

THE GREAT REUNION

After C.S. Lewis' *The Great Divorce*

By Nancy M. Cross

THE GREAT REUNION

Chapter I

If there had been any place of escape I would have fled the apartment; however, the empty streets of greytown offered no havens. Tousle-headed Poet dawdling in my apartment that dismal afternoon had worn my patience to a fissile thread. It was not womanly compassion that kept me from ordering him out; it was fear.

It had been slow coming, but I was sunk in a morass of dread. To be cut off from all human contact was entirely possible. I never had been a fearful person, but this was different. Already there were no neighbors - not one - the present company not counted; the apartment building, after venomous fights between the tenants, was entirely vacant except for his furfuracious room three floors up.

When I looked down the street, blank fronts of buildings stared back at me through sightless windows edged by jagged lashes of glass. Old pull shades blinked above like torn lids, some short, some long; and curtain shreds moved by the wind would alternately fan up hope, or more often terror that another person still moved there. No, there was no place to go. Pacing up and down the room, I deliberately kept away from the view so I wouldn't be tormented with the visual repetition of the awful truth.

Inside the confinement of the four walls this leech of a person, presuming on the blackmail I was willing to pay fear, held me hostage. The punishment was hours of "readings" of pretentious poetry. I both longed for him to go and couldn't bear the thought of it. The possibility was ever present that he would leave the room upstairs and look for a more appreciative audience. I knew, and he should have, that in narcissistic greytown there were few listeners even if a colony of persons still could be found. Yet he might go looking. Solitude when a choice had always been a blessing, but when it threatened to become my fate, it loomed the ultimate curse. So, as he droned on from sheaves of doggerel, I forced myself to contain my rising irritation and anxiety.

All that Tousle-head's presence implied joined together with the unlifting gloom of greytown to spawn that fungi-fruit - despair. Existence here had become unbearable. He, on the other hand, so absorbed with himself and his talent, found it tolerable so long as there was attention, even coerced attention plied from someone as distracted and oppressed as I. In fact, it gave him pleasure to be irritating because it proved just how unappreciated he really was. All that he could see of the abysmal lacking of greytown was inequity. Yet, it was he, sprawled across my divan that day (was it ever day in greytown?) who unintentionally pointed the way out.

Struggling with despondency, on the brink of hysteria - that pent-in scream that split my head - I had been moving back and forth across the room trying to keep hold of myself, when the faintest impulse flickered on the edges of my consciousness like an embryonic firefly. Pulsing weakly, I scarcely noticed it before it died away. Perhaps I dreamed a dream long ago in some far-off place that was struggling to

become a memory. Again a slight stirring. It behaved like a ghostly shape barely caught in the corner of my eye, disappearing when I turned my gaze upon it. At any rate a small bubble was rising in the pitch. What should I remember? Was there something? I must know! "Help! Oh, help!" I cried this silently to no one in particular; not thinking it was prayer.

Then, as it in answer to this unspoken plea, Touse-head began a stanza that had a different ring to it. The words immediately caught my attention:

O Loathsome Day, when all around,
Yea, grass and tree, was wounding;
Too green the grass, too dense the leaf,
Too bright for eye, the leaf let lie!
Not made for man, not made for me,
No god I know would make it so.
Enduring Meadow, home for none,
But those who, own-self shunning
Will name as Truth, will say is Love,
The One unkind, The One who blinds,
With cross stabs sense and reason.
For man, full-fleshed, and fair of mind,
No truth is this, but treason!
O Loathsome Day, when all around,
The traitor god was wounding -

He stopped and looked up. "I was there you know." Peering through modish glasses with what he considered a boyish look he tossed the words over to me. I was tired to the bone with his mannerisms, but this poem had registered. Despite its offensive sexism there was something here close to real experience, definite, different from his usual vacuity.

"Where?" At the intensity of my voice his eyes became sly, like a child about to run and make you catch him. I thought I would shake him if he delayed a moment in answering me. That vehemence communicated itself.

"At Enduring Meadow, silly. You've heard of it. They tell everybody at the very first. But don't bother to go. They should be called endurance meadows. It would take a masochist to like that place; somebody off his rocker to want to stay. I consider that trip a spiteful joke."

“You mean that there’s a place that you can go from here like you described in that poem.” I had grabbed the last few pages from his hand and was fumbling through them, “that this is really true? Here.” I pointed to the words, “brightness, sharpness! Where? You tell me!”

That was it - the fleeting image. I was beginning to remember. We had been told, yes, at the Civic Centre when we arrived. We had received our ID. cards and the officials had said, “Don’t lose this, or you may forget who you are.” That had seemed very odd at the time, but no longer. Then there was something about a bus. . . about a trip when you are ready you’ll remember,” they’d said.

“Where? Where do you go to get that bus?” I was shouting.

He was easy to intimidate after all. While he told me the directions, I was grabbing my jacket. A check in the pocket for the I.D., a glance around the room, and I knew that there was nothing I needed or cared about taking, and I would never come back. Touse-head had admired my imagination in creating the apartment? Well, he could have it - good riddance! I knew that he would soon move on to find habitations no matter how far removed they might be. His need for center stage would compel him.

Following his directions, I ran. It was hard to see. Rain drops from a squall that had somehow managed to rouse itself out of the listless sky pelted my face. As my feet sped forward, doubt that anything so good could really be almost turned my resolve. But before that negative message could reach my feet, there was the bus! Its bright reds and golds illumined the whole corner; the color shimmered off the wet pavement in reflected, iridescent waves. It was a glorious sight. My shadow glanced off across the shine as I breathlessly climbed on board. The driver smiled at me saying nothing, and though I was the only traveler, closed the door and started the engine. Either it was a very poor day for business, or else he had been waiting just for me.

As the bus leapt into the air, I thought, “So the White Rabbit Bus is real after all.” My mind went back to a favorite radio program of childhood days in which by imagination I had been transported into the middle of wonderful tales of fantasy and adventure. The vehicle had been a bus which full of children, ‘jumped anywhere, anytime.’

With that happy memory, flooded over with thoughts of home and love, I began to shed the emotional overlay of abject sorrow that had engulfed me like thick ash. The entombment of greytown had cracked; my heart and mind began to rise. When I thought about the end of the journey and what I might find there, a feeling that had long been dead - anticipation - scattered the dullness that gripped my brain. This inner revival heightened as the bus, which had already ascended over the ugly chimney-forest of greytown, flew on and up in ever widening circles.

Like the green and yellow Minnesota morning back home easing out the darkness in my bedroom when I’d slowly pulled up the window blind, a clearer view came of the past grim weeks, or was it only days, or maybe months of after-death. Somehow I had gone through that dreaded passage and arrived in a strange partial state of being, neither quite dead, nor quite alive, in greytown. I’d been going through the

motions, mindlessly, slowly filling up with emptiness and terror, when something had emerged to save me from an after-death of lifelessness.

Suddenly I remembered! In my haste to leave greytown, I had forgotten it! I had forgotten my book! Left behind? The fruit of all my labors? How could I? I felt like a mother fleeing a burning building who in a fatal memory lapse has left behind a beloved child. I was stunned. How could it be that that which had occupied all my days, lengthening into years, that which had been my food and drink, in the impulse of a moment had been wholly forgotten? I'd have to . . .

But, no, I couldn't. There was no returning. Not now. One look at the back of the driver told me that. Nor was the regret, strong though it was, so keen that the finality caused me agony. That, I thought, was immensely strange. Why was I assuming it was all over? After all, I could go back if things didn't go right here. Touse-head had. I'd tried to be detached from this intellectual child because pride had been a constant temptation. But I'd never been free of it. I was proud of what I'd achieved. Not a theologian, nor even degreed from a university, I delved into Scripture, psychology, theology and Church history, and came up with an irrefutable, logical argument for the place of woman in the priesthood of the Catholic Church! Oh, yes!

Of course, Protestants had long ago seen the light, but my own tradition had been ignoring the obvious in its entrenched patriarchy. Many who read the manuscript, including some priests and religious, acclaimed my effort, calling it the best to date because I had gone beyond the usual analysis. Making excursions into sacramental theology, I began to see that there was possibly no need for priesthood or hierarchy of either gender, male or female. It was an intriguing idea and, of course, had the makings of another, and I thought, even more original work.

I was in search of a publisher when . . .when the accident happened. Being so much a part of me, I was not surprised to find the book still with me when I arrived at greytown. "You can't take it with you," I'd always been told. But obviously in some sense you could and did when some things had become an appendage.

It must have been that bore, Touse-headed Poet, whose grating presumption had distracted me; or was it the shock of the sudden eruption of hope that had so completely severed my ties to it. Whatever the cause, the absence of pain, which by rights should have been intense, now seemed a bit like relief. I would never have believed that there had been anything burdensome about that book. Yet, occasionally I had thought that writing it in a lighter vein, a little less wordy, without attempting so much philosophical jargon, might find a more extensive readership - hopefully even a publisher.

That thought now grew, and I found myself hoping that Enduring Meadows would have an out-of-the-way corner, fine-pointed black pens, good paper, and the uninterrupted time where such a new form could be given to the work. It would be hard to start over, but the imagined possibility heightened my eagerness, and I pressed my forehead against the brightening window to see outside.

Purity of blue light was everywhere. There was an intensity to the blue that reminded me of early evening after sunset on a wintry day at home when the temperature threatened to plunge far below zero. Nothing else was to be seen. I felt no fear, instead my heart filled up with happiness that at last I was to come to the place which our northern skies had been but the reflection. Then out of the brightness a cliff loomed in sight. We soared up its side and were soon over the edge.

Spread before us was a startling green meadow. I involuntarily covered my eyes with both hands. The light was too brilliant. "Abominable, it should be called endurance meadows," I heard Touse-head's indictment. Did the radiance have some peculiar force because my body contours were fading as the powerful flood increased? There were a few moments when optimism faded. Perhaps I was not fit for life here. Perhaps I would just cease to be - evaporate.

The bus stopped and the driver opened the door. I hesitated, but still screening my poor eyes, slowly got out of the seat, and pulling my jacket around me to give me some pretense of substance, I left the bus.

Chapter II

No wonder Tousle-head had despaired of this place. His self-indulgence was as out of place here as a marshmallow in the summer sun. The grass was like sword points stabbing through my old Adidas; and though my eyes were becoming accustomed to the brilliance, the vista was so expansive that it was not only my body that was a misty form; my mind also dimmed to monosyllabic thoughts. "Oh... ah. . . wha. . . . uhh. . . oh. . . how. . . ahhhhhh." It was unnerving.

I thought of myself as a person who rallied in the face of danger, probably more out of pride than courage. Those old instincts to resist kept me from falling back to the bus. Besides, the prospect of a return to greytown was unthinkable, the book notwithstanding. Better to evaporate here in the all pervading light than to ossify there in perpetual gloom.

So I stood and waited, how long and for what I didn't know. The stunned senses still wavered, but I was slowly able to take in what my blinking eyes were recording. Far off in heights beyond telling rose rank after rank of mountains that out-peaked my ability to perceive. They were bathed in what looked like the first glorious rays of morning. One of my first collected thought was, "Homer's 'rosy-fingered dawn.'" They shimmered on a horizon vastly further away than the prairie horizons of my earthly home. "The mountains of the gods," I whispered, "But are there gods here?" I had never thought that it was so.

"Oh, yes," the words were spoken by my ear. I jumped. My poor feet came down on the razor edged grass. I turned to look, at the same time trying to avoid more painful thrusts, and was kept from falling by a strong arm. It was a woman's face, a glorious face united to the substantial arm now around my waist that smiled kindly at my bewilderment.

"There are gods here. Remember the Scriptures, Mary, 'ye are gods?' He affirmed that. And the mountains are where they continue their journey."

"What? What? Who are you? And where did you know me from?" I was so startled the words came out defensively.

There was surprise. "I'm Sarah. Don't you remember me? Your colleague in Continuing Ed? You know, the writing seminar. I've been sent to meet you."

"Sarah? But you look so different, Sarah. You're so beautiful! Well, you were always nice looking, I don't mean that. . . ." I stumbled to find the right words.

She laughed, a clear laugh that sounded like carillon bells. "When we begin to materialize here in the real substance, we change - you'll see." Her face glistened with a joy that played up the classic evenness of her features. She was wonderful to look at. And she seemed so happy to see me. I looked down at myself, so faint and nondescript.

"Don't worry about that now," Sarah said, "you're already growing stronger. It won't take you long to put on some substance if I know you and your grit." Again that chiming laugh.

"We did have good times at the U. Whatever happened to your article, the one you sent to Commonweal? It was a zinger." I didn't know if I was making sense. There was a weak connection between my mouth and my brain, and the words just tumbled out.

"Oh, that - well, it didn't get published, Anyway it doesn't matter. That is all behind us now."

I took her hesitancy for modesty. "You were really a good writer, Sarah. I bet it came close to being accepted. Didn't the editor reply or anything? I found those editors really exasperating. Perhaps even Commonweal is subliminally anti-woman. You know, strange, but I forgot my book. Do you think maybe there's a..."

"Mary," (Until now I had not heard my name since a nurse's frantic voice had tried to call me back - too late. At greytown no one was known by name - another reason for the identification card. Rather we had known each other by some non-conformity. This rather than being an indication of individuality had been a generality. I had been called "Lib Woman," a name I hated.) "Mary, there's a different thought about things here. That's why I was sent to meet you.

"Your mother would have come; she's very happy you're here. But she sent you her love, and said to tell you that she would be eagerly waiting your arrival later. She's traveled quite high into the hills. Many of the ways here are like second nature to her, so she could not differentiate them for you. That is why I was asked to come. The wise ones desire that you stay here and not go back. They thought I could explain the way things are because our backgrounds are so similar."

We had been walking slowly, Sarah supporting much of the weight off my throbbing feet, towards a little grove of trees whose brilliant emerald and gold leaves glinted lights into the clear air. Gradually my eyes reconciled to the bright colors, even as my feet were a trifle more adapting. I attempted to ignore the pain and to understand what Sarah was trying to tell me. My mother . . . the wise ones . . . and why did she think I might not stay, that I might even yet go back to greytown?

"Let's sit here for a while," Sarah helped me lower myself to a large smooth stone of a buff color with a texture like fine egg shell. It only looked fragile; the moment I settled myself, as weightless as I seemed to be, I felt its resilient strength as though it had a lively being of its own. It didn't passively hold me but seemed to want to aid my resting. "A servant-like rock," I thought, "how curious. Nature, inanimate, but somehow bending towards me."

I squinted up at Sarah who sat across. She was unclothed but wore her nakedness with the unselfconsciousness of the fully clothed. Her body gleamed with the same radiance I saw in her face; and I noted in myself no shame in looking at her. My own jeans, jacket, and shirt, its slogan still intact, were what seemed inharmonious and even indecent in the surroundings. Yet, they tended to hide the shadow I was. It was better than being exposed to comparison with the full glory of her unadorned beauty.

Here the light that inspired the artists originated, though it had been only partially captured by even the greatest - the skin tones of Copley, the morning light of Vermeer. I was so taken up in looking

that again I lost my train of thought. My brain, full of random impressions, was working hard to pull things together. Sarah patiently waited.

“You were saying,” I blurted out, “things are different here? That’s an understatement. I wonder if I can take it. But there is no need to think I’ll ever return to greytown. Were you ever there?” I shuddered. “I’ll never go back. My only worry is that I may not be up to surviving.”

There was that glorious laugh again. “Oh, don’t fear! You’ll survive. Many who were a lot less substantial than you have made it. I was thinner and weaker myself. I was never as faithful to my spiritual duties as you, and was a Christian a much shorter time. That makes a difference. You were very obedient religiously, Mary, much more so than most of us in the movement.”

That caused me some thought. I didn’t say so, but I realized for the first time that I had forgotten all about faith, about God, in greytown. How close had I been to . . . I couldn’t think about it. “Well, I really don’t blame the others for getting discouraged with the way things are and for giving up on the Church. I hung in there because. . . well, because of the Eucharist, because I did, yes. . . and I do, believe!”

This statement came out of my own mouth? Things were loosening up in my brain. Looking back, it’s certain that the ingrained love of the Presence, often taken for granted, even neglected, had been working even against the natural forces of greytown and had somehow released me from my preoccupations long enough to get me to that bus.

That faith, tenuous as it was, held me because of a childhood that had been close to God through the love of godly parents. But since my mid-twenties, speculations of a more intellectual nature had dug away at the banks of that deep and sacred river, trying to both widen it and make it shallow enough to wade in. Ultimately that erosion might have destroyed childlike faith but this spontaneous statement, “I believe!” made me realize with a start, what a state I’d been in and how close to losing it.

This beautiful outer court of heaven offered to begin a mending. Greytown, well . . . some kind of a sorting out had begun there. Slowly - it was like coming out of a dense, obliterating fog, but what I really wanted was . . . of course, Him, to be with Him in the place of His abode. What had so nearly blotted out that love? In a moment of reflection I was shaken. What was that spontaneous “Him, His” business? Out of my mouth? Never! Too much was going on here; I was going to have to hang on . . . or lose it. Next to Sarah, shadow person that I was, I felt suddenly too big, even enormous and unwieldy. A blown-up, windy kind of a thing.

I rattled on to Sarah, “I do think that if we’re persistent we can still see change - the recognition of the need for justice, and finally, equality in practice. Don’t people more advanced up here work for that realization to finally dawn down there?”

“I knew that greytown would never be interested. Talk about chauvinism - complete egoism! But here - I’m sure that equality is in the very air we breathe. There can be no discrimination, no second best here. I always knew that we could hardly expect earth with its perverted value system to come to truth

easily, but in this place . . . oh, so glorious . . . of eternal values - all that must pass away. St. Paul was right about that even if he was a man of his age when it came to women.”

Warming up to my favorite subject, Sarah’s benevolent, thoughtful gaze was encouraging. “Just see what this marvelous freedom from male oppression has done for you, Sarah, you positively glow. Though, (I was hesitant to say it) I’m puzzled that secondary sex characteristics are still part of the spiritual body.”

There was a pause before Sarah turned her candid look away from me toward the far mountains. “Mary, there’s a reason for . . .” She seemed to think better of it and changed the subject.

“Mary, there are many people I want you to meet here; in fact, there are two I have been asked to take you to see. They live a good distance away, but as soon as your feet are better - it shouldn’t take long - we could begin our journey. That is if you are sure you will stay. You see, not everything will fit your expectations. There are many things I’ve had to redefine, words that we used so much, like ‘freedom,’ ‘equality,’ and ‘justice.’ I think you’ve already sensed that many of our dearly held beliefs were upset in the process. How would you feel if you were told that the great ones are not in the least swayed by our old arguments, but are, on the contrary, concerned that we may have been unintentionally helping the enemy?”

This speech was very hard for me to follow. “Would you re-re-repeat that?” I stuttered.

She did. At the end it didn’t make sense - like gibberish. “The enemy? What enemy?”

“Satan is the enemy.”

Had I heard right? What? What? Unbelievable! Helping the enemy? Satan? My head swarmed with contradictions to this statement. All those undeniable arguments were forming. But along with them I felt an old sinking feeling in my stomach, a miserable tightness that I thought had been left behind on earth. There I had fought against narrow-minded conservatism, often having to ignore a horrid, defeated feeling. I suppressed it and forged ahead. Now, the weight of failure was overwhelming.

Failure. It was so incongruous in this setting. The light still suffused everything, the darting colors above still dazzled. There was no gloom; everything went right on rejoicing. Everything trusted that somehow I fit in. Did I? But was it possible to believe that I was in the right and Sarah and her “great ones” in the wrong? One or the other. Right or wrong. But couldn’t we compromise? My brain spun. Where was the middle ground for compromise? Maybe it was just definitions. For a moment I brightened - semantics! But what could “pluralism” mean here? My favorite word. Wriggle mentally as I might, I was a worm on a hook - a mere bait? Each thought hurt more. How could I get out? Obviously the only way out was to drop something, let go of some things - some things that had been terribly valuable. . . The only way out. . . why did I need a way out? I was hopelessly confused. . . was. . . surrender.

Surrender? How could I? I had poured myself out in the fight. My best work was wrapped up in the Cause. Could Heaven really be against *rights*? Unthinkable. What could it mean? Should I just leave here? Just leave all this . . . But greytown . . . and my thoughts turned back round to the beginning - right or wrong. . . I thought there was room for everybody. . .but, surrender? How could I?

