C.S. Lewis, *praeparatio evangelica* : a Catholic Evangelical, Defined by Method, Technique, and Form

P.H. Brazier

KEY WORDS

Evangelical | Catholic | *regula fidei* | Theological Method | Mission | *analogia entis-analogia fidei*

ABSTRACT

C.S. Lewis was at one and the same time *intensely* Evangelical and *intensely* Catholic. The method, technique, and form of his work was likewise Catholic-Evangelical: his method was defined by the Christ event, derived from the Patristic theologian Vincentius of Lérins (the Scripture imbued authority of the Church, 'what has been held always, everywhere, by everybody') and the Puritan Richard Baxter (from whom he acknowledges the term 'mere Christian'—a sheer core to the faith, *merus*). This paper demonstrates a thread of systematic ground and continuity to Lewis's writings: a content-led bipartite method and bipartite technique, unified by a universal Platonic principle, realized through the form of the *analogia entis-analogia fidei*—derived from the Catholic and Puritan traditions, but Evangelical in mission. Lewis's theological and philosophical writings frame a Christian *Weltanschauung* : 'the Creation, the fall, the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Second Coming, and the Four Last Things.' Therefore he defines his work as *praeparatio evangelica*: preparation for the Holy Spirit. In this he is neither an Enlightenment-led modernist, nor a disparate and relativistic liberal Postmodernist, but an orthodox theologian-philosopher in the Patristic tradition, grounding his writings in Scripture. Lewis could therefore be described as a Catholic-Evangelical.

1. INTRODUCTION

As an apologist and theologian C.S. Lewis is often considered something of a dilettante who dabbled in theology as a populariser, whose work demonstrates scant evidence of a system or of any philosophical ground? Was Lewis an occasional theologian who wrote idiosyncratic (and sometimes linguistically quirky) apologetics that certainly captivated his audience, brief theological excursions focused on a particular question, but not underpinned by an overarching system that ordered his theological *corpus* as a whole? The aim of this paper is to show that Lewis did exhibit a system. His method, technique, and form was consistently employed, and was characterized by a deep obligation to primary axioms and propositions, by a coherent thread of evangelical truth, defined by a seam of clarity discernible throughout his work.

Lewis was an Anglican, a communicant member of the Church of England. Evangelicals may not like the way Lewis subscribed to what can be considered a traditional Catholic position on the sacraments and on *post mortem* purgation. Likewise Roman Catholics would do well to see how Lewis could get beyond the external structure of religion to appreciate the immediacy of relationship any believer can have with the Lord Jesus, which in some ways by-passes the structures and authority of the church(es). Lewis was, therefore, a Catholic-Evangelical who went to great lengths to exclude the establishment middle ground along with the modernist liberal wings of the Church of England from his works—leaving the (Anglo) Catholic and Evangelical. Writing to *The Church Times* in 1952, Lewis commented that what unites the Evangelical and the Anglo-Catholic against the Liberal or Modernist is that both are thoroughgoing supernaturalists who believe in the Biblical witness to salvation history.[1]

1 'Lewis to The Church Times, Feb. 8, 1952,' in, *Collected*

2. BIBLE, TRADITION AND CREED: HOW SYSTEMATIC WAS LEWIS

But what do we make of Lewis as a theologian? Was Lewis a systematic theologian? Essentially founded by Louis Berkhof in the 1930s[2] and championed (in a Barthian context) by late twentieth-century neo-orthodox theologians such as Colin E. Gunton and Robert Jenson as a relatively unique form of doctrine and teaching, practitioners of systematic theology both within the Church and the academy endeavour to formulate an orderly, rational, and coherent account of the Christian faith, often as a *Weltanschauung*, often drawing on philosophical techniques within an evidential framework. As such systematic theology is essentially rooted in the Bible and the creeds (and therefore should be by default Evangelical). Such ancient texts form a type of foundation, along with the declared philosophical techniques.[3]

Nicholas M. Healey distinguishes three types of systematic theology: first, official, generated by the churches, second ordinary theological reflection produced by virtually all believers, and third, what can be described as professional-academic systematic theology.[4] It is the latter that essentially claims a developed method, systematically applied to the individual's work: coherence and constancy are defining principles. Can this be said of Lewis's apologetics and seemingly disparate philosophical theological essays? Is Lewis's *corpus* essentially in the first two categories—the churches and ordinary believers who attempt to order their doctrine and ethics? Although attempts at defining systematic theology have been disparate and therefore inconclusive, as a working definition we can reiterate Colin E. Gunton's comment that, 'systematic theology is what happens when theology engages with philosophy: therefore reason should be discussed theologically.'[5] Should Evangelicals engage with philosophy? Have many failed to in the past, to the detriment of their witness, when philosophy is the λόγος, the reason of God? What, briefly, was Lewis's background? A trained philosopher, a *literatus*, and Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature, C.S. Lewis was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree by the University of St. Andrews in 1946 in recognition of his work in theology and apologetics. Although he had no formal training in theology, his intellect was confirmed in that he received, within four years of study, two B.A. Hons degrees from the University of Oxford (having passed all three required public examinations with first class honours) in Greats (Greek and Roman Literature and Classical Philosophy) and in English. Lewis's training in Classical Philosophy was similar to, and as an apologist places him with, Justin Martyr, and many others in the early Church. Lewis was technically an amateur (not a salaried religious professional), yet he had, in effect, erected an elaborate smoke screen to separate himself from

Letters Vol. III: Narnia, Cambridge and Joy 1950-1963 (edited by Walter Hooper. San Francisco: Harper, 2007), p. 164.

2 See, Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing), 1938. Also, Karl Barth, *The Church Dogmatics* (14 Vols., translated and edited G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance. Edinburgh: T&T Clark), 1936-77. Post-WW2 we find Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (3 volumes; Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1951–63.

3 Attempts at defining systematic theology have been inconclusive. See, for example, Colin E. Gunton, 'A Rose by any Other Name? From Christian Doctrine to Systematic Theology', in *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 1.1, March 1999, pp. 4–23; also, Nicholas M. Healey, 'What is Systematic Theology?', in *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 11.1, January 2009, pp. 24–39, and, Robert Jenson, *Systematic Theology* (Oxford: OUP, 1997).

4 Healey, 'What is Systematic Theology?', pp. 24–33.

5 Colin E. Gunton, *Revelation and Reason: Prolegomena to Systematic Theology* (London: Continuum, 2009), 13.

a clerical elite in the Church of England and in the academy of his day because he categorized this elite as self-proclaimed modern and/or theologically liberal. Unlike many intellectuals he made no secret of his conversion and his faith, indeed Lewis was at one and the same time *intensely* Evangelical and *intensely* Catholic. In considering Lewis as a theologian we shall first establish the ground and influence on Lewis as a philosophical theologian and apologist, then extrapolate—essentially from his own words—what the method, technique, and form, in his *corpus* was.

3. THEOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL GROUND

i. The Post-War Zeitgeist

The depth, sharpness and piercing perception of Lewis's intellect was primarily the result of 'The Great Knock', William T. Kirkpatrick, who tutored Lewis for Oxford. Kirkpatrick though an atheist had a passionate love of truth, and veracity was not defined by, or curtailed according to, social etiquette: if your opponent was wrong you had a duty before truth to say so. Writing to his father on hearing of Kirkpatrick's death in 1921 Lewis wrote: 'It is however no sentiment, but the plainest fact to say that I at least owe to him in the intellectual sphere as much as one human being can owe another ... It was an atmosphere of unrelenting clearness and rigid honesty ... and this I shall be the better for as long as I live.'[6] Lewis's philosophical education had begun in earnest when he was invalided out of the First World War. Wounded in the Battle of Arras, Lewis developed a serious interest in philosophy whilst recovering in Étaples hospital: he read and studied John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.[7] Amongst many young students who returned from the trenches, Lewis, in the early 1920s, was part of the parochial Oxford post-war spirit of the age, who modelled themselves on an earlier mid-European pre-WW1 Viennese generation defined by logical positivism. After the First World War the philosophical establishment at Oxford was still characterized by continental Idealism and the English Idealist philosopher, advocate of temperance and political radical T.H. Green, but positivism was taking hold. This affects Lewis and accounts for his realist period characterized by his atheism. Thus far Lewis was in many ways a product of the post-war spirit of the age: a brutal positivistic logic based on what was immediately perceivable to the senses derived from the concept of a closed universe, which was seen as the product of an accident of evolution, not of a creator God. But Lewis started to become religious: first a theist, then a Christian. Lewis identified the rejection of the ancient religions generally, Christianity specifically, by an intellectual elite at Oxford in the 1920s as a chronological-intellectual position. That is, a proposition characterized by, 'the uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate of our own age and the assumption that whatever has gone out of date is on that count discredited.'[8] Seen as an unswerving

6 'Lewis writing to his father, 28 March 1921', in, C.S. Lewis, *Collected Letters, Vol. I: Family Letters 1905-1931* (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 2004), pp. 534-536, quotation, pp. 534-535.

7 John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (ed. R. S. Woolhouse; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, Penguin Classics, 1997).

8 See, C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (London: Geoffrey Bless, 1955), Chp. 13, specifically pp. 206-208, quotation, p. 207. Along with Owen Barfield and J.R.R Tolkien, Lewis would then raise the question of why did a particular thought system cease to be fashionable, and whether it was ever refuted, and if so, how. See also, C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1952), Chp. 7. See also, the first volume of the space trilogy, C.S. Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet* (London: Bodley Head, 1938), where the anti-heroes, Devine and Weston, assume all ideas that have gone before are inferior and flawed, even

faith in the modern and contemporary this chronological-intellectual proposition was expressed thus: if one argues that A implies B, and if A implying B is an old argument from the times when people also believed C, then A implying B is false, because C was found to be untrue; furthermore, Lewis asserted that this argument implied that such propositions are to be mistrusted if they are religious or relate to a religious mind-set, because, mistakenly, the modernist position believes that humanity progresses from crude ignorance, year by year. Identifying the arrogance of this flawed modernist argument helped Lewis extricate himself from a plethora of philosophies and belief systems at Oxford in the 1920s. It was, moreover, the inverse of this chronological-intellectual argument that characterized his Christian apologetic: anything modern should be mistrusted because it is contemporary, and must first to be measured against the former, the old. Lewis mistrusted modern philosophy and theology, and through his training in Classical Philosophy he drew upon Plato, avoiding the continental Cartesian and Kantian schools and their derivative thought systems. Parallel to his development towards becoming a Christian was his development in pre-modern Idealism as a philosophical foundation, together with his understanding of and respect for reason. Idealism was for Lewis contrary to the closed universe of positivistic realism.

ii. Idealism and Platonism

Much of the philosophical ground of Lewis's work was formulated in the 1920s, during his period as an apostate atheist as part of his early employment at Oxford teaching philosophy. Lewis's doctoral research at Oxford was on the seventeenth century Cambridge Platonist Philosopher Henry More, who contrasted with the continental school of philosophy: 'What Lewis found in More was an anti-Cartesian rationalist, someone who understood reason not as an abstract, analytic faculty presiding over an indeterminate field of extension, but as the consubstantial light joining the intellect to reality.'[9] In contrast to the continental school Lewis simply went back to Henry More, and to Plato; when he became a Christian this extended to Patristic theologians, Medieval Scholasticism and seventeenth century Protestants: 'More's thought ... pointed beyond the merely rational and merely material, and in him Lewis found an idealist who believed in God, in reason as a living principle, in nature as alive with λόγος.'[10] Lewis the philosopher was therefore brought to a degree of intellectual maturity by his study of the seventeenth-century Platonists; this gave him a ground, a philosophical framework, which remained constant for the rest of his life.

Lewis's studies exposed him to many thought systems. As a naive philosophy teacher at Oxford in his mid-twenties he owns to subscribing to what he terms Philosophical Idealism. In addition to the fundamental grounding he drew from Henry More, this intellectual development is influenced by Plato, the Irish philosopher George Berkeley Bishop of Cloyne, and indirectly, and to a lesser extent, by Georg Hegel, though it is questionable as to how much Lewis really did draw on the continental school, noted for Absolute Idealism

in relation to alien species on another planet. See also, C.S. Lewis, *The Pilgrim's Regress: An Allegorical Apology for Christianity, Reason and Romanticism* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1933).

9 James Patrick, 'C.S. Lewis and Idealism', in, *Rumours of Heaven: Essays in Celebration of C.S. Lewis* (Guildford: Eagle Press, 1998), pp. 156-173, quotation, p. 160. See also, on the relationship between More's philosophy and the continental school, Andrew Walker, 'Scripture, Revelation and Platonism in C.S. Lewis', in, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol 55.1 (February 2002), pp. 19-35.

