We all know what Christianity looks like when viewed from the standpoint of modernity. In this essay I shall try to turn the truth tables and see what modernity looks like when viewed from the standpoint of Christianity.

My point of view is what C. S. Lewis called "mere Christianity." "Mere Christianity" means not "little Christianity" but "big Christianity": full, Biblical, apostolic, traditional, orthodox Christianity.

I shall be using many of Lewis' ideas in this essay: some explicitly, some implicitly. But this is not a scholarly essay about Lewis but an amateur essay using Lewis (and others) to think about the fate of "the permanent things" in the modern world. (I'm sure Lewis would much prefer his readers to think with him rather than about him; to look along with him rather that at him (to use his own very useful distinction, from the essay "Meditation in a Toolshed.")

We know what Christianity looks like when viewed from the standpoint of modernity because we are bombarded with this. The media moguls, the opinion-molders and real educators of our society, are the most aggressively anti-Christian propaganda elite since the Nazis. Can you remember a single movie in the last twenty years in which some or all of the Christian clergymen were not hypocrites? Talk about a classic case of projection! (If you think that dig is too dirty, read Paul Johnson's book *Intellectuals*. Someone sagely said that the title should have been *Hypocrites*.)

But what does modernity look like from the viewpoint of Christianity? Essentially, a gallows on which "the permanent things" are lynched without a trial; an altar, or a slaughterhouse in which "the permanent things" are sacrificed to the dark gods of Baal and Ashtaroth and Moloch: power and greed and lust.

Our world was aptly described by Arthur Koesteler's paradoxical and prophetic title, "Darkness at Noon." A similar title by Martin Buber, "Eclipse of God," makes the same point by a similar astronomical image: that we are now living in the real Dark Ages, as we approach the end of that century which a famous religious journal named itself after, with incredible naïveté and false prophecy: "The Christian Century!" If there is any title we can be certain the history books of the future will never use for our century, it is that one. Much more likely is Franky Schaeffer's suggestion, "The Century of Genocide."

Of all twentieth century inventions, that one is the one that has most drastically affected the most lives. We have so far witnessed five major holocausts in this century, and along with every "civilized" nation in the Western world except Ireland, we are now participating in the sixth and largest one of all, which is also the only one that shows no signs of ending, as the other five did. What the Turks did to the Armenians, Hitler to the Jews, Stalin and Mao to their political enemies, and Pol Pot to one third of all his nation's people, our present femininity-haters who are incredibly misnamed "radical feminists" and their allies are still doing to the most tiny, innocent, and defenceless of all classes of human beings, unborn babies.
Mother Teresa said, with the simplicity of a peasant, "When a mother can kill her own child, what is left of the West to save?" (Incredibly, *Time* magazine printed that statement. Perhaps there is some hope after all.)

God asked a rhetorical question, in scripture: "Can a mother forsake the fruit of her womb? Even if she could, I could not forsake you, says the Lord your God." The rhetorical question was meant to put forth an unthinkable absurdity. Yet millions of mothers today perform that unthinkable absurdity, and many more millions, mostly men, think approvingly of that unthinkable work of Moloch.

Doubtless, most of the twenty million mothers who have aborted their babies since our Supreme Court of justice declared this injustice just were themselves victims of propaganda pressures and cultural conditioning, "more sinned against than sinning." That, however, makes things worse, not better: it implicates the whole culture in the double deed of destroying undeveloped bodies and undeveloped consciences.

If the soul is more precious than the body, the latter death is worse than the former. The soul of Western civilization is dying; that is the essence of our tragedy. When its body follows, as it must, we will see the civilizational pus ooze, but that pus is already there, festering inside. The barbarians are already within the gates, writing the textbooks, newspapers, TV shows, movies, and music.

Is this going to be another one of those interminable essays on how to prevent the wreck of Western civilization? No. For as Whittaker Chambers wrote, "It is idle to talk about preventing the wreck of Western civilization. It is already a wreck from within."

Do I come to you then as a prophet of doom? No. I disavow both mantles, both prophet and doom. Perhaps there is still time to intercede for the secular city as Abraham interceded for Sodom. We do not know how much time we have left. But we do know this: if God spares New York, He will owe an apology to Sodom.

Avery Dulles has mapped out a useful chart of four possible contemporary Christian attitudes toward our secular society, in a kind of logical square of opposition. He calls the four options Traditionalism, Neo-conservatism, Liberalism, and Radicalism. Traditionalism believes in the Church but not the State, i.e., not the present state of society. It is counter-cultural. Neo-conservatism (e.g., Richard John Neuhaus and Michael Novak) believes in both the Church and the American state. Liberalism believes in Americanism but not in the Church, i.e., not traditional Christianity. And Radicalism says, "A plague on both your houses."

I am a Traditionalist, as was C. S. Lewis. But I want to interject a word of caution to my fellow Traditionalists. It is the fear that Traditionalists run the same kind of risk in idealizing the past as both Neo-conservatives and Liberals (what strange bedfellows!) run in looking benignly at the present and the future. Looking back is a posture that has been known to be very dangerous to one's health, especially if one is on a salt-free diet: remember Lot's wife.
So let's look to the future. Is it not time to be optimistic now that the Iron Curtain has fallen with an iron thud? To answer this question, let us ask two other questions, one about us and one about "them."

The one about us is: were we more moved by the fear of God or the fear of Gorbachev? Were we wrestling against principalities and powers in the Kremlin or in Hell? Do we understand Solzhenitsyn's line about the border between Good and Evil running not between nations but down the middle of our own souls?

And the question about "them" is: What kind of freedom was uppermost in the minds of most of the masses who poured through the newly opened Berlin Wall? Was it spiritual freedom, or even intellectual freedom? Did they, like the wise men from the East of old, come West seeking Christ? Or condoms? Did they pour into churches? Or porn shops? What excited them about the West? Did they buy Bibles or toilet paper? What freedom was legislated in Romania as soon as it had killed its dictator, who was guilty of enormous crimes? It was the freedom to kill those who are guilty of no crime at all except being in the way of someone who was bigger and already born.

So let's look to the real battle, not to the fake one. Now that that silly little temporary distraction called Communism is dead or dying everywhere from Managua to Moscow—everywhere except Cambridge and Columbia—we can get back to the battle that should have been bothering Traditionalists all along much more than the battle against the Eastern barbarianism without, namely the Western barbarianism within. The year 1984 has come and gone with few signs of Orwell's 1984 looming on our horizon, but Huxley's *Brave New World* looks like a more accurate prophecy every year. So let us be brave and look at our new world; at the internal slippery slope we've been sliding down, now that the external pseudo-threat of Communism has lost its power to distract our attention.