I sat immobile, much less life-filled than the stone on which I sat. How long did I sit there rigid closed up like a frightened clam with Sarah's solemn gaze upon me, waiting? In the silence her gravity rested lightly upon me.

It was a gentle pressure. Gentle, gentle. Press, press. Almost against my will, I felt my brain relax. What did it really matter? Little by little, one by one, out came those precious dogmas on behalf of legitimate dissent. I had collected and polished them, my pearls. They fell to my feet in slow motion and seemed to mingle indistinguishable from the small smooth stones there. I suppose I could have grabbed them back - my treasures, my dear, dear treasures, before they became indistinguishable from the dust. But I didn't have the will. "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust." How could they disappear so easily when they had been gained with such labor and affection? I tried, but I couldn't really remember even what was it all about? Gone. The word rang through me - echoing in an empty tomb. I sat still in the middle of a great emptiness where mental movement in any direction meant only pain - no other meaning, just pain.

Chapter III

The light of a perpetual morning gave no indication of the passing of time. Of course, there was none here. Perhaps a great length of earth time had passed. We sat in the little grove with the leaves like muted wind chimes softly purling above us.

“Sarah?” My voice had an alien sound. “Help me understand. If this is His will. . .” I swallowed the rest and sobbed.

Tears flowed, not ebbing until they had lowered me down, down, into a deep silence - an ultramarine kind of silence. In that depth my soul like a long shadow lay motionless on a dim ocean floor barely breathing, fining the dark waters. Finally the encasement of the comforting weight yielded and a lazy ascent began through variegated greens laced with cobalt blue, then emerald to aqua, and slowly up till I floated on a lemon surface beneath the tinkling leaves. But still my soul floated higher till gleaming gold with the reflected light of a celestial Sun whose rays splayed into my resting body, I began to feel the warmth pulsing in my veins. It rose till the feeling of health one experiences after a good run flushed over me. When I opened my eyes, I found myself to be perceptibly more dense in form, while at the same time feeling an inner buoyant peace. My heart was very light. All heaviness, all struggle seemed gone. Gone! That had become a theme word, all that had been was .. gone .. how light, how positively light!

Yet, more solid, no doubt denser, still I tingled with an ethereal vitality. The mountains no longer looked an impossible journey away, and the grass and the little flowers at my feet yielded readily when I thrust a testing toe at them. I felt shy. I had never been shy. Or was it simply a kind of humility? I had never known that spiritual state either.

“I think I’m ready, Sarah... Will you still take me? What can I say?”

“Oh, Mary, I’m so glad!” She hugged me, her eyes full of tears. “There’s a knowledge, you’ll love it. It answers all our heart’s desires. And, Mary, our first visit is to someone greatly admired by you! You first read of this place, and she spread out her hands, in his book!”

It took me a moment. “Lewis? You mean Clives Staples Lewis?” I looked at her. “It wasn’t admiration, Sarah, it was love. I’ve dreamed of meeting him! How many imaginary conversations I’ve had with him over the years. Can I believe this? C.S. Lewis!”

“Did you ever read his essay on women and priesthood, Mary?”

“Yes, yes, but I thought that just a blindness that was excusable - man, you know, male. Not so?”

She shook her head.

“Well, that would have been hard for me. Yet, I always knew that there was some strange mystery about women that he persisted in believing. It was there in Perelandra and between every line in That Hideous Strength. But I enjoyed everything else so much, I just let that go by. I didn’t think it was

anything more than his own masculine prejudices, which in his case were easy to forgive. I hope he'll help me understand what you seem to see now."

"Oh, he will! He and Athanasius"

"Atha. .atha. .na. .sius?" Stuttering again. "You said, 'Athanasius?' Hasn't he been dead, I mean, hasn't he been here for centuries? How on earth, I mean, in heaven, can he help me with this woman thing? Immersed in, let's see, what century was that? - the fourth? - those cultural assumptions, how can they be credible for us twenty-first century women? I'm sure he's very holy, but. . .

Gone? Oh, come on! Was I taking it all back? Did these choices just go on and on?

"That's a pattern of thinking that will not stand up to Reality here, Mary." Sarah spoke very deliberately, like a teacher to a slow student in school. "Principles are unchanging, you know. It is not woman or culture that concerns or motivates him. It is principle. He has grasped what underlies creation. He might be said to have had the Lewisonian mind of the fourth century, or better, Lewis shares something of the Athanasian mind. Neither of them is confused by the flotsam of intellectual argument that bobs about on the surface, but they are those rare ones who always have known well the underlying depths where Truth lies."

We were now walking along the top of a rise which had formed the small cove where my metamorphosis had begun. To our left, not far off, was a running stream from which flashes of light played on glittering pebble banks. The water like undulating clear quartz looked too solid for drinking. But a herd of tawny-gold deer, mouth's dripping, raised their great eyes to look serenely at us. Ahead the meadow rolled in soft contoured mounds, each one running into each, giving the appearance of a sleepy, grassy sea with just the hint of yesterday's great waves still swelling.

The walking was effortless; the air so exhilarating that one felt a run to the distant mountains was entirely possible. Far to the right another small group of persons was alternately running, leaping, and walking like school children on a picnic. Though too far away to hear any conversation, laughter, in musical phrases, wafted over to our ears, and we, too, found ourselves delighting in their lighthearted play.

Despite Sarah's reproof, perhaps because of it - her directness and clarity were pure refreshment - my heart, still floated softly around my chest, sometimes bumping so near my throat it forced me to swallow. Whatever lay behind in regrets was receding. The present was dressed in acceptance and forgiveness. Whatever lay ahead for me, wouldn't it just be joy?

Yes, Gone! The old stuff was really Gone!

Sarah was earnestly talking. "Lewis has come down out of the high places because so many need his wisdom. Even the most advanced here, though light years ahead, come back when needed to be teachers or helpers. There are many women, men too; who like you and me were swept up with what

we thought was a just cause. And, of course, some of it was inspired by the Holy Spirit. It has taken Athanasius to help us sort out down to the basics. After an encounter with these two, one marvels at the refinements of some very old temptations we gullibly took in.

She paused. "Mary, do you remember in the story how dear Puddleglum stomped out the Green Lady's fire with his unprotected feet so that, when the confusion-laden incense subsided, the children were able to think clearly again about the things that they knew well and believed strongly?"

I nodded.

"Well, it's something like that with our reasoning. It takes the rude smell of burning flesh, almost our own, to clear out the haze of confusion and pull us out of it."

"But we were not all wrong? The other side all right?"

"Of course not, but understand there is no competition here, Mary; no 'we' and 'they.' It's us. All is quickly moving toward . . . union," she looked toward the mountains where the heavenly sun, still hidden, impended upon the peaks. Watching for a moment, she turned back to me. "It is true that much of what we thought 'traditional' was out of focus. There is no place here for arrogance among males or sentimentality among females. Some, perhaps a little, of what we promoted did impel women toward wholeness."

We then went back over all we had learned about ourselves as women in those furious years of feminist activity. Sarah spoke of her marriage without self-reproach and of her prayer for Jim and his new wife. I reminisced about those friends we had had in common. None, so far as she knew, had yet come to greytown or Enduring Meadow.

Sarah shared the experiences of her last illness. Her spirit had begun to grow during that year long battle with cancer. At the end in one of her comas she had experienced what she had come to call "The Principle."

"The best way I can explain The Principle is to tell you the dream I had just before I awoke in greytown. You must know that each of its stages was timeless - the whole thing seemed like a lifetime. The first thing I remember of that experience was a huge white candle burning before me in an otherwise totally black void. The flame was fiercely true and unwavering like a fiery angel finger pointing, even stretching up and up. Vigorously, almost violently, did it point. So impelling was the strength of it, so pure its intent to burn and to reach up, that it drew all the light and fire from every cell of my eye and brain to join with it.

"That light and fire was life - my life was fed into this incandescence while it, and now I with it, divided into three. The three flames intensified, eagerly intertwining into an arc-white braid which still strained heavenward.

“Have you ever held your own hand and felt love of self flowing through, a love of self that can only be from God? One thing loving itself. Such love doesn’t make you feel large, just very small. That in a measure is what I experienced - myself times three; yet one thing loving itself.

“Intertwined, welded, and still incandescent, I was a new being, but still conscious of being myself, now on the other side of the candle. The void was filled. Now I stood in a brightly lighted oriental room of great length. Overhead on both sides clerestory windows lined long rush paper walls. Subject-Of-All-Love sat in the figure of an old man upon a resplendent red Persian rug at the far end of the hall. He was the only lasting thing in the space, he and perhaps the crimson rug, everything else looked transient as though a stage set for a one time performance, a backdrop for an appearance, a condescension for me, a poor creature who without props and materiality otherwise could not perceive.

Subject drew object. I was propelled irresistibly on my own feet till I fell on my knees before him. For the fleetest second my eyes met his and I was shot through with KNOWING. He KNEW me. He was Ancient of Ancients, and he KNEW me, had KNOWN me - forever. I prostrated myself on the floor before him overcome with KNOWING - his knowing me and my own knowing. I KNEW my creaturehood; I KNEW his prevalence; it unraveled the new braid of my being and ...“

Here she stopped walking and was silent. She had been caught up in relating the vision, but it was as if she’d just become conscious of my presence again.

“I don’t know if I should say more. It will sound strange to you.”

“I understand,” I said. I had already finished her story in my head. It affected me deeply. I don’t know how I understood; I had never married (my virginity I thought a curse), but I knew - total surrender was orgiastic; being known was orgiastic aside from anything physical. Certainly this that she described was neither physical or sexual in any genital sense, it was as profound . . .well, I could think of nothing to explain it.

“Yada,” she said.

The old Hebrew word was recognized from my studies. I had thought it unaccountable that the term for “knowing” was an interchangeable word for “sexual intercourse”. The Jews were just too graphic.

“Yes, yada,” I repeated, “The Song of Songs is not in the center of the Holy Book by some chance.”

“Is anything by chance? Especially anything that is related to Sacred Scripture. I’ve only come to understand all this through Athanasius”

His name came off her lips like well-loved, living syllables, not as the dry historical peculiarity it had always been to me. It was startling to hear her speak the name like a song. In fact, she said the vision had so imbued her with desire for the Principle that she had neither forgotten nor lingered at the

Reception Centre in greytown, but had flagged a cab which had somehow overturned the time it usually took to get to the bus stop.

Cancer can be all the purgation one needs. Suffering had enlivened her perceptions of Reality; the coma had been used to prepare her for that Reality. She had understood immediately when the alternative was offered at the Centre, while I had been in a fog. That opaqueness that had settled over my mind now seemed more and more linked to the effect the book and all my self-absorbed thinking had had on me.

Actually we determined that our arrivals at the Reception Centre could not have been more than a few hours of each other, one way or the other. The accident had happened after a meeting of St. Joan of Arc Woman's Coalition on an icy January night. I recalled that someone in the car had mentioned that Sarah Anders was in very serious condition in the University Cancer Center. Conscience- struck that I hadn't thought of her, I had resolved to visit on the morrow. There had been no tomorrow, at least in the earth sense, for either of us.

We walked and marveled at the threads of our lives which now were being woven together in the final fabric. Aside from that glorious finality which was now part of our relationship, we were like two women talking animatedly in any time or place, our conversation punctuated by her musical laugh - why did it remind me of the bell descant of Straus's Der Rosen Cavalier? Though absorbed with each other, it was not so fully that the joy of the walk was lost on our senses.

I was realizing a sharpness, an astringency of sight, sound and smell, as though they had undergone a scrubbing down. I remembered the piercing medicinal odors coming from a room in the process of a thorough cleaning, and how these later mellowed into freshness. Such a sense cleansing made the whole experience of Enduring Meadow too intense at first, but now there was a clarity and crispness to everything that was only beauty and delight. It was in a new physics whose basic principle was praise that the physical perceivers received and transmitted their input to the brain.

Chapter IV

The little rolling hillocks had developed into a livelier terrain. Because of the unevenness of the footing many who had come this way before us had chosen the most yielding passage, and so there was a path to follow unlike the plain where every way was as open as any other. Wide and smooth, this path spoke of companionship and good conversation among other groups of walkers, who, like us, enjoyed its hospitality and comfort amidst the impulsive nature that bounded it on both sides.

Nature's artlessness, her singleness of purpose - just to be, had always been the sylphic net that bound my heart to her. And here that abandon was full without the injury to her innocence that she suffered on earth. Here she stood on tiptoe like an adolescent girl, unselfconsciously watching for love to come. Her adorned head with its fresh-washed green hair flowing in the changeable breeze was dotted with stony jewels and blossoms, and wreathed with glossy leaves of promise. We entered into that spell of anticipation as we drew close to our destination.

More and more Lewis' presence pressed in on our consciousness. The very surroundings called out all our memories of the Narnian tales, and made those characters and incidents seem as if they had just appeared before our eyes, or were about to be enacted around the next small rise of ground. I had been unaware that Sarah had been a Lewis buff in our earth-life friendship. Actually, she said, she had not read any of his works until she was sick and someone had brought her a copy of Mere Christianity. That was the entering point for her. Her philosophic interest in religion had become personal conviction.

Whereas I had been "a cradle Catholic," she had made a profession of faith and received the sacraments under the shadow of a fatal disease at the age of twenty-eight. She had known "Zion" only since arriving here, while I had known her in a diminished sense all my forty years.

From this vantage point, standing on heaven's porch, we both agreed, the Church was a stunning sight - the only constant force of sanity in an otherwise insane world. If, and it was becoming increasingly clear to me that it was so, my earthbound understanding of her had been clouded by a perfidious deception, now her alignment with heaven was something to marvel at.

It was, then, the earthly intellectual milieu that was in fact reactionary, warped, out of kilter. These thoughts still threaten to arouse confusion in me - intellectually, I was at sea. What I wanted. . . Gone . . . kept threatening to return.

"How do you explain it, Sarah?"

Sarah's face was lustrous but stern. "There is a bitter, ambitious Power - you know that. He is determined that he can still bring the Church down, and barring that, at least promote an internal perversity so severe that she will be delayed in accomplishing her mission. Unless our intellects are submerged in the baptismal waters and thus submitted. . .

"I kept my head above water."

She touched my arm and her face softened. "I did too. Not only my head, but my heart and my hands. Look how long I resisted the faith, until almost all my strength was gone, literally. The Almighty turns all the Church's wounds to glory and doubles that glory when the one who has wounded her is repentant, otherwise she would have ceased to exist. Look at the poor stuff she has to work with."

This conversation continued sprinkled with periods of quiet reflection. Then we would begin to talk again about the same thing at the same moment. Though we approached things in a wholly individual way, this paralleling of thought became more evident. We observed with awe that a unity was growing between us that was not dependent on our own efforts. Unity, though a goal within the church-life I had known, was always marred, despite the best intentions, with the infantile spirituality of the effort behind it. People, myself too, tended to sound condescending, falsely humble, or too sweet, unless, of course, they cared for unity not at all. But between Sarah and me there was growing a common understanding that was based on belief and acceptance of the imminence of God's Word. The freedom from all kind of pretense or effort was delightful.

"Do you see what is happening? We are experiencing the Prelude - the Prelude to the Great Theme. When dawn breaks over the mountains we shall all be one and one with Him!" She radiated the happiness that was choking me. "We are being changed from glory to glory, just as St. Paul said, to fit us into that final Orchestration. Isn't it wonderful, wonderful?"

She spoke softly toward the mountains. "You are in us, bringing us to perfection, despite ourselves. Thank You. . . Thank You. Come soon. . . We wait for You. . . Just a little longer."

The countryside had completed its change from meadow to copse. Shrubs and small trees covered rough hummocks in an exuberant tangle of vegetation thrilled through with bird- song. Though we could not see any habitation, we walked on a well-traveled, wide track. Then a new sound broke on our ears - the high change-ringing of tower bells. There could be no need for striking the hour. It was a thanksgiving peal that rang out. Thanksgiving for the perpetual promise of morning - an ejaculation of praise!

Rounding a bend, a picture book scene lay before us, a transplant from Yorkshire (no, Yorkshire was a transplant from it). A quiet pond lay like a mercury gem; its far edge was hospice to a cluster of thatch roofed cottages. On its silvery surface swans like pale anemones bent over their reflections. A dark girdle of fir trees rose behind the buildings framing in the tranquility. In the glowing light one might have thought it was near sunset, just before the lamps are lit.

"It is the homey cottages that makes one think so. The constant light is the only thing not like England," Sarah was again on the wavelength of my thoughts. A familiar fragrance came across to us on the breeze - baking bread!

I hadn't thought of food the entire journey. I turned questioningly to Sarah.

“There is no need of food here, of course. Bread, though, has such implications for our spirits! When we eat together it is for the joy of the meal and the deep remembrance of The meal. Come on now! It must be about tea time at OverKilns!”

OverKilns. As we picked up our pace, I wondered if would meet Mrs. Moore and Fred Paxford. I never did, but not perhaps because they were not there. We hurried along.

“Remember, he is not living here. He just comes back to this place for people like us. I’m told he loves the challenge of the higher levels, but he loves more to do His will, and so he comes back to help those like us absorb truth. Like so many who devoted their lives to truth, and who still teach here on the threshold. . . he’s still just Our Lord’s servant!”

We now were walking up the stone walk to the entrance of one of the middle cottages.

“Isn’t it fun?” Sarah was pushing open a door in a small recess framed by a bushy yew. The large threshold on which she stood was clasped by a mass of myrtle, its blue flower heads resting tiny cheeks upon the cool slab-rock surface.

Chapter V.

A boisterous laugh was bounding about the room's low ceiling as we entered. In one end by an open window sat the healthiest looking man one could imagine. Seated in a large wing chair of ancient age, he was fairly bursting with vitality, and out of his open mouth issued this booming laughter that rollicked over and around the small group who on various stools and small chairs clustered around him. These were not intimidated by the great roll of it, but were flourishing in its reverberations like a flower garden in a summer thunderstorm.

He like all of us (my own clothing had all evaporated) seemed to be made of a warm- hued, inner-illuminated alabaster that had no imperfections, no veins of variant color.

"He always said clothes were a necessity to protect us from our own weaknesses and the weaknesses of others and not in the true nature of things," I thought. I was amazingly comfortable in my own new flesh, or substance, or whatever it was called. "When this mortal has put on immortality." It would all be totally material in the resurrection, which I assumed at this point it and other "things" were not - somehow.

Lewis looked at us, his laughter leveled off to a smile, and he waved us to a low bench that sat against the window wall. On a small table in front of him a large pot of tea waited in its blue print cozy and kept company with an odd assortment of cups of all shapes and sizes, one much larger than the rest. A plate of fresh baked scones with a jar of strawberry jam, a silver knife sticking out of it, were being passed from person to person. Kneeling by the table, a bearded young man began to pour tea. Passing the large cup to Lewis, he carefully served the one closest to him, who in turn handed cups to those behind. When ours came to us, I let the warmth of the hot sides of the cup soak into my hands. I was not cold, but it reminded me of the comfort a cup of tea had been in my chilly Minnesota study. That too, a simple good thing, had been a small foretaste, a tiny sign of the greater Good to come.

Lewis was in the middle of an exposition which the laugh and the tea pouring had not interrupted. We listened carefully to catch the thread of the discussion.

"That's a devilish fallacy at the center of much modern thought - freedom's not that sort of thing at all, you know. A fish may flop anywhere it likes on the shore, but one could hardly say it was enjoying its freedom. Instead we'd see the signs of slow death. No, the fish needs its medium, water, in order to be free. In the world there has been a steady attempt to get rid of the medium in which alone mankind is free.

"What is that medium? It is as vital to real human life as air to breathe, earth to walk on, food and water for nourishment. That medium is God's Command. I have called it the Tao to distinguish it from that which it precedes - the Jewish Law - though it is re-stated in plain Don'ts there.

I was experiencing a pure emotion of delight. Being here in this company, taught by Lewis, was the fulfillment of fantasies I had never expected to live. Like loose garden soil in sunshine, my mind lay

open and I felt myself absorbing meanings beyond the surface of the words which as fresh water from a fountain were soaking into me. Experiencing such joy, how could I know that what was so happily Gone, had simply hidden beneath the layer of cold rock far below, lying there quite unmoved. It would take more than intellectual stimulation to budge that pride-filled depth.