10 Patrick, 'C.S. Lewis and Idealism' (1998), p. 161.

and Dialectic. In his assertion of the forms Lewis is an orthodox Platonist (with Tolkien, he used the term 'shadowlands' for this world, this reality, to contrast with the real, when the real is intuited, but beyond our immediate sense perception). From his conversion on Lewis is a Christian Platonist in a manner similar to Patristic theologians. After Henry More, it is George Berkeley's (Bishop of Cloyne) writings on perception and epistemology that Lewis draws on, specifically Berkeley's theory of immaterialism—Subjective Idealism—encapsulated in the dictum, *esse est percipi* (to be is to be perceived), which had a profound effect on the young Lewis because of the argument from Berkeley that we can only know sensations and ideas of objects, we cannot know abstractions.

iii. Theological Influences

Though trained in philosophy (Classical Philosophy—as were most of the patristic theologians, in particular Justin Martyr, Athanasius and Augustine, who had been trained in the secular academy of their day) Lewis's primary aim was to glorify God, and inform people about the salvific actions of God in the Christ event. Therefore he is a theologian-philosopher, not a philosophical theologian: the emphasis on the primacy of theology is important. Whereas, for example, Athanasius (following his philosophical training) was prepared by the Catechetical School in Alexandria in the early fourth century as a theologian, Lewis was essentially self-taught theologically: he read widely and deeply from patristic to medieval theologians. Lewis laid out his theological influences, and the education he received from them, in a letter in response to an enquiry from a reader, in 1958; when the correspondent questions the complexity of the debts Lewis owes to modern theologians, he comments that his debt to the moderns is hardly anything at all, that he knows not the moderns and what they stand for, that Christianity reached him initially through the literature he taught in the 1920s: Dante, Spenser, Milton, George Herbert, and so forth.[11] After his conversion he drank in Augustine of Hippo, Richard Hooker, Traherne and the work of many Medieval mystics, also the Church Fathers, the Patristic theologians. He admits his ignorance of many modern theological works, with the exception of Anders Nygren's *Agape and Eros*, and Gustaf Aulén's seminal work on Christ's sacrifice, *Christus Victor* (both works drew heavily on the Patristic tradition, but also on the Reformation tradition from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries). A key to Lewis's beliefs and therefore his theology is an orthodox doctrine of original sin. Much of Lewis's doctrine of the fall is derived specifically from Augustine's *de civitate Dei*. Lewis studied Augustine's *confessiones* in 1936, and *de civitate Dei* in 1937, both in the original Latin, returning to them regularly over the next decade, as well as translating the massive *de civitate Dei* for his own use.[12] In addition, Lewis read and studied Aquinas's great *summa theologiae* on a daily basis in the 1940s, in its original Latin, which gave his apologetics and philosophical theology a distinctively sharp logical edge.

4. SYSTEMATIC METHOD, TECHNIQUE, AND FORM

If apologetics are broadly to be considered as arguments in justification of a theory or

11 'Lewis writing to Corbin Scott Carnell, Oct. 13, 1958,' in, *C.S. Lewis, Collected Letters, Vol. III*, 978–98.

12 See, 'Lewis writing to Dom Bede Griffiths, April 24, 1936,' and, 'Lewis writing to Dom Bede Griffiths, May 23 1936,' in, *C.S. Lewis, Collected Letters, Vol. II: Books, Broadcasts and War 1931-1949* (edited by Walter Hooper. San Francisco: Harper, 2004), pp. 187–90 and pp. 191-95.

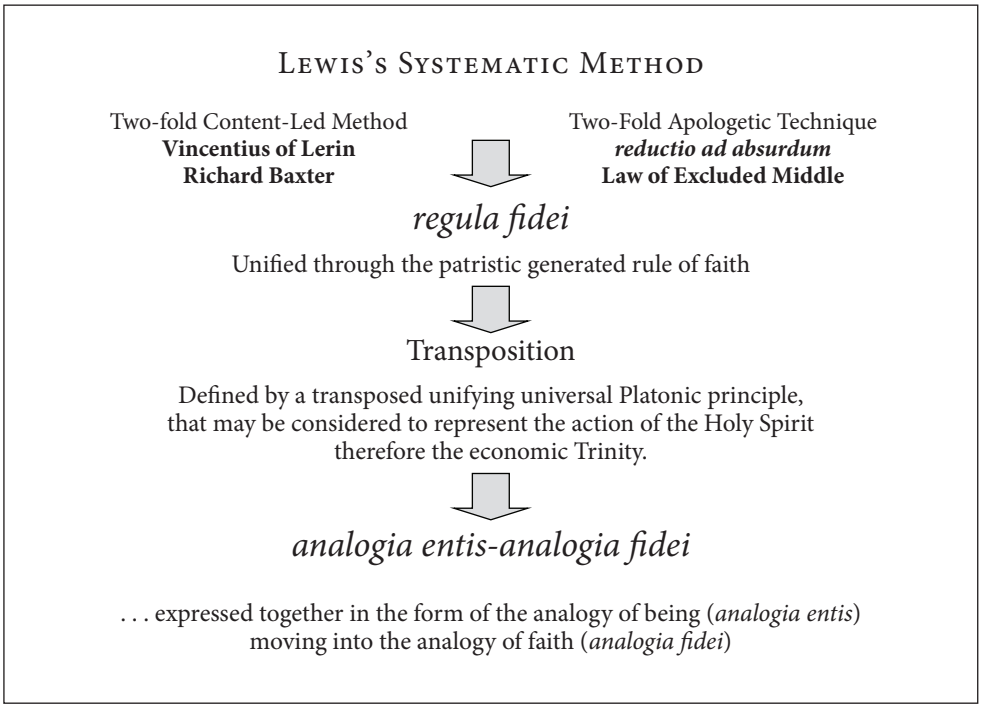

Figure 1 C.S. Lewis: Systematic Method

doctrine, and if Christian apologetics are to be qualified as reasoned arguments to explicate orthodox Christian faith, and if an apologist confronts the disagreements between differing theistic and non-theistic belief systems, then defence is at the heart of apologetics. Given the origins of the term in the Greek ἀπολογία, Lewis as a Christian apologist wrote and spoke in defence of the truth of the Gospel, justifying it in the face of self-confessed atheists, scientists and philosophers, but also in relation to other religions and belief systems. Because he was, so to speak, preparing the way—*praeparatio evangelica*—he also confronted the inertia and apathy of many ordinary people who considered themselves neither Christian, nor anti-Christian. Lewis commented that 'Mine are *praeparatio evangelica* rather than *evangelium*, an attempt to convince people that there is a moral law, that we disobey it, and that the existence of a Lawgiver is at least very probable and also (unless you add the Christian doctrine of the atonement) that this imparts despair rather than comfort.'[13] Therefore Lewis saw himself as preparing his readers for the Gospel, not necessarily converting them. Lewis saw his role, public and private, in bearing witness to Christ: he was in effect a pre-evangelist.[14] Lewis

13 'Lewis writing to Sister Penelope CSMV, May 15, 1941,' in, *Collected Letters, Vol. II*, pp. 484-485. See also, C.S. Lewis, 'Preface to the Third Edition,' in *The Pilgrim's Regress*, xvii. See also, Joel Heck, 'Praeparatio Evangelica,' in, *C. S. Lewis Light Bearer in the Shadowlands* (ed. by Angus J. L. Menuge; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1997), pp. 235-257.

14 Lewis probably discovered the phrase from Eusebius of Caesare's, Προπαρασκευη Ευαγγελικη (*Preparation for the Gospel*, written sometime between 313 and 324 AD), usually known by its Latin title, *Praeparatio Evangelica* was written to demonstrate the veracity of the Gospel over and against Pagan religion through clear and sustained

wrote and broadcast popular apologetics, but he also wrote serious philosophical theology. It would give a false picture to consider one without the other. If apologetics are considered different to academic theology, and in particular from philosophical theology, because Christian doctrine may inadvertently be diluted or compromised or changed in rejoinder to a perceived threat, in addition if the content of apologetics may indeed be unintentionally defined by the perceived threat, then we need to consider what techniques Lewis used to assert orthodox Christian doctrine—whether philosophical theology or apologetics—whilst attempting to be true to the core of established faith.