We're all familiar with the statistics on violent crime, rape, child abuse, drugs, and similar American leisure activities. We know that half of all marriages commit suicide, i.e. divorce. We can read headlines well enough to be totally cynical about businessmen and politicians. Surveys tell us this is the first generation in American history whose children are not better educated than their parents, but worse. They tell us that if teenagers don't have sex, they must be ugly, isolated or Fundamentalists. Half of all urban teenagers get pregnant, and half of them have abortions. A brave new world indeed.

I don't think we need to specify any more of the many symptoms of our decay. They are ubiquitous, obvious and odious. The very word "decay" is evidence for our decay; for, as Chesterton put it, "Our fathers said that a nation had sinned and suffered, like a man; we say it has decayed, like a cheese."

Consider just one more linguistic symptom of our decay. Whenever you hear a liberal theologian calling for a more "adult" Christianity, please remember what the word "adult" means in our culture. (What is an "adult" bookstore, or an "adult" movie?) Ask yourself then what is the relationship between such a theologian and a certain old out-of-date teacher who said, "Unless you become as little children, you can not enter the Kingdom of God."
What happened? An eclipse. Nietzsche called it "the death of God," but Buber replied with the alternative image of the "eclipse of God." When the sun is eclipsed it is still there, but no longer seen. When someone is dead, he's no longer there. But both death and eclipse produce a similar effect in our experience: darkness.

It is a "darkness at noon," as Koesteler's title says, because noon is when eclipses happen. This is true both astronomically and historically. The noonday devil of pride arranges for the eclipse. It's the old Greek *hybris* plot, and it's been repeated many times: ancient Israel, Greece, Rome, America. Today secularism, subjectivism, relativism, materialism, and hedonism are the craters on the moon that has risen up to eclipse the sun of God just at the noon hour of human pride and cleverness, the triumph of "man's conquest of nature." Just as Lewis prophetically warned in *The Abolition of Man*, the culmination of "man's conquest of nature" has been his conquest of human nature by "liberating" it from the constraints of the natural moral law, the "Tao."

The change is not merely that we are behaving like beasts, but that we are believing like beasts. Man has never obeyed the Tao very well, but he at least believed in it, and thus felt guilt. The new philosophy has removed guilt. It has made hypocrisy impossible, for "hypocrisy is the tribute vice pays to virtue."

Nietzsche's "death of God" is a real event, but wrongly described. It is not the death of God but of His image in the human soul. It is not the sun that is in darkness during an eclipse, as it seems, but the earth. "The death of God" is the pure psychological projection by a spiritual corpse.

Now when the symptoms of a terminal disease appear, whether in an individual or in a civilization, what is the reasonable thing to do? Not despair but treatment. Not keeping our nose to the symptoms, sniffing at the decay and frothing at the mouth. Rather, we must approach the problem coldly, calmly and logically, as a doctor would. We must be both practical and scientific. To be practical is to find out what to do, and then do it. To be scientific is to ask for a clear, step-by-step analysis of the problem and its solution.

Such an analysis should use the most practical and pervasive idea in all scientific thinking, the principle of causality. Every medical analysis follows the principle of causality by going through four steps: observation, diagnosis, prognosis, and prescription; the observation of the symptoms, the diagnosis of the disease that causes the symptoms, the prognosis of the cure, and the prescription for the treatment that causes the cure. The symptoms are the bad effects, the diagnosis tells the bad cause, the prognosis the good effect, and the prescription the good cause.

Every practical philosophy answers these four questions, because a practical philosopher is a doctor for the soul. For instance, Buddha's "Four Noble Truths" follow exactly these four steps. The "Four Noble Truths" comprise the whole of Buddhism, according to Buddha himself in the "Arrow Sermon." First: to live is to suffer; all life is suffering. Second: the cause of suffering is selfish desire. Third: there is a way to end suffering and achieve Nirvana: namely, to end desire. Take away the cause and you take away its effect. Fourth: the way to end desire is to practice the Noble Eight-fold Path, the Buddhist yoga of ego-reduction.
Freudianism also contains these four steps. The symptoms are neurosis and psychosis. The diagnosis says the cause is the conflict between id and superego, between individual animal desire and social norms. The prognosis is homeostasis, or adjustment, a compromise of sorts. And the prescription is psychoanalysis.

Marxism sees the symptoms as class conflict, the diagnosis is Capitalism, the prognosis is the classless Communist society, and the prescription is for a worldwide proletarian revolution.

Platonism sees the symptoms as vice; the diagnosis is ignorance; the prognosis is virtue; and the prescription is philosophical wisdom via the Socratic method.

Christianity also fits this pattern. The symptom is death, the diagnosis is sin, the prognosis is salvation, and the prescription is repentance and faith. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rm. 6:23)—that single sentence sums up all Christian theology.

Let us now apply the generic form of this four step analysis to the particular content of the deadly disease in contemporary Western civilization.

The first of the four steps in the analysis is the observation of the symptoms. I think we all pretty much know both that the patient is critical and what the symptoms are; so I shall skip step one and spend most of my time on step two, the diagnosis.

For that is what we mainly go to the doctor for. We go to the doctor only after we have already observed the symptoms; otherwise we wouldn't be there. "Those who are sick need a physician, not those who are well. I come to call not the righteous, but sinners." (Mt 9:12)

And once the doctor performs step two, once he diagnoses the disease, steps three and four usually follow fairly routinely. Once you know the disease, you can consult the textbooks to see whether it can be cured (the prognosis) and if so, how (the prescription).

I am going to diagnose our disease as an eclipse of "the permanent things." Therefore we need some definitions. I already defined "eclipse," but not "permanent" or "things." What "things" are permanent? And in what way are they "permanent?"

We can mean three different things by "permanent" and three different things by "things." First, "permanent." How can anything be permanent? Essentially, either subjectively or objectively, or both, or neither.

First, something may be permanent both objectively, in itself, and also subjectively, in our consciousness. E.g. the law of causality: nothing ever arises without a cause, and everyone knows that. Both the fact and the knowledge of it are permanent.

Second, something may be permanent objectively but not subjectively—for instance, the truth of monotheism. If there is one God, He is permanent and eternal; but the world's knowledge of Him is not.
Third, something may be permanent subjectively but not objectively: a permanent illusion, such as the attractiveness of sin, or the egocentric perspective which we carry around with us all the time, as if I had first dibs on the name "I AM" rather than God.

Fourth, something may be permanent neither objectively nor subjectively, such as fads and fashions. These do not concern us here because they are not in any sense "permanent things." The other three are.

Take the crucial example of the Tao, moral values, the natural moral law. There are four possible positions about it: first, that it is permanent both objectively and subjectively: that there are eternal moral verities and that our awareness of them can never be eradicated from the human heart. This is the position of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Second, that the moral law is permanent objectively but not subjectively; that we can be changed into what Lewis in The Abolition of Man calls "men without chests," men whose chest, or heart, or conscience, or organ for apprehending the Tao, has atrophied.

Third, that the moral law is not objectively permanent but that it is subjectively permanent, a structural illusion of the psyche. This is Freud’s position: the super-ego is the unconscious reflection of society’s constraints on the id’s desires.