“Like water for the fish it is elemental for real humanity. Therefore, only within the Tao, the Command of God, can man or woman be free. We imagine a fish out of water slowly dying, so is a man or woman when he or she tries to live outside the Tao - oh, not physically, understand, but that, too, is finally affected. It only stands to reason that He who created them male and female, created them for a purpose, called them forth to state truth in their being - and that, truth and ultimate destiny, is after all, what God’s Command is.

“We talk of a fish and his medium which allows him to live out all he was created to be, and we call that ‘freedom.’ But mankind’s freedom far exceeds the fish’s, for not only does mankind have freedom in the medium of God’s Command, but he has a far deeper, wider, higher freedom in that medium because of a gift - the outrageous gift of choice made by the will. There is no choice for our gilled friend, but mankind can choose to live eternally in God’s Command, or to die outside of it. He can choose to believe or disbelieve - it is the source and meaning of all that is human. To choose God’s Command as his own enhances the freedom that mankind finds there. That enhancement is the joy of knowing, the bliss of appreciating. What a freedom!”

“But the Tao? Is that Christian?” a young man asked.

“No, the Law, the Way, the Road, precedes all that is specifically of the Christian era, but the Christian, or even another moral era, could not be conceived without that basic law which is written on the hearts of men wherever or whenever they are found. An Eskimo living in his far-flung outpost in Alaska’s north, true to the traditions of his fathers, is a human because of his adherence to it; just so, an Australian aborigine is a human because he abides by it. The Tao means that certain attitudes in life are really true because they echo God’s Command, and others are really false because they ignore that Command. It is only upon a base of the Tao that a “yes” to God can be said. When the Master said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life,” He was proclaiming Himself to be the Tao. There can be no argument with that when all of us have proof of it just by being in this place.” His arm swept out encompassing the scene which included the distant mountains with their light of promise which shone through the open window.

“And that relates to woman ...?” A woman still marked by greying hair and some transparency asked the question worriedly.

“As with all creation - you don’t find tigers on the tundra, or elephants on ice floes for they would be exceedingly unfree - woman has a special medium given in the Tao. This medium is an objective order to which a woman belongs and which she may choose or not. Her double freedom is to embrace that medium by her own free choice. Our emotions, because of the rebel in us who wants what is not good for

us, may be in disharmony with that objective order. That is our own subjective problem. But one which He has also solved for everyone who comes to Him.”

“I don’t understand,” the same woman spoke. There was a small whine in her voice. “I thought we were freed from all those heavy shoulds and shouldn’ts. I don’t understand.” She looked thoroughly discouraged.

“Ah, my dear,’ Lewis leaned towards her and his voice was comparatively soft. “Think and feel just a little way further and you will have passed the barricade into real freedom. Don’t give up now. It is like this - the Holy Spirit does break down bars, knocks over fences, crumbles walls, you’re right. But when we prisoners slowly begin to realize a hope, and then hesitatingly move beyond the walls of our old jails, we are met inevitably by someone quite other - ‘The Deceiver,’ Scripture calls him. He tells us that he is our saviour, he defines freedom with lies; he fans our misunderstanding and ignorance into bitterness and grievance. He turns our joy of liberation into anger at what might have been but was not.

“He is the wolf in sheep’s clothing. For all time he has been the accuser, the convictor, the judge, and the jailer. His disguise is so that he may gain time to reset the bars, to reposition the fences, to rebuild the walls so that he might have us again - even us, whom the Holy Spirit has re-gifted with free will and choice.

“He tells a woman freed from the bondage of personal inhibitions and cultural law that the Tao is the enemy. He beguiles her with the thought that nothing in the world of spirit or of matter is ever verboten; that all is sacrament.”

This hit too close. I gulped and flushed.

“And thus he slips in his poison which is quite undetected by the poor naïf. He plays on her natural inclination to a self-centered life until she wants what is inimical to her created being, and thus he sets her up to choose a new slavery - to him once again. To go back to our lowly fish, it is as if that creature could be tempted to deliberately poison his own medium in order to be free; or as if he were demanding equal time on shore where he could not survive. It is not a ‘should,’ or a ‘shouldn’t,’ it is a choice, life or death.”

He stopped talking and looked gently at the woman though there was nothing soft about that gentleness. His eyes were bright and expectant. I felt his ministry now exceeded the intellectual. He seemed to be doing for her what Sarah had done for me, removing by faith some dark obstacle in the spirit. The woman’s eyes which had been so distracted began to look at him more steadily, then a little tear rolled out of the corner of one of them, then a few more, until in a moment or two she was laughing and crying all together. The happiest sound on earth had been of real repentance and new vision, and it was no different here. Led by our teacher, who had completely relaxed into his chair, we all did a bit of celebrating with laughter and hugs for Bernice.

"Please, sir, could you give us an example of what the Tao is for woman?" We quieted down quickly because it was a very modest voice that spoke. The woman speaking had the bearing and radiance of a queen. "Clothed in the gold of Ophaz," I thought, "though not clothed at all."

Lewis turning towards her bowed his head. "My mother... my sister," he said, "you know it very well because you have chosen to live in it all your life. Why do you ask me?"

"I am asking for my friend with whom I am traveling, sir. I find it very difficult to express all that my heart tells me about these things." She turned lovingly toward an older woman who still wore a few vestiges of earthly clothes and whose transformation to immortality, like myself, was still in process.

"My friend is an anthropologist who has had great success in her work. She is much greater than I, having enlightened many, which I never did from the back kitchen of my convent. I brought her to you even though the journey has been very hard for her. I knew that she might understand from you what I fail at explaining."

At this point the older woman spoke crisply, "You fail at nothing, Dolores, I see it - the truth in you; it is just my mind - my stumbling block. I seek too much to comprehend. You see, I know how the Jewish Law came into being, and I recognize the way woman's role developed, not only among the Jews but among other peoples. It was a very natural thing and hardly anything I would call supernatural or trans-natural."

Lewis interrupted. "Do you observe in your studies any proof of the fall of man as the Scriptures record it?"

"The fall? Of man? Don't you mean the human race? And how do you mean that? I know it only theologically, that there is a flaw in mankind that causes persons to fail when wanting to do their best."

"Yes, yes," he waved this off, "but I mean anthropologically. Do you see evidence of the fall? Isn't it possible that man and woman once had a grasp of reality and exercised a creativity that exceeds anything that is now known? That earth's people (without Christ's redemption) are moving further away each century from the alpha point with God, except, of course, those who choose to transfer membership from the plummeting planet to the Eternal habitations, and who thus deny the fate and the finale?"

"You are not speaking of technological regression, but of matters of the spirit of persons. Well, I hadn't thought about it in just that way." She mused. "But what has that to do with my questions about what the Tao, or Medium, as you call it, is for woman?"

"I hear in your questions an assumption that the traditions surrounding the female on earth are merely cultural, and I'm asking you to search your experience to see if there is any evidence that such traditions may have a different origin, is patriarchy a deviant or isolated phenomenon with, for instance, the Semitic tribes only?"

“Of course not. You know that the dominance of the male and subjection of the female is found in every culture and every age. It has been called a universal phenomenon. Its roots are obviously in morphology. Muscular development and size of the male, gestation needs of the female - the womb, the breasts cause much different use of the environment than the penis - all the implications of sexual difference.” She shrugged. “Those things are really insignificant though, overall.”

“How can any direct creation of the divine hand be insignificant? Especially anything so all prevailing as masculine and feminine?”

“Are you suggesting that roles called into play because of male and female morphology are somehow purposeful in the Divine Plan?”

“Exactly. That is the only logical conclusion.”

“And those roles are . . . that this is the Medium... but domination...but subjection. Oh, no!”

“Ah, yes, it is so. Despite domination and subjection. If we could discover what these roles were before the corruption of godly values. That is why I asked you about the Fall.”

“Before the corruption of godly values . . .I see,” she paused. “there is something - something that reminds me of that phrase. I was with the NSG – that’s National Geographic, the expedition in the 70’s to the Tasaday tribe in the Philippines. And I have observed something similar on other occasions, but never so purely as there. Though primitive in the ways of modern man (pardon me, an old habit. I mean mankind), the aborigines were amazingly free of immorality as western humankind has come to know it. (Though I try, it is nearly impossible not to make a judgment.)”

Her voice trailed off and we waited. When she spoke again it was barely a whisper of the firm voice we have been listening to, a whisper that communicated soft surprise. “Could that be the meaning of the dream?” Sifting only a few feet away I barely caught the phrase. There was more silence. She shook her head a little, looked around and continued with her precise way of speaking.

“I had never thought of it before in this context, but before our expedition I had a recurring dream. In this dream, we scientists were preparing for the trip to the Philippines in some desert place. The transport plane that was to take us and all our equipment was in a very large hangar hung with black crepe from which we were all barred. It was as though it was in quarantine or that there was a plague or something. We understood that the place was undergoing a complete sterilization. There was fear on the part of the authorities that we might also be contaminated so we were each subjected to a kind of sheep dip just like you see out west some where.” She laughed.

“However, despite all these precautions a large black bag was smuggled into the belly of the plane which had not been through the cleansing rituals. I knew what was in it, the others did, too. But as scientists we felt that we knew better than the authorities with all their hang-ups, and could take these things along with no problem. To avoid the fuss we stole the bag on.

"It had artifacts from each of the expedition member's houses - things collected from all over the world, from every excavation site, from every expedition. There were bits and pieces of gods and goddesses, phallic symbols, metal coins, shards (actually we are never allowed to keep any valuable artifact from a site). The bag was full of these things.

"The scene then shifted to the skies over the jungle drop. Of course, in reality we did not jump, we landed by helicopter on a special landing the natives had built, but in the dream we parachuted down into the fluffy, green mattresses of tree tops. Everything was idyllic. The blue, cloud-spotted skies, the virgin rain forest, as green as emeralds, the exquisite flowers glowing in subdued light with their internal illumination, and exotic birds flashing in and out of the shadows. In the dream every bird was feather perfect, every flower without wilt or blight.

"They all now became beautiful ornaments hanging on an enormous Christmas tree. The airplane, high above our heads, was the largest ornament of all, flashing its metallic lights, an artificial star streaking into the surroundings. Then without warning, the two doors of the hold in the plane's belly opened and out plummeted the great bag, mouth first.

"The contents were vomited out, an ominous thick cloud. Tar-like filth defiled everything. The birds attempted, but were unable to fly away, looking like poor creatures caught in a vast oil slick. The flowers were blotted out. The tree branches, heavy with silt, broke and sagged. Every living thing folded under the oppression. The once gaily decorated tree ended as a slithered stump in a battleground of mud. The airplane lay there, a broken toy in the slime. What had begun as a kind of Christmas had ended as the advent of the devil. The objects from the bag, however, were thriving. The god and goddesses walked around proudly, mincing through the destruction they had caused - living idols."

It was evident on Lewis' face that his mind's eye had recreated every detail of the dream. At the end he sighed, "It's all told there," he said, "the whole sad story. Were these original peoples you visited . . . ? Well, tell me about them."

"Of course, we found out all we could about them during our stay. It was only later that I was aware that a question about killing and war put to a people who had never known any conflict - they had no concept of fighting - might have been a demonic message. And a question about sexual habits, about possible promiscuity, to a people who, despite a preponderance of males, had always known only monogamy or chastity, might be enticing those innocents to taste forbidden fruit. Clearly, neither killing another or taking another's wife had ever occurred to them. That would substantiate what you are saying, would it not? That there might have been a pocket where corruption of godly values had not taken place, until . . . well . . .

Lewis nodded. "until the snake at the foot of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil intruded. And the women, what about them? They were isolated, were they not, from all the other world values, customs, and social mores?"

“Oh, yes. We were the absolute first contact they had had with the outer world. I will never forget the occasion of the tribe’s recitation of their history and their prophecies. It was spine-tingling even to us scientists. It came out that these Tasadays believed that our visit to them had been prophesied long ago. When the elder had finished the long narration which contained these prophetic words, he turned to the women and said solemnly, ‘You women, hold these things in your hearts.’ Yes, that was it. ‘You women,’ he said, ‘hold these things in your hearts.’ It sounded Biblical. This was an important part of their role - to be a kind of receptacle for tribal truth. Men here were the overall providers, as is the usual pattern, and the women were the gatherers and homemakers. Children were loved and cared for by everyone, but the women, of course, were primary to their nourishment either from the breast or in food preparation. I had never linked any of this with vestiges of a time of perfection on earth, however. And I’m sure that it would be impossible to prove.”

After a quiet moment or two, Lewis continued, “Do you think it strange that universally men are providers and women and children provided for? Could that not be related directly to the Tao?”

“I have heard all those theories about women being the natural and primary receivers, men the natural and primary initiators. That has been the basis for upholding an authority role for men and a servitude role for women, but that theory fails even anthropologically when we observe women nursing baby boys at the breast. Isn’t the first experience of all persons, male and female - reception of the breast? A male must also, then, be first of all a receiver, and in this case, the woman who thrusts the breast into his mouth is the initiator.”

Lewis’s bright eyes had intensified through this discourse. I expected him to burst into speech, but it was Dolores’s violet voice we heard.

“We are all receivers; receivers of life, receivers of the Spirit, receivers of all that sustains life, and we are initiators of nothing. Men and women, it doesn’t matter, we are all brides of Christ Jesus, spouses of the Holy Spirit, mothers of the Lord, children of the Father.”

Lewis clapped his hands as punctuation to her quiet but impassioned speech. “Hear, hear!” he cried. “We are all feminine to God and must bow before the Ultimate Masculine. We meet the masculine first in the earthly man, but we must all, male and female, meet Him in His transcendent reality. The ancient foe has attempted to deface that polar demarcation, for in it lies the truth of what mankind’s relationship is to his Maker - Love! Is it love if it does not heed and obey, that is, if one does not submit, to the Beloved?”

“So then, you say that this so-called truth of the masculine, bearing that kind of authority which is still partially traceable, despite the Fall, is what we anthropologists observe?” The voice was constricted. “And that that demands an obedience from woman that is the Tao for her?” Looking toward the scientist, I saw her face full of consternation.

“Yes, that’s it. Still traceable, but bent.” Lewis was not making it easier for her, “Not as it was in Perfection when there was no such thing as a degraded or devalued human being, when each one was whole and holy, able and willing to think God’s thoughts after Him. This, Dolores, is what you know. You have accepted femininity, or the Tao of femininity on all levels - biological, psychological, physical and spiritual. You are more truly a mother than those ‘who have born seven sons.’”

“Anything you speak of, sir, if you see it in me, belongs to the Blessed Mother, who has been our order’s Model and Protectress. It is she, the Star of the Sea, who has instilled her life in all of us sisters.”

At this, her friend’s countenance grew darker. “I must have time to think,” so saying, she rose from her stool and made her way to the door. The light from the mountains struck her face and she reacted as if to a physical blow. Covering her face and bending down to find some shaded protection, she disappeared from our sight. We did not see her again. In my imagination, however, I saw her struggling back on tormented feet to Enduring Meadow, though perhaps there was a more merciful way back to the greytown bus that I did not know.

Chapter VI.

The episode and its ending left the group quietly thinking. I was especially aware of my own situation. Though having lost the shreds of clothes, I was still a trifle on the shadowy side; would I consolidate whatever depths in me were holding out? Could it be possible that I might still turn back? From that first wonderful release with Sarah's ministry to me, I hadn't believed it, but I was less cock-sure that my own decisions to remain were so ironclad that nothing could possibly unseat me. Maybe somewhere a strong rebel lurked in my own psyche that simply would not ultimately submit. I prayed not! I remembered ... Gone! Please! Stay Gone!

There was a good deal of looking into teacups, drumming of fingers, tapping of feet, and abstract gazing out of the windows. Lewis looked us over gravely, sipping now and then from his out-sized cup. He knew the questions that had risen in our minds and was allowing them to come into forms that we could state.

The grey-haired woman who had been released from the grasp of self-pity leaned forward now with a new assurance. Her brow was furrowed no longer by depression, but thought, "but. . . ." was all she got out of her mouth.

Lewis jumped in, anticipating her question as though he had read her mind. "Oh, I know. Encrusted on the feminine Tao is an accumulation of human scabs. This stuff is only cultural, but tries to get accredited as the Tao by claiming to be part of the objective order." The little humorous glint was rekindled in his eye. "Chauvinism is then a problem, though most of that problem has been, I believe, mere projected resentment by a creature who for some illogical reason has hated to be adored for her loveliness, and protected because of her gentleness. Woman at her best brings out all in a man that he likes most about himself - devotion and strength." Lewis grew quiet a moment, then said, "Take it from me, I almost made it through an old bachelor." And again the huge guffaw wrinkled the still air. "Well, strike off the barnacles if you will, but save the ship, eh?" Then he sobered and smiled, gently saying, "Joy, my dear Joy. Ahh, all's well. . . we have begun again; we are together."

The tension of the earlier conversation was broken, his good humor, his obvious love, had normalized things. We all relaxed again into laughter. "Oh, yes, women are capable persons - without doubt fully able to lead three hundred and sixty degree lives." His arm scribed a circle. "Have no second thoughts about that. They are not mantel ornaments meant to add to the decor, they are not diamond stickpins meant to measure a man's worldly success, but (and this he emphasized) neither are they meant to be equal." Some of the women and men visibly jumped. "If you mean by that . . . 'the same as in all regards.'"

"I know I wrote once in a vein that made equality a word meaning interchangeable, and in the context it was legitimate. But on that basis I had to make man and woman unequal in marriage. What I meant was just what I've said, equality defined humanly means 'the same as in all regards!'

Defined by heaven's standard, however, it must define the relationship of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, which is 'of equal weight, of equal worth,' not 'the same as in all regards.'

"To make it mean that, and then to insist on equality for woman in relationship to man is to yank her out of her medium and watch her slow death in an alien culture. It is like taking an amoeba from its nutrient and trying to raise it in ammonia. And in this case it is not just womankind that suffers, for as an intruder in the male medium she also burdens that medium with a demand it cannot fulfill, so it degenerates and can no longer be to its rightful host the nourishment it is meant to be."

Such a discourse would have raised my hackles at one time. I still found it difficult going. This medium business. I almost wished he'd chosen a different analogy. It was as though man and woman were being considered as aliens to each other, not of the same species. I found myself voicing this.

Lewis looked at me with the twinkle very alive in his eye, "My dear, haven't you ever noticed it is so?" Again the bachelor-uncle laugh. "Man and woman with all they have in common - forty-five out of forty-six chromosomes, is that it? are representations of two opposite poles which you will encounter in deeper and deeper ways as you ascend the mountains. I believe that when we reach the Ultimate we will see these opposites are at the very heart of reality. That is the reason Wisdom has set up these little seminars. There is so much confusion, illogicalness, about these things. It tags along right into Enduring Meadows, but there is simply no place for it higher up. It must be dropped away here!"

"The redefining of such words as 'equality,' 'justice,' 'rights,' and 'freedom' is not a new line of endeavor for our ancient foe who began his reinterpretation of words in Eden when he said to Eve, 'you shall not die.' Right then he redefined the final word - 'death.' When we actually come to understand these terms as they do on the High Ridges, we shall find them more mind-exploding than Reality was when we first stepped off the Pegasus bus onto Enduring Meadow. It was precisely because these terms have to do with the Eternal Relationship which is replicated on earth in the relationship of man and woman that the evil one must deface them. In his definition of 'equal,' he is attempting to erase the indelible distinctions of man and woman, of masculine and feminine. Now what lies behind that diabolic attempt? That question when answered will clarify the real issue."

Our teacher then stood up, called a recess, and disappeared into an inner room.

Chapter VII

We were left to become acquainted with our new companions. Like no social gathering I had ever known, this was not a mere exchange of names and pleasantries. As part of a family which promised a boundless adventure in friendships, we greeted each other like a happy litter of pups. A woman of animated countenance grasped Sarah's arm, and talking like old friends, the three of us moved out a side door into a typically English garden. The man with whom she had been sitting, and whom I had assumed to be her husband (for some reason that I now wondered about; I did remember that there would be no marriage in the heights), followed us a few steps, hesitated, and then turned to talk with a knot of men.