Lewis's method was defined by content: the nature of the content was derived from the fifth century Patristic theologian Vincentius of Lérins and the seventeenth-century Puritan Richard Baxter. Lewis's content-led method in his theology is two-fold: one element is broadly *Catholic* (pertinently, Patristic), the other broadly *Evangelical* (pertinently, Puritan). In terms of how he presented this content in his apologetics Lewis relied on two identifiable philosophical techniques: first, *reductio ad absurdum*, and, second, the law of excluded middle.

i. Content Defined Method I: What has been Held Always, by All

First, was an appeal to the basic core of the faith established in the centuries after Christ's resurrection, a basic core that was essentially complete by the mid-fifth century, but with much of the detail worked out by the mid-eighth century, this common core to the faith was endorsed by Scripture and by the developing Church tradition. Writing to *The Church Times* in 1952, Lewis commented that,

> To a layman, it seems obvious that what unites the Evangelical and the Anglo-Catholic against the Liberal or Modernist is something very clear and momentous, namely, the fact that both are thoroughgoing supernaturalists, who believe in the Creation, the fall, the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Second Coming, and the Four Last Things. This unites them not only with one another, but with the Christian religion as understood *ubique et ab omnibus*.[15]

The phrase *ubique et ab omnibus*, is important. It is from Vincentius of Lérins who was asserting that we should hold on to that which has been believed by all. Lewis is referring to Vincentius' key work, *The Commonitory* (written in 434 AD), which was written to establish a general or common rule to identify truth from falsity. Vincentius's rule is in essence succinct and simple: it is the authority of the Bible. All questions of doctrine and ethics must be measured against the Canon of Scripture, answered from the Bible. But this, Vincentius acknowledges, is problematic because there are so many interpretations of scripture. The rule of scripture is then qualified by an appeal to that which has been endorsed universally since the earliest days of the Church. The clergy and offices of the Church imbue the Bible with this authority, thus: '*quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus*' ('what has been held always, everywhere, by everybody').[16] In other words

argument, as such it complements Lewis's apologetic defence of Christianity. See: Johnson, Ethnicity and Argument in Eusebius' Praeparatio Evangelica (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

15 'Lewis to The Church Times, Feb. 8, 1952,' in, Collected Letters Vol. III, p. 164.

16 Vincent of Lérins, The Commonitory of Vincent of Lérins, for the Antiquity and Universality of the Catholic Faith against the Profane Novelties of all Heresies (translated by C. A. Heurtley, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace), pp. 207–60, in The Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 11, Sulpitius Severus, Vincent of Lerins, John Cassian (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

there is a body of doctrine/belief, particularly about Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, which is non-negotiable, authenticated by Scripture, held in faith by all, always, everywhere (hence, universally consented to from antiquity), which was established in the centuries after Christ, in the Patristic era, that emerged from the apostles as the authority of the Church.

ii. Content Defined Method II: A Mere Core

The second element to Lewis's method was, like Vincentius of Lérins, to identify a common ground or core, but in this instance to name it and in so doing identify some of its characteristics: 'Mere Christianity'. This common core, this 'Mere Christianity', is then to be used as a measure of doctrine and ethics. Lewis continued in the letter sent to *The Church Times* from 1952, quoted above, 'Perhaps the trouble is that as supernaturalists, whether "Low" or "High" Church, thus taken together, they lack a name. May I suggest 'Deep Church'; or, if that fails, in humility, Baxter's 'mere Christians'?' [17] Lewis is deliberately invoking the work of the seventeenth century English Puritan Richard Baxter:

> You know not of what Party I am of; nor what to call me; I am sorrier for you in this than for myself; if you know not, I will tell you, I am a CHRISTIAN, a MEER* CHRISTIAN, of no other Religion; and the Church that I am of is the Christian Church, and hath been visible where ever the Christian Religion and Church hath been visible: But must you know of what Sect or Party I am of? I am against all Sects and dividing Parties: But if any will call *Mere Christians* by the name of a Party, because they take up with *mere Christianity*, *Creed*, and *Scripture*, and will not be of any dividing or contentious Sect, I am of that Party which is so against Parties: If the name CHRISTIAN be not enough, call me a CATHOLIC CHRISTIAN; not as that word signifieth an hereticating majority of Bishops, but as it signifieth one that hath no Religion, but that which by Christ and the Apostles was left to the Catholic Church, or the body of Jesus Christ on Earth.
>
> I am sorry that you are not content with meer Christianity ... I would say also that (nor as Protestants) did I not take the religion called Protestant (a name which I am not fond of) to be nothing but *simple Christian*.[18]
>
> [Baxter's emphasis and capitalization.
> *: early modern English spelling.]

Therefore a 'mere'[19] core of orthodoxy informed Lewis's method, that which had been held by all during the Patristic era, a 'mere' core that developed in the early centuries of the Church, and could be identified as a true seam of orthodoxy through church history. Content was doctrinal; content defined method—and method was therefore by definition orthodox.

iii. Apologetic Technique I: *reductio ad absurdum*

In formal disputation and logic—and especially beloved by barristers in court—*reductio ad absurdum* (*reduction to the absurd*) is a type of argument that refutes an opponent's proposal by demonstrating that it is either rooted in, or leads inevitably to, an absurd or self-contradictory conclusion. If such a proposition is shown to be absurd and untenable then Lewis

For the statement, 'quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus', quoted by Lewis, see, Ch. 2, §. 6 'A General Rule for Distinguishing the Truth of the Catholic Faith from the Falsehood of Heretical Pravity', pp. 214, also, 219 and, 223. An online text can be consulted at the *Christian Classics Ethereal Library*: www.ccel.org.

17 'Lewis to *The Church Times*, Feb. 8, 1952,' in, *Collected Letters Vol. III*, p. 164.

18 Richard Baxter, 'What History is Credible, and What Not,' Introductory essay in, *Church History of the Government of Bishops and their Councils* (London: Simmons, 1680), p. xvii. (Edition consulted in the British Library.)