Fourth, that there is no objectively permanent moral law and no subjectively permanent moral law; that human nature is malleable and that conscience can be shaped, reshaped, or eradicated by social engineering. This is the position of Marx and of Behaviorism.

I make no apologies for calling Freud a fraud or for giving low marks to Marx, but I feel fear and trembling in arguing against Aquinas. But my daily experience of ordinary American life and people seems to tell me that the heart, the moral organ, has indeed atrophied. Perhaps the blood needed by the heart has migrated south to another, less subtle organ. There seems to be linguistic evidence for that, for the same people who confuse "adult" and "adulterous" also often confuse "organism" and "orgasm."

Well, I don't want to spend my time arguing whether the moral law is subjectively permanent or not, but I want to ask instead what things are objectively permanent. What kinds of "things" are "the permanent things," anyway? Certainly not concrete things, like concrete. What, then? Three things, at least.

First, permanent truths. These are not simply ideas in human minds, because our minds are not permanent. We change our minds faster than we change our clothes. If these "permanent things" are ideas, they must be in the divine mind. As Sartre says, "There can be no eternal truth if there is no eternal and perfect consciousness to think it." Aquinas says the same thing, in almost exactly the same words.

These permanent truths are not even the so-called "laws of nature," or laws of science. Heraclitus, the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher, first clearly realized the double truth that all matter is in motion and that there are permanent laws or formulas for this motion. He taught that "everything flows," like a river, but also that there was a permanent logos or law of change.
For him this was the law of the transformations between fire and water, earth and air; for us it is such truths as the law of transformation between mass and energy (E=MC²) or the equality between force and mass times acceleration.

But these laws of nature are not what I mean by "the permanent things." For they are only descriptions of how matter does behave, not laws of how it must behave. Molecules do not bow down before a pre-existing Ten Commandments of Matter before they set out on their daily rounds. There is no permanent necessity to the laws of nature. It is conceivable that they may change billions of years from now if and when all the matter in the universe gets sucked into Black Holes. It is generally agreed today that the laws of nature were radically different than they are now during the first few seconds of the universe's existence, right after the Big Bang.

No, by permanent truths I mean things like the Law of Non-contradiction, and the Law of Causality, and the multiplication table: the objective and unchangeable laws of logic, metaphysics, and mathematics. Nothing can ever both be and not be in the same way at the same time. Nothing can ever begin to be without any cause at all for its beginning to be. Two times three can never begin to equal seven.

Can anyone deny these "permanent things?" Yes indeed. Even they are not subjectively permanent. For many of our currently fashionable philosophies reduce them to symbol systems, useful conventions, mental biases, cultural copings, projections of our fear of death or chaos, word games, or even patriarchal plots to oppress women. Permanent objective truths are not necessarily permanent subjectively. I spent $18 for a badly written book by Allan Bloom because I got hooked on its wonderful first sentence: "If there is one thing every college professor in America can be certain of, or nearly certain of, it is that all or nearly all of the students who enter his classroom will believe, or think they believe, that truth is relative."

Why would someone want to deny objective truth? Who's afraid of the of non-contradiction? What's behind the insane attempt to soften up the very structures of sanity? I think it is not logical, mathematical, or metaphysical truths that threaten them, but moral truths. If there were permanent moral truths, that would mean that morality is no longer about nice, warm, fuzzy, vague, soft, negotiable things called "values" but about hard, unyielding, uncompromising, uncomfortable, non-negotiable things called "laws."

And their fear of permanent, objective moral laws is amazingly selective. It almost always comes down to just one area: sex.

In my experience, students, like professors, bluff a lot, and do adroit intellectual dancing. But I'd bet a wad of money that if only the sixth commandment were made optional, half of all the hatred and fear of the Church would vanish.

St. Augustine was one of the few honest enough to admit his obsession. After puffing great philosophical profundities about the intellectual problems that kept him back from the Church, he finally admits, in the Confessions, "The plain fact was, I thought I should be impossibly miserable without the embraces of a mistress." If that profoundly philosophical motive was what held back one of the most honest, truth-seeking wisdom-lovers in history, do you really hope that nobler ideals motivate the spiritual children of Woodstock?
Thus, much more crucial than permanent truths are permanent values, or rather, permanent moral laws, laws as objective and unchangeable as the laws of mathematics. Applying these laws may be uncertain and changeable, but they are not. Applying the laws of mathematics is also sometimes uncertain and changeable, e.g. when you try to measure the exact length of a live alligator.

(By the way, I think Lewis made a tactical error in conceding to use the modern word "values" instead of the ancient word "law" in The Abolition of Man. For to the mind of the modern reader, the idea of "objective values" is simply an unintelligible contradiction in terms. For this modern mind is Cartesian and Kantian; and to the Cartesian dualist, "objective" means merely "physical," which values are not, and to the Kantian moralist "values" mean something posited by man's will, not God's: something subjective, though universal. You see, there is real confusion here. God did not give Moses "The Ten Values." And the currently fashionable way of teaching moral relativism in American high schools is not called "Laws Clarification." There is a difference.)

A third kind of "permanent things" emphasizes the word "things." Not only are there permanent truths and permanent moral laws, but also permanent things. There is a wonderful passage about this in Till We Have Faces. After Orual's sister Psyche tells Orual that she has seen the face of the god, her husband, and his palace, his house, Orual wonders whether it could be true even though she cannot see these things. She asks her Greek tutor and philosopher, the Fox:

"You don't think—not possibly—not as a mere hundredth chance—there might be things that are real though we can't see them?"

"Certainly I do. Such things as Justice, Equality, the Soul, or musical notes."

"Oh, Grandfather, I don't mean things like that. . . . Are there no things—I mean things—but what we see?"

The "things" Orual suspects are not physical things, yet they are not abstract ideas either. They are solid and substantial and real, like gods, or Platonic Forms. The immense difficulty modern students have in understanding Plato's famous Theory of Forms as anything other than abstract class concepts can be seen from their utter incomprehension (yet fascination) with Charles Williams' novel The Place of the Lion, in which the very real and active protagonists are Platonic Forms (!); and in students' equal incomprehension (and fascination) with the Great Dance at the end of Perelandra, especially this Platonic point in it:

He could see (but the word "seeing" is now plainly inadequate) wherever the ribbons or serpents of light intersected, minute corpuscles of momentary brightness; and he knew somehow that these particles were the secular generalities of which history tells—peoples, institutions, climates of opinion, civilisations, arts, sciences, and the like—ephemeral coruscations that piped their short song and vanished. The ribbons or cords themselves, in which millions of corpuscles lived and died, were things of a different kind. At first he could not say what. But he knew in the end that most of them were individual entities. . . . Some of the thinner and more delicate cords were beings that we call short-lived: flowers and insects, a fruit
or a storm of rain . . . Others were such things as we also think lasting: crystals, rivers, mountains, or even stars. Far above these in girth and luminosity, and flashing with colours from beyond our spectrum, were the lines of the personal beings . . . . But not all the cords were individuals; some were universal truths or universal qualities. It did not surprise him then to find that these and the persons were both cords and both stood together as against the mere atoms of generality which lived and died in the clashing of their streams; but afterwards, when he came back to earth, he wondered.