"Who is that man?" was on my tongue to ask, but Clare, her face bright with smiles, bubbling with spirited talk, seemed not to identify with him. Like kaleidoscopes of expression her eyes spoke as vigorously as her mouth. Not a facade, behind her mobile face lay a lively intelligence surprisingly free from any taint of pride. She was captivated by what she had heard and overflowed with it and with her own observations.

She now had us both by the arms. Narrowing, there was no room for three abreast on the path, so I stepped over some feathery plant tops into a second row. The rows were lined with vegetable leaves in their verdant hues from blue-green of the broccoli to spicy yellow of the flowering dill. Like crayon lines, the rows wavered down a slight incline to some pens. Here crested quail scurried in a long enclosure, and a fat rabbit nibbled curly cress in another. The ends of the cages were open.

"Look," said Clare, "they aren't kept. They don't need protection or restraint. They simply like a home. Dependence by choice, isn't that what all this boils down to? We are to be dependent on 'God's Command' but we are to be so by choosing it, not by being unaware or unconscious like a child or like these creatures."

I responded to the phrase she'd used, "dependent by choice." Only a mature, independent person could make such an act of choice. But Clare was sailing out ahead of us.

"What would his motives be in erasing distinctions of male and female." When we looked confused, she added, "Satan, I mean, not Lewis. Oh, I'm so glad to be safe from him forever. If we fall away here, it is just our own hard heart. Wasn't it too bad about that woman, you know, the one who left, but I was told she'd have another chance.

"I know that this polarity idea is under constant attack on earth. My field was psychology. There was a continuous attempt by my old colleagues, God bless them, to erase differences. Everything should be homogeneous, you know, like solidarity meant undifferentiated mass-ness. Morphology they could not erase, but they could and did minimize it. Intuitively I knew that something was wrong, but couldn't see it clearly. What are Satan's intentions in this?" She dropped upon a bench the way a young girl sits down with no self-conscious pose.

Not waiting for an answer, she continued, "The argument went that just as in education, 'separate but equal' never worked, so it would not work in human relations, where woman was the one discriminated against. And it went from there - the fight for homosexuals and lesbians to have their relationships recognized as legitimate. In this context that appears to be another attempt by the enemy to erase a polarity Lewis tells us is part of the Tao. Does polarity mean that women do not belong in the business, economic, governmental, intellectual life on earth? Was I out of place as a scientist?" She stopped for breath and this time she waited for an answer.

It was Sarah who replied, "No, it is clear a woman can do anything within her power to do." She repeated it, "Anything. This is not where the medium lies. It lies inside. It is a very delicate thing and must be cherished and nurtured. It is what being feminine is all about. I did not know what feminine meant before my last illness. The only way I came to experience it was through a gift in a vision. I yearned for . . . for.. to be. . . well, He just. . . gave me a gift of it. I've called it The Principle, but I think Lewis would just call it, oh dear,. . . 'submission.' Not submission to just anything, but to that which has been put over you by Him - by God's Command."

Clare and I were silent, not out of embarrassment at what she had said, but because of the implications of this statement.

Clare spoke first, "He gifted you, you said" she repeated thoughtfully.

Sarah seemed reluctant to say more. Or perhaps she didn't know how to express something that was obviously so important to her. Her eyes glistened. "You needn't beg for a submissive heart, sisters." She put both hands over her. "He longs to give it."

Sarah had a femininity of a kind I admired greatly. This statement opened a door which had been closed up till now in my understanding. It was the first time I had heard the word, "submissive." I rolled it around in my head, then on my tongue silently. It did not reach below that, but it triggered a momentary response which was not at all distasteful. Funny, I always thought "submit" the most miserable of words describing the most demeaning of all attitudes.

Up to this point I was hoping that my change of heart on the meadows had been a near complete remodeling of my psyche. Had He really chosen to reveal all my hidden depths then, I know now, I would have, despite my arrogance, or even because of it, chosen to go back to greytown. It would have hit the pride level too hard. But He was all gentleness. For now I thought, "In the same order as my experience on the meadows, Sarah has had a deeper transformation which has crowned all her personal attributes with full unqualified womanhood."

"So, that's it! A new heart condition to make us His women. Quite the opposite of what I once believed." Clare was talkative, but knowledgeable. "Did either of you ever study Carl Jung?"

I acknowledged that I had. Sarah shook her head.

"I know that he did not bend the knee to Our Lord, yet at one point he influenced me. He foresaw the end of the old marriage ideal. He knew that 'He shall be thy master' was dead. Our newly developing masculinity meant that we women had goals and knew what to do to achieve them. That was simply not compatible with passive obedience. And now we three are being turned around and brought back to submission! How can a consciousness once expanded be turned back?"

Then, quite unlike her, she stopped abruptly and turned to look at the man who had almost come along with us. His back was toward us, and though he was an average sized man, his posture, bent a little forward at the waist along with the remnants of shadow, made him look slight, or perhaps timid. When she turned to us again, all of the vivaciousness had vanished, instead upon her youthful face were lines of pain and age – I had thought her quite complete, but the insubstantial past was apparent. The change was dramatic and unexpected.

"Clare, what is wrong?"

"How can one submit to a zero? Oh, forgive me, dear Lord, he was never a zero, of course. He's a warm, wonderful human being who loves Our Lord. But really, he never acted decisively and rarely has an opinion. I've had to talk for him in every social situation. What does submission mean in our case? Why have we been presented with this at such a late date? What can we do about it now? It's cruel." She was just as uninhibited in tears as in laughter. She did not hide the flow.

After a pause, during which Sarah and I had nothing to say, she stopped crying and smiling ruefully through wet eyes, continued, "So easy to intellectualize, so hard to accept in the context of my real life. How I have wished that he were a strong man, how wonderful to trust someone God has given to be your head. Before," she waved her hand to indicate earth-time, "I thought that idea was a cop-out; and that it really, by now it would be settled . . . here. As part of God's order, of course, it is no cop-out. But in my strength," there was a little struggle and a few more tears, "somehow I chose the weak ... not exactly the ordering kind, I'm afraid." She looked back at the passive silhouette and then at the backs of her wet hands. "Wouldn't you have thought that everything would have been worked out once we were transported to the Meadows?"

"Clare," I began. I remembered little of Jung, but something I had read long ago and had never really understood seemed to be answering. "Do you recall a true story Jung told about a man who psychologically, unconsciously forced his wife to carry his shadow?"

Clare bent her head and looked quizzical. "I did read it. Let's see he was the perfect man, was that it?"

I nodded.

"And Jung couldn't find any darkness in him?"

"That is the way I remember it, too."

“But then, Jung met his wife. And it was clear to him then who carried the shadow for both of them. The darkness was all in her. Oh, yes, that story.”

Nothing of it had spoken to her. From there I knew that I have to speak frankly. Sarah’s confrontiveness had been the conduit of springs of living water to me. I hoped this might be the same, somehow, for Clare.

“You are so lively, so uninhibited, so fun, so intelligent.” Clare looked embarrassed and tried to wave me off. “No, really, I’m not saying this to flatter you. But in any competition you’d be hard to beat. Do you suppose that your light has in any way caused a shadow to fall on. . . I didn’t even know his name. Clare hadn’t mentioned it.

“Roger.” She spoke the word flatly.

No more was said while that dull sound hung in the air. I glanced toward that figure standing now with two other men. It was true there didn’t seem to be a shred of that surging masculine in him that linked with the word ‘submission’ gives a very human thrill to a woman. I was on thin ice that might break through and leave me bobbing, but I kept on.

“If you just could . . . “

“Oh, Mary,” Clare interrupted me, “I know what you are trying to tell me ...that if I were quieter, less expressive, not so many words, somehow things would equalize. I used to get that thought now and then, but it seemed contrary to the gospel - the gospel of fulfillment. The gospel, Jesus, told me I was to be free and whole.”

That stumped me. I looked at Sarah and she smiled at us both. “Aren’t we right back to Point One? How did you find only half a gospel? There is an unavoidable other half. Freedom and wholeness come only through the cross.”

Clare’s expressive eyes opened wide. She who always had words seemed momentarily speechless. She fumbled with a word or two, and gave it up. Suddenly she sat back on the bench and covered her face with her hands. I expected more tears, and a muffled sound did come from behind the palms. Not crying, but a soft giggle. She was shaking with that laughter that often shares the stage with tears.

“Do you know what I see?” Her fingers were still pressed against her eyes. “I see an agate, big warts of crusty sediments disfiguring it, being put into one of those stone tumbling machines. We used to have one. A cupful of grit goes in with it. The machine is turned on. Grit and agate are turning, churning, “her head was rotating with the words, “turning, churning, round and round together. It would go on for days. Oh, ouch!” Her hands fell onto her lap. “Oh, Roger, were you meant to be my tumbler and the grit? And I wouldn’t?” She seemed to regain her good spirits, but there was a subtle difference. A person we

might once have said “had everything”: what would the refining at Roger’s hand produce, I wondered? Something more glorious, that much was clear.

I glanced up the path to where he was. For a moment I thought he had moved away. Then in surveying the scene more carefully, I realized that I had not recognized him because of a different stance. Could I be mistaken? No, a glance at Clare and Sarah told me that they were noting the same thing. He stood more squarely, his weight which seemed to have increased, a distinctness was emerging, and now rested right on the balls of his feet. As though sensing our eyes on him, he turned around and looked directly at us seeking out Clare with a stare that was full of some kind of energy. Startled, Clare returned the look.

“Roger?” she whispered softly.

I imagined I saw a gold bond, or perhaps a golden teeter-totter, beneath the garden path that held them together. When Clare had yielded, Roger had gained energy immediately - she had lightened her end, and his had come down with weight. Clearly, the Holy Spirit was working directly here. On earth there would be all that demonic static in the situation, the same Godly impulses toward perfection would work much more slowly and painfully; but certainly they would take the same course. Yes, it was all very clear to me at that moment, something was being wonderfully and mystically corrected. However, as sad as I am to say it, a little later the old habits of my own autonomy had clouded this revelation almost entirely.

Clare hadn’t taken her attention from Roger, nor he his from her. There was no marriage in heaven, but at this point on the eternal threshold, marriages could still be spiritually consummated. That these two persons were leaping toward that fulfillment in a brief interval was evident. Clare, rising to her feet, began to walk to meet him. It was different walk, characterized more by a sweetness than the outgoing, self-possession that marked her strides before. Momentarily she turned to us smiling, “I’m remembering some perfect words, ‘He must increase, and I must decrease.’” Perfect words, indeed.

We were enthralled watching them meet on the path. Clare held out both of her hands. When Roger took them the melting reached us via some other golden bond. To have watched them longer would have been an intrusion. We turned away.

After an interim, I broke the silence. “What I’ve seen; what I’ve heard’s a marvel, (and then that fateful word) but . . . it still has not been answered. Could we have nourished and cherished this femininity while pursuing strength and activity? To stop that thrust in me would have been like stopping a cracked dam from bursting.”

“Ask that question of Lewis, Mary. I just know that submission is the ground for all fruitfulness and Our Lord told us that fruitfulness is the one mark, the one sign of those truly in the Kingdom. ‘You will know them by their fruits.’ Only those submitted to Him, given wholly to His will, can be fruitful.

Remember, that's the indicator above all other that makes Our Blessed Mother's place so secure. Her level of submission, her self-giving to His will, and the Fruitfulness. . ." We know her by her fruits!"

"Female submits to male, like these bunnies," I had lifted out a soft coal-black one whose ears lay softly along his back.

Sarah smiled, "These creatures are no longer subject to natural law. There is no need for physical procreation where there is no death. Here fruitfulness transcends the biological.

This turned a thought in my head which Sarah read, "Now, don't mistake that transcendence! Just as life in the heavenlies does not precede earthly existence for us humans, neither may man or woman sidestep or skip over the fulfillment of their sexuality either. Some aspire to sexlessness on the grounds that it is finer or nobler. Such a belief puts a person in the impossible position of knowing better than the Creator what is fine and noble. The very beginning point of submission for a woman who has been given by God to a man is in the marriage bed." She looked toward Clare and Roger. "What we have seen completed here is the act of submission which began there. It cannot be neglected." The couple was moving slowly back towards us.

We took them in in silence, but in the spirit we exulted in what we saw. They were His object lesson. I knew it. But still I was befriending a sly stubbornness rising from below. It was not Gone - that small stubbornness that was intent on throwing blindness across my mind. It manifested itself in an inability to center on this phenomena and accept it for myself. "Submission" was much more easily assented to "out there" than received "in here." Clare had noted that well. And "in here" I had a glazed level across which the whole implication of submission for me slid into a recess that I subconsciously hoped to keep inaccessible.

Clare was a changed person. Oh, yes, she still sparkled, but it had less of an aluminum quality about it. It was more like the light reflecting from a running stream or a rippled lake than the harsher flash that causes involuntary blinking. And the dark shadow was no longer cast. She introduced us to Roger with distinct pride, and I realized that she now reflected his light rather than the other way around. He was magnificent, not the diffident man who had hardly been observable beside Clare in the seminar room. He first took Sarah's and then my hand. With assurance and the kind of interest that awakens the best in me, he said, "Please, don't let me interrupt. Clare was enjoying it so much! This visit with Lewis! He has certainly turned over some old ways of thinking." And looking at Clare, "and of being."

"How are the men coming out on this question he left with us?" I was curious not only to find out what had been discussed by the others, but also about what he was thinking about this transformation.

He took time with his answer. "A real thinker," I mused, Clare would have spilled out several brilliant paragraphs by now. I glanced at her. She was smiling at him without a sign of anxiousness.

"Good for her," I thought.

“Most of us, it seems, have trouble accepting any agency that it now appears is integral to maleness. We tried to control such impulses and to eliminate them from our actions and words. Actually most of us experienced a great deal of guilt, and denied vigorously any impulse to wield authority in relationships with our wife and children. There were two problems; first a mistaken idea about what authority was, and second, intellectual acceptance of democracy as the ideal. Contemplation of the Trinity would have clarified the first, and narrowed the logical application of the second.”

He was deliberate. He spoke as carefully as Clare spoke spontaneously. I could see how difficult it would have been for him to get a word in edgewise prior to this moment. Now he was encouraged by Clare’s obvious interest and respect; before she must have thought his kind of thinking boring.

“And the enemy’s idea in promoting the ambiguous Mother/Father God is, of course, an attack against the truth of that agency - ultimately against God’s authority.” He shook his head, “One thing you have to say for Satan - his objectives don’t change; and his tactics are predictable.” Then turning to Clare, “How do you see it?”

“Yes, yes. Looking at it another way, Satan would like to cut us in on a part of the action that is not rightly ours - something we can’t ever really do. If God can be feminine then it is O.K. for us,” she motioned to the men and women in the garden, “to be masculine and usurp power. Then we don’t need to accept or receive, or have a submissive heart. We need no impregnation for fruitfulness, and we end up mistaking works for fruits.”

Clare was still herself. She was thinking and responding naturally. Giving so much to Roger had not stifled her, and he was able to generously make room for her more temperamental style. How had she changed? Of course, she was denser, more real, and I thought that what she was saying was now more for Roger’s benefit than for ours. Not that she was instructing him. Not that. It was that she was adding to him, no longer taking away. I was especially sensitive to this. Impressing people had been so much my mode in spoken and written word. And impressing people was self aggrandizement at its worst.

“Clare, do you remember reading that statement of deBeauvoir’s to me? Something about the very posture of acceptance and receptivity being a humiliation for a woman? Well, men feel even more humiliated by any demand that they demonstrate acceptance and receptivity. It is their rejection of this value that begins the ugly chain of rejection that women link into by emulating masculine values. After all, we, too, must submit. We are ‘sent under’ by God’s command because any agency we exercise is accountable to Him and to those whom He has set over us. We are thoroughly dependent, too”

At this, as I viewed them, I realized that he and Clare no longer carried any of those telltale shreds of mortality. A god and goddess now stood wonderfully side by side. I thought of the loveliest pairs I had ever seen. There was a pair of cut glass vases of my grandmother’s I’d admired since a child, each designed in a complementary but different pattern. Roses exuberantly entwined round the one; lilies sedately crisscrossed round the other. And at home two great and ancient elms had graced our farmyard

before the blight. Each stood alone; they did not lean, or even net together their branches, but both tossed in the same wind, and both rejoiced in absorbing the same sun. How I'd loved to watch those glorious crowned heads from my bedroom window!

My mind searched for an adequate comparison, but found none. Here were two complete persons now clothed in eternity, glorious as gods, a little lower than the angels. Or perhaps now a little higher, for weren't they in His substance, with His Spirit motivating them? I wanted to bow down before them.

Again a moment of clarity. The brightness of it was like a beacon. This searchlight blazed down upon that inner sleeper of mine who only whimpered, "It's not for me," and pulling the covers up over its head went back to sleep. I was still so much a captive of my intellect, which was fully committed, that I was not aware of the duplicity unreached by intellect, or the hypocrisy of allowing this tenacious refuser a bed. Not Gone, no, just in hiding.

"Yes, 'tis better to rule in hell than serve in heaven" is the devilish credo more and more lived out on earth." Roger took the little rabbit from my hands into his strong ones and nestled him back into the straw. Then the four of us turned back to the house.

"So, Lewis is saying that the polarity must be maintained, that male and female represent an oppositeness that goes back, or behind, or above, or before. . yes, before, man and woman - that they express something utterly primordial, something that is the infinite of the continuum. A continuum that on our human side ends, or begins with sex difference itself." Clare had the words I groped for.

"Yes," Sarah agreed, "Any attempt to erase that difference, or to cause it to be hazy, is an attack on the Ultimate Polarity that energizes the very heart of things."

We walked slowly thinking out loud. Then Clare stopped and in her exuberant childlike way, exclaimed, "But those poles, male and female, they can be unified. Jung never quite saw it. He said that all other polarity, hot and cold, light and dark, conscious and unconscious sprang from our experience as male with the "other," or as female with the "other." Though male and female unite physically, he found them irreconcilable on a basic level. He looked for, as had all the alchemists, the lapis lazuli, the unifier, and came to call it the Holy Spirit, but hardly in the way that we Christians believe it!"

Roger amazed us by flinging open his strong arms toward the sky, "Praise God for reconciling the irreconcilables, for uniting opposites in the Holy Spirit!" And he put both arms around Clare and lifted her laughing till her forehead met his mouth.

Chapter VIII

The others coming up to the garden door, and those already inside, echoed the first gesture and the thanksgiving. The laughter of brothers and sisters like an entrance song greeted Lewis as he regained his chair. He placed his hand on the manes of the two carved lion heads which made up the arms of the great chair. His bare feet were supported by a low hassock covered in raspberry colored tapestry cloth. The pattern was the same as the green tapestry cloth that covered the chair. My eye was snagged by this detailing of mythical creatures hiding or playing in a wood. Unicorns, fauns, nymphs, satyrs - all were set against a background of magnificent foliage. Some of this was palm trees, others climbing philodendron with large cut leaves upon which multicolored parrots and finches posed lifelike. It occurred to me that Lewis had emerged from his own special environment to preside temporarily at our prosaic gathering. The realism of the representations was amazing. I was so taken up by the extraordinariness of them even in this stunning universe of which I was now a part that I lost the question which Lewis had now begun to answer.

“Yes, exactly! Our enemy has finally struck at the absolute core! He has reached the great shipbuilder’s metacenter. To masculinize the feminine, to feminize the masculine. We are close to the final judgment. You have it there, my brother.” He spoke with great assurance.

“Do you remember that among Our Lord’s last words spoken among us was a prophecy uttered to women? ‘Behold,’ He said, ‘the days are coming when they will say, “Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never gave suck?”’ Hasn’t that day come? Anti-conception consciousness, rebellion against sexual difference, revolt against morphology? The conflagration has reached the dry wood; the flames are leaping just as He said, ‘Then they will begin to say to the mountains, “Fall on us,” and to the hills, “Cover us,” ‘For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?’”

At the impact of these words, we sat very still. Lewis continued with intensity though he spoke more softly and with a note of sadness, “Such frigid, barren, unyielding consciousnesses can never enter into the Kingdom of heaven. The Wise Ones, whom we are all meant to join high in the mountains, by intercourse and union with their Opposite are fruitful for Him in ways that we here would find hard to comprehend. Their fruitfulness goes backward to earth and forward to new heavens and new earths. On the weary globe we see that fruit in healings, in wars averted, in famines shortened, in catastrophes checked, in multitudes of individual souls brought to conversion. How much worse earth would be - but He shares the creativity of the universes with His spouse. We are that spouse, the community of saints.”

