

PERELANDRA

by C.S. Lewis



THE AUTHOR

Clive Staples Lewis (1898-1963) was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland; his father was a lawyer and his mother a mathematician. She died when Lewis was nine, and the trauma eventually drove him to atheism in his teens. He read voraciously from his youth and began writing at an early age. He served briefly in World War I and graduated from Oxford in 1923. He returned to Oxford to teach English at Magdalen College (1925-1954), then moved to Cambridge as Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature (1954-1963). He died on the same day that John F. Kennedy was assassinated - November 22, 1963.

Not surprisingly, reading and conversations with fellow scholars led to Lewis' conversion. Christian writers such as George MacDonald and G.K. Chesterton led him to question the arrogance of his atheism, and ultimately the exercise of his imagination along with his reason brought him to Christ. He went on to become one of the greatest spokesmen for the Christian faith in the twentieth century.

Lewis preferred the company of men to women, living for most of his life with his older brother Warren and spending long and delightful afternoons in discussions with fellow writers at the *Eagle and Child* pub in Oxford. The writers who gathered there styled themselves the Inklings, and included J.R.R. Tolkien, Owen Barfield and Charles Williams. He did, however, care for the mother of his college roommate, Paddy Moore. The two had vowed to care for the other's families should either one be killed in the war, and Lewis kept his promise, allowing Mrs. Moore to live with him and his brother until her death in 1951. Finally, and most unexpectedly, Lewis married - having carried on a lengthy correspondence with Joy Davidman, an American Jewish divorcee, the two fell in love when she visited him in England and married in 1953. Their marriage was a happy one, but was cut short when Joy died of cancer in 1960.

Lewis' writings display an enormous range and virtuosity in varying styles and genres. They include the children's stories for which he is perhaps most famous (*The Chronicles of Narnia*, 1950-1956), autobiographical writings (*The Pilgrim's Regress*, 1933; *Surprised by Joy*, 1955; *A Grief Observed*, 1961), his Space Trilogy (*Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, *That Hideous Strength*, 1938-1945), and theological and apologetic writings (*The Problem of Pain*, 1940; *The Screwtape*

Letters, 1942; *Mere Christianity*, 1943; *The Abolition of Man*, 1943; *The Great Divorce*, 1945; *Miracles*, 1947; and *God in the Dock*, published in 1970), along with literary criticism and essays on a variety of other topics.

Perelandra was the second novel in Lewis' Space Trilogy. It involves Ransom, the protagonist, traveling to Venus (also known as Perelandra) to attempt to foil an evil scientist, Weston, who is attempting to corrupt the sole couple in the Eden-like environment. The extensive conversations among Ransom, Weston, and the Green Lady serve as an interesting counterpoint to the discussions of sin and temptation found in *The Screwtape Letters*. The ending of *Perelandra* is also the source of Lewis' concept of transcendent sexuality, grounded in Platonic philosophy like many aspects of his writing.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

- C.S. Lewis - The first-person narrator of the frame story.
- Elwin Ransom - The protagonist is a philologist who has been chosen to prevent the fall of the newly-created first couple on Perelandra.
- Edward Weston - An evil physicist who travels space seeking to conquer other worlds; he serves as the surrogate for the Bent One who possesses his body, seeking to corrupt the Green Lady as what Ransom calls the Un-man. Ultimately he is killed in physical combat by Ransom.
- Tenedril - The Green Lady, the "Eve" of Perelandra's unfallen Eden, she is the main object of Weston's temptations and Ransom's rescue efforts.
- Tor - The King, he is absent throughout much of the story, but in the end accepts his rightful place as ruler of the unfallen Eden.
- Maleldil - The name for Christ, the ruler of all creation.
- Malacandra - The Oyarsa (angelic ruler) of the planet that bears his name, he transports Ransom to Perelandra and is on hand when the green couple are united and enthroned.
- Perelandra - The Oyarsa of the planet that bears her name, she is the essence of femininity in the same way Malacandra is the essence of masculinity.

PLOT SUMMARY

The story begins with Lewis himself as the first-person narrator. He is on his way to visit his friend Elwin Ransom, a philologist who has just returned from a trip to Malacandra (Mars; the story of that journey is found in *Out of the Silent Planet*). Lewis has learned of the strange inhabitants of that planet, as well as the eldils and the Oyarsa (angelic beings) who populate the universe. As he travels, Lewis experiences all sorts of irrational fears, even wondering whether or not Ransom could be in league with hostile aliens who are preparing to invade Earth. He arrives at

the isolated cottage and finds Ransom not at home. He goes in and discovers a cold white box made of some ice-like substance, and sees for the first time one of the eldils - in this case the Oyarsa of Malacandra. Ransom soon arrives and tells Lewis that he has been summoned to Perelandra (Venus) because the Dark Oyarsa of Thulcandra (Earth), whom we know as Satan, is preparing to mount an attack on that newly-populated place. Ransom gives Lewis instructions to lock him into the casket, remain until he is whisked away, then go home and wait for a summons from the Oyarsa to come back and retrieve him from the casket. Lewis follows the instructions, and a year later is summoned, along with a doctor friend, to unlock the casket and release Ransom. He finds him in remarkably good health except for a bleeding wound on his heel, and with an incredible story to tell. That story makes up the remainder of the novel.