These Platonic universals are not abstractions. They are things. They are gods, or spirits. In "The Descent of the Gods" chapter of That Hideous Strength, each of the planetary spirits is both a universal quality, like joviality, and a particular entity, like Jove. Jove, or Jupiter, does not merely symbolize joy; he is joy. Joy is not an abstract property, but a "permanent thing," a reality, a god.

Lewis is so insistent on this point about the concreteness, not abstractness, of nonphysical realities, that in Miracles he goes so far as to call God Himself a particular thing. He says:

What we know through laws and general principles is a series of connections. But in order for there to be a real universe, the connections must be given something to connect: a torrent of opaque actualities must be fed into the pattern. If God created the world, then He is precisely the source of this torrent . . . . But if God is the ultimate source of all concrete, individual things and events, then God Himself must be concrete and individual in the highest degree. Unless the origin of all other things were itself concrete and individual, nothing else could be so; for there is no conceivable means whereby what is abstract or general could itself produce concrete reality. Bookkeeping continued to all eternity could never produce one farthing. Metre, of itself, could never produce a poem.

. . . if by using the word "infinite" we encourage ourselves to think of God as a formless "everything" about whom nothing in particular and everything in general is true, then it would be better to drop the word altogether. Let us dare to say that God is a particular Thing. Once, He was the only Thing; but He created, He made other things to be. He is not those other things. He is not "universal being" . . . . He has a determinate character. Thus He is righteous, not amoral; creative, not inert. . . . And men are exhorted to "know the Lord," to discover and experience this particular character.

We have defined three kinds of "permanent things." All three are in eclipse in our civilization. Now I want to concentrate especially on the second one, the moral "things," and on the little classic The Abolition of Man, one of the half dozen books I would like to make everyone in our culture read, at gunpoint if necessary, for the sake of sanity and survival.

One of the things this book does for our culture is to show us ourselves in our radical distinctiveness from all previous cultures. The most enlightening single sentence I have ever read about our culture and how radically different it is from all previous cultures is this one from The Abolition of Man:

There is something which unites magic and applied science [technology] while separating both from the 'wisdom' of earlier ages. For the wise men of old the cardinal problem had been
how to conform the soul to reality, and the solution had been knowledge, self-discipline, and
virtue. For magic and applied science alike the problem is how to subdue reality to the wishes of
men, and the solution is a technique.4

We usually misunderstand the spiritual significance of technology, for we associate it with
science more than with magic. Of the four enterprises—magic, religion, science, and
technology—most moderns would classify science and technology together and magic and
religion together. Not so Lewis. He sees deeper. The deepest unity, the unity of ultimate aim and
purpose, unites magic and technology: the aim of both is the satisfaction of our desires by power
and control. The opposite aim unites science and religion: conformity to objective truth. Just as
the aim of the magician and the aim of the saint are opposites, so the aim of the pure scientist
and the aim of the engineer are opposites. It is not the spirit of pure science, the spirit of pure
curiosity and wonder, that our culture values, but the spirit of practical success and power. It was
classical Greek and medieval civilization that valued the spirit of pure science, though they did
not have the efficient method to do it very well. If there is one thing that is abundantly clear
from a study of the lives as well as the writings of modern intellectuals, it is that only a small and
uninfluential minority of them believe in and practice the pure love of objective truth, especially
moral truth.

Toynbee distinguished 21 great civilizations in human history, of which ours is the latest.
Every one of them admitted the Tao, objective moral truths. Ours is the first civilization to deny
the Tao. The most radically new feature of our civilization is not technology, its newly powerful
means, but the lack of an end, a summum bonum. We are the first civilization that does not know
why we exist.

Every past civilization has had some religious answer to that question. The essence of
modernity is the abandoning of that religious foundation, and thus eventually also abandoning
the moral first story of the same civilizational building. Morality has always rested on religion in
practice, even if a few philosophers like Plato and Aristotle could defend it without religion in
theory. Dostoevsky wrote, "If God does not exist, everything is permissible." History shows far
more people, both atheists and theists, on Dostoevsky's side than on Plato's here. For Sartre,
"there can be no eternal Good since there is no infinite and perfect consciousness to think it."
For Nietzsche, the consequence of the good news that "God is dead" is a "transvaluation of all
values." Like Milton's Satan, he says, in effect, "Evil, be thou my good." He declares love,
compassion, mercy, justice, impartiality, and democracy to be weak and therefore evil; cruelty,
ruthlessness, war, competition, and selfishness are good. For from the natural struggle of
selfishness emerges the strongest, the Superman.

Please do not be horrified, but I am often tempted to thank God for Hitler. For if one big
Hitler and one big Holocaust had not scared the Hell out of us, we might be living in a
worldwide Hitler-Holocaust-Hell right now. God rubbed our face in it—we have seen the pure
logical consequences of "the death of God" in the fires of Auschwitz. Yet most of us in the
West still have not learned the old and simple lesson (scandalous to modern intellectuals simply
because it is simple and old) that "unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build
it." No one in our time has ever faced and answered the question: If there is no God, why
shouldn't I do as I please if I can get away with it? Because it's not acceptable," nice, humane,
human, democratic, fair, just, community-building, helpful, survival-enhancing, practical, and
approved? But suppose I don't want to be acceptable, nice, humane, human, democratic, fair, just, community-building, helpful, survival-enhancing, practical, or approved? I have never heard any reply to that from any humanist. No one has ever answered Dostoevsky's "Underground Man." The existentialists refute humanism. You don't need an Augustine or an Aquinas to refute humanism, only a Nietzsche or a Sartre.

If Dostoevsky is right, morality without religion is impossible. For there is no morality without real moral laws, binding duties, objective obligations. A morality of mere convention, man-made and thus man-revisable rules of the social game, is not morality at all, only mores. Life under such pseudo-morality is not real moral warfare, only war games, and we are never on the hot seat, but in a hot tub.

So there is no morality without moral absolutes. But there can be no moral absolutes without God. That's the second step. An absolute law can come from and be enforced by only an absolute will. Finally, no civilization can stand without morality. That should be exceedingly obvious, both from common sense and from history. Thus: without religion, no moral absolutes, without moral absolutes, no real morality, and without real morality, no survival of civilization. Thus without religion, civilization cannot survive. And

has not survived. This is not just a law of logic but also of history. Every civilization in history has had a religious base. Ours is experimenting with a deviation from history's most obvious and universal law. The prognosis thus does not look very hopeful. If you can't even fool Mother Nature, you certainly can't fool Father God.