There was again a long reflective pause. Then Sarah whispered to me, “Ask your question?” I was prepared.

“Sir, have we who thought claiming our masculine qualities a step toward wholeness for a woman also been misled? Mary, Our Mother, had a strong masculine side. She reasoned, she decided, she initiated and differentiated. If developing our masculine side has made us unfit for the heights. . .”

“My dear, your femininity is apparent, and I’m not referring just to physiology. Your demeanor, your speech, the way you sit there with folded hands, your tranquil look, all speak to me of femininity, but I also see why it is becoming. It has a strong masculine suspension. Without that you’d be like a picture without a frame. Hard to really see; not easy to appreciate. Women without their masculinity developed are apt to be rolled up in themselves, like a canvas without stretchers. It even affects the colors themselves; they’re too weak, far too pastel and undelineated to be beautiful. Imitate Our Mother and you’ll be as ‘just right’ as she - in perfect balance.

“And Jesus, Our Lord, is He not also framed in perfect femininity? His authority of bearing, sternness of speech, even violence of action - all that masculinity was set off by a manner so loving, a touch so soothing, a compassion so gentle. . We are created to express both. As a male I have an inner feminine, as a female you have an inner masculine, but the sex spoken of by our bodies, that is the picture, the other is but the support, the important support to which it is fastened. Whenever you helped a woman to exercise, to develop that necessary backup to her femininity you helped her to become whole. In that you were an instrument for the Holy Spirit whose work wholeness is; but whenever you confused the woman with being the same as the man in role, you helped the Evil One who demands all opposites to be washed out of the human scene.” Lewis nodded at me, discerning another question that was on my lips. “Yes, what else?” Again the accepting smile.

“Sir, this growing masculinity in us threatens earthly marriage, or makes it very difficult. It brings competitiveness. It can’t seem to be helped. My friend, Sarah, of course, it was before her conversion, but her growing strength ended her marriage. Her husband could not abide a woman who would question. Men are so. . so . .arrogant. Your emphasis on differentiation, on polarity - you are saying equality cannot be in marriage, not if it means ‘the same as,’ well, it sounds like the one, the male must still order, while we females, merely obey. I protest! It isn’t fair! Why should we women be the slaves?”

In the bunker, the sleeper was roused! Fully awake, these were her words. Even as they came from my mouth, my mind was aghast. Weren’t these the same objections voiced by the anthropologist who couldn’t accept the polar roles of man and woman?

Who are you?” I screamed interiorly at the rebel. “Why can’t you ever learn? What kind of an imbecile must you be? The answer has been demonstrated here plainly again and again! Gone?! Give up, and go!” Frustration overwhelmed me.

Lewis found something in my query funny. He began to laugh while I fell back appalled at myself; the inner conversation was all I could hear.

From inside came, "I am Feeling, and feeling never learns. You're the stupid one to think so! I'd say you were the imbecile!"

"What can I do with you?" Inwardly I saw myself snarled in fear and exasperation. How could I deal with this part of self uncovered and recalcitrant? I was divided and she, these feelings, would undo me.

"It's what I can do with you? Don't I have the power? Don't I always upset your best laid plans? This is no different. You can't do away with me, and I am simply beyond your domain. You think it all happens in your head - intellect, hah! Think what you like, but you can't dictate to me! And remember, you're not just a brain. So keep on trying to ignore me and see where you get."

Feeling.. . Feeling..

I knew what I wanted of Feeling. I wanted her to be on my side. I wanted all her richness, her energy, her motivating power to be supportive of Intellect and will. But she was right; I could not reach her, or certainly convert her. And she did erupt without warning, immobilizing me more times that I cared to remember. She seemed an enemy, pulling me (whoever "me" was in this inner free-for-all) down when I was piously thinking, "up," and pushing me up when I was piously thinking, "down."

Finally conciliatory words came to me and cried them to the depths; they were all that I could manage. "What," I whispered, "can I do for you?"

There was a long silence, and then in a different mode, "Well now, that's different." A further pause and then I heard a very small sound on a very weak frequency, "Seek healing for me. Please, I want to be healed."

In earth-life, such an admission and request would have taken the better part of a lifetime, first, to be asked and then, to be met. Here it was answered immediately. There was an inaudible rush of piercing love. The voltage rocked me, scorching out Self-Pity, cauterizing the soft hole where Resentment lived, and consigning both of these intruders to outer darkness. Be Gone, Self-Pity! Out with you, Resentment! Were the words actually spoken? They hit like blocks of ice, no, no, like blocks of fiery napalm.

At the same time there flashed before my inner eye a brief but mordant scene, etched forever in my brain. A great hand reached down and took a gigantic crying baby out of the center of the universe. As it was lifted up the baby shrank and shrank until a normal sized adult person was set down on the periphery of the cosmos. Here it joined hands with uncounted others - a great circle who surrounded a center of unspeakable light. It had all taken but an instant. I don't believe that I missed a word of Lewis' reply.

"Oh, but you are something! Not obey, eh? Never submit, is that it?" He was chuckling.

"Before this new surge of womankind toward the masculine, the woman was submissive on a very elementary level. She grew up knowing nothing but the Law. She knew the consequences of

disobedience and so she obeyed. It was quite simple. And for the times it worked quite well. For the most part her place was secure, her marriage relationship, though not entirely fulfilling, was all she expected, therefore she had a certain level of happiness. However, when her masculinity became just a little less dormant, she began to bear this obedience with less acceptance; the long repressed feelings, so resentful of all the degradation of her person, were loosed.

“With each stride forward toward independence of thought, her dissatisfaction grew. She might now be obedient to her husband’s word, but internally she questioned it, and she began to be beset by bitterness and self-pity. As soon as these questions were verbalized by a few intrepid ones, the top blew off and the overt war was on. ‘Submission,’ the word and the concept, became the target for all guns. That word as a result has become almost unmentionable on earth, even in His Church.

“Now , that is not to say that the old elemental unthinking submission of wife to husband was a perfect thing, or even what He had in mind when he founded the relationship. Not at all! Remember, with the Law by which woman was put under man’s authority, He was working with the imperfect - with fallen man and woman. It was necessary under the circumstances to put them in restraints to protect them from themselves and to insure a future for mankind.

“The Law (I don’t speak of the Tao, but the Law brought into necessity by the Fall) was simply stop-gap, the glue applied to stricken mankind to keep the breakdown from gathering momentum till the whole creation flew apart. Quite different from the original Tao, the Law emphasized oppositeness rather than unity in diversity, though both are sides of the same coin.

“As these creatures, man and woman grow up in Christ they are freed from the Law, but not, of course, from the Tao - that would be illogical. Now what had been externally applied was meant to internally embraced. Now, by choice, not by demand, obedience was hopefully to be taken up. With each move in exercising her masculine side, a woman was presented with the possibility of a higher obedience, a more perfect submission, and therefore a more beautiful femininity.

“Anything done with understanding by will is more glorious than when done in ignorance by the mere necessity to comply. Now I’ll test you, how do you like this analogy?” He chuckled looking directly at me. “Just as an unfettered dog who heels on command is displaying a much higher obedience than one confined to a choke chain and a short leash, so a woman who has taken to herself her masculine qualities, and who now chooses to willingly submit is manifesting a quality of a different order.”

Another man in the group leaned forward, “Professor Lewis, doesn’t this still put woman in second place, valuable, sure, but second in God’s creation of mankind?” After all, a dog on a leash - what kind of analogy is that?

I was glad that his attention was drawn away from me. I had no idea what my face disclosed. With each inner experience I knew the tough bindings around my heart were being loosened. Some lightness of heart had been gained on the meadows, that had been a turning point from which I could not

imagine forgetting. I was realizing however that even that release had been only a start. The work was going on. That inner sleeper, Feeling, had expressed her need and was being healed, I was sure. This latest laser surgery had seared through another layer of those leather-like straps and they were beginning to come apart. Happily I was being changed. As Sarah had said, "from one glory to another." This purgative process completed that promise, but I wasn't sure that I knew yet the depths of submission of heart necessary to scale the heights, and I worried that some vestige of hardness still showed on my face.

"What value system are you using to arrive at that conclusion? Be careful, the values here are opposite from earth's, you know."

That was it. We were all, obviously this man too, finding it very hard to start thinking and feeling right-side-up. The man hesitated. Lewis waited.

"Ohhhh, ohhhh." Another pause. Then he said, "The first will be last . . . and the last will be first."

"There now! By earth's standards to serve, to obey, is that wretched second class citizenship everybody down there is so sensitive to these days. But here is it is the mark of those who climb the mountains. And the higher we go, the lower does servant sink into the heart."

The man leaned back in his chair. "Ah, that's why Susan is so far ahead of me in the climb, though we both arrived here together. She cheerfully made my well being her first concern. Now, I must acquire that grace."

"Yes, we must all desire obedience. Here, at the hard core of the matter stands the Marian woman. See, Dolores! With her, submission is displayed to the world to confound its standards. If, however, the woman refuses such humility and clings to power, who will exemplify the truth and how will anyone come to understand the Reality that motivates the Lord's gospel? St. Paul has rightly said that such women discredit the gospel."

This interpretation of St. Paul made me uncomfortably remember my book. But even the memory of it was ebbing, soon to be Gone, too. I willed it so.

"Remember His words," Lewis was standing up, "If anyone calls me Lord, Lord, and does not obey." I thought he looked right at me. "Well, dear ones, enough of this. Time that you all moved on. There are newcomers in the garden. If you have questions they will be answered in the course of your journey by those more qualified than I. May His Name be praised for ever and ever! Amen!"

He was gone before a word of thanks could be offered. The big armchair with its pattern of fantastic and varied creatures stood empty, the lion armrests at the watch until he came back again.

Chapter IX.

It would be a while before the next session started. While the others, full of conversation, moved out of the room, I sat staring at the portentous chair, my mind full of what I had heard. Only slowly did I become aware that before my eyes, as if cut by an unseen razor, the green fabric of the great wing chair had begun to split open neatly down the center. I blinked, but rather than restoring things to normal, my reopened eyes saw the tapestry pull back like curtains on a stage. The scene beyond them immediately swallowed up the chair, the room - everything.

Projected out in great black space, the azure globe, earth, floated swathed in her layered capes of snowy chiffon mist. I seemed to be racing toward her at great speed because she grew rapidly larger till engulfed within her sheer white atmosphere, I dropped slowly onto her surface and was immersed again in the stir and bustle of a great city.

The city had landmarks I thought I recognized. Was it Minneapolis? But in other ways the surroundings were completely unknown and strange. The people who walked by looked like people I had known, but I was kept from crying out greetings because of two facts: First, I knew I was not really present to them; and second, I was put off by a strange phenomenon.

The exposed skin of almost every one of the passers-by, arms, legs, and faces, was covered with a disagreeable reddish makeup that from my observations had nothing to do with race or sex. The reds far outnumbered those who appeared to me to be normal. I walked about the streets trying to discover clues as to what this coloration could mean. Was it the horrible effect of some contaminants in the air? Had there been a radio-active accident? No, there were a few, a very few, who were unaffected here and there, but they seemed to be pariahs – avoided if possible. Was it a kind of medical application now necessary? Perhaps there was some need for protection from the sun's rays - too much ultraviolet because of damage to the ozone layer? But then, why wouldn't everyone be protected? Or, was it the nature of a fad, a whim of fashion. It was very ugly stuff, but I remembered that fashionable trends could be ugly. And was this taking place in time as I had known it, or had centuries passed since my passage on earth?

After wandering from place to place, entering buildings and walking through parks for some time, I realized that there was one kind of building in which there were no reds - the Catholic churches. The solitary prayers in the pews, whether of Caucasian, Asian, or African extraction, wore no ointment. This was the evidence that finally led me to believe the red makeup was some concoction that had come from the dark side. The majority somehow had been convinced to invest themselves in it. For health reasons? As a sign of some kind of political or social involvement? I couldn't guess. To be a Catholic had eliminated, at least to this point, buying into whatever it was.

But then a small group of "reds," as I mentally called them, though intending nothing political, began to approach the church in front of which I stood. Holding in their hands some small compacts, they

began to collar and cajole the people going in. They were very persuasive. They insisted that the ointment was necessary to be "right" or "enlightened," and that refusing it was really uncharitable toward all those who had already accepted it. As their argument seemed to be based on logic and concern for others, at first a few, and then more and more accepted the compacts. The reds helped them apply the miserable stuff. The converts, pleased with the attention thus gained, took the little boxes into the church.

Here they began to work on their fellow worshippers to take the ointment which was offered without initial cost. Chief among both those who persuaded at the door, and those who soon peddled inside the church were women. Some men received the compacts, but most of these showed fear of the women either in the way of near terror, or else a fear in the more hidden way of wanting desperately to please.

By now a small group of women had gathered by the altar railing. These, carrying compacts, were smeared liberally with the hideous carmine. They talked amongst themselves for a few minutes, then opened the sanctuary gates, entered, and sat on the steps to the great high altar. For a while that was all they did. The men who had also donned the makeup, with some of the women, did not accompany them, but sat in the first pews giving encouragement. At first with cowed whispers, this advocacy heightened steadily until the solemn stone interior was rent with cheers and whistles. With this easing of restraint, the women sitting on the marble stars began to mount them by sliding up in a sitting position, boosting themselves from one tread to the next.

Alarmed by the noise, a priest came out from the sacristy. He looked bewilderedly at what was happening. One of the women, a very young and attractive one, except for the stuff on her face, pulled him down next to her in a choir stall. There she began to talk to him animatedly. She was very expressive with her hands, and though I could not hear the conversation, it was obvious that she was describing the wondrous change the ointment had made in her life, and how, before wearing it she had been in a state of ignorance, or worse, oppression. She was blaming the priest who looked more and more apprehensive and confused. She held out the compact, opened it, and began applying the contents to his face. The man struggled politely for a moment or two, but then guiltily put down the hand with which he shielded his face and permitted it to be besmirched. He sat a few moments as though he had been struck.

Finally recovering his composure, if not his mental equilibrium, he took the young woman by the hand and approached the altar table on the lower level of the sanctuary. By the time the two took their positions behind it, the women at their back had reached the top of the steps. In a slow animalistic ballet, they rose and turned. Then grabbing and grasping each other in deliberately degrading ways they began to climb up on the high marble altarpiece. Standing on the magnificent table of the Lord, then pushing and shoving each other up from saint niche to saint niche, they assaulted the gleaming statuary like soldiers gaining an enemy hill. I couldn't imagine, in my horror at the scene, what the object of their mad scramble could possibly be.

At the peak of the marble mountain, like its flag of honor, stood a life- sized, finely fashioned golden crucifix, its corpus surrounded by glistening spikes which symbolized Christ's glory. Could it be? No! My heart beat furiously, but it was. It was the intent of the red women to topple the cross!

By then an athletic one had already begun to pull herself up by the gibbet. She was not pushing it over. Instead, she carefully steadied herself with one hand while she grasped the corpus with the other. As she did this another woman reached the summit. She, too, grasped the corpus. Then before my disbelieving eyes, the two snapped open compacts and began to cover the golden image with red goo.

However, below them the others watching - those still standing on top of the altar, and those leaning like mountain climbers from the niches, began to howl. Something clearly was not pleasing them. They became louder and louder, and more and more agitated, till finally several reached up and grabbed the ascendent two's ankles. Those tried to kick back at their assailants, but they were toppled roughly to the floor where they both lay motionless.

My senses were reeling. I thought I would be sick. But the nightmare didn't stop. Two more women now gained the base of the crucifix. This time with a tremendous joint effort, motivated by an anger that terrified me, they wrenched the corpus from the cross and hurled it down after the fallen women. It did not hit them, but lay, its radiant spokes twisted and bent upon the tessera floor.

Something was being handed up now from the women who had stayed on the sacristy level. I could not see what it was. Though heavy, it was the assault group's intent to keep it hidden from those in the church. Now I realized why in sliding up the stairs seated, they had faced the nave. Whatever it was had been moved up secretly behind them. I glanced at the priest and the woman at the table altar. They kept their backs to what was happening at the high altar and stood transfixed, staring out into the partially filled pews like two wooden statues.

"Where were the people who could do something about this?" I agonized. "The priests, the bishops?" They were no doubt, this minute, trying to be open and sympathetic to their red neighbors and friends, feeling a little red makeup no danger to the faith.

In the pews the scene was curious. Some were still clapping and shouting approval while others sat stunned. One man got out in the aisle where he was vigorously rubbing off his red paint. He seemed filled with disgust as he folded the ointment into his handkerchief and sought a fresh corner with which again to dab his face. Those around him began to point and jeer, calling him turncoat.

When I looked back at the assault group, I gasped. The plaster casting of a nude woman smudged with carmine was being hammered into place upon the cross. The Zeitgeist in place, the priest and woman turned toward it and genuflected.

I could stand no more. My hands went up before my eyes, and at the same time a loud voice cracked like thunder, "When you see the desolating sacrilege in the holy place . . ." Then there was

silence. My eyes opened to a green blur. The brocade scene of the upholstered chair came once more into focus. Its fantasy pictures were as before, motionless. The nightmare was over.

Chapter X.

I was sitting atone in the low beamed cottage in that quiet morning tight which perpetually clothed Enduring Meadows and Inner Foothills. Looking out of the window the intensity of Presence Mountains filled my sight, slowly easing out the emotional impact of the vision of horror. Earth was far away in another realm.

Tears came to my eyes. It was so sad that within her beauty, even the beloved Church, there should be such frightful ugliness. The meaning of what I had seen remained to consider. I knew that while one of earth's residents I had been one who had accepted the red ointment and even peddled it. How far had I gone? Why had I thought maleness such an offense, yet such a spiteful goal?

I remembered greytown. In that state of mind, how had I been judged ready to take the winged bus? Oh, the mercy of Him who is above all!

Then my outward gaze to the mountains was interrupted. Two, I thought two, stopped outside the window. One was my friend and companion, Sarah, the other a being so radiant that I could not see the facial features though it seemed turned toward me. Sarah briefly bent her head to this overwhelming visage. There was a meekness, an utter sweetness about that motion that melted me. I heard her say, "Of course, whatever is desired." Then the form became all light - a flash of phosphorous. When my eyes regained their function, Sarah was coming in the door.

"Mary, you'll be going on alone. I'm being sent back to the Meadows. Another bus is arriving, and our old friend, Father Jim, will be on it. With some of his family, I'm to meet him.

"Father Jim?" She meant the young priest from Newman Center.

"Yes, if he will stay, I'm to bring him to the seminars with Augustine far into the foothills after a stop here. I'm to try to prepare him."

"That will be a job." Though he had been wholeheartedly generous with the students, sharing everything he owned, Father Jim had often defied his superiors. "I hope he will listen. And oh, Sarah, thank you!" I hugged her gratefully. "But how am I to find my way?"

"You could have traveled with someone from the group here. I'm sure that some of them were going to Actuality Colony, but they've all left. Clare and Roger were heading out with some who were to see Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque. She knew so well the grace of submitting to insensitive authority for His sake. It looks like you will go alone. But you'll have no trouble. The way is clear, there are no dangers here. It is a steep climb at times, but you'll need nothing but your own fortitude."

The thought of the trip alone was not unpleasant. I had always liked solitary prayer. Now I felt a need to be quiet and let my spirit absorb what I had experienced - Lewis' exposition, my inner healing, but most of all ... the vision. Sarah pointed out the lane which led away toward high hills. All I needed to find my way was to hold my destination in mind, she said, and I would receive sure guidance when crossroads offered choices in the journey.

We knew that there was no real parting here, so we kissed each other solemnly but without sadness. The glorious light of the Presence Mountains crowned the whole scene ahead, and I started out with great joy.

The thick firs that had stood behind the cottages now were on both sides of the track. Lovely little dots of white flowers, like edelweiss, gleamed up from under the sweep of their great dark branches. Birds of subtle hues, small ones similar to the warblers at home, rustled here and there among spiky clumps of needles. The beauty was complete. I thought my heart would burst.