Ransom is unable to describe his journey, during which he was in a state of suspended animation, yet retained a certain awareness of the environment through which he passed. When he arrives on Perelandra, the coffin-like object in which he was traveling melts, and he finds himself floating or swimming in a warm and gentle sea with amazingly high waves. He soon encounters floating islands made of some sort of vegetation, and swims to one, finding it strong enough to support him. After a sound sleep, he explores the island and finds delicious fruit that satisfies his hunger completely. Soon the sun sets, and he finds himself in absolute darkness. He wakes refreshed and sees lying near him a large lizard. Wondering if this is a rational creature, he tries to communicate with it, but soon finds it to be a harmless beast. Continuing to explore the floating island, he encounters trees with large transparent globes suspended from them. When he touches one, it disintegrates in a cool and fragrant shower. He realizes that the trees draw water from the sea below, which then passes through their stems and forms large bubbles. When Ransom walks to the shore to get a drink, he sees other islands in the distance, around one of which a variety of creatures seem to be gathering. He sees there at the center of all the activity a human form with bright green skin. As the islands float closer to one another, he realizes that the form is that of a woman. He tries to communicate with her in Old Solar, the language of the unfallen worlds of the solar system, but struggles to make himself heard. She suddenly begins laughing; when he looks down, he realizes that she is laughing at his ludicrous body, white on one side and sunburned on the other because of his orientation in the capsule during space travel. He tries to swim to her, but darkness falls before he is able to reach her island.

When Ransom wakes the next morning, he finds the Green Lady's island no more than five feet from his. She apologizes for laughing at him the day before, and they begin a conversation. He finds that she and her husband, the King, who have been temporarily separated by the unpredictable movements of the floating islands, are the only humanoid creatures on Perelandra. Their world is a young world, though she has gained from conversations with Maleldil (God) some knowledge of the older worlds. In fact, when Ransom mentions his sojourn on Malacandra, Maleldil whispers into her ear about the place and gives her a vision of its appearance and its inhabitants. She enjoys conversing with Ransom because he tells her things she does not know and gives her things to think about - what she refers to as "making her older." Ransom, however, feels inhibited by the huge responsibility placed on his shoulders and by the fact that he is conversing with a true Queen - the first of her race. In her simplicity, she shares wisdom with him as well, telling him that she had never even thought of the possibility that, when Maleldil sends her one blessing, she should be disappointed that she does not have some other one. After Ransom lies to her about his response to one of her comments, he corrects himself but feels terribly guilty, and the conversation comes to an end.

The next day Ransom explores the island more thoroughly. While standing on the shore and overlooking the sea, he spots in the distance a tall structure that appears mountainous, and concludes that Perelandra has solid ground as well as floating islands. The Green Lady then appears, accompanied as usual by animals, and confirms his suspicions, but tells him that Maleldil, while permitting them to visit the Fixed Lands, has forbidden them to sleep there overnight. The Lady expresses a desire to visit the Fixed Land, and Ransom asks if he may accompany her. Suddenly their conversation is interrupted by a bright light flashing across the sky, followed by a wave disturbing the floating island. The Green Lady then summons a school of large fish, two of which they ride to the Fixed Land. Ransom is pleased with the similarities to his own land, and the two begin to move inland and climb the green pillars that Ransom had thought were mountains from the distance. She climbs up easily, but he finds the climb arduous, and in the process skins his knee. She is curious about the blood that seeps out, and he tries to explain to her about pain. She decides to scrape her own knee to experience the sensation, but Maleldil instructs her not to do so. Once they reach the top, the Green Lady looks for the King, but sees him nowhere on any island visible to them. Simultaneously, however, they spot something spherical floating in the sea, and Ransom thinks it looks familiar. It looks, in fact, like the spaceship in which he had been kidnaped and taken to Malacandra. Ransom concludes that Professor Weston, the physicist who longed to expand the human presence throughout the solar system and enslave all its inhabitants, has come to Perelandra, and that his job is to defeat him. He remembers that the Eldils on Malacandra had really defeated the evil space travelers, and asks the Green Lady if one might find Eldils on her planet. Maleldil informs her that new worlds no longer have them, and Ransom concludes that he is therefore on his own. As night approaches, they must leave the Fixed Land, but Ransom insists that they go down a different way to avoid meeting Weston. She refuses, and they are soon confronted by the evil scientist. He accuses Ransom of seducing the Green Lady, and when Ransom tries to convince her to flee, Weston pulls out a revolver, holding Ransom while letting the Lady go. Weston then tells Ransom that he has advanced greatly since their last meeting, seeing his calling as going far beyond science and the planetary imperialism he had previously coveted and extending to the world of the spirit in which all will be made one. In fact, this true spirit has possessed him. Ransom quickly realizes that the spirit in question is Satan, the evil lord of Thulcandra, and knows that Weston has become his instrument to bring about the fall of the new world of Perelandra in the same way he had done to earth so long ago. When Weston calls on that spirit, he has a seizure and falls unconscious, after which Ransom throws the revolver into the sea and goes in search of food on the Fixed Land.

When he wakes the next morning, he finds Weston gone, leaving no sign of his inflatable raft or his supplies. Ransom goes to the shore and discovers that one of the large fish is waiting for him. He climbs aboard, and the fish carries him all day and into the night, after which he arrives at one of the floating islands. After a good night's sleep, he awakes to hear voices in conversation - the Green Lady and Weston; the latter is trying to convince her that Maleldil really wants her to take initiative, live on the Fixed Land, and "grow older" so that she may teach the King the next time she sees him. The Lady resists the temptation, but Ransom notices that Weston rarely speaks in his own voice any more - that he is increasingly being taken over by that spirit to which he so readily yielded himself.