This fact comes as a surprise only to this generation, the first to be Biblically illiterate. All I have done is to translate into abstract, logical language the simple, punchy point of Old Testament history that a nation's fate rests on its faith.

There is one thing even stupider than modernism abandoning religion in society: theological modernism abandoning religion even in religion. The essence of theological modernism is the denial of the supernatural (miracles, Christ's divinity and resurrection, Heaven and Hell, the Second Coming, and the divine inspiration of scripture). These fundamentals of the faith are labeled "fundamentalistic"—modernity's other F-word. Modernism reduces religion to morality, morality to social morality, and social morality to socialism.

In fact, its instinctive gravitation to socialism is natural. For socialism and religion are the only two answers to a problem Lewis poses in The Abolition of Man: the problem of the Controllers versus the controlled, the Conditioners versus the conditioned. To see this, we must first review his argument in that book.

Lewis' argument in chapter 3 is absolutely stunning, both in the sense of intellectually brilliant and in the sense of emotionally terrifying. It is that "man's conquest of nature" without the Tao must necessarily become nature's conquest of man. For "man's conquest of nature" must always mean, in the concrete, some men's power over other men, using nature as the instrument. Lewis' examples of the wireless, the airplane, and the contraceptive show this: some men wield the newly-won power over others as its patients. Perhaps they are its willing patients, but they are its patients. Now as long as both the agents and the patients of these powers over nature admit and
work within a common Tao, or moral law, they have the same interests, rights, and values. Monarchy is not oppressive if the king and the people are working for a common goal under a common law and share a common dignity. But if the power elite, whether king, voting majority, or media elite, cease to believe in an objective Tao, as is clearly the case in our society, then they become Controllers, Conditioners, Social Engineers, and the patients become the controlled. Propaganda replaces propagation. Propagation is "old birds teaching young birds to fly." Propaganda is programming parrots. Propagation is the transmission of tradition. Propaganda is the invention of innovation. Which of the two is piped into our brains daily by our media?

This new class of Innovators, the Tao-less Conditioners, will themselves be motivated in their social engineering, but not by the Tao, which is supernatural and eternal, a "permanent thing." Instead, they will be motivated by their natural impulses, which are non-permanent things: their heredity and environment, especially their environment, especially the fashionable opinions. This means they will be motivated by Nature, not by "the permanent things," which are supernatural.

Thus "man's conquest of nature" must be expanded at both ends: the conquerors are themselves conquered by nature (Tao-less environment), and they in turn only use nature to conquer other men. Thus "man's conquest of nature" turns out to be nature's conquest of man. Man's triumph is thus man's abolition, for the new man is an artifact. Those who have been conditioned out of the belief in free will, lose their free will. Those who believe they are only clever apes, become only clever apes. "Made in U.S.A." comes to mean "made in the image of King Kong," not King Christ. Where is Christ? In a jar of Andres Serrano's urine. Artists are prophets, antennae.

Now there are only two ways out of this "abolition of man" by social engineering. One is, of course, the return to the Tao. This is unlikely because the one thing modernity resists the most is return. It believes in progress, not repentance. But this would be a solution to the alienation between the Conditioners and the conditioned because both would then be under the same moral law. That spiritual equality would overshadow the physical and social inequality. The authorities would then wield power only in the name of the common objective Tao.

The other way to unity is socialism: not spiritual unity of a Tao but mere physical unity, i.e. social unity, i.e. economic unity. A "classless society" will supposedly make it impossible for one class to conquer or condition others. From the history of secular socialist and communist experiments that we have seen so far, I think we must not only call all the experiments failures but also call most of the experimenters liars and hypocrites. The most systematic oppression and mass murders in history have been carried out in the name of social equality, and blessed by the intellectuals, both of the Left and the Right. Statistical studies have revealed that in Hitler's concentration camps, the cruelest torturers were the most educated.

Socialism's dream is naive because mere equality does not automatically destroy oppression. Egalitarianism can be as oppressive as any tyranny. De Tocqueville pointed out long ago that democratic totalitarianism is not a contradiction in terms, and that Americans are naive if they think that the sheer political structure of democracy will protect them against totalitarianism. For democracy and totalitarianism are not opposite answers to the same question, but answers to two different questions, and thus can be compatible. Democracy is an answer to the question: In
**whom** is the social-political power located? The answer is: in the people at large. Totalitarianism is an answer to the question: How much power are the social-political authorities to have? The answer is: total power, power to reshape human life, human thought, human nature itself.

Here are three examples of democratic totalitarianism: in theory, Rousseau's "General Will" (vox populi, vox dei); in fiction, Huxley's *Brave New World*; and in fact, the American media establishment.

Only the Tao can ensure freedom. Only when we are bound to a higher law of permanent, unchangeable, objective moral absolutes, are we free from being determined by the lower laws of animal instincts, selfishness, sin, and propaganda. Only conformity to the trans-social Tao can make nonconformity to a decadent society just, or even possible. For we do, and must, conform to something, or else we are formless. The only question is: To what? There are only two possible answers: to what is higher than ourselves or to what is lower, supernature or nature, the Bible or MTV, Jesus Christ or Norman Lear, the Crucified or the crucifiers.

Let's take a time-out and take stock for a moment. How far down the slide have we slid? How much of the Tao is already lost? How many of the objectively permanent things have become subjectively impermanent?

I count at least 33: silence, solitude, detachment, self-control, contemplation, awe, humility, hierarchy, modesty, chastity, reverence, authority, obedience, tradition, honor, simplicity, holiness, loyalty, gentlemanliness, manliness, womanliness, propriety, ceremony, cosmic justice, pure passion, holy poverty, respect for old age, the positive spiritual use of suffering, gratitude, fidelity, real individuality, real community, courage, and absolute honesty (the passionate, or fanatical love of truth for its own sake). That's one lost value for each of the years in Christ's life.

We could, of course, profitably spend hours, days, perhaps lifetimes exploring each one of these 33 lost values; and we could probably add 33 more. But in this age of progress and time-saving devices we have no time for such important things any more—things like conversation, debate, meditation, prayer, deep friendship, imagination, even family. (If the sexual revolution doesn't do the family in, it will die for lack of time.)

But, you may think, this gloomy picture I have painted of a spiritual Dark Ages is only half the picture. What of all the progress we've made?

Well, let's look at the progress we've made. It can be divided into two kinds: spiritual and material. Let's take spiritual progress first. I think there has been some significant spiritual progress in modernity in at least one area: kindness vs. cruelty. I think we are much kinder than our ancestors were, especially to those we used to be cruel to: criminals, heretics, foreigners, other races, and especially the handicapped. I think this is very real progress indeed. I wonder, though, whether one big step forward offsets 33 steps back, some of them also big, some medium sized, but none small.