It was not just the beauty, it was the justice. Here everything was ordered. His will reigned. How free I felt within that all-prevailing justice. There could be no fear where there was no disorder.

"How different," I thought, "Justice has its real meaning here. How confused things are on earth. There I struggled with the Law all along. I could never understand why the Lord insisted He had not done away with the Law. It was to me a horrible restrictive thing. But here Law prevailed and it set everything free.

"And my femininity." I looked at my shapely self. All distortion that had so shamed me was now absorbed by a perfection to be marveled at. "That is part of the Law, too. "Tao," Lewis called it. "Tao." Here is principle expressed in morphology. It should not seem strange. Wouldn't all He created speak of Himself in some way?"

"This masculine, feminine thing. After all there are only two kinds of people. Male and female. And these - extensions of an eternal spiritual principle."

Here my thoughts bogged down. How could a Trinitarian God, as I knew God to be, be imaged in these two? Many of my friends in St. Joan of Arc Women's Coalition had written papers expressing the need for a feminine in the Trinity. Most speculation hinged on the feminine person being the Holy Spirit. Some had insisted that the whole Godhead could just as well be considered feminine since sexuality really had nothing to do with God. They had pressured Father to not only delete antiquated statements from Scripture (I had seen the Ephesians 5 stricken with black marker right in the Lectionary), but to refer to Mother God as often as God the Father.

In these surrounding all that was too closely related to the vision of the green chair. I touched my face just thinking of the red make-up and shuddered. Though justice was in the very air I breathed, and I knew myself to be forgiven, I had some regrets. There would have been things I would have done differently if I could do them over. I would like to have been more helpful to the Kingdom. But it was all in

the past. He knew I never intended to be against Him. And that pronoun. He was" He," like Isaiah and Jesus had insisted, after all. Perhaps the mystery would have more light shed upon it in Actuality. . . Athanasius . . .what a wonder!

Walking was still a pleasure, and I quickened my pace. I had already made several choices at forks in the road without hesitation. The fir trees were not thick to the bottom of their trunks as they had been. Now they grew to great height with straight clean reaches. One could look through them for some distance till the increase of their numbers by perspective formed a wall beyond which I could not see. The hills were steeper now; the road ahead would rise and disappear out of my sight after it crested. When I reached the ridge it reappeared, diving down into another valley. At one such vantage point I looked out over the ever progressing hills and valleys toward the glowing mountains. The shades of blue and green merged into purples on one end of the spectrum, and into yellow and golds on the other. Over all, the magnificent light like a living thing heightened the colors to a vibrancy no artist on earth ever captured, for they eluded every earthly pigment.

The sheer glory of what my eyes beheld was taken in and, like hot oil poured on cool water, met my inner happiness and exploded. The force of it came up and out of my throat. I found myself shouting in a loud voice, that didn't sound like mine, the praises of Him Who Reigns Forever. The more I shouted, the more wanted to shout. The words flowed out in a fervent song - spontaneous music so lovely I wanted to hold it forever.

I wasn't alone in this Arcadian hymn. The rocks beside the road, the trees, the hills, the bird's high in the sky, all were caught up in the cacophony of joy. Reverberations sped back and forth between the slopes. I felt as though I were lifted up bodily at one with the song and flung back and forth upon the hills, among the trees, like the sound itself. Perhaps I was, for when the resonant harmonies began to empty, like some great vessel slowly poured out upon the ground, and quiet once more spread over the scene, I found myself face down upon the road. Its rough surface tensed like a muscle holding me with infinite care, and far beneath that, tough as fibrous steel gristle, I saw with my closed eyes the shining strands of eternal love, binding molecule to molecule. In that absolute commitment the whole creation knows the glorious freedom of the children of God. Gone was the bondage to decay and death. Gone!

I raised my cheek from the throbbing dust and propped my chin on my hands. It was then that I realized the unwinding in my chest. Inside, my heart was larger and its character quite odd. The tough, hard bindings were all undone and the soft insides were expanding. With the feel of it, Sarah flashed into my mind. When she'd bowed to the figure of light. It was submission. "Is it acting?" Watching her, that jealous thought had quickly come. I had banished it. Of course, it was not acting, and I hoped that in some way such a humility might be true of me. At that time a similar gesture on my part would have been acting, but now. . . now, could such yielding be true of me?

"My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready." I spoke to myself as I got to my feet, all the time pressing my breast within which beat this unsheathed heart. It felt almost liquidly, like it could slosh with any movement of mine.

The road stretched away. A small bird whistled a plain note. Gratitude for this gift which warmly swelled beneath my hand splashed round and over flowed. "I shall give you a heart of flesh." "Fountains of living water shall flow from your inner being," His words came tremulously to my lips.

As I began the descent into the next valley, I scanned the way ahead. There was something dark, a speck. At first I thought it was a tree limb, or a shadow on the road. Then I saw it was moving. An animal? No the movement was human. "There's another person there!" I wondered if Actuality was the destination of whoever it was. But, no matter, the person was far too far ahead of me to be a traveling companion.

Chapter XI.

The beautiful asymmetrical patterns made by the hills and valleys, and their prodigious forms of plant life changed with each bend in the road. There was no boredom or tiredness, a physical and mental state that had been left behind forever in greytown. A marvel for the sense of sight on both sides of the track, a plethora to think about, my thoughts jumped here and there with the energetic spirit of sparks in a bonfire of green pine boughs.

Gradually the terrain became steep and rocky. At length a great cliff loomed head and the path was now jogging abruptly to avoid large boulders as big as houses. I had just rounded a particularly huge one when a strong voice greeted me.

“Hullo, sister.”

“Hello !“

A bearded man sat upon a rock; his body and face held all the youthfulness and vitality of the Transformed. It was a quality one did not take for granted. His face was full of wisdom, but a few faint lines crossed his forehead, as if hints of some kind of anxiousness still traveled there. All humans seemed magnificent; he may not yet be as complete as he would be, but my unleashed heart bounded toward him. Perhaps he would share the rest of the journey.

“You were ahead of me on the way. I saw you far off.”

“Yes, I looked back and saw you coming along. I decided to wait. Company at this point was an enjoyable prospect. Do you mind?”

Oh, no. I'm ready for some companionship myself. My name is Mary.”

“And I'm, John.”

“Mary and John; not original, but I'm happy for the coincidence.”

He smiled. “I hope it augurs a friendship like theirs.”

“Are you headed for Actuality?”

“Yes, this is the way.” He waved his hand toward the great sheer height of stone that lay a short distance away.

I nodded. “Do we have to climb that?” I could see no way to make such an ascent in any normal way.

“There's a stairway beveled out of the rock along the far edge. It's a good climb, but when we reach the top, the Colony is not far away.”

“You've been here before?”

“Yes, I thought I had got it into my head and heart, but I’m coming back to hear these principles again. For some reason they escape me. Praise our good God, patience is endless here; we may hear the same thing again and again until we really know. But I find it very difficult to screen out all that I had allowed to form me on earth. It slows my progress to the mountains. Of course, if I had heeded my early seminary training.. .“ His voice trailed off, and the little worry lines momentarily deepened.

“You? You are a priest?”

“Well, yes,” he hesitated and then added, “Would you believe, a bishop?”

“A bishop?” I was surprised.

“Well, then,” another pause as though he weighed what the effect would be and was teasing me, “An archbishop.” He had a wonderful smile.

“An archbishop! And you find Athanasius too much for you? How can I be expected to gain anything from him?”

“Remember, Athanasius was too much for many bishops and clerics in his own earth time; few understood him. How many times did the Church, or that part of the Church that at the time had power, throw him out? It may be easier for you. Simplicity. Not ignorance, but simplicity, pays off here. It all depends, I think, on how much rationalizing or equivocating you did with the faith.”

“Oh, I did plenty of that, I’m sorry to say.”

“Perhaps it was not so much with principle with you. When I began to waver on the basics - that was when a concrete kind of mindset took over, otherwise these principles would have reasserted themselves. What is cannot be forced into behaving as though it is not.”

“Your belief in Our Savior and His Sacrifice wavered?”

“Oh, no, never. I’d still be in greytown or worse if that much of the faith had eroded. I knew my need for His gift of salvation to me personally, but I thought that there were more palatable ways to present Him to the world, ways that would be small compromises without adulterating the pure core. This woman thing - it seemed to me something maintained only by human tradition. Women are highly gifted. I had nuns in my Archdiocese who could work circles around most priests. These women were not easy to forget; they were relentless in demanding action toward their feminist goals. I thought rightly so. The pope kept insisting in his travels from country to country, in private and in public that the Church was not discriminating against women, but was following holy revelation, but I began to think we were victims of ancient thought. I excused him. He is a holy and intelligent man, but I thought in this matter his culture had the upper hand.”

I was nodding.

“So you thought so, too. I probably helped you think so. I wrote many articles about the conflict stirred up in the western democratic mind by his parochial eastern orientation. Of course, I’d vowed obedience and tried to be respectful about it. From this perspective, however, it was impossible condescension and presumption. I lost something very important in all that, not only for myself, but for the people.” Again the little fret marks scattered across his forehead. “I believed that the Church needed a visible head, an authoritative voice; but I neglected faith in the power of the Holy Spirit in these matters, so that emphasis faded. Yes, I rather accepted a kind of pluralism. Then it was the need of multiple voices and freedom to accept different points of view that I encouraged - not far from the Truth, but emphasized . . . well . . . wrongly.”

“I’ve just come from one of C.S. Lewis’ conferences. He says such a concept of freedom throws the wheat out with the chaff.”

We were walking along, weaving our way through gigantic boulders exquisite in form and color. I loved walking between their immensities sometimes as through a narrow hallway. John walked ahead working through his thoughts as though through boulders of a different kind.

“Just so. But the whole woman question was a good place to start exercising this freedom, wrong as it was. There was something, I admit, that was deeply distasteful to me personally about women becoming priests, but I squelched that in shame. I blamed my training from childhood in an all male hierarchical structure. It made me angry and frustrated that I should have been so twisted in my development. My psyche, I felt, was warped, and warped by the Church! Male superiority, indeed! Just thinking that authority meant superiority shows how little I understood the matter. It was arrogant and irrational! And the pope himself seemed unable to substantiate his statements that women were not to be considered for ordination - that this prohibition lay much deeper than patriarchal culture. Of course, he quoted Scripture and Tradition. That should have been sufficient, but these infallible guides had suffered most in the general erosion.”

We continued traversing this huge rock field. Each rock and boulder was magnificent, wholly unique. Although not transparent, they were like gem stones in the intensity of the bands of color that haphazardly crisscrossed their surfaces. I had never thought of rock colors as intense - beiges, tans, blacks, greys; but like the rock I had rested upon in the cove on Enduring Meadow, these vibrated with inner life. Through poetic intuition Hopkins’ inscape had come close to describing this reality. It called to mind the shimmering vibrancy of wet stones under the sparkling waters of Lake Superior. A vibrancy that was like life.

“Isn’t it like these rocks?” I didn’t know where the sudden inspiration would take me but it seemed to be flowing from the rocks themselves, I merely followed it. “This rock field may be their culture; they were formed in this area, I assume; one might say the Father used certain conditioning agents available here to create their reality. If it’s so with a man, and if one believes that the Holy Spirit chose this

man, one must believe that cultural conditioning far from being a hindrance to his mission, is exactly what is needed as a vehicle for the Spirit.

“You’ve chosen a rather unoriginal analogy. ‘Thou art Peter, and upon this petra I will build my church.’”

“He was anything but rock-like.”

“I guess that’s really the point. Upon his wavering unreliability Our Lord conferred ‘rockness.’ So it must have been the work of the Holy Spirit throughout papal history, despite appearances to the contrary. Otherwise there is no accounting for the fact that ‘the gates of hell have not prevailed against the Church.’ Satanic forces have never stopped trying. You see, I was blind to that dimension, the experiential dimension of the Holy Spirit, as well as the counter dimension of the Adversary of our souls - those concepts, actually persons, were real to me in a theoretical realm only, and so I expressed all those equivocations.”

The gates of hell!.. prevailing against the Church! I recalled the vision of the great arm chair and found myself relating to John the whole terrible affair.

“Do you think that that can really happen?”

He was quiet awhile; the tenseness in his face severe. “To a point I think it already has,” he said. “Didn’t you hear the voice?” Then he seemed to withdraw to some place within himself that was far away from me. When he spoke again it was so softly to himself that I couldn’t hear, and I didn’t want to ask him anything further. But I wondered if what that awesome voice had pronounced meant that the gates of hell had somehow prevailed.

No, Our Lord had promised that it could not happen. Whatever the threat, the Church was becoming that Bride, without a wrinkle in her glorious robes, without a spot to soil her beauty. The Blessed Mother had been sent to warn, to plead, to prepare the Bride for her Son. That was it! It must be, then that Christendom would accept the warning and awake in time. The Woman had instructed those innocents to tell the Church to guard against the errors of Russia. How embarrassed my liberal mind had been at that! But where had it come from - this materialistic thrust for empowerment, in the worldly understanding of that word, that had burst upon the west in the last ninety or so years? I mused on this. Walking along through the narrow passage after John who was alone in his pain, present in body only, it seemed more clear that the Godless philosophy and my feministic leanings had all been connected.

He was plainly suffering. I once thought that there would be no suffering in this realm. I was wrong. I had experienced for myself that there could be deep and painful regrets with a burning away of attachments. However, repentance had brought me to freedom, to where there the sting was truly gone. Despite his misery, it gladdened me to know that this would soon be true for him, and I had no need to try to lighten his burden or try to save him. Soon that anguished brow would melt, perhaps with

tears, to a serenity that had no mars. In my mind's eye I could see that face, resolved, as beautiful as shining bronze. So I walked along behind him in silence.

Chapter XII.

The path skirted the base of a great perpendicular mass of sheer faced rock. At close range I marveled at its remarkable composition of huge crystals that had the polish of glass. It was not only these gigantic hexahedrons that fascinated me, but also the colors and their strange illumination. Each of the crystalline forms was a different shade of grey from dark to light, with here and there a glint of gleaming white. The shadowy tones darkened and lightened as if there was some movement behind the facade which let out small emissions of light from deep within and then closed them off again.

The effect was similar to the play of light across the floor of a room where the trees nodding and tossing in the summer wind filter the sunshine through a window. Without pattern or purpose that I could discern, this occurred with a random grace that was very beautiful. It was like music, but music without sound. Or the whole face of the cliff might have been a great and very wondrous mosaic work made for a giant's castle wall. It seemed that if one looked hard enough the surface might reveal pictures of historic happenings on some extant planet remote in a galaxy where such colossals reigned. I found it easy to imagine that the movement was a form of communication which I could not interpret.

This vast light-animated rock face was not so new to John, and he was hurrying us along because the first few stairs and their great landing were now visible, carved ruggedly out of the cliff itself at the far limits of the wall. Beyond that was a great tumbled pile of rock - a huge slide of boulders in chaotic disorder that went up and up forever. While I was marveling at this extravagance and trying without success to take it all in, something caught the corner of my eye more than the soft fading and rising of the lights. I touched John's arm.

"Look, what is that?"

He stopped and stared at the perpendicular slab. A picture was indeed forming there as if in response to my imagination. In black and white, it was like watching an instant camera's picture develop, or an old fashioned television come into focus. The shades of grey simply moved to form stationery areas of vague form. But gradually the darks and lights gathered into coherent groupings, and a discernible space appeared - a large dusky room, its high walls rising into the darkness and lined with thousands, upon thousands of books. All was illuminated by one low light that at first cast no more brightness into the archives than a candle.

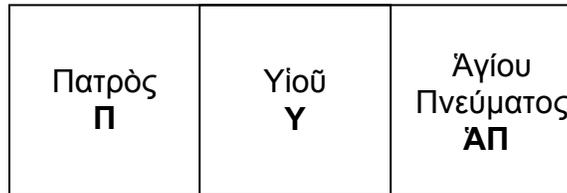
Under this spot of dim light, three men's heads bent with single-minded absorption over something on the table before them. This great table at which they sat was of the library sort, massive with thick legs and upon closer examination was actually four smaller tables pushed together in an L shape. Around it in the gloom boxes were stacked on the floor - ordinary packing boxes marked with big numerals, and in some cases, alphabet letters. Each box was stuffed with folders and papers. Hanging from the backs of chairs were shopping bags; these too were labeled and like small Santa packs overflowed with banded and clipped manuscripts. The L shaped table was massed with books, some in

neat piles, some between bookends, some in topsy-turvy stacks, and many flung open with various kinds of weights, even an old shoe! to hold their position. Loose papers were strewn over the table and floor like some aberrant breeze had wandered through, it's disheveling naughtiness totally ignored.

The heads, one grey, one quite bald, the other with a great puff of white hair whose edges were lost in the shadows, huddled in the corner of the L. The grey-head leaned in from the inside corner, the other two from the outside edges of the table. The men had cleared a little spot in the mounds of books and were bent over intently, their heads as close together as the width of the table would permit. My eyes had adjusted so that the ceiling lamp on a pulley lowered over their work made it possible to see what they were doing; the rest of the room lay back in the gloom. The one in the crook of the L was making some kind of design with a large crayon marker. There was no sound. John and I moved closer to the picture.

"What is it he is drawing?" I whispered.

John was spellbound. "It's a diagram," he said. "Some kind of theological diagram, I suppose. They are drawing out a concept - the Trinity?"



Father . . . Son and Holy Spirit. Yes . . . the Trinity. See, for some reason, three linked squares. The big crayon was busy seeming to copy again the figure, but there were changes.

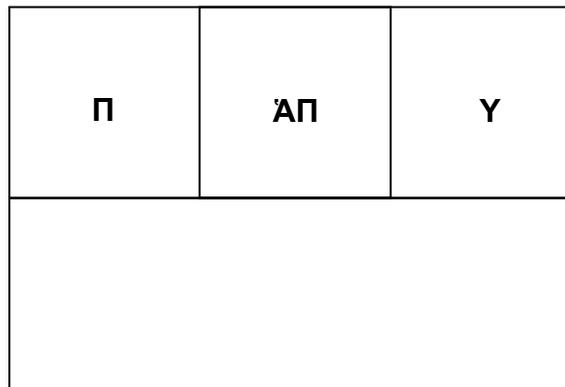
The fellow on the outside of the table was pointing to **ΑΠ**. His friend in the crook of the tables took a big eraser and rubbed it out, and then erased **Υ** as well. The white-head pressed his finger on the center square. Here the first man drew **ΑΠ** putting **Υ** to the outside. These two symbols or signs had changed places.



John mused to himself, "Now just Greek letters. Pi for Father; Upsilon for Son and Alpha Pi for the Holy Spirit. But, with the change, it's Father, Holy Spirit, and Son. I can't think what else it would be."

Now as if a camera had focused in for a close-up, I could see clearly the letters that looked to me like a mal-formed H, then a "Pi", so John said, and **Y** or he said, "Epsilon." Each was scrawled in one square of the configuration of three squares joined side to side into a rectangle.

The man with the marker was now drawing a rectangle the same size as the first directly below and adjoining it.



There was a discussion; it seemed, about whether or not to divide this new rectangle into three equal parts. Nothing was done with it. By now John and I were so involved that we imagined the concentrated breathing, and easily might have touched the nearest on the shoulder, but we refrained from any interruption.

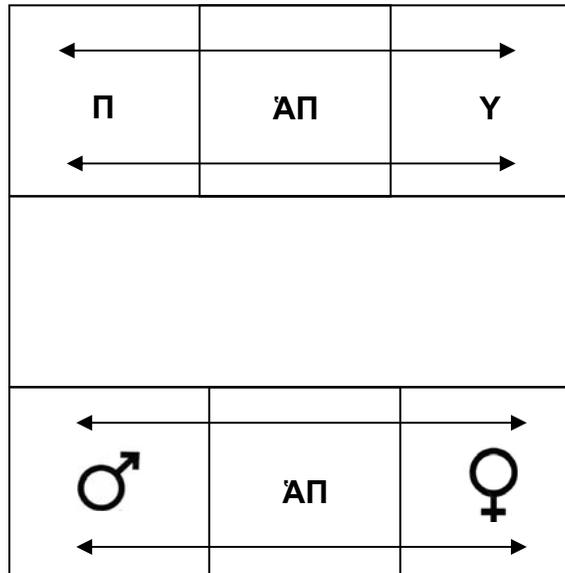
Then a third rectangle was drawn by the leader, beneath and adjoining the second at all its points. This was without hesitation divided into three equal squares like the first rectangle. The three rectangles formed a large square, nearly the size of the piece of paper the men were working on. Immediately a hand added the now familiar Greek letters.