The next morning, Ransom wakes to find the Green Lady and Weston nowhere in sight. As he walks around the island, he encounters a frog-like creature with its back ripped open. He puts it out of its misery with great difficulty, but soon finds that the entire island is littered with the poor broken creatures. He follows the trail of mangled amphibians to Weston, who is in the process of torturing yet another frog. He sees in his eyes a picture of pure evil like he has never before

experienced, and falls to the ground in a faint. When he recovers and again locates Weston, he is talking to the Lady, trying to convince her that Maleldil desires her to develop independence by breaking one of His commands - in particular, the one about dwelling on the Fixed Land, since it is purely arbitrary and has no good purpose otherwise. Ransom counters by arguing that true love for Maleldil can only be demonstrated by keeping an arbitrary command, and that this is what He desires. The Lady favors Ransom's explanation despite the fact that Weston tries to slander him as being "young" or even "bad" - a word the Lady does not know, but which Weston defines as a person who is not willing to seek new experiences. Ransom speaks of the evil consequences that came upon man when the first Lady in his world followed the words spoken by Weston. Weston responds by talking about all the scientific advances that followed Eve's choice, and even dares to speak of Maleldil's incarnation as one of its consequences. Ransom responds by asking the monstrosity what benefit he gained from Maleldil's incarnation, and Weston can do nothing beyond a howl of pain and rage. The words coming out of Weston's mouth increasingly take on the character of the spirit possessing him, and Ransom begins to wonder if the real Weston remains at all, or if his body has simply become the vehicle for the invasion of Perelandra by the Bent One himself. At this point, Weston begins to repeat Ransom's name endlessly, and when Ransom responds, answering, "Nothing." Ransom soon realizes that the horror that was Weston - what he calls the Un-man - does not need sleep, and that he can look forward to endless hours of the monotonous sound of his own name.

The Un-man now switches his strategy. He begins to tell the Lady stories - tales of women who, though misunderstood and persecuted, nobly sacrifice themselves for the sake of those they love. He is encouraging her to identify with these tragic heroines, and Ransom soon realizes that all the stories have a common thread - the woman chooses to do what those she loves would never approve in order to give them aid they would never seek. The Lady listens intently, though the tales seem to be affecting her imagination without influencing her will. When the Lady sleeps, the Un-man brings out an entire repertory of ways to annoy Ransom, either with puerile obscenities or with constant attempts to mutilate any living creatures that have the misfortune to wander within reach. The stories do, however, seem to be drawing the Lady away from the basic facts of love for Maleldil and the King, obedience, and the present joys of her existence. One day Ransom finds the Un-man and the Lady dressed in robes of feathers - he has no doubts about the source of the feathers - with the Un-man trying to convince the Lady that she is more beautiful with these adornments. He even pulls out a mirror to try to stimulate her vanity.

During the night, as the Lady sleeps, Ransom ponders his situation. The Un-man was apparently tireless, and it would only be a matter of time before he overwhelmed the Lady's defenses. How could Maleldil allow this to happen? Suddenly the presence of Maleldil is all around him and he unmistakably senses the answer - that *he* is the instrument of Maleldil, and that if Perelandra is to be saved, he must do it. "Doing one's best and leaving the results in God's hands" simply would not do. The thought then occurs to Ransom that no distinction between the soul and the body exists on Perelandra because it is an unfallen world; therefore, the battle against evil might require actual physical combat rather than simply conversation. He shrinks away from the thought, but the Presence all around him convinces him that the physical destruction of Weston's body is the only hope for the deliverance of Perelandra. Ransom considers the very idea ridiculous - he is an out-of-shape, middle-aged university professor who has never won a fight in his life - but soon understands that, like the boys fighting and dying in World War II on earth, he must do what is required. It then dawns on him that, should he fail in his task, Perelandra would, like Earth, have to be redeemed by Maleldil Himself, the horrible cost being beyond imagining. Maleldil tells him

that his surname is no accident, then puts the Un-man to sleep so Ransom can get some rest before the climactic battle on the following morning.

Ransom awakes the next morning to find that Maleldil has put the whole island to sleep; its creatures were to be spared the sight of violence and bloodshed. After some time he finds the Un-man, who is torturing and maiming a helpless bird. He immediately punches him in the jaw, but is mocked for his efforts. The Un-man then attacks and the fight rages for hours, with the Un-man tearing at Ransom with his nails and Ransom punching effectively whenever he has an opening. After breaking several of the Enemy's ribs, breaking one of his legs and dislocating one of his arms, Ransom looks up to see the Un-man in full flight. He follows him to the sea, where they both mount fish, with Ransom pursuing the Un-man toward the Fixed Land. After a day and a night of traveling, during which Ransom struggles with doubts about the reality of his experience and the significance of his mission, he catches up with his Enemy at sea. Surprisingly, he finds the monstrosity speaking in Weston's voice, blubbering in pain. Weston speaks of the reality of Hell and argues that nothing else is real - that ghosts and bogies of legend and superstition are the true reality, while life on earth is temporary and meaningless and science is nothing but fantasy. If God exists, He doesn't care, leaving mankind to death and endless misery. As they approach firm land and face imminent death by being dashed against the cliffs by the waves, Ransom begs Weston to repent, but suddenly finds himself being seized by the Un-man and dragged down into the depths of the sea.