19 '*Mere*', from, the Medieval Middle English 'pure', 'sheer', or 'downright', 'meer', from the Latin, *merus*, undiluted.

has, so to speak, won the day, or so he believed. Lewis excelled at reducing the opposition's arguments to nothing, demolishing their case and showing what they believed to be absurd: *reductio ad absurdum*. Such a technique is valued by Lewis in an apologetic discussion. Such a technique is grounded in logic. Lewis was no fideist who shied away from logic and reason. Logic is inherent to the natural sciences, but also in finding out about the truth of God: 'One of the objections to studying logic most often cited is that logic does not apply to God or to any of the mysteries of the Christian faith, such as the Trinity or the Incarnation . . . [but] even those who claim, "Logic does not apply to God," use logic in that very statement. Logic is unavoidable . . . Theology is a rational discourse about God.'[20] Geisler and Brookes continue by reiterating, derived from Aristotle, the four basic laws, self-evident and self-explanatory: the law of non-contradiction (A is not non-A, no two contradictory statements can be simultaneously true in the same sense); the law of identity (God is God); the law of excluded middle (A is either A or non-A, there is no compromise); the law of rational inference (inferences can be deduced what what is known *about* what is not known).[21] Therefore, 'Theological method builds on these elementary laws of logic. If logic is a necessary precondition of all thought, then it must also be necessary for all thought about God.'[22] This does not deny that in many instances our human fallibility and fallenness may lead to an apparent paradox, which we cannot resolve through logic: logic is not God.

iv. Apologetic Technique II: Law of Excluded Middle

Reductio ad absurdum relates, in terms of philosophy and logic, to the *law of excluded middle* (C.S. Lewis is mortal, or he is immortal, there is no third option, logic excludes that Lewis is neither mortal nor immortal). Again rooted in philosophical logic the law of excluded middle is the technique used to show that an argument or proposition is either true or not true. In its purest form, because truth can appear ambiguous, this is expressed as 'either-or'. Ambiguity is then dismissed by fact. Lewis almost certainly derived this technique from his reading of Aristotle. Lewis excelled at excluding the grey, nuanced, middle ground where ambiguity thrived; he excluded this in favour of the 'either-or'. He did not necessarily insist on one option being acknowledged as truth, but left the defeated opponent to see that if absurdity was to be avoided they had to make a decision. This comes into its own with Christian apologetics because whatever beliefs we hold Jesus confronts us with the need to make a decision. This 'either-or' is at the heart of Lewis's most popular and in some ways controversial apologetic: that Jesus was 'Mad, Bad or God' (that is, *aut Deus aut malus homo*—Jesus was God, or he cannot be considered a good man).[23]

20 Norman Geisler and Ronald Brookes, *Come Let Us Reason. An Introduction to Logical Thinking* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990), Ch. 1 "The Whats and Whys of Logic," 11-20, specifically, 15-17, referring to John 1, the Lo/goj.

21 Geisler and Brookes, *Come Let Us Reason*, 16–17. The law of rational inference is at the heart of Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*, what Lewis called a "supposal", a "what if", in this case, what if Christ was incarnate in a totally alien reality, another world outside of our universe, and died to save creatures there? What would happen: analogy by inference.

22 Ibid, 16–17.

23 See, P.H. Brazier, *C.S. Lewis—The Work of Christ Revealed. C.S. Lewis: Revelation and the Christ (Book 2)* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), Pt. 2, 'Part Two The Revelation of Christ—God, or a Bad Man,' Chps. 4-8, pp. 89-188, also, P.H. Brazier, ' "God ... or a Bad, or Mad, Man": C.S. Lewis's Argument for Christ – A Systematic Theological, Historical and Philosophical Analysis of aut Deus aut malus homo', accepted, September 2010 for publication in, *The Heythrop Journal*; published 'online early', Wiley-Blackwell Online Library website 29

The picture given to us by Scripture, the witness and testimony of the evangelists, is of a man who audaciously forgave people their sins, when such was God's prerogative, a man who claimed pre-existence to Abraham, who *acted as if* he was God. Scripture also shows how those who encountered Jesus, or those who exercised power and control over him (the Scribes and Pharisees, the Chief Priests, the Romans), were forced to make a decision about him: either Jesus is a 'liar', he is 'unbalanced', he cannot be considered sane, *or*, he has a 'demon', he is 'possessed', he does these things by Beelzebub, *or*, he is the God of Israel, the Lord, walking among them, he is truly the divine 'light of the world.'[24]

Lewis's two-fold method and two-fold technique was not forcing the hearer to the point of conversion, it was merely setting out the options, clearly, without a nuanced, grey, middle-ground-confusion. Therefore Lewis's method and technique simply prepared the hearer to make a decision, Lewis's apologetics and theology were evangelical but, as he asserted, they were *praeparatio evangelica*.

5. *REGULA FIDEI*

Lewis's writings were content-driven: as the Christ event is an occurrence, an incident, in history, the method is primarily defined by this event. This event leads into Church history, the content issuing—in part—from Jesus' request to his followers to remember him.[25] Therefore Lewis's method is to identify a body of knowledge and understanding that exists outside of human consciousness. This had led to the formulation of the creeds. To go beyond this, to expand and expound on the creeds, is then to codify this understanding into a body of knowledge and understanding, propositions and doctrine. Primarily this body of knowledge and understanding is attested to by scripture, it is endorsed by scripture, and it is about God's dealings with humanity culminating in the Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection. Secondarily, when there are questions which cannot be directly answered by appeal to scripture, this developing body of doctrine is secondarily endorsed by appeal to the developed Patristic tradition—the early Church. Therefore there is identified a '*meer*'/'*merus*', a sheer, pure, simple undiluted core, a basic core of 'Mere Christianity', that is at the heart of the Christian faith and provides the foundation, the ground, for theological apologetics: scripture, backed-up by the Patristic tradition, identifies a mere core. This underpins all of Lewis's work as a theologian.

This relates closely to the *regula fidei* (rule of faith), which was established in Lewis's work from early on, though it becomes more and more important in his mature work: that which evaluates theological opinion and the life of the church by measuring against what has been firmly established and believed—that is, Lewis's content driven method derived from the Patristic theologian Vincentius of Lérins and the seventeenth century Puritan Richard Baxter, his 'mere' core of orthodoxy. This rule of faith was rooted in Scripture: in Paul's comments in Romans, where all is to be seen in proportion to faith: in the Greek New Testament, ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως—literally, the '*analogy of faith*' (Romans 12:6).

Lewis saw Christianity as the *Weltanschauung*. This 'mere' core was the meta-narrative, above all competing meta-narratives.

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24 John 8:49 and 10:21, also, Matt 11:18 and Luke 7:33, and, Mark 3:20-22.

25 Matt 26.26-28; Mark 14.22-25; Luke 22.14-19; See also 1 Cor. 11:24.

Richard Baxter's work, from which Lewis derived the concept of 'Mere Christianity', was a work of Church history and he, like Lewis, realized the importance of identifying what was and what was not part of this salvation history. Baxter wrote:

> But it is not all history that is needful or useful to us: there are many things done which we are not concerned to be acquainted with. But the history of the Church, of the propagation of the Christian faith, and what the doctrine was that was then received, and how it was practised, promoted and defended, and how it was corrupted, invaded and persecuted, is of so great use to posterity, that next to the scripture and the illuminations of God's Spirit, I remember nothing more needful to be known.[26]

This is remarkably similar to Vincentius of Lérins balance between scripture and the developing Patristic Church tradition. Baxter saw this as important because, he argues, that mere Christians should know about the past, about Church history, as they need to be 'truly acquainted how things have gone in the Church from the beginning,'[27] thus the records and documents from the Patristic period are of immense importance. This was also so for Lewis: history was not relative, our perception may, to a degree, be relative to our personal interests, but there was a thread—as Vincentius of Lérins had identified—of truth, of the emergence of sound beliefs about Christ, which was of importance.