Though it was obvious that those in the picture had no contact with us at all and could not be disturbed, John still whispered back to me, "What's this addition supposed to be? Puzzling why they have rearranged the sequence to be Father, Spirit, and Son for some reason."

Then the youngest had taken the marker and slashed through the squares from left to right with black two-headed arrows.

The-second rectangle was skipped over, and the men began to work on the lower three squares.

After some gentle persuasion by the grey-head, they put down  , **ΑΠ** and  . Again connected with arrows.



John was muttering. “They are paralleling God the Father, God the Son with man and woman ...”. He scratched his head. “Well, ‘made in God’s image and likeness’ – ok, ok. Then they are making humankind, Man that is, a trinity, too. “Of course, that’s scriptural, don’t you think? ‘What God has joined ...’. Then He is the Third person... ok, ok. The arrows? They must simply indicate the love binding Father and Son in the Spirit; LOVE! The Holy Spirit Person of Love! Yeah, I love it!”

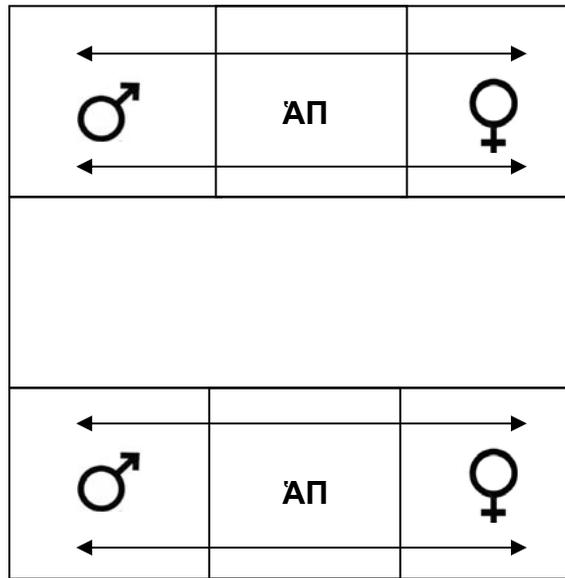
While John was crowing, the bald one in the crook of tables took back the marker, and moving his hand back to the first row of the Holy Trinity, he crossed out the **Π**, and put in its place

♂ marking out the **Υ** placed ♀.

“Whoa! That’s crazy!” John’s furrowed brow, I realized, though expressing puzzlement was free from fretting. I was more interested in him than I was in the complicated scheme he continued trying to decipher. I’d been distracted.

“Why? Why is it crazy?”

“They’ve started using male and female signs for Persons of the Trinity. There is no sexuality in the Trinity. Absolutely not! Heresy to think so. Heresy!”



“Well . . . wait a minute,” I said, coming to. “From Lewis I remember. Maybe it’s a clue.”

“What? What?” John was impatient.

“These signs they are making; symbols for male and female. What if they were signs or symbols for something that lies behind, or in the Tao, for not male and female, but principles. Like a principle of the masculine. What would that be? Wouldn’t it be initiative, or . . . oh, I don’t know. . . the origin . . . or like the . . . sorry, its over my head. Maybe author – even authority?”

“Could be.” John paused, “Could be they are working with the animating principle of the Father, as you said, ‘initiative’, beginning everything. Then the Son is the responder. *Through Him* everything was made. And so He is given the feminine sign. Not for sexuality, of course, but the principle of initiative that lies behind the physical male body, and the principle of response embedded in the Trinity that lies behind and before female sexuality. That would make perfect sense. It is something like Yin and Yang only much more complete and perfect because it makes sense of God, Praise Him, making male and female persons in His Person image. O my dear Lord!! I see!”

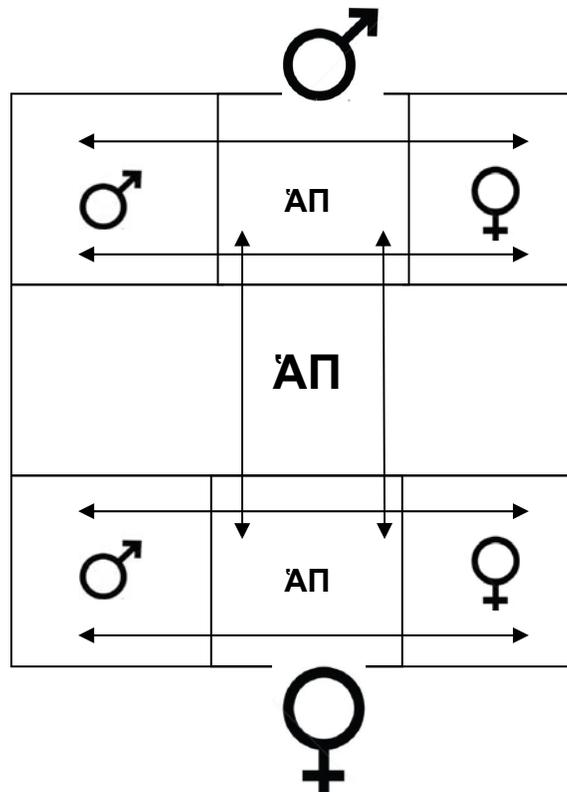
Excitedly; the elder of our theologians took the marker, and drawing a heavy black line around the whole first rectangle, he marked over everything else with a large ♂. In the same size lettering he scrawled ΑΠ on the second rectangle and retracing the line of the third rectangle he inscribed it with large bold ♀.

“You know, John, in my favorite Lewis book, *That Hideous Strength*, he wrote that there is no escape from the masculine, that eventually we had to surrender to the loud, irruptive, possessive thing. I

remember those words as being so offensive. What is above and beyond all things, he said, is so masculine that we are all feminine in relation to it. Isn't that the simple explanation of all these diagrams?"

"Oh?" He stopped. "Of course! That settles the feminism complaints, doesn't it?"

"Yes, he did a job on that stuff about equality, blah, blah. I finally was getting it at his seminar though it took a painful turn."

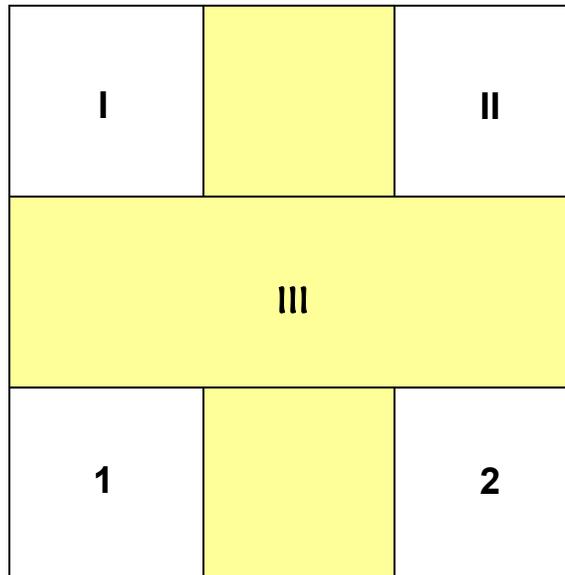


This last move made a diagram with two sets of   overridden by the masculine sign in the rectangle representing the Trinity, and the feminine sign representing Man linked now by **ΑΠ**.

"Ah," breathed John, "Now complete! The Holy Spirit uniting the ob-positioned in all relationships! Perfect! Perfect LOVE. And immediately it justifies dear Dom Eugene Boylan who dared to write in *This Tremendous Lover* . . . yes, it was so memorable, I couldn't forget it, 'love either finds equality or makes equality.' Finally, Man, that is mankind, his friend and lover, must be given equality – a participation in the devine nature."

As John reverently moved toward the rock face, one hand on his forehead, the men pushed back their chairs and looked at each other with quiet satisfaction. Slowly the scene dimmed except for the diagram image itself.

With the-background, men and library fading, the diagram began to grow larger and brighter. As it did so a spot of color, the first color amidst the greys, appeared in the very center. Beginning as a dot of soft yellow, it steadily intensified and spread out, a tumescent pool of melting gold. At first circular, the pond shot out four arms top and side, which flowed like rapid rivers, brightening and expanding all the time until a perfect dazzling cross was formed, as big as a man. There was a flash and an emblazoned **III** appeared in the center. The four corners of the square had grown huge. In the general enlargement still displaying those symbolic signs, but these, too, were turning to gold, but instead of Greek letters, or male/female signs, they appeared as Latin numerals, **I** on the left top and bottom, **II** on the upper right and lower right.



Then flaming up, the whole configuration exploded in a meteoric flash and disappeared.

While I'd drawn back in astonishment at the transformation of the diagram, John made a move towards it, as if to place his hands upon the golden cross where now just the crystalline pattern of variegated grey remained. He put his finger instead on the rock where the dot of yellow had first appeared, and stood there, head bowed, absorbed in his thoughts. But shaking his head, he looked at me with grave bewilderment.

"What does it mean? If the diagram had not been confirmed so spectacularly here where the devil cannot deceive, I wouldn't have believed what those fellows were doing - not any of it. Such things are to be handled warily. And I had lately learned not to be immediately swayed by theologians."

"I know, but they were orthodox. Did you notice the open books? I gave up on the diagram. It was over my head. So I took a good look at what they were reading. It was all the Church Fathers: Ignatius, Chrysostom, Basil, Hilary, Athanasius, Augustine, Aquinas. Then that stack to the right, it was all John Henry Cardinal Newman. On top was his Development of Doctrine, or some such title. The Councils were represented, and something by Pope Leo XIII. A whole bag on the back of that first chair held the writings of John Paul II. You could hardly fault that bunch on orthodoxy. And their faces, they were such humble looking souls – a far cry from the faces I saw in the newspapers when the Pope cracked down on some European theologians, especially what's-his-name."

"Yes, yes, we don't need to fear any deception here, but even so, what they had there beats me. Looked like. . . let's see. On the first level, which was meant to represent the Trinity, the Father was marked with a male sign. No, no. . . no male or female in the Trinity." He was quiet for a moment. "But what if they meant that sign to be just the function or the principle lying behind the masculine and did not mean it to refer to sexuality at all. Then the lower level probably would be mankind where masculine and feminine, first found as principle in the Trinity do take the shape of physical bodies. The first square then would be the human male." He continued to think out loud. "But mankind drawn equal to the Trinity?" He shook his head again. "And they were marking the Son with the feminine symbol. But, if again, that symbol was used only as shorthand, not for sexuality, but for a principle, a principle that stands prior to and behind any sexual expression of it, then it would mean only that the Son originates a relationship in the Trinity that in creation woman was created to epitomize." He turned to me, "Does that make any sense to you? Besides," he hesitated, "Well. . . yes, it would make sense to put the Holy Spirit in the center of each triune unity. He is the Unifier of everything, and it was those Holy Spirit areas that all changed into gold.

With his head bowed he was pondering this when we at last reached the stairs. He stood on the great landing at the bottom, still rubbing his beard and asking me rhetorical questions to which he expected no reply. His eyes normally dark and accentuated by heavy brows were even blacker, and though grappling with stuff that he accepted as very important, his forehead was now like that shining bronze I had imagined - burnished clear. Where was the guilt and worry?

I had felt an inner response to what I had seen, a joyful feeling, but I could not have stated it. Whatever it was would take time to jell in my thoughts. That old dominance of intellect that had excluded so much of me was surely broken; intellect was now a servant to my will rather than its master. I knew that what we had just experienced had something vital to say about that symbol of woman itself. And what a symbol! A circle that exuded a cross, or a circle that was pierced by a cross! Possibly both at the same time. I had worn it, that woman symbol, so ignorantly, so carelessly, and certainly those who wore it had no idea! Beyond my own intention I had been wearing that prophetic mark when I'd arrived on Enduring Meadow. Those externals had long ago evaporated, but the symbol was internalized permanently on my soul. Actually it was from there that it had first emerged.

John continued to talk to himself as we began to mount the stairs. Chiseled right out of the rock itself each stair was large and smooth, perfectly sculpted as though by strong artistic hands that loved their work. The risers ran with the grain of the hexahedrons, so were like the cliff wall that still rose along on our left. The treads, however, were cut cross-grain, the crystals forming an interlocking hexagonal design that reminded me of the bits of Petoskey stone I'd collected as a child on the shores of Grand Traverse Bay - petrified coral from the vast Devonian seas that 800 million years ago had covered the area. My eye was continually drawn to these ever-changing shaded patterns of pearly stone as we continued our climb. Just as these designs lightened during the ascent, growing clearer and more compact, so the feelings thrown like random dice into my mind by the theologians diagram began to draw together and compose themselves into ideas with an order.

I was about to test these new thoughts on John when he turned from ahead of me and shouted out, as if to the sky, "Of course, it's just what Athanasius says." He clapped his thighs and nearly lost his balance. "I understand, I understand. Oh, why didn't I see it before? It's so. . . so. . .important!" He turned and began to pound up the stairs, his strong back and legs looking more like an athlete's than a cleric's.

Whoever said that without evil and darkness there would be no contrasts and therefore, no anticipation or excitement in life? As with all worldly ways of looking at things, they were wrong. Dead wrong - enduring death in some isolated extremity of greytown, even now, I supposed. I had never been absorbed more by any adventure, and this one was wholly in the realm of spirit - intellect and emotion.

John stopped. Turning around he started back down. His face glowed, "Mary, forgive me, for a moment I forgot about you." Grasping my hand, together we took the last three decades of stairs two at a time.

Chapter XIII.

The view from the top was so awe-inspiring that despite our strong forward momentum, we were stopped in our tracks. Blue hills and vales stretched back, slowly yielding to the lighter hues of Enduring Meadows far away. Everything was clear and bright. Though smaller, things at great distance were no less distinct than things close up. Several isolated unicorn were grazing in a far valley, each one as conspicuous as though threaded on a tapestry. Birds soared just off the cliff face enjoying the buoyant updrafts with shrieks of delight. Down below some brilliant scarlet lizards, like rubies, had come out upon the rocks to glorify the light. John still held my hand.

“Mary,” he said, and his clear look as sober, without uncertainty. “Do you know what you are?”

I hesitated, trying to catch a clue about his meaning from his eyes.

“You are a *monad*. If that word means ‘everything in a nutshell’ - then you are a monad of all this.” He waved his arm over the whole wondrous scene.

“A monad? Does that mean. . . I’m not reducible to something else? But why a monad of all this - this threshold of heaven?”

“You and all women are the monad of the eternal principle! You are the feminine that shows the way. You’ll see soon.” He let go of my hand and pointed toward the right. “Actuality Colony is just a short way over there. Hey, there! That group, do you see? That’s Athanasius in the center! Be ready for a true head trip.”

About two football fields away a small group sat on outcroppings of rock that thrust out of an otherwise grassy level. From our distance they looked like a painting by David except that the red, gold, and blue robes were missing and instead was that glow and dazzle of spiritual whatever – not yet flesh, no particular hue in itself but a combination that surpassed all color. In the center perched like a great bird on a higher prominence was a man whose radiance surpassed all the rest.

He was both old and young. Even from our distance both qualities came through. His line was trim and spare, bursting with energy. The bird might fly off, I thought. Yet there was a weight to the image, a bearing, a gravity that could only be true of the immensely wise, or the very ancient.

My sight was filled by him. If you had met him anywhere, the impulse would have been to fall on your knees. As that thought came into my mind, he flung back his head and spread out his arms and a rich song phrase came dancing to our ears.

“Gloria ... in... .ex. . cel. . sias. . . Deo!” Light burst around him. I didn’t take my gaze from him, but said to John, “Is everything in Latin?”

“He speaks Greek usually. But you’ll understand. Everyone interprets tongues here - it’s one of the gifts.”

He was a 'spellbinder,' they would say on earth. No one turned a head as we approached. John and I in an instinctive move, bowed to the saint and then sat down, I upon a low flat rise of ground all cushiony with curly grass, John a pace ahead on a stone scooped out. . looking like, well, a modern Danish chair. Was its shape because of much use by solid people, or just by the nature of the place, I wondered. From my place I was looking into the enormity of Presence Mountains, now quite near, and into that glowing Promised Dawn which might break out at any moment. As a result of that, or because of the saint's personal brilliance, his features were hard to see. When he spoke he was so animated that his full locks shook, and out of them flashed the lights of summer lightning making him even more difficult to look at. Yet he was very real.

That gravity! That authority! My new liquid heart melted even more before him. How audacious the words I used to speak and hear so casually, "In communion with the angels and saints." If someone very close to the Lord was like this, what would it be like to be in the very Presence of Our Lord Himself? I had been uncouneted times at Eucharist, but had I discerned the Body? Mercy, mercy, Lord. Yet I knew it could be true that I, one day (how easily time reference still crept into my thoughts) would be one with the Saints. Already it was true to a small degree. I was able to feel a kinship with this spiritual giant of a man before me. If the process of sanctity were not already in process, I thought, that affinity would be impossible.

Taking everything in with the sense of sight, I was not oblivious to my sense of hearing. The sound of Athanasius' voice was electrifying; strong, and high. There was nothing in it that rang of the prominent preachers, nothing at all. It was totally other than that. Of course, with real knowledge there is no need to sound knowledgeable; with real understanding there is no need to sound believing. The words came out of his person as fully his. They came out like clear squares of flawless, highly polished quartz might come out of a supernatural quarry of that clear stone. They fully represented in content, form, and expression what Athanasius himself was. I had noticed this about the speech of all the solid people - Sarah, Lewis, John, but in Athanasius it was perfected.

Though his words were clear and whole, I wondered about my ability to understand him. Yet, somehow it didn't seem necessary to follow mentally. This type of learning experience was still new to me and one that I didn't take for granted. From John's intensity I could tell that he was intellectually involved. I, however, was taking it in on a different level. I cannot say, "I felt," for it was more akin to a revival of connatural knowledge, some knowing in me that had existed since my origins. It didn't seem in the least a headtrip. The simplest child using that capacity would have understood. I had presumptuously thought that I had a theological bent of mind. How superficial that was! Yet, in my ready heart I knew what Athanasius was saying, even as I somehow knew the meaning of the theologian's diagram.

The table rock on which our teacher now was sitting cross-legged was about hip high. From somewhere at the base of this a reflection of his own luminosity kept darting about landing first on this one, and then on that, in the radiant colors of the rainbow. Vivid red to rich purple played out all over the

scene. The prism causing all this pyrotechnics must be large, I thought, but from my dazzled angle it was impossible to see the source.

YE HAVE OBEYED THE VOICE OF THE REDEEMER: PRAISE HIM!

YE WILL COME TO KNOW HIM AS HE IS: PRAISE HIM!

KNOW YE THEN, THAT THE HATER OF VIRTUE, THE ADVERSARY,

HAS BROUGHT THE SEED OF CRAFTINESS

TO FRUITION IN THESE THE LATTER DAYS.

LET US PULL OUT THE LAST ROOT OF THAT EVIL SEED

FROM YOUR MINDS AND HEARTS.

THAT SEED BED DUG AND PLANTED IN MY DAY BY HIS ARIAN

SLAVES HAS BORNE ITS VILE FRUIT IN YOURS.

He spoke this fully and slowly, the prism light below him and the summer lightning around his head joining in a dazzling rain of colors which fell down on each of his motionless listeners. Looking toward the mountains, he continued,

SOVEREIGN GOD, FATHER OF ALL

DO NOT ALLOW THE EVIL ONE TO VANQUISH TRUTH!

THE TRUTH STANDS. BETWEEN WHILES THE VILE FRUIT

PROLIFERATES.

YE AND YOUR CHOICE SPAN THE CHASM.

BELOVED ONE, YEA, THE BRIDE, THE CHURCH,

**PERSISTING AGAINST CRAFTINESS FROM HER BIRTH
IS NOW HERSELF
THE BATTLEGROUND.**

**WHAT SORROW PIERCES US WHO FOUGHT FOR HER
TO SEE THIS TEMPTATION ROUSE ITSELF AGAIN
WITHIN HER BEAUTEOUS WALLS.**

KNOW YE THEN, THE ADVERSARY WILL FALL.