When Ransom thinks he can hold his breath no longer, he finds himself on a stony beach in total darkness. He continues the battle with Weston and finally throttles him. Thinking him dead, he decides to rest until morning. Eventually he realizes that morning will never come - he is in a cave in the depths of a mountain. He begins to feel his way around, and finally starts to climb, after much effort reaching a refreshing stream and a beam of light. He follows the light and reaches a flat area at the edge of which is a bottomless pit of fire. He then realizes that the Un-man, whom he thought to be dead, has followed him, seemingly accompanied by a fearsome, huge ant-like creature. Ransom seizes a stone and smashed the Un-man's face, then realizes that the monstrosity was simply one that inhabited the cave, and held no terrors for him. Making sure this time that Weston is dead, he pushes his body into the fiery pit. After crushing the Enemy's head, he realizes that he has a wound - a bite mark from Weston - that is bleeding and refuses to heal.

Ransom then continues his travels, finally emerging into sunlight such as he had never seen before on Perelandra. As he had in the underground caves, he encounters strange beasts reminiscent of mythological figures, like the mermen and mermaids he had seen in the Perelandrian seas. On a cliff of soft rock, he inscribes an epitaph for Weston, the great physicist whose body had been taken over by the Evil One. As he approaches a tall mountain, he notices that all the beasts around him seem to be streaming toward it. When he arrives, he realizes that the place is filled with eldils as well as beasts, and that all are waiting for the arrival of the King and Queen. He also sees a white coffin like the one in which he had been transported to Perelandra.

The ceremony that follows involves the handing over of authority from the Oyarsa of Perelandra to its new human rulers. Ransom is also honored for his role in preserving the new world. Both Perelandra and Malacandra are present, and manifest themselves in visible form in elongated and pure white human-like bodies. In looking upon them, Ransom believes he sees and understands for the first time the essence of masculinity and femininity, which transcends the earthly conceptions of male and female. He understands that the gods of the ancients were nothing but pale memories on a sin-cursed world of angelic realities that existed before the earth was made. When he first looks on the face of the King, he sees in him the face of Christ whose image he bears. He then witnesses the Great Dance, the interweaving of all that God has made into one great unity,

which nonetheless preserves the identities of individual creatures, events, and ideas. The Great Dance lasts for a year, during which it seems as if no time has passed at all. When it ends, Ransom is shut up in his coffin and sees Perelandra no more.

NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

“The distinction between natural and supernatural, in fact, broke down; and when it had done so, one realised how great a comfort it had been - how it had eased the burden of intolerable strangeness which this universe imposes on us by dividing it into two halves and encouraging the mind never to think of both in the same context. What price we may have paid for this comfort in the way of false security and accepted confusion of thought is another matter.” (Lewis, ch.1, p.11)

“My fear was now of another kind. I felt sure that the creature was what we call ‘good,’ but I wasn’t sure whether I liked ‘goodness’ so much as I had supposed. This is a very terrible experience. As long as what you are afraid of is something evil, you may still hope that the good may come to your rescue. But suppose you struggle through to the good and find that it also is dreadful?” (Lewis, ch.1, p.19)

“Oh, they’ll put all sorts of things into your head if you let them. The best plan is to take no notice and keep straight on. Don’t try to answer them. They like drawing you into an interminable argument.” (Ransom, ch.2, p.21)

“Don’t imagine I’ve been selected to go to Perelandra because I’m anyone in particular. One never can see, or not till long afterwards, why *any* one was selected for *any* job. And when one does, it is usually some reason that leaves no room for vanity. Certainly, it is never for what the man himself would have regarded as his chief qualifications.” (Ransom, ch.2, p.24)

“For whatever cause, it appeared to him better not to taste again. Perhaps the experience had been so complete that repetition would be a vulgarity - like asking to hear the same symphony twice in a day.” (ch.3, p.43)

“This itch to have things over again, as if life were a film that could be unrolled twice or even made to work backwards . . . was it possibly the root of all evil? No: of course the love of money was called that. But money itself - perhaps one valued it chiefly as a defence against chance, a security for being able to have things over again, a means of arresting the unrolling of the film.” (Ransom, ch.4, p.48)

“I mean that in your world Maleldil first took Himself in this form, the form of your race and mine . . . Since our Beloved became a man, how should Reason in any world take on another form?” (Green Lady, ch.5, p.62)

“But how can one wish any of those waves not to reach us which Maleldil is rolling toward us?” (Green Lady, ch.5, p.68)

“You could send your soul after the good you had expected, instead of turning it to the good you had got. You could refuse the real good; you could make the real fruit taste insipid by thinking of the other.” (Green Lady, ch.5, p.69)

“I thought that I was carried in the will of Him I love, but now I see that I walk with it. I thought that the good things He sent me drew me into them as the waves lift the islands; but now I see that it is I who plunge into them with my own legs and arms, as when we go swimming. I feel as if I were living in that roofless world of yours where men walk undefended beneath naked heaven. It is a delight with terror in it! One’s own self to be walking from one good to another, walking beside Him as Himself may walk, not even holding hands. How has He made me so separate from Himself? How did it enter His mind to conceive such a thing? The world is so much larger than I thought. I thought we went along paths - but it seems there are no paths. The going itself is the path.” (Green Lady, ch.5, p.69-70)

“When you felt like that, then the very air seemed too crowded to breathe; a complete fulness seemed to be excluding you from a place which, nevertheless, you were unable to leave. But when you gave in to the thing, gave yourself up to it, there was no burden to be borne. It became not a load but a medium, a sort of splendour as of eatable, drinkable, breathable gold, which fed and carried you and not only poured into you but out from you as well. Taken the wrong way, it suffocated; taken the right way, it made terrestrial life seem, by comparison, a vacuum.” (Ransom, ch.6, p.72)