In any case, the case for progress and modernity usually rests either on one of two grounds: either supposed spiritual progress that is not progress at all (e.g. freedom from superstition, authority, absolutist morality, Biblical literalism, Church dogma, and the like), or explicitly
material progress, scientific and technological progress. It is this last area which is spectacular and indisputable, and thus the strongest case for Progressivism.

Our civilization certainly has produced astounding, magnificent, utterly undreamed-of successes in understanding and mastering the forces of nature. I think every intelligent human being born before the Renaissance, if transported by a time machine to today, would be stupefied with wonder, marvel and admiration at the awesome progress in science and technology, i.e. material progress, in our world.

But now I ask a strange and unusual and very upsetting question: is there such a thing as material progress at all? Or is this a confusion of categories, like a blue number, or a rectangular value? I am not sure of this, but I want to suggest, for your consideration, the possibility that there is not and can not be any such thing as purely material progress; that only spirit can progress.

The reason I think this surprising and unpopular conclusion is true has something to do with the nature of time. To see this, we must speak Greek for a minute. The Greek language is much richer and subtler than English when it comes to philosophical distinctions, and Greek has two words for time, not just one. \textit{Kronos} means the time measured objectively, impersonally, and mathematically by the motion of unconscious matter through space. For instance, one day of \textit{kronos} is always exactly 24 hours long, the time it takes for the earth to rotate. \textit{Kairos}, on the other hand, is human time, lived time, experienced time, the time measured by human consciousness and purposive reaching out into a future that is not yet but is planned for. Only \textit{kairos} knows anything of goals and values.

For instance, when St. Paul writes, "It is now time to rise from sleep, because your salvation is nearer than when you first believed," he does not mean by "time" something like "June 30 of the year 50 A.D." "It is now time to die" does not mean "it is 3:20 P.M." Ends, goals, and purposes measure \textit{kairos}, and these things exist only in consciousness, in spirit, not in mere matter.

The reason why I think only spirit can progress is because only spirit lives in \textit{kairos}. For only \textit{kairos} touches eternity, knows eternity, aims at eternity. Progress means not merely change, but change toward a goal. The change is relative and shifting, but the goal is absolute and permanent. If not, if the goal changed along with the movement toward it, we could not speak any more of progress, only change. There is no progress if the goal line recedes in front of the runner as fast as the runner runs. You can't steal second base if the second baseman has already stolen it and is running to third.

Think of a circle, like a pie, with a segment, like a piece of pie, in it. The segment is \textit{kairos}, lived time, lifetime. The circumference is \textit{kronos}. \textit{Kronos} limits how much \textit{kairos} there is (e.g. 80 years), but it does not determine the other dimension of \textit{kairos}, the dimension of progress. Progress means getting closer to the goal, which in my geometrical image is symbolized by the center of the circle. That would be eternity, permanence. Only in the \textit{kairos} dimension, i.e. the spiritual dimension, can we speak meaningfully of progress at all. The only thing \textit{kronos} can do is endlessly circle around the center and limit the quantity of any segment of \textit{kairos}, but the circumference is equidistant from the center. This symbolizes the fact that our lived time, our
lifetime, can move toward eternity, but purely material time cannot. You get closer to God by sanctity, not by aging. The world gets closer to God by improving spiritually, not by improving materially. And God is the goal, the measure of progress.

The essence of modernity is the death of the spiritual. A modernist is someone who is more concerned about air pollution than soul pollution. A modernist is someone who wants clean air so he can breathe dirty words.

A modernist cares about big things, like whales, more than little things, like fetuses; big things like governments, more than little things like families and neighborhoods; big things like states, which last hundreds of years, more than little things like souls, which last forever.

A modernist, thus, is one who puts his faith and hope for progress in precisely the one thing that cannot progress: matter. A traditionalist, on the other hand, is one who `looks not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen, for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are unseen are eternal." (II Cor 4:18) A traditionalist believes in "the permanent things," and the permanent things cannot progress because they are the things to which all real progress progresses.

Perhaps I should modify my stark statement that matter cannot progress at all. Perhaps matter can progress, but only with and in and for spirit. If your body and your tools and your possessions serve your spirit, make you truly happy and good and wise, they contribute to progress too.

But this modification does not help the progressive at all, since it is pretty obvious that modernity's technological know-how and power has not made us happier, wiser, better, or more saintly than our ancestors. When we speak of modern progress, we do not mean progress in happiness, in contentment, in peace of mind. Nor do we mean progress in holiness and moral perfection or wisdom. We speak readily of "modern knowledge" but never of "modern wisdom." Rather, we speak of "ancient wisdom." For wisdom is to knowledge what kairos is to kronos: the spiritual and purposive and teleological and moral dimension.

Incidentally, this point about kairos and kronos liberates us not only from the ignorant worship of the nonexistent god "Progress" but also from the ignorant lust to be "up to date." A date, being mere kronos, has no character. It is almost nothing. It is a one-dimensional line, the circumference. A line can have no color. Only kairos, only a two-dimensional segment of the circle, can have character, and color. Since a date is only a point on the circumference, it has no character. Nothing can ever be really "up to date." What a wild goose chase is our lust to be "with it" or "contemporary"! What a waste of passion and love and energy!

It's all in the Bible, of course. All this stuff about "love not the world" and how hard it is for the rich to be saved—it's very practical. St. Teresa of Avila wrote, "Anyone who wishes to enter the second Mansion will be well advised, as far as his state of life permits, to try to put aside all unnecessary affairs and business." One thing painfully obvious about modern "progress" is that we all are much busier now than we ever used to be. All these time-saving devices have done exactly the opposite of saving time: they've killed time, or enslaved us to time, to kronos, to the clock. Jesus is a very good psychologist when he says, in the parable of the sower, that we are
choked and suffocated by the brambles of the cares and riches and pleasures of life, so the seed of life cannot grow, cannot progress. Progress retards progress! Progress is the enemy of progress! Business chokes our real business here. Riches make real riches extremely difficult. Remember Mother Teresa's simple, Christ-like words at Harvard: "You did not invite me here from a poor country to speak to a rich country. America is not a rich country. America is a desperately spiritually poor country." America is a poor country. This only seems paradoxical to us. In fact, it is simplicity itself. It is we who are standing on our head; that's why Christ's simplicities appear to us as upside down paradoxes. Once we get right side up again, we will see how simple it is. And the world will see us as upside down and strange, and "out of it." How wonderful to be "out of it" when "it" is the maelstrom.

You may doubt the paradoxical point that progress retards progress. You may think it too pessimistic, world-denying, anti-progressive, irrelevant—"out of it," in a word. Well, here is one more argument for my outrageous paradox against progress. Let's take modernity's supposed progress to its limit, its end, its success. I think its failure will be most clearly and spectacularly evident if we look at its supreme success, by its own standards—like a prosecuting attorney who simply lets the accused criminal talk on and on and hang himself.

Modernity's progress in conquering nature is incomplete because nature still holds one trump card over all her conquerors: death. Nature always has the last word. Suppose genetic engineering conquered death. That would be the supreme triumph. Or would it?

