therefore, God predetermined the weather at Dunkirk and its role for Germany and England.

Think how a novelist approaches the writing of a novel. He can arrange things in such a way that the desired outcomes occur. The problem is that Nature is probably not in time and God certainly is not. God is present in an eternal Now. A black line on a page can represent a person with free will, with red lines to represent material events, and the person watching it represents God. The black line can address prayers to the watcher. The watcher sees the whole page and can take the arrangement of black and red lines as a whole. God is not bound by time.

There are two implications. 1. “... all events in the real world are providential events” in the sense that they happened with God’s permission. So natural causes can be adduced, as can divine will. 2. We can think that prayer does no good if we assume that the answer has already been decided, but we should not use this reasoning to cease praying. With a given event, “one of the things taken into account in deciding it, and therefore one of the things that really cause it to happen, may be this very prayer that we are now offering” (232). Free choice is still possible.

Why “not pray for an event which we know *not* to have happened, such as praying for someone who was killed yesterday? Because of our knowledge, which expresses God’s will, which was that the person die. We can’t pray for what is unobtainable.

One can never prove empirically that a given event was an answer to prayer, or that it wasn’t. This is a spiritual necessity. If we knew that our prayers caused things, we would think ourselves magicians. We would become corrupt. Instead we must believe that God answers our prayers. But “when the event you prayed for occurs your prayer has always contributed to it” (234). If the opposite occurred, your prayer was considered and refused for the ultimate good.