“The beasts would not think it hard if I told them to walk on their heads. It would become their delight to walk on their heads. I am His beast, and all His biddings are joys.” (Green Lady, ch.6, p.76)

“I don’t know much about what people call the religious view of life. You see, I’m a Christian.” (Ransom, ch.7, p.91)

“And if you refused to learn things from me and kept on saying you would wait and ask the King, would that not be like turning away from the fruit you had found to the fruit you had expected?” (Weston, ch.8, p.105)

“[The women of my world] are of a great spirit. They always reach out their hands for the new and unexpected good, and see that it is good long before the men understand it. Their minds run ahead of what Maleldil has told them. They do not need to wait for Him to tell them what is good, but know it for themselves as He does. They are, as it were, little Maleldils. And because of their wisdom, their beauty is as much greater than yours as the sweetness of these gourds surpasses the taste of water. And because of their beauty the love which the men have for them is as much greater than the King’s love for you as the naked burning of Deep Heaven seen from my world is more wonderful than the golden roof of yours.” (Weston, ch.8, p.106)

“He saw a man who was certainly Weston, to judge from his height and build and colouring and features. In that sense he was quite recognisable. But the terror was that he was also unrecognisable. He did not look like a sick man: but he looked very like a dead one.” (ch.9, p.110)

“Yes, it is for this that I came here, that you may have Death in abundance. But you must be very courageous.” (Weston, ch.9, p.114)

“He longs - oh, how greatly He longs - to see His creature become fully itself, to stand up in its own reason and its own courage even against Him. But how can He *tell* it to do this? That would spoil all. Whatever it did after that would only be one more step taken *with* Him. This is the one thing of all the things He desires in which He must have no finger. Do you think He is not weary of seeing nothing but Himself in all that He has made? If that contented Him, why should He create at all? To find the Other - the thing whose will is no longer His - that is Maleldil’s desire.” (Weston, ch.9, p.117)

“It showed plenty of subtlety and intelligence when talking to the Lady; but Ransom soon perceived that it regarded intelligence simply and solely as a weapon, which it had no more wish to employ in its off-duty hours than a soldier has to do bayonet practice when he is on leave. Thought was for it a device necessary to certain ends, but thought in itself did not interest it. It assumed reason as externally and inorganically as it had assumed Weston’s body.” (ch.10, p.128)

“A moment later it was explaining that men like Ransom in his own world - men of that intensely male and backward-looking type who always shrank away from the new good - had continuously laboured to keep women down to mere child-bearing and to ignore the high destiny for which Maleldil had created her.” (ch.10, p.131-132)

“What the Un-man said was always very nearly true.” (ch.10, p.133)

“A man can love himself, and be together with himself. That is what it means to be a man or a woman - to walk alongside oneself as if one were a second person and to delight in one’s own beauty. Mirrors were made to teach this art.” (Weston, ch.10, p.137)

“The image of her beautiful body had been offered to her only as a means to awake the far more perilous image of her great soul. The external and, as it were, dramatic conception of the self was the enemy’s true aim. He was making her mind a theatre in which that phantom self should hold the stage. He had already written the play.” (ch.10, p.138-139)

“What was the sense of so arranging things that anything really important should finally and absolutely depend on such a man of straw as himself?” (Ransom, ch.11, p.142)

“It stood to reason that a struggle with the Devil meant a *spiritual* struggle . . . the notion of a physical combat was only fit for a savage.” (Ransom, ch.11, p.143)

“The triple distinction of truth from myth and of both from fact was purely terrestrial - was part and parcel of that unhappy division between soul and body which resulted from the Fall. Even on earth the sacraments existed as a permanent reminder that the division was neither wholesome nor final. The Incarnation had been the beginning of its disappearance. On Perelandra it would have no meaning at all.” (Ransom, ch.11, p.144)

“Terrible follies came into his mind. He would fail to obey the Voice, but it would be all right because he would repent later on, when he was back on Earth. He would lose his nerve as St. Peter had done, and be, like St. Peter, forgiven.” (Ransom, ch.11, p.147)

“It is not for nothing that you are named Ransom.” (Maleldil, ch.11, p.147)

“My name also is Ransom.” (Maleldil, ch.11, p.148)

“Predestination and freedom were apparently identical. He could no longer see any meaning in the many arguments he had heard on this subject.” (Ransom, ch.11, p.149)

“I have cast your Enemy into sleep. He will not wake till morning. Get up. Walk twenty paces back into the wood; there sleep. Your sister sleeps also.” (Maleldil, ch.11, p.150)

“And you think, little one, that you can fight with me? You think He will help you, perhaps? Many thought that. I’ve known Him longer than you, little one. They all think He’s going to help them - till they come to their senses screaming recantations too late in the middle of the fire, mouldering in concentration camps, writhing under saws, jibbering in mad-houses, or nailed on to crosses. Could He help Himself?” (Weston, ch.12, p.153)

“That’s why it’s so important to live as long as you can. All the good things are now - a thin little rind of what we call life, put on for show, and then - the *real* universe for ever and ever.” (Weston, ch.13, p.167-168)

“Reality is neither rational nor consistent nor anything else.” (Weston, ch.13, p.169)

“There was, no doubt, a confusion of persons in damnation: what Pantheists falsely hoped of Heaven bad men really received in Hell . . . The question whether Satan, or one whom Satan has digested, is acting on any given occasion, has in the long run no clear significance.” (Ransom, ch.14, p.173)

“It appeared to Ransom that there might, if a man could find it, be some way to renew the old Pagan practice of propitiating the local gods of unknown places in such fashion that it was no offense to God Himself but only a prudent and courteous apology for trespass.” (ch.15, p.183-184)