Let's backtrack to Eden. You remember the story, of course. It began with the invention of advertising. Satan invented the first advertisement: "Eat this; it will make you like God." It was a lie, of course, like most of the industry. Modern technology is Satan's new advertisement. It tempts us, as it tempted Eve, to become like God in power (but not in virtue). Artificial immortality would be the supreme sell job. We would mortgage our soul for that, the conquest of the very power of life. That would conquer even the highest of the angels, the seraphim, whom God stationed at the gate of Eden with a flaming sword to prevent us from eating the fruit of the tree of eternal life. Death was God's severe mercy, the tourniquet around the wound of sin, to limit sin to 80 years or so. Remove the tourniquet, and history would bleed to death. Imagine the Roman Empire forever. Imagine the Third Reich forever. Imagine America forever. Lewis speaks of our "nightmare civilizations" whirling around themselves in never-ending gyrations of selfishness and despair (in Miracles), and (elsewhere, in Mere Christianity) of eggs that never hatched (by death) and so went rotten. "You can't just be a good egg forever; you must hatch or go bad." Death lets us hatch; artificial immortality would make us go bad forever. Hell incarnate would reign on earth. That would have to be the end of the world. And most geneticists estimate we will have it in 2-300 years (according to Osborn Seagerberg in The Immortality Factor).

How wonderful Progress is!

Let's now back up and ask the psychological question about motivation: why did our civilization suddenly develop this lust for power? What caused the great sea-change that The Abolition of Man defines? Why did we get a new summum bonum, "man's conquest of nature," or power?
I think Nietzsche, of all people, provides us with the answer. The children of this world are
wiser in their own generation than the children of light. Nietzsche, the prophet of nihilism,
understands modern nihilism better than its critics sometimes. Here is the sentence in Nietzsche
that answers our question. Viktor Frankl quotes it in *Man's Search for Meaning* as the key to why
some survived the Nazi death camps and others, often the strongest, did not: "A man can
endure almost any how if only he has a why." In other words, you can endure bad circumstances,
powerlessness, poverty, even a concentration camp, if and only if you have a meaning and
purpose to your whole life, and therefore also to suffering which is part of life. The corollary is
that if you do not have a "why," you will not be able to endure any "how" that is a little upsetting.

This explains the origin of modern technology. It did not drop out of the sky. Nor did
mankind suddenly get smart, by some genetic mutation. Rather, the old "why," or meaning and
purpose to life, the old *summum bonum*, began to weaken and decay. Once the sense of life's
significance was lost, we could not endure its sufferings, so we had to invent ways of conquering
nature to radically reduce those sufferings. A man with no "why" must conquer his "how."

St. Thomas says, "Man cannot live without joy. That is why one deprived of spiritual joy
necessarily turns to carnal pleasures." The same is true of societies as of individuals. When "God
is dead," idols must be worshipped, for man is innately a worshipper. When true joy dies, false
joys must be believed in. We are addicts. That's the only explanation for the amazing fact that
the whole human race idiotically tries the same experiment over and over again, with endless
little variations, even though it has failed every single time, billions and billions of times: the
experiment of idolatry, of hoping to find happiness and joy and fulfillment and adequate and
final meaning in this world, trying to find the *summum bonum* in the creature rather than the
Creator. In light of the dismal track record of this vehicle, it is amazing that we keep gassing it
up and putting it on the road again. It is more than amazing, it is insanity. The human race is
spiritually insane. That is what the shocking doctrine of Original Sin means. It is shocking to us
only because we are standing on our heads again, just as with the paradox about progress.

True joy is significance, false joy is power. True joy is finding truth and choosing goodness.
False joy is fabricating ideologies and "creating your own values," and buying beauty. True joy is
smelling the rose, false joy is plucking and possessing it.

Western civilization began to worship power when it began to doubt significance. The
reason Lewis and Chesterton and Williams and Tolkien fascinate us so much is fundamentally
that they still live in the medieval world, a world chock full of built-in, God-designed
significance. That's why they all think analogically, sacramentally, imagistically. For them,
everything means something beyond itself. Everything is not only a thing, but a sign, full of
significance. Modernity, confining itself to the scientific method as the model for knowing
reality, deliberately induces in itself what Lewis calls a dog-like state of mind, full of facts and
empty of significance.

Point to your dog's food and he will sniff your finger. Show a baby a book and he will try to
eat it rather than read it. Show a modern a lion and he will try to tame it and make money out of
it in a circus, and smile superiorly at the quaint old medievals who saw it as the King of Beasts
and the natural symbol in the animal kingdom of the great King of Kings.
That's also why Tom Howard is so fascinating, especially in *Chance or the Dance?*

That's also why modern scripture scholars tend to be either fundamentalist literalists or modernist demythologizers: neither side sees that an event like the resurrection can be both a literal historical fact and a sign or symbol. The words man makes are signs that point to things beyond themselves; but the things God makes are also signs. The whole world points beyond itself. But the whole modern mind has lost this sign-reading dimension of consciousness. Even Christians have to strain to see it. We have lost the very powerful and all-pervasive sense of significance; therefore we must replace it with science (i.e. factual knowledge) and technology (i.e. power).

At the far end of this loss of significance lies Deconstructionism, which denies that even words have significance, intentionality, a meaning that points beyond themselves. Archibald MacLeish says, "A poem must be palpable and mute, like globed fruit . . . a poem must not mean, but be." If this means what it seems to mean, it is proto-deconstructionism, linguistic nihilism, and the beginning of the end—the end of a human history and consciousness that begins with "In the beginning was the Word." Nietzsche wrote, sagely, "We (i.e. we atheists) are not done with God until we are done with grammar." It looks like we are now beginning to be done with grammar. The next step can be clearly seen by reading the apotheosis of *That Hideous Strength*, the Babel scene, or its original in Genesis 11 and Revelation 18. The ancient Tower of Babel story in Genesis and the apocalyptic Fall of Babylon prophecy in Revelation are the spiritual meaning of modernity. These two chapters are mirrors, reflecting each other and ourselves.

We're almost finished. We've spent nearly all our time on the diagnosis, and now we have to make a very quick prognosis and prescription, the last two of our four steps in our spiritual medical analysis of Western civilization.

The diagnosis was very bad news indeed. I wish it was not. Honestly, I do not enjoy playing the part of the prophet of doom. Like most Americans, I like to be liked, and the messenger of bad news is seldom liked. Do you like your dentist when he tells you your roots are decayed? I fear many of you will remember only one thing from this essay years hence: Kreeft is a Puddleglum. Doom and gloom loom on his horizon.

Actually, I *am* a Puddleglum. The Boston Red Sox have taught me that Calvinistic, New England wisdom. Yet my prognosis is surprisingly optimistic. For seven reasons, I will not pronounce the patient dead yet, or even terminal.

First, ignorance. No one knows the future but God.