6. TRANSPOSITION: A UNIFYING UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLE

Lewis is identifying the universal testimony of the Church as the ground and as an indicator of doctrine where theology is a word of the Church, issuing from the Word: the λόγος. The Word is defined by what flows from the revelation of the Christ event, through the authority of the Church, bound by the Holy Spirit. There is therefore a unifying universal principle against which all modern or contemporary forms of theology are measured. This unifying universal principle is at its strongest in the early and Patristic churches where scripture is developed as a validating mechanism (Vincentius) and is at its purest and simplest, later, in a mere core (Baxter). This issues from a doctrine of revelation. Lewis's understanding of revelation, where revelation is at the heart of doctrine, is governed—pneumatologically—by transposition.[28]

If idealism is incarnational (the ideal, the eternal, descended to earth, to live amongst us and die for our sins, to raise us up again and draw us up out of the mire heavenward[29]), it is important to remember that for Lewis, any revelation is transposed. Described by Lewis as his contribution to the philosophy of the incarnation, a doctrine of transposition relates closely to a kenotic Christology (Phil 2:6–11), to the *communicatio idiomatum* (the communication of attributes), the knowability of God (which is both a veiling and an unveiling), and how human fallibility can lead us to misread what is communicated to us.[30] In a doctrine of transposition the hard-and-firm division

26 Baxter, 'Preface,' in, Church History, p. iv.

27 Ibid, p. vi vii.

28 C.S. Lewis, "Transposition," a sermon given in Mansfield College, Oxford on Whit Sunday, 28 May 1944; published in *Transposition and Other Addresses* (1st ed., , 1949). A reworked and extended edition of the sermon as an academic paper ("Transposition," 2nd ed., 1962) was published in *They Asked for a Paper*. All references are to this 2nd edition.

29 Lewis draws heavily on Athanasius (c.297–373) in this proposition.

30 Lewis, "Transposition," (2nd ed.), 166. For a detailed exposition of this see, See, P.H. Brazier, 'C.S. Lewis: A Doctrine of Transposition', in *The Heythrop Journal*, Vol. 50 No. 4, (July 2009), pp. 669-688.

and separation posited by Platonic Idealism between eternity and our reality, between the forms and the physical world, is blurred, it is seen as a gradation; therefore transposition explains, to a degree, what is happening in revelation: transposition makes gradual, it theologizes this hard and fast Platonic dualism. Lewis sets out a doctrine of transposition in detail.[31] The knowledge and understanding, God's revelation, that is imparted, revealed, is transposed: it is changed, diminuted, diluted, *through our reception* of revelation, like a symphony for full orchestra transposed for solo piano, or a drawing (sometimes pencil, other times pen-and-ink, then charcoal or pastel—each different) as compared to the landscape depicted or the person portrayed. However, something of the essence, the essential spirit, is communicated, relayed, *revealed*. The fine drawings by Leonardo da Vinci are an example of how despite the limitations of the medium, the drawing still *conveys* something of the essential *beauty* and *spirit* in a person, in the face and not just the physical form but the *essence*. This is "how" revelation is imparted. As a key to all of Lewis's work, a doctrine of transposition is itself transposed, reduced, lessened and changed, but essentially still true to the original. This is broadly Platonic in the manner in which the transposed is defined by the truly real in eternity. Lewis's doctrine is designed to explain how revelation works, how it is communicated, and, paradoxically, why revelation can never be fully imparted. Jesus is therefore a transposition of the eternal Christ, the second person of the Trinity, the λόγος, into the human. Moses knew that no human could look God in the face and live. Therefore such an incarnational transposition is by necessity veiled—simply so we can begin to discern, to know, and understand something of the revelation of the Christ. If God had descended, un-transposed, two thousand years ago, then it would have been the end of the world (as it will be in the *eschaton*, with the second coming).

Lewis set out the principle underlying his bipartite method and bipartite technique in a letter to an American Episcopalian, Hart Lyman Stebbins, who had written to him asking what would be 'the arguments which throw the decision to the Anglican and against the Roman Catholic Church'[32] Lewis's reply uses an image, a metaphor, almost a parable, inevitably Platonic. He writes that if he sought the fullest and truest interpretation of what Plato taught then he would be confident in accepting the interpretation which is common to all those who either claim to be Platonists or subscribe to his teaching, those who agree on what he took to be true Platonism: 'Any purely modern views which claim to have discovered for the first time what Plato meant, and say that everyone from Aristotle down has misunderstood him, I reject out of hand.'[33] Lewis then tackles the balance between the churches of his day, of the denominations in the twentieth century.

> I should approach them with great respect. But if I found that their teaching in many ways was curiously unlike his actual text and unlike what ancient interpreters said, and in some cases could not be traced back to within 1000 years of his time, I should reject these exclusive claims: while still ready, of course, to take any particular thing they taught on its merits.
>
> I do the same with Christianity. What is most certain is the vast mass of doctrine which I find agreed on by scripture, the Fathers, the Middle Ages, modern RCs,

31 Ibid, (2nd ed.).

32 'Lewis writing to H. Lyman Stebbins, May 8, 1945,' in, C.S. Lewis, *Collected Letters Vol. II*, pp. 645-647. The essential substance of Stebbins letter is presented on p. 645 at the beginning of the reply Lewis sent to him.

33 Ibid, pp. 645-46.

> modern Protestants. That is true 'catholic' doctrine. Mere 'modernism' I reject at once.[34]

Therefore we have Lewis's content-driven method succinctly stated in one principle: continuity and agreement of a core of belief, agreed on by scripture, the Fathers, the Middle Ages, contemporary Roman Catholics and Protestants and tracing its heritage back to the apostles: this is true 'catholic' for him. This is a universal principle, where universalism lies beyond any particularly denomination.[35] Because Lewis's reply was in the context of Stebbins enquiry of the relationship between the Anglican and the Roman Catholic churches he did continue to explain how he rejected Roman Catholicism where it differed and dissented from this universal tradition and in particularly from apostolic Christianity, citing examples relating to Mary and Mariology, the Papal principle, and the doctrine of transubstantiation, in relation to—importantly—the New Testament. It is important to remember that Lewis is writing in the context of pre-Vatican II Rome. "In a word, the whole set-up of modern Romanism seems to me to be as much a provincial or local variation from the central, ancient tradition as any particular Protestant sect is. I must therefore reject their claim: though this does not mean rejecting particular things they say."[36] This is not simply an anti-Roman polemic; Lewis equally applied this universal principle to Protestantism.For example, writing to his life-long friend Arthur Greeves there are detailed criticisms of the Puritan and more extreme Protestantism evident in their Ulster heritage, where such Puritanism departs from this universal principle and becomes provincial, parochial and local, a variation from this central and mere, simple and sheer, core.[37] We may ask, importantly, what is the source of this unifying universal principle? For Lewis this is Christ: the universal Christ from all eternity to all eternity, the second person of the Trinity, co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, who through and in the Spirit will lead us into all truth, that governs all truth, who for Lewis is biblically endorsed as the way, the truth, and the life (John 16:13; cf. John 8:32; 14:16.)