“Be comforted. It is no doing of yours. You are not great, though you could have prevented a thing so great that Deep Heaven sees it with amazement. Be comforted, small one, in your smallness. He lays no merit on you. Receive and be glad. Have no fear, lest your shoulders be bearing this world.” (Malacandra, ch.16, p.197)

“Here there was no affection at all: no least lingering memory of it even at ten million years’ distance, no germ from which it could spring in any future, however, remote. Pure, spiritual, intellectual love shot from their faces like barbed lightning. It was so unlike the love we experience that its expression could easily be mistaken for ferocity.” (ch.16, p.199-200)

“At all events what Ransom saw at that moment was the real meaning of gender . . . Gender is a reality, and a more fundamental reality than sex.” (Lewis, ch.16, p.200)

“It was hard even for Ransom to tell me of the King’s face. But we dare not withhold the truth. It was that face which no man can say he does not know. You might ask how it was possible to look upon it and not to commit idolatry, not to mistake it for that of which it was the likeness. For the resemblance was, in its own fashion, infinite, so that almost you could wonder at finding no sorrows in his brow and no wounds in his hands and feet.” (Lewis, ch.17, p.205)

“And why should I desire the Fixed except to make sure - to be able on one day to command where I should be the next and what should happen to me? It was to reject the wave - to draw my hands out of Maleldil’s, to say to Him, ‘Not thus, but thus’ - to put in our own power what times should roll towards us . . . as if you gathered fruits together to-day for to-morrow’s eating instead of taking what came. That would have been cold love and feeble trust. And out of it how could we ever have climbed back into love and trust again?” (Green Lady, ch.17, p.208)

“We have learned of evil, though not as the Evil One wished us to learn. We have learned better than that, and know it more, for it is waking that understands sleep and not sleep that understands waking. There is an ignorance of evil that comes from being young: there is a darker ignorance that comes from doing it, as men by sleeping lose the knowledge of sleep. You are more ignorant of evil in Thulcandra now than in the days before your Lord and Lady began to do it.” (King, ch.17, p.209)

“The best fruits are plucked for each by some hand that is not his own.” (King, ch.17, p.210)

“He has no need at all of anything that is made. An eldil is not more needful to Him than a grain of the Dust: a peopled world no more needful than a world that is empty: but all needless alike, and what all add to Him is nothing. We also have no need of anything that is made. Love me, my brothers, for I am infinitely superfluous, and your love shall be like His, born neither of your need nor of my deserving, but of plain bounty.” (ch.17, p.217)

“All things are by Him and for Him. He utters Himself also for His own delight and sees that He is good. He is His own begotten and what proceeds from Him is Himself.” (ch.17, p.217)

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. Discuss the relationship between the first two books of C.S. Lewis’ Space Trilogy, *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra*. In what important ways does the first set the stage for the second? Be sure to go beyond the mere introduction of characters; consider setting and plot as well.
2. Compare and contrast the treatments of sin and temptation in C.S. Lewis’ *Perelandra* and *The Screwtape Letters*. What themes do the two works have in common? In what ways do the differences in genre influence the treatment of those themes?

3. To what extent does Weston in C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra* use the tactics advised by Screwtape in *The Screwtape Letters*? Choose three specific pieces of advice in the latter work and explain how Weston uses them in the novel. Are these realistic avenues of temptation in human experience? Why or why not?
4. Compare and contrast the treatments of sin and temptation in C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra* and John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. What themes do the two works have in common? In what ways do the differences in genre influence the treatment of those themes?
5. Both C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra* and John Milton's *Paradise Lost* deal with the temptation of unfallen man by Satan in an earthly paradise. Do the two authors view the nature of temptation in the same way? How are their ideas different?
6. Compare and contrast the portrayals of Satan in C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra* and John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Which do you consider to be the more powerful? Which gives more incisive insight into the ways in which Satan tempts people today? Why do you think so? Support your answer with details from both works of literature.
7. One great problem encountered by those who would fictionalize the Fall is to explain how the ideas that lead to sin enter the minds of sinless beings. One might argue, for instance, that Eve had already fallen before she ate the fruit of the tree, since she had already displayed qualities of pride, lust, and autonomy. How is this problem of "a Fall before the Fall" handled in C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra* and John Milton's *Paradise Lost*? Keep in mind that, shortly before writing his novel, Lewis had published *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, so that similarities between the two are in no way accidental. Which one handles the problem in a more convincing manner, given that Scripture tells us virtually nothing of the psychology of Eve before and during the conversation with the Serpent?
8. Compare and contrast the pictures of the temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden presented in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*. Which do you believe gives greater insight into the ways in which Satan seeks to plunge the human race into sin? Why? Support your answer with evidence from both books.
9. Compare and contrast the portrayals of Satan in C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra* and Goethe's *Faust*. Concentrate your analysis on the difference of treatment resulting from one work being written by a Christian author and the other coming from the pen of a man who knew the Bible thoroughly, but deviated from it in his thought and writings.
10. Both C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra* and *The Screwtape Letters* were written during World War II. How do the events going on in England while Lewis is writing affect the feelings and reactions of the characters? How does the war provide illustrations for Lewis' ideas?
11. Discuss the placement of C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra* in his space trilogy. Why, thematically, does it fit appropriately between *Out of the Silent Planet* and *That Hideous Strength*?

