

THE ROLE OF METAPHOR IN CHRISTIAN THOUGHT AND EXPERIENCE AS UNDERSTOOD BY GORDON CLARK AND C. S. LEWIS

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The publication of Gordon Clark's *Language and Theology*¹ raises anew the question of how Christians are to understand the role of the Bible's metaphors, parables, visions, analogies, and so on for Christian thought and experience. Clark attacks a considerable array of philosophies and theologies in order to defend his own philosophy, which others call rationalist idealism. He does not, however, deal with the views of other evangelicals who disagree with his approach. Clark views metaphor and analogy as essentially ornamental or decorative, not types of speech that are essential to Christian speaking about God. By contrast Arthur Holmes says:

While analogy, symbol and even paradox are indeed literary devices, they are still vehicles of understanding. They represent exploratory probes, the stretching of the mind to grasp what is unfamiliar or remote, the attempt to probe the mystery of something utterly unique, even to capture some elusive but alluring thought. For a finite man who knows in part and sees through a glass darkly these devices are indispensable. For a creative thinker treading new paths they are essential.²

Holmes' view is developed in great detail by C. S. Lewis. Clark does not mention Lewis' views, even though Lewis has probably written more extensively on metaphor and related subjects than any well-known Christian writer in this century. Since Clark does not relate his views to Lewis', this paper is an attempt to extend the scope of the dialogue by comparing Clark's theory with that of Lewis.

The heart of their disagreement is this: Clark asserts that Biblical metaphors are inadequate for insight and understanding, mere surrogates for the real thing, which is the interpretation we give to them. Lewis on the other hand proclaims that God has spoken to us (among other means) by divinely authorized metaphors, parables, analogies, and so on. These are not only adequate to provide insight but are the means by which we can "see God's face and live." This striking difference in how the two men value the Bible's metaphors is rooted in quite differing views of knowledge, truth, language and reality. Clark takes geometry as the standard of thought. Lewis, however, believes that such more "scientific" speech is valuable for many purposes but not all, so it should not be taken as the standard for judging more "poetic" speech such as is used in religion.

I will summarize Clark's theory first, then Lewis', then compare them.

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¹G. Clark, *Language and Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980).

²A. Holmes, "The Philosophical Methodology of Gordon Clark," *The Philosophy of Gordon Clark* (ed. R. H. Nash; Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1968) 223.

I. CLARK'S THEORY OF METAPHOR

Every thinker's views on metaphor are rooted in a variety of assumptions that provide the necessary support for those views. Briefly, Clark's major philosophical roots seem to include the following:

1. Geometry is the standard for all thought. He uses the language of geometry—axioms, theorems, deduction—and almost apologizes for his account not being as clear and precise as a geometric demonstration.³

2. As a result of adopting geometry as his standard, Clark concludes that all knowledge is verbal and propositional: "Knowledge . . . always comes in propositions."⁴ This suggests that we do not "know" a person's face, or our experience of love, except insofar as we can verbalize it in propositions.

3. Clarity and precision are everything in geometry, so Clark takes over from there this standard of meaningfulness: "What cannot be expressed clearly is not meaningful."⁵ This is a prescription, a rule from his favorite language-game, which he, however, declares to be universal. Is this not what logical positivists did with their verification principle?

4. Further, Clark offers a prescription for the use of the word "truth." In geometry there are two categories—perfect truth, and error—so Clark adopts that distinction. For him the only propositions that can be labeled as "true" are those that are perfectly true, that are identical with what God thinks: "If we know anything at all, what we know must be identical with what God knows. God knows all truth, and unless we know something God knows, our ideas are untrue."⁶ As a result of this view Clark believes that our senses, all the sciences and history provide no knowledge, no truth, because their results are only approximate.

5. The standard by which to measure truth is for Clark the same as in geometry—coherence. Since geometry is made up entirely of mental constructs there is no necessity to bring in the physical, temporal reality of the world into geometry. So Clark in adopting geometry promotes the logical coherence of a system as the sole standard, rejecting another view held by many evangelicals that we must also see how well the system corresponds to reality as we experience it.