7. *ANALOGIA ENTIS-ANALOGIA FIDEI*

Lewis's work develops from the assertive, even aggressive, apologetic of the 1940s into something characteristically and methodologically dissimilar (though not poles apart, or diametrically different), and the progress of that change can be attributed to a greater or lesser degree to the Anscombe-Lewis debate (1948), though proving such an assertion is riddled with the problems of causation that the debate was about.[38] The form of Lewis's work is defined within this bipartite method and technique *by analogy*. In the 1930s and 1940s his apologetics and philosophical theology are defined by grounding propositions in creation, and therefore in reason—the *analogia entis*; by the 1950s Lewis sees the primary link between God and humanity for our theologizing as in and through the Christ: the *analogia fidei*.

34 Ibid, p. 646.

35 It is in this context that Lewis uses the hall metaphor in the preface to *Mere Christianity*: the individual denominations and churches are like rooms leading off from a hall or lobby, where the hall represents this mere core of orthodoxy (pp. viii-ix).

36 'Lewis writing to H. Lyman Stebbins, May 8, 1945,' pp. 646-647.

37 See,' Lewis writing to Arthur Greeves Dec. 6, 1931,' in, Lewis, *Collected Letters, Vol. II*, pp. 22-25.

38 See, P.H. Brazier, 'C.S. Lewis and the Anscombe Debate: from analogia entis to analogia fidei', in, *The Journal of Inklings Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (October 2011), pp. 69-123.

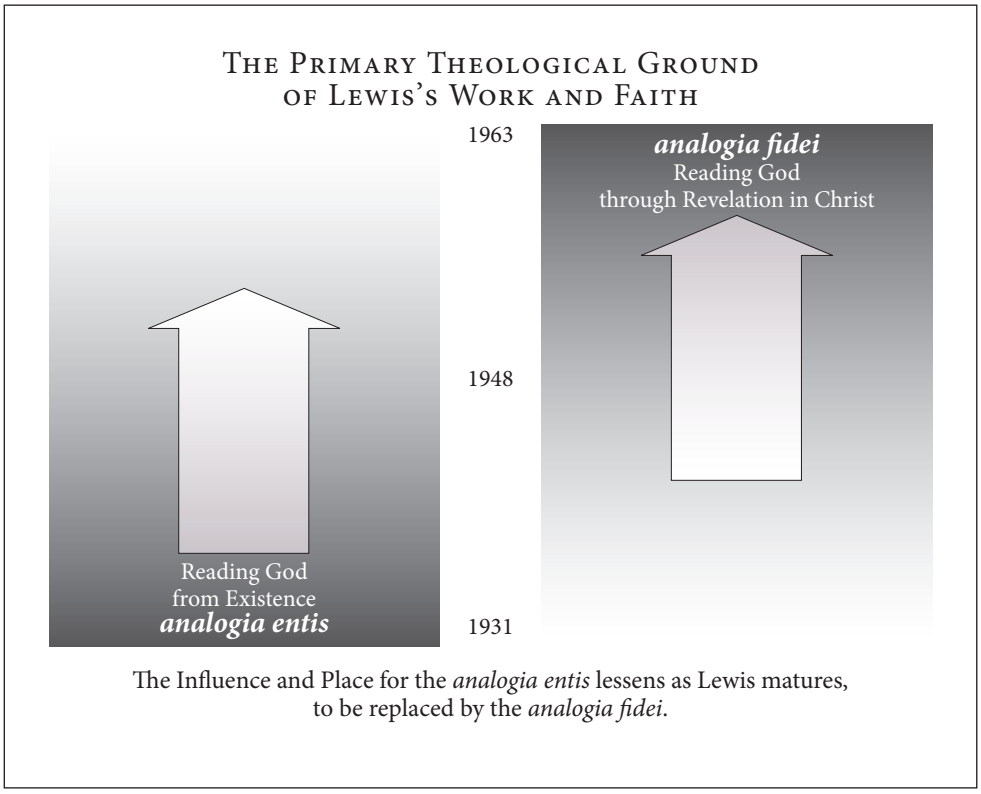

Figure 2 The *analogia entis–analogia fidei*—The Primary Theological Ground of Lewis's Work

In the 1930s and 1940s (the early and middle period works) Lewis's championing of apologetics is through the *analogia entis*: for example, *The Problem of Pain* (1940), and especially in the BBC radio programmes, *The Broadcast Talks* (1941-44), it is in these works that he applies *reductio ad absurdum* to its fullest, forcing the reader and listener to reject the irrationality and illogicality of the alternative position, and excluding any grey middle-ground compromise. There is some evidence of the *analogia fidei* in this early and middle period—analogical narratives, theologically charged parable and story—characterized by the form of the *analogia fidei*, for example, *The Space Trilogy* (1938-45), *The Screwtape Letters* (1942) and *The Great Divorce* (1945).

In the mature period works, late 1940s and the 1950s, after the Anscombe-Lewis debate (1948), which did not refute his argument from reason, but exposed a badly worked-out premise in his understanding of causation,[39] he takes a more cautious and reflective approach, wisdom becomes the touchstone, complemented by the *analogia fidei*. It is faith now that leads to understanding, but faith is the ground from which reason can work, where reason predates creation, where the reason of God is infused into the human. To reject the Christ is *absurdum*, Christ is the universal *Weltanschauung*; to try to pursue a middle ground is flawed. The *analogia fidei* is demonstrated in his use of analogical

39 See, Brazier, 'C.S. Lewis and the Anscombe Debate ', specifically, pp. 83-83, also, pp. 96-104.

narrative. For example, *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-56), *Till We Have Faces* (1956), *Reflections on the Psalms* (1958) and *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (1964, posthumously published). Lewis continues to value the *analogia entis* throughout his mature work, for example the many carefully structured essays of philosophical theology, *Mere Christianity* (1952) and the second edition of *Miracles* (1960); however, it is fair to say that the form of the *analogia fidei* occupies a much greater role in his work in the 1950s. This development probably owes some of its impetus to the Anscombe-Lewis debate, but the evidence is there for a more gradual change, initiated from before his encounter with the young linguistic philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe. In addition, the move from an emphasis on the *analogia entis* to the *analogia fidei* may have been, to a degree, the result of maturity as Lewis grew older; and there is also the effect his love for Joy Davidman had on him, and her subsequent death from cancer.