12. To what extent is Ransom a Christ-figure in C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*? Be sure to take into account his interaction with the Green Lady as well as his climactic battle with Weston.
13. Compare and contrast the temptations presented to the Green Lady by Weston in C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra* with those set before Eve in Genesis 3:1-6. Is Lewis simply creating a fictional environment in which to discuss the temptations man faces in the twentieth century, or does the picture he paints have universal applicability as an elaboration on the temptations faced by our First Mother?
14. To what extent do the specific temptations voiced by the Un-man in C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra* give a picture of the peculiar sins of twentieth-century man? Consider such issues as science, technology, and feminism in your answer.
15. Discuss the picture of ideal manhood and womanhood presented in C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*. Are his pictures of the ideal man and woman biblical? Why or why not?
16. The concept of transcendent sexuality presented in the closing chapters of C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra* has its roots in the thought of Plato, who taught that things in this world are mere shadows of universal ideals. To what extent is this concept biblical? Be sure to make use of specifics, both from the novel and from Scripture.
17. Compare and contrast the use of the Platonic notion of ideals in C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra* and George MacDonald's *Phantastes*. Do these concepts play significant roles in the plots and themes of the two novels, or do they simply represent part of the philosophical background held in common by the two authors?
18. In C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*, Ransom describes his calling in these words: "Don't imagine I've been selected to go to Perelandra because I'm anyone in particular. One never can see, or not till long afterwards, why *any* one was selected for *any* job. And when one does, it is usually some reason that leaves no room for vanity. Certainly, it is never for what the man himself would have regarded as his chief qualifications." To what extent are these words an accurate picture of the biblical teaching concerning one's calling to serve Christ? Support your answer, both from the novel and from Scripture.
19. In the first chapter of C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*, the narrator says, "The distinction between natural and supernatural, in fact, broke down; and when it had done so, one realised how great a comfort it had been - how it had eased the burden of intolerable strangeness which this universe imposes on us by dividing it into two halves and encouraging the mind never to think of both in the same context. What price we may have paid for this comfort in the way of false security and accepted confusion of thought is another matter." To what extent is this statement a critique of the philosophy of Rene Descartes, who argued that reality could be divided into the noumenal and the phenomenal, the realm of the mind and the realm of sensory experience? Is Lewis right in his criticism?

20. In the first chapter of C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*, the narrator, upon first encountering an eldil, says, "My fear was now of another kind. I felt sure that the creature was what we call 'good,' but I wasn't sure whether I liked 'goodness' so much as I had supposed. This is a very terrible experience. As long as what you are afraid of is something evil, you may still hope that the good may come to your rescue. But suppose you struggle through to the good and find that it also is dreadful?" To what extent is this an accurate description of the biblical concept of the fear of God? Use specifics from both the novel and Scripture to support your answer.
21. In one of her early conversations with Ransom in C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*, the Green Lady considers the dangers of thinking of something you did not have by saying, "You could send your soul after the good you had expected, instead of turning it to the good you had got. You could refuse the real good; you could make the real fruit taste insipid by thinking of the other." Discuss the wisdom of these words with regard to human wishes and desires and the concept of trusting God. Analyze the ideas expressed here in the light of Scripture.
22. Discuss the concept of free will and predestination in C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*. Be sure to include quotations from conversations involving Ransom as well as those involving the Un-man. Is Lewis' view of these things biblical? Why or why not?
23. In C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*, Weston, in agony near his death, tells Ransom that "Reality is neither rational nor consistent nor anything else." Discuss the view of reason found in Lewis' science fiction novel. Consider the way it is pictured both in the language of the protagonist and that of the Un-man.
24. In C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*, the Green Lady describes her attitude toward the will of Maleldil in the following words: "The beasts would not think it hard if I told them to walk on their heads. It would become their delight to walk on their heads. I am His beast, and all His biddings are joys." Why do we find God's biddings so hard to follow? Answer the question using references to the conversations in the novel, passages of Scripture, and personal experience.
25. In C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*, Weston tempts the Green Lady and denigrates Ransom in the following way: "A moment later it was explaining that men like Ransom in his own world - men of that intensely male and backward-looking type who always shrank away from the new good - had continuously laboured to keep women down to mere child-bearing and to ignore the high destiny for which Maleldil had created her." To what extent are these words a critique of feminism? Is the critique biblical? Why or why not?
26. In C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*, Ransom muses over the question of the relationship between Satan and his minions in the following words: "There was, no doubt, a confusion of persons in damnation: what Pantheists falsely hoped of Heaven bad men really received in Hell . . . The question whether Satan, or one whom Satan has digested, is acting on any given occasion, has in the long run no clear significance." Compare this idea to the similar one expressed in *The Screwtape Letters*. Is this conception of the relationship between Satan and sinners biblical? Why or why not?