HIS WEAKNESS IS OF OLD.

BLIND PROUD POCK, HE DOES NOT SEE

THATTHE HOLY TRIAD'S POWER

IS *IN THE WEAK*

***WITH* THE FEW**

***THROUGH* THE HIDDEN LOWLY**

IT IS BY SUCH AS THESE THAT HIS DEFEAT LIES.

The aurora of flashing sparks rose round his head.

REMEMBER, DEARLY BELOVED,

THAT MY OPPONENT, ARIUS, COULD NOT ACCEPT THIS TRUTH

THAT LIVES ATTHE HEART OF THE GOSPEL

BUT HIS VAINGLORIOUS MIND

ABSORBED THE FITTING LIE.

POOR GUDGEON, ALIGNED WITH HIS MASTER'S JUDGMENT:

THAT TO BE SENT, TO SERVE, TO OBEY,

WERE SIGNS OF THE INFERIOR.

JESUS, OUR LORD, (the light intensified) YOU AT YOUR FATHER'S BIDDING,

YEA, TOOK EVEN SERVANTHOOD TO THE DEATH, PRAISE BE!

EQUAL, his voice was rising, TO THE ETERNAL, SOVEREIGN,

ABSOLUTE FATHER.

THAT THRALL OF DARKNESS PREACHED

THAT THE SON,

YEA, A SERVANT, BUT YET, THE ETERNAL WORD,

WAS NOT THE FULLNESS OF GODHEAD.

O YE HEAVENS! O ANGELS! O YE SAINTS!

FORGET HIS WORDS, BLOT THEM OUT.

BANISH THEM TO HELL FOREVER!

AMEN AND AMEN!

Ending with his arms raised to the mountains, again the gorgeous display of lights shattered the sky upward above the saint, cascading down upon us who sat in a shower-bath of color.

HAD THIS WICKED DOCTRINE LIVED,

YE, MY DEAR BRETHREN, WOULD NOT HAVE KNOWN SALVATION.

JESUS, PRAISE HIS HOLY NAME FOREVER, IS

GOD MADE MAN

SO THAT YE MIGHT BE MADE DIVINE.

HIS IS THE TASK

TO RESTORE THE CORRUPTIBLE TO INCORRUPTION.

DO YE NOT SEE IT NOW?

BY NO LESS POWER THAN HOLY GOD

ARE YE BEING RECREATED INTO HIS DIVINITY.

DO YE NOT SEE IT NOW?

This last he said in a whisper, but it came on the air amplified right into our inner ear where it burned, 'recreated into His divinity.' Did we not see it now?

The skyrocketing colors were so intense now that I closed my eyes, but still saw them dancing behind my eyelids.

THE HOLY THIRD:

FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD PERSONS -

SPEAKS THIS OF PREEMINENCE OF ONE OVER THE OTHERS?

ARE THEY NOT THREE EQUALS?

DID THOU, LORD, NOT CREATE IN YOUR OWN LIKENESS, MAN,

TWO PERSONS FULLY REFLECTING YOUR OWN ORDER,

A FIRST AND A SECOND.

DOES THIS STAMP THE FIRST WITH PRESTIGE, WITH

SUPERIORITY?

MARKING WITH DEGRADITION THE SECOND?

NAY! NAY!

THAT WAS THE GREAT AND FIRST LIE, SERPENT!

WERE THAT SO, the transparent voice rose again,

THE BLESSED HOLY SPIRIT WOULD BE LEAST AS LAST

FOR HE CONDESCENDS, the great head bowed, then lifted going on...

JOINING IN THIS HOLY UNION WITH MAN AND WOMAN.

AWAKE! SEE YE NOT?

A NEW TRINITY, SEE YE NOT?

ONE SUBSTANCE, . . . NOT CONFOUNDING THE PERSONS.

SO I HAVE TAUGHT! FORGET THIS NOT!

IT IS TRUE FOR BOTH TRIADS.

Again for a long moment his uplifted visage scanned the heights,

BLESSED ONE, EMPOWER OUR FEEBLE WORDS.

TWO OPPOSITES... DO NOT MISUNDERSTAND.

He spoke very slowly emphasizing syllables.

THEY DO NOT OP - P O S E EACH OTHER.

OB- POS ITE

THAT IS OB-POSITON.

He carefully pulled out the words.

OB . . . FACING TOWARDS.

He extended his arms and turned his palms toward each other. Bringing his hands together, he clasped them, and arrows of light shot through his fingers. Then he spread his arms again, palms toward each other. Between his two hands the colors danced and played as if pulled out on a band between them.

ALL LIGHT BETWEEN! GLORIOUS UNION!

Looking between his hands intently, he appeared like a small boy captivated by an extraordinary toy. And extraordinary it was to see the colors arrange themselves in variegation between his two hands in the order of the spectrum, a cable-like, orderly luminosity.

THE SPIRIT! THE SPIRIT!

THE SPIRIT EMANATES FROM THE TWO,

PROCEEDING FROM FATHER AND SON,

AHH, THEIR LOVE,

AHH, THEIR UNITY.

His voice was permeated with awe, and he stopped speaking for a time. Beginning again, he held out his hands toward our group, palms in.

THE FATHER! He was moving the fingers of his left hand vigorously,

SPEAKS! THE WORD!

He was moving the fingers of his left hand vigorously,

THE WORD EXPRESSES THE FATHER.

HE IS WHAT THE FATHER SPEAKS.

THE FATHER SPEAKS HIS WORD FROM ALL ETERNITY

HIS SON OUR LORD

ALL BEING, TOO.

YET, KNOW YE, THE BOOK NAMES HIM, SHE?

THE WORD IS SHE, WISDOM, ONLY FOR THE FATHER'S UNION.

SHE MUST BE SENT AS HE . . .

OH, YE CANNOT UNDERSTAND.

He was moving the fingers of his left hand vigorously,

COMMAND! COMMAND! CALLED INTO BEING!

YE COME TO BE . . . BY HIS COMMAND.

GLORY! GLORY!

It is like stuffing a whole huge oak tree back into an acorn, I thought. This is all too much, too much.

Still holding up his left hand he continued,

ONE AUTHOR, THE SOURCE!

DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

YET, THE FATHER'S COMMAND IS NOT ENOUGH.

NOT ENOUGH BY HIS OWN DESIGN.

NO, THERE IS THE OTHER,

THE OB- POSITIONED PERSON,

THE SECOND, THE WORD-SON! Again the right hand picked up the motion.

DO YE STILL SAY THE CREEDS? DO YE KNOW THE WORDS?

I heard John rumble softly, "begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, God of God, Light of Light, through whom all was made that is in heaven and on earth."

HOLE FROM WHOLE,

SOLE FROM SOLE,

COMPLETE FROM COMPLETE,

KING FROM KING,

LORD FROM LORD.

TIS THE WORD CREATED THE WHOLE WORLD

THE WORD ENLIGHTENS BY HIS WISDOM;

THE SON

THROUGH WHOM ALL THINGS WERE MADE.

His left forefinger now pointed to his right hand dramatically. And the right hand palm facing the left, opened, fingers back, wholly open to the gesture of the directing left forefinger.

THE SECOND PERSON OF THE HOLY TRIAD RECEIVES

THE COMMAND.

IT IS THROUGH THIS MATRIX,

YEA, THROUGH THE SON THAT ALL THINGS COME INTO BEING,

HE, THE SON IS THE WOMB, IF YE WILL, THE . . . SHE!

WHERE THE COMMAND TAKES SHAPE AND FORM

Now the saint's left hand still forming shapes, moved right inside an imaginary globe that he had formed by his right.

I CANNOT SHOW YE THE TRUTH OF THIS. IT IS

BEYOND THE SKILL OF MEN.

His voice softened. He put back his marvelous head and his eyes scanned the great blue vault above. There was total adoration in the gaze. Because of more than just the stunning lightning it was too much to watch him. We all averted our eyes down, not looking at each other either. It seemed that we rested that way for a long time.

Then his voice rose again and picked up strongly,

THREE PRINCIPLES. . . AYE, TOO STRAINED THAT WORD,

IT IS *BEING* WE DESCRIBE. . . PERSONS.

ONE ENCOMPASSES COMMAND,

A GENCY, INITIATION, AUTHORITY:

THE OTHER RESPONSE!**RECEIVING, ACCEPTING, SUBMITTING, OBEYING,****AND THESE JOIN IN UNITY BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. . .****BRINGING FORTH!****GREAT FRUITFULNESS! THE WHOLE CREATED ORDER!**

The whole landscape was again illumined in the magnificent jewel tones which swirled out of his snowy locks and splattered, small drops of radiance, upon every person and thing - a visible blessing.

DOES THAT NOT REMIND YE**OF THAT CROWN OF CREATION, WOMAN?****WAS SHE NOT CREATED****TO CARRY A PERSONHOOD IN MANKIND****LIKE THAT OF THE SON IN THE HOLY TRIAD?****RECOGNIZE THE OLD REBELLIOUS VALUES AND WHOSE THEY ARE!****THE INTRUDER HAS TRIED TO CLAIM YE,****DID HE NOT SAY TO YE IN YOUR EARTHLY PILGRIMAGE,****OEDIENCE IS HUMILIATION,****SUBMISSION IS OPPRESSION,****THAT GOD SHOULD COMMAND HIS CREATION IS INTOLERABLE?****DID HE NOT WHISPER TO YE WHAT HE NOW SHOUTS,****DOWN WITH ALL HIERARCHY, AWAY WITH ALL DICOTOMY?****THIS BATTLE BEGAN IN EDEN.****AND AGAIN HE REAVES THE MONAD**

TO WRING OUT OF HER, THE LAST SHRED OF OBEDIENCE.

That word! I looked at Johns back. He had grown brighter and more glorious. It was as though Athanasius' words had pumped spiritual vitality into him. He looked back with his dark eyes and nodded his leonine head.

THE VIRGIN,**THE MOTHER,****THE WOMAN,****SHE HOLDS THE VERY TRUTH****WE ALL MUST LIVE THAT TRUTH****IN ORDER TO GREET THE DAWN.****DO NOT LOSE SWEET YIELDING,****AHH! SWEETEST OBEDIENCE****OR YE ARE IN GRAVE DANGER STILL****OF LOSING YOU, DEAR JESUS - YOUR SALVATION.**

Now he bent down and lifted a large object at his feet with both hands. It was the source of the prism light. He held aloft a breathtaking clear crystal pyramid, or was it a huge pyramidal diamond? From it the radiance of his being was refracted into dancing extravagances of brilliant hues. I'd never seen any object like it, though it flashed through my mind how imitation religions yearned to fake reality, and how cheaply imitative they were.

KEEP WATCH ! MY BELOVED ONES.**KEEP WATCH!.**

He turned the glorious object in his hands which were as if dyed and double-dyed by prismatic illumination.

WITH MY LIPS I DECLARE ALL THE ORDINANCES OF THY MOUTH.**IN THE WAY OF THY TESTIMONIES I DELIGHT!**

His voice rose yet again. He held the blazing transparency over his head.

I WILL NEVER FORGET THY PRECEPTS

FOR BY THEM THOU HAST GIVEN ME LIFE FOREVER!

The energy of the outburst of reflected light, its blues, oranges, yellows, and reds, spangled the greensward like gay balloons flitting and flying here and there, the embodied joy of a great celebration. I could hardly see the holy teacher's slim figure in the brilliant display of his praise of God. Everyone was electrified in spirit with him. The jubilation was timeless.

The diamond pyramid he still held high and there appeared, or so it seemed to me, in each of the four corners of its base, a dancing couple. These were obliterated by lights and then were there again, changing colors all the time. Because of the three dimensions of the great prism, the figures often overlapped. Then I saw banners and bells carried high billowing in the wind, and these slowly emerged from the prism growing larger all the while. A procession of rejoicing youths, though not all were young in age. Wait. . . it was not inside the great wedge of diamond at all; the crystal had been only reflecting a gaily buoyant group approaching us. As they came along amidst showers of flower petals, a song arose so full of happiness that I put my hands again over my vulnerable heart to hold in the wondrous pain of love. Love! LOVE and utmost thanksgiving!

The godly saint had risen from his place; he floated down, his ponderous gravity buoyed somehow, and joined the group. They slowly, midst the surpassing hues of the crystal pyramid, with songs and shouts of elated praise, made their way in the direction of Actuality Colony. Athanasius could be seen leaping happily, youthfully, in their midst, still holding aloft the flashing prism. On our feet we all watched transfixed till the procession moved behind a hillock and out of sight. It was a scene beyond anything my imagination had the power to contrive.

Chapter XIV.

I was surprised that the audience with Athanasius had been so brief. Perhaps we had missed most of it. John had not moved from the place where he had risen beside the stone chair, his bare feet sunk into the curly grass. I looked at him.

"Did we hear all he had to say to us?"

"He told us all we need. He seems unable now to go into details or explanations. He's too far in for that now. The closer to dawn one gets here, the simpler things must become. I've sat here twice before and have longed for explanations. Now I see that would be too complex for him. And it is not necessary."

The others had begun to move around; there were about fifteen or sixteen in all. John greeted several warmly. From their talk I gathered a couple of them were priests. No one walked away. As if gripped by the same strong inclination, we all moved toward a larger knoll where we sat down, the soft grass kinking around us like masses of short, green, silky corkscrews.

We made an informal group that, loosely speaking, was a circle. Motivated by the same impulse - it was enough for Saint Athanasius to know simply, but we were not ready for pure principle to satisfy us.

One man spoke, "the whole thing is summed up in the pyramid. But how? I had thought at one time, much influenced by psychology, that the perfect symbol was the square or circle. That ruled out the Trinity - not psychologically complete, you know?"

Another laughed, "Oh, yes, the subtlety of the Old Boy, and I don't mean Jung! To insist that the Virgin Mary was the fourth corner of the square. The old, old heresy - mankind is part of Godhead. I fell for that too, for a while."

"If you had known mathematics, you'd have known that a square or a circle is not the perfect form." A woman spoke quietly.

"But here, in the pyramid, we have four triangles, four trinities, if you will." John was speaking. "That was the part I didn't understand until a remarkable experience I had on my way back here." And with great deliberation John began to describe to the rest the diagram on the rock-face. He was expressive with his hands, but when diagrams in the air did not suffice, he began to sketch in the close packed grass. It behaved like napped fabric. When pushed one way it lightened, when stroked the other it darkened.

Soon before us in the grass was the diagram like a tic-tac-toe board, except the lines in the middle horizontal row were missing. He was telling them about the golden flow that had filed out the cross. "It swept through the whole center section and this mid square top and bottom. That cross represented the Holy Spirit," he said, "even as the peak of the pyramid also does."

"Why is that?" A woman leaned forward.

"Because the Holy Spirit is the Unifier, as Athanasius said. If the Father is Agent, and the Son, Receiver, then these two OB-POSITIONAL poles," he spoke the word like Athanasius to everyone's delight, "Are brought into ecstatic union by the Holy Spirit."

"The Three together are Love. And from the union of Love comes Fruitfulness - All Creation." A woman's warm voice added this last.

John nodded. "The peak of the pyramid would represent the Spirit, for here is the apex of all four sides. In the diagram.

It is the same. He pulls together Father and Son; man and woman, opposites, in Himself .."

"..and is the abiding, unifying bond between Godhead and mankind." Everyone was caught up in the discovery. It was like seeing a ball of snarled yarn untangled by the deft actions of a group of people skillful at untying knots.

There are three unions in your diagram, the Holy Trinity, the male and female in mankind, and a union of Mankind and God. So what is the fourth plane or side of the pyramid?

John replied, "That puzzled me, but the pyramid is one step more complete than the diagram. It pictures us also, as individual souls."

Here I spoke. "Oh, yes, Lewis described how each of us must develop the qualities of the other sex. A male, feminine qualities, a female, masculine qualities which are inherent to her. He saw them also in harmony within the person, unified, by the action of the Holy Spirit."

"That is the fourth plane," John paused, "and do you see that the symbols of masculine and feminine can also be used on all levels of the diagram, and on all planes of the pyramid? Whenever the function of the Persons or person is Agent - a masculine sign, whenever the function is Receiver, the feminine?"

All of us silently studied the diagram. I closed my eyes. When I did, emerging out of the darkness beneath my closed lids were the dancing images of the couples in the brilliant crystal. Round and round they spun in their four corners. Was it significant? Should I tell the others? Or had they also seen that phenomenon? I waited.

Then John spoke again, "The Holy Spirit ... in our human earth-bound ways, He was hidden from us. We neglected Him. From this vantage point it looks like the last will be first! He, too, gives Himself up for Love!"

Again we quieted into contemplation. A soft breeze moved among us, almost a caress. Then a woman's voice, "He blows where He wills. No man knows whence He comes or whither He goes."

Silence.

"Mary?" I opened my eyes. "Now do you know?"

He was referring to monad, I guessed. "Yes, but. . . what is man's . . . umm . . . principle?"

"As a man I must reflect two, not one. Yours is pure. Yours is first."

The couples of the pyramid, I thought, one led, the other followed. If the one who followed would not, there would be no dance. If one couple would not dance, could that stop all the rest? That was what monad meant, didn't it? Could a woman who refused the dance break up the unity of the whole? Was that Eve's real undoing?

I wouldn't speak to break the stillness that now prevailed in the group. There was perfect peace.

"Mary" The word was so soft this time I scarcely heard it. "Mary" Was it my name or the Blessed Mother's? Or did it matter? "Mary" It floated gently and musically around us. "Mary" I could almost see it as a form; a golden leaf buoyed on the gliding surface of the air and wafting back and forth among us. "Mary" The words were whispered for the last time. Then silence resumed, but I still saw the golden leaf floating from person to person.

Then a boyish laugh broke the quiet pattern and rippled out in waves. One of the young men put back his head and laughed. "Joint heirs with Christ!" he cried, "Equality with God!" There was surprise and elation in his voice. He put his hand to his shining forehead, "It is more than I can think!"

In a moment his delight infected us all. It was John who leaped up and clapped his hands. "A spouse of the Creator! His own! One with Him!" He spun around in an improvised dance, and we all were joining with him, each with our own step, but to the same unheard rhythm. The man next to me grabbed my two hands and like children at Christmas twirling round the tree, we danced out in widening circles. The others spontaneously did the same. All were now in couples. Lifted by a music that filled the air, our feet scarcely touched the ground. John's gleaming face spun by like a vision. But my eyes were really full of the glory that was growing behind us. We were heading toward the awesome mountains which spread before us like a transcendent backdrop. It was the Dawn!

The great light threatened to break upon the snowy peaks at any moment. In an ecstasy of joyous praise, in time to a music of unseen wondrous choirs, we flew on. And then the first sharp ray flashed over the ridge and blinded my eyes. I felt my partner's grasp tighten on my arm.

"It's another day, a brand new day! Get up, Mary." A face loomed over mind. My roommate was shaking my arm. The automatic radio alarm was broadcasting the FM station that woke me daily. A part of the Messiah was being sun, "We Like Sheep . . ." the lilting music and voices dancing over the plain. Barb had already opened the shades, the sunlight was pouring into the room.

"What's this under your head? Look what you slept on all night. Near pressed so hard it won't close. Not too good for a book." She put it on the bedside table and left the room.

Sitting up, I was slowly gathering my wits. The lovely choir still filled my head with glorious sound. What was it? Oh, yes, Lewis' book, *The Great Divorce*, I had fallen asleep reading it. Swinging my feet out of bed, I leaned over the bedside table. My glance fell on the center of the page. The words stood out clearly like an important message.

"A dream? The - then - am I not really here, Sir?"

"No, Son, said he kindly, taking my hand in his. "It is not so good as that. The bitter drink of death is still before you. Ye are only dreaming. And it ye come to tell of what ye have seen, make it plain that it was but a dream. See ye make it very plain. Give no fool the pretext to think ye are claiming knowledge of what no mortal knows. I'll have no Swedenborgs and no Vale Owens among my children."

"God forbid, Sir," I said, trying to look very wise.

"He has forbidden it. That's why I'm telling ye."

I pressed the reluctant book covers closed. "Thank you, Clives Staples Lewis, I shall not forget. I shall make it very plain" I said. "But, ohh . dear Lord. . what will it mean?"

THE END