8. CONCLUSION

Lewis gets close to producing a *summa* (if a *summa* can be considered part of the aim and objective of a systematic theology) in *Mere Christianity*,[40] which was based on the wartime BBC radio broadcasts (1941-44), which dealt with the Christian *Weltanschauung*: the creation and the fall into original sin, salvation history, God's revelation and economy with humanity and the world, the Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and second coming of God in Christ, the Church, all leading teleologically to usher in the *eschaton*: death, judgement, heaven and hell. *Mere Christianity* was a relatively short work compared to the lengths Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth went to, yet it is, perhaps, more complete than many systematic theologies (though it does have its detractors who will point to a personal bias in Lewis, a criticism that can be levelled at any theologian, systematic or otherwise).

Lewis was an intensely private and reticent man, who disliked his fame, but nonetheless he produced a considerable *corpus* of work that still today communicates orthodox, creedal, traditional, Christian doctrine to many millions of people. Disparate though his work may appear to some, taken as a whole there is a thread of continuity throughout that indicates a systematic basis to his theological and philosophical writings, there is even the framework of a systematic theology (however, it is incomplete, as can be said with Aquinas, Barth, Gunton, and many others). It can be argued that Lewis lacks the pretence that many official theologians use to give their work credibility before an often overtly atheistic and seemingly disinterested academy. Then there are those who are quite justifiably sceptical of the concept of systematic theology, that it is just an academic pretence grafted onto basic Christian doctrine, especially when it is difficult to get systematic theologians to agree on a single unifying definition of systematic theology. This notwithstanding Lewis did exhibit something of a system, consistently applied, with a steady and predictable logical ordered and reasoned thread of method, technique, and form, across his work. Lewis did exhibit, often veiled, this content-led bipartite method and bipartite technique that worked together in the form of the *analogia entis-analogia fidei*, unified by a universal Platonic principle, that may be considered to represent the pneumatological action of the economic Trinity: Lewis's Platonic commerce can, in effect, be seen as a somewhat

40 C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (1952).

mechanistic description of the action of the Holy Spirit within salvation history. Lewis was intensely serious and reserved, whose work was deeply considered and thought-out. What is important is not whether Lewis can be classified as a systematic theologian but that he had a carefully thought-out method and technique, consistently applied to his popular apologetics, his philosophical theology, and his confessional writings. We must not be beguiled by the popular conception of, the image produced by, the sometimes flamboyant and idiosyncratic language, or the seeming dilettante who dabbled in theology as a populariser; underlying Lewis's *corpus* is a depth and consistency, a coherence, that is often normally associated with high-ranking professional academic theologians.

P.H. Brazier
Paul Brazier is an independent theologian and scholar who lives in London, U.K. For the last fourteen years he has been the full-time care-giver to his wife who has epilepsy. His doctoral work was on the influence of Dostoevsky on the young Karl Barth. He is editor of the late Colin E. Gunton's work, and, is currently working on an in-depth systematic analysis of C.S. Lewis's Christology and doctrine of revelation—
www.cslewisandthechrist.net.

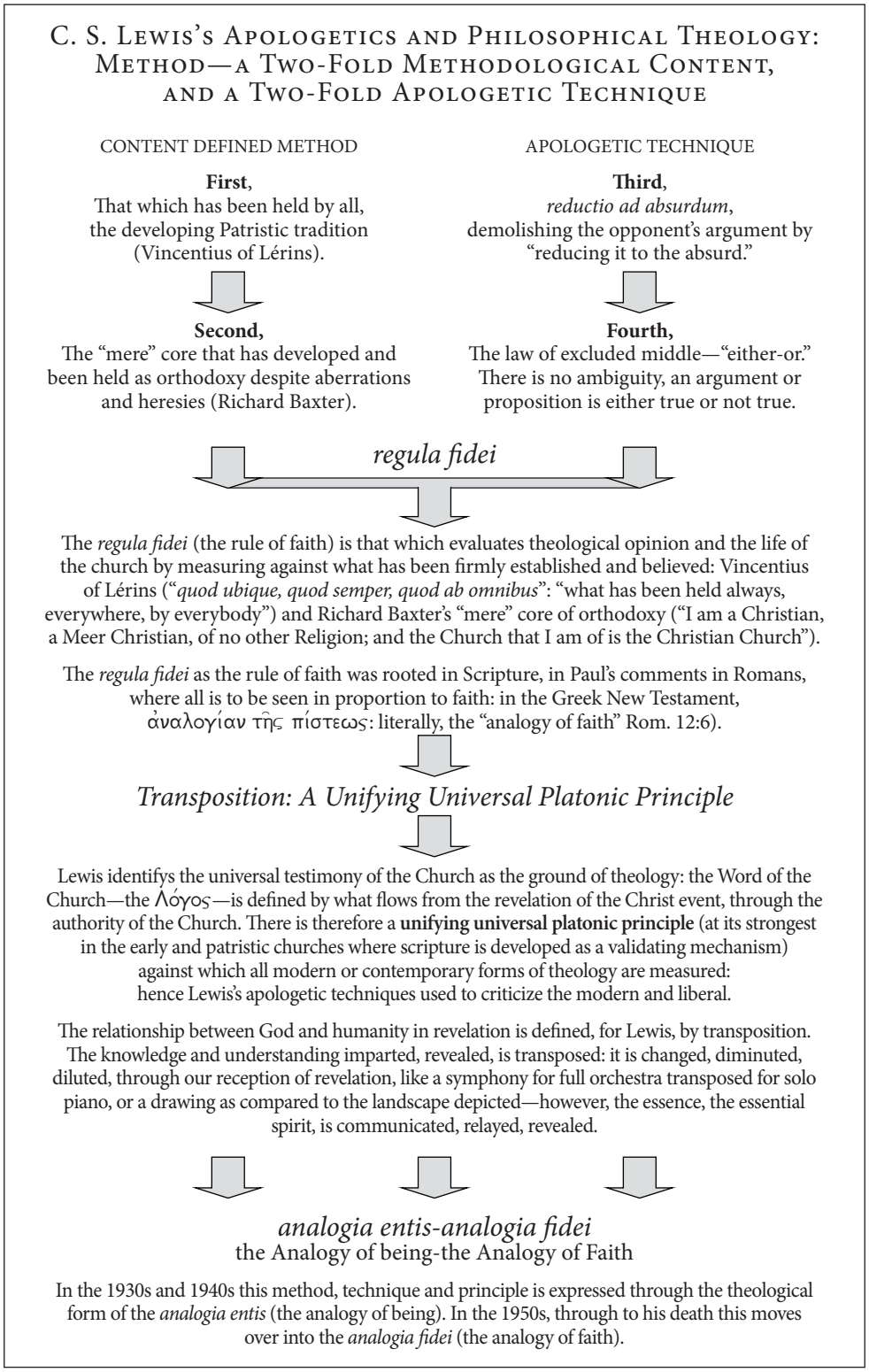

Figure 3 C. S. Lewis—Method, Technique, and Form