27. In C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*, Weston tempts the Green Lady with the following words: "[The women of my world] are of a great spirit. They always reach out their hands for the new and unexpected good, and see that it is good long before the men understand it. Their minds run ahead of what Maleldil has told them. They do not need to wait for Him to tell them what is good, but know it for themselves as He does. They are, as it were, little Maleldils. And because of their wisdom, their beauty is as much greater than yours as the sweetness of these gourds surpasses the taste of water. And because of their beauty the love which the men have for them is as much greater than the King's love for you as the naked burning of Deep Heaven seen from my world is more wonderful than the golden roof of yours." To what extent are these words a critique of feminism? Is the critique biblical? Why or why not?
28. In C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*, Weston tempts the Green Lady with the following words: "He longs - oh, how greatly He longs - to see His creature become fully itself, to stand up in its own reason and its own courage even against Him. But how can He *tell* it to do this? That would spoil all. Whatever it did after that would only be one more step taken *with* Him. This is the one thing of all the things He desires in which He must have no finger. Do you think He is not weary of seeing nothing but Himself in all that He has made? If that contented Him, why should He create at all? To find the Other - the thing whose will is no longer His - that is Maleldil's desire." To what extent are these words a critique of the modern emphasis on human autonomy and independence? Is the critique biblical? Why or why not?
29. Near the end of C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*, the Green Lady says to Ransom, "And why should I desire the Fixed except to make sure - to be able on one day to command where I should be the next and what should happen to me? It was to reject the wave - to draw my hands out of Maleldil's, to say to Him, 'Not thus, but thus' - to put in our own power what times should roll towards us . . . as if you gathered fruits together to-day for to-morrow's eating instead of taking what came. That would have been cold love and feeble trust. And out of it how could we ever have climbed back into love and trust again?" Is this statement a biblical commentary on the nature of faith? Evaluate the extent to which these words are a faithful expression of the biblical teaching on the subject.
30. Much discussion has occurred over the years concerning the significance of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden, and what difference eating its fruit made to man's forebears. In C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*, the King comments on this subject in the following words: "We have learned of evil, though not as the Evil One wished us to learn. We have learned better than that, and know it more, for it is waking that understands sleep and not sleep that understands waking. There is an ignorance of evil that comes from being young: there is a darker ignorance that comes from doing it, as men by sleeping lose the knowledge of sleep. You are more ignorant of evil in Thulcandra now than in the days before your Lord and Lady began to do it." Evaluate the validity of Lewis' image in helping to understand the difference between two ways of knowing good and evil. How would the image work if carried over into an understanding of one's situation in heaven?

31. In the conversation among unnamed speakers near the end of C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*, one speaker says, "He has no need at all of anything that is made. An eldil is not more needful to Him than a grain of the Dust: a peopled world no more needful than a world that is empty: but all needless alike, and what all add to Him is nothing. We also have no need of anything that is made. Love me, my brothers, for I am infinitely superfluous, and your love shall be like His, born neither of your need nor of my deserving, but of plain bounty." To what extent is this speech an effective description of *agape* love? Evaluate these words in the light of Scripture.
32. Discuss the view of science found in C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*. Are the negative evaluations found in the dialogues and comments on Weston and his ilk intended to criticize science in general, or simply its abuses? Support your conclusions with specifics from the novel.
33. In C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*, early conversations with Ransom fill the Green Lady's mind with words and ideas that are later exploited by the Un-man. To what extent may one argue that the abstract knowledge of evil prepares the way for one to succumb to temptation? Use the novel, Scripture, and human experience to support your answer to the question.
34. Discuss the relationship between the will and the imagination in C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*. Lewis pictures the Green Lady as retaining her virtue despite the fact that "her imagination was already filled with bright, poisonous shapes" because "no evil intention had been formed in her mind." Can one imagine evil without sinning? Support your conclusion from the novel, from Scripture, and from human experience.
35. Discuss the extent to which Ransom himself must resist temptation in C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*. While the main focus of the novel is on the temptation of the Green Lady, the protagonist also faces temptations that could ruin his mission and even threaten his spiritual well-being. Choose three of these temptations, discuss how Ransom handles them, and explain the biblical lessons being communicated through this often-neglected aspect of the novel.
36. Discuss the significance of the Fixed Land in C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*. Besides the obvious parallel with the forbidden fruit in Genesis, what role does it play in the conversations involving the Green Lady, Ransom, and Weston? Why do you think Lewis chose this particular command as the crux of temptation? Be sure to quote specific passages in the novel where the significance of the Fixed Land is discussed and relate them to the points of your essay.
37. Discuss the significance of the physical battle between Ransom and Weston in C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*. Besides the obvious allusion to Genesis 3:15, what is the fight intended to represent? Is it intended to be apocalyptic in the same way as the climax of *That Hideous Strength*? Why or why not?

38. Evaluate the idea of paganism as a distorted form of spiritual reality as presented in C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra*. Consider not only the appearances of the Oyarsa and eldils, but other offhand comments made by Ransom concerning his experiences while traveling alone in *Perelandra*. While such an idea is surely part of Lewis' fantasy world, does it have any biblical validity? Support your discussion with details from the novel and appropriate passages from Scripture.
39. Much of C.S. Lewis' *Perelandra* consists of lengthy dialogues - between Ransom and the Green Lady, between the Green Lady and the Un-man, between Ransom and Maleldil, and involving various combinations of the above. In the end, however, the central conversation - that involving Ransom, the Green Lady, and the Un-man - is inconclusive, and Ransom must win the battle, not by reason, but by physical force. What is Lewis trying to say about the power and limitations of human reason through these circumstances? Are his thoughts on this matter biblical? Why or why not?
40. In C.S. Lewis' Space Trilogy, the cast of villains changes. In *Out of the Silent Planet*, Weston and Devine are the villains of the piece. *Perelandra* details the defeat and destruction of Weston (Devine is not in the story), while *That Hideous Strength* narrates the defeat of Devine (known as Feverstone in the story) and his colleagues. Discuss the appropriateness of focusing on Weston in the middle book and Devine in the last one. Why do you think Lewis made this choice? Support your conclusions with specifics from the two novels.
41. Aslan in C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and Ransom in the same author's space fantasy *Perelandra* are clearly Christ-figures. Compare and contrast the two characters, particularly the ways in which they symbolize the redemptive work of Jesus on the Cross. Use Scripture as well as details from the two stories in your analysis.