Second, free will. Repentance, turning back, has happened in history and can happen again. If the liberal claims to have a bright crystal ball, the conservative shouldn't claim to have a dark one, but none at all. The liberal believes in maximal external freedom because he does not really believe in the primary internal freedom, free will, and the moral responsibility that goes with it, a responsibility that extends even to our eternal destiny. We who believe in free will must never despair of the salvation of any soul (remember the thief on the cross) or any society (remember
ancient Israel). As my favorite saint, Thomas More, put it, "The times are never so bad but that a
good man can live in them."

Third, there is the "skin of our teeth" principle. Humanity always seems to survive by the
skin of its teeth (to use the point and title of an old Thornton Wilder play). If any one of a
thousand chances had gone just slightly the other way, none of us would be here now. If the
temperature of the primeval fireball had been a trillionth of a degree hotter or colder three
seconds after the Big Bang, no life could ever have evolved anywhere in the universe. If the
cosmic rays had not bombarded the primeval slime at just the right angle, protein molecules
could never have come out of the stew. If Europe had not discovered ale before the Black
Death polluted the water supply, most of our ancestors would have died. If Hitler had gotten the
atom bomb, he would have destroyed the world. If your grandfather hadn't turned his head right
instead of left one day and noticed your grandmother on the trolley, he would never have dated
her, married her, and begat you. If one Egyptian tailor hadn't cheated on the threads of Joseph's
mantle, Potiphar's wife would never have been able to tear it, present it as evidence to Potiphar
that Joseph attacked her, gotten him thrown into prison, and let him be in a position to interpret
Pharaoh's dream, win his confidence, advise him to store seven years of grain, and save his
family, the 70 original Jews, from whom Jesus came. We owe our salvation to a cheap Egyptian
tailor.

Fourth, there is the rebound principle. After each night, a day. After each trough, a wave.
Eclipses end. Communism is dying. Bad things die. American decadence will die. If necessary,
America will die too. Diseases run their course. If our civilization is doomed, mankind is not—
not till the end of the world, and that's the happiest event of all, the coming of our Bridegroom.
Maranatha!

Fifth, the Church is now the counter culture, not the culture, not the fat cat establishment;
North Vietnam, not South Vietnam; a catacomb church, not a Constantinian church. The
Church is thriving in every place she is persecuted—Poland, Lithuania, East Germany, China.
She is sick only where she is established: England, West Germany, Holland, Scandinavia. What
an exciting change of battle plans our General is now overseeing: from defense to offence! We
are now spies, guerrillas. We are the barbarians at the gates.

Sixth, the Church will win. Christ will win. That is guaranteed, by the only absolutely
trustworthy guaranteeer there is. If we only remember where our true country lies, and our true
citizenship, we are absolutely certain of victory. All who seek Christ find Him. If that is not so,
then He is a liar and you don't want to find Him then.

Seventh, the strongest force in history is not man's sin but God's grace. "Where sin
abounded, grace did much more abound." (Rm. 5:20) God can't lose. Othello can lose to Iago
but Shakespeare can't lose. God is our Shakespeare. History is His story. Identify with our
Author and you can't lose either, in the end.

But that's only "in the end." That's the long range prognosis. What of the short range
prognosis for that little local pocket of stuff called modern Western civilization? That may be
another kettle of fish entirely. The fish may be so rotten that the only thing for God to do is to
throw it out. And would that be so terrible, really? Compared with what we've just looked at,
compared with the Church and compared with the grace of God, the survival of Western civilization is a triviality. Our civilization is a carbuncle on the cosmos, a hemorrhoid on history.

Finally, the prescription: what shall we do? How shall we fight the good fight? What are our marching orders as we prepare for Armageddon, or Marathon, or Waterloo?

Four answers come to mind, four practical principles, four prescriptions.

First, be counter cultural. Like the Bible. Like the early Church. Like Augustine's *City of God*. Like Jesus. "Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds." Be a nut, a fanatic, a weirdo. Was it ever said of the early Christians that they were "cool," or "with it"? Or, to use exact adult equivalents, that they were "appropriate" or "acceptable"? No, here's what the world said: "These that have turned the world upside down have come here." (Acts 17:6) Let's turn the world upside down, for it's standing on its head, with its eyes in the mud and its feet kicking up in rebellion at the heavens. (Sorry, Chesterton, that's about the twentieth image I stole from you. Perhaps this confession will work the good penance of making more good thieves of your goods.)

Second, be ready. Be ready for battle, for we are at war. Edie Galbraith writes, in a letter to the *National Catholic Register*:

I'm getting tired of constantly praying for peace. What's wrong with praying for *victory* once in awhile? We belong to the Church Militant; we're engaged in a battle. The battle is with the powers of darkness. Since there is never any shortage of darkness, I think we should be allowed to pray for the grace to be victorious.

What difference does it make when you think you're at war? You get a sense of perspective. A matter of life and death appears as it is: as a matter of life and death. Trivia appears as it is: trivia. No one complains that the beds are lumpy on a battlefield. No one even bleats about "sexual needs" when live bullets are whistling past the ears.

Third, be ready for the end. For we may well be very near the end. Passionate, anxious, expectant longing for the end, for the return of the Lord, was the high octane fuel of the early Church. We have watered down the fuel today.

I do not think we need to make arrogant and foolish predictions in order to say "Maranatha" with an exclamation point. A good third baseman need not predict that the next pitch will be hit to him as a screaming line drive in order to be prepared for one. Let us be alert.

Alertness is not worry. Worry drains your energy; alertness conserves it, because it is calm, not agitated: deadly calm, in the face of a matter of life or death, especially spiritual life or death. For the war we are all in, like it or not, is the war between Heaven and Hell, and at stake is human souls.

Finally, for this greatest of all wars we must use the greatest of all weapons, the strongest power that is.
Our enemies are supernatural, of course, but we also have natural, concrete, human enemies, those who are doing Satan's work, consciously or unconsciously, as we try to do Christ's, those who passionately hate us and want to kill us, i.e. to destroy the Church and make our souls like theirs. They are in the ACLU and Planned Parenthood and the Gay and Lesbian Task Force, and media boardrooms. But they are also in the legislatures and the corporations, and sometimes even in the seminaries. What is our strongest weapon against them?

There is one that is guaranteed to defeat them, and we alone have it. Their weapon is hate, ours is love. God's love. ἀγάπη. We can defeat our enemies by making them our friends, by loving them to death. It may take forever. But love never ends, never gives up. Not even when it sees Calvary. And once it has seen that, everything else is trivial, including the decadence of Western civilization.

Endnotes

1 C. S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces* (St. James Place, London: Collins, Son & Co., Ltd., 1979), 150.


Address at Christendom College's Summer Institute on Apologetics, July 1990

It later became a chapter in Kreeft's *C. S. Lewis for the Third Millennium: Six Essays on The Abolition of Man*, Ignatius Press, 1994