6. A further result of the geometry standard is Clark's apparent view that reality and truth are synonymous.⁷ In geometry that is possible because the reality is made up of mental constructs that explicitly entail the truths of geometry. But when this view is taken as universal then has it not become idealism, the theory that reality is made up simply and solely of true ideas?

Since metaphor has no essential role in geometry it is not surprising to find that Clark sees no essential role for it in Christian thought.

7. He believes that metaphor is rhetoric, a kind of literary embellishment providing "aesthetic appeal and psychological impact," thus effectively attracting

³Ibid., pp. 87-88.

⁴Clark, *Language*, 97.

⁵Ibid., p. 92.

⁶Nash, ed., *Philosophy*, 76-77.

⁷Cf. Holmes, "Philosophical," 221.

audience attention and facilitating memory.⁸ This is the "ornament" view of metaphor that has been adopted by rationalists and empiricists at least since the Enlightenment.

8. Clark also sees analogy as "a literary and aesthetic device," a means for making "an unexpected comparison between two subjects we already know."⁹ As a result of this definition Clark sees analogy as impossible in theology because God is an unknown, and unknowns cannot be depicted by analogy.

9. Metaphor and symbol are not quite as useless in Clark's view, but they are very limited: "If the purpose is insight and understanding, symbolic language must be recognized as seriously inadequate."¹⁰ Since knowledge, truth and meaning are only found for Clark in clear propositions, it is necessary to translate metaphors into clear literal propositions before they become useful for thought. Clark believes that insofar as a metaphor does have meaning it can be fully expressed in clear, literal propositions.¹¹ He states his standard for meaningfulness very starkly: "The metaphor or parable has meaning only if there is some similarity that can be stated in non-metaphorical, literal language."¹² Here the influence of geometry as the norm seems evident.

10. Clark's judgment on the inadequacy of metaphors as means of insight and understanding does not simply apply to non-Biblical writings but is the standard he brings to bear on the Bible as well. John the Baptist's metaphor of Jesus as the Lamb of God is taken by Clark as something secondary: "The symbol is merely a surrogate for something else and what we want is the real thing not the symbol."¹³

11. For Clark the real thing is the interpretation his tradition supplies. By interpreting the Jewish religious practice of lamb sacrifice in legal terms Clark provides the following as the real thing: "The lamb is a symbol of the vicarious satisfaction of justice."¹⁴ That more abstract way of speaking has apparently become the standard theory in Clark's tradition, and so for him the concrete Biblical metaphors are only aesthetically appealing ways of dressing up this theory.

Clark believes that his legal terms (satisfaction of justice) are used literally here. When Jesus is referred to as the lamb, Clark suggests that we should take this to mean in literal speech that Jesus' death is the vicarious satisfaction of divine justice for the whole world. Thus the metaphor of the lamb is not what God was communicating. Instead it was a vehicle, a container, a surrogate for the real meaning, which Clark believes he can state literally and precisely. Thus a certain theological tradition is the truth (on this and many other points) while the Bible's

⁸G. Clark, *Religion, Revelation and Reason* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1961) 146.

⁹Nash, ed., *Philosophy*, 77.

¹⁰Clark, *Religion*, 145.

¹¹Clark, *Language*, 87.

¹²Clark, *Religion*, 143.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 145.

metaphors are only pointers to the truth, containers of God's Word (meaning) rather than that Word itself.

12. As support for his theory that metaphor is a surrogate for literal speech Clark offers his theory on the origins of language. He claims that God gave us language "for the purpose of conversing literally with God—as well as for counting sheep."¹⁵ The necessity for conversing "literally" is because by geometric standards only literal speech can be clear and precise enough (at times) to qualify as knowledge and truth. Then in reply to those who assert that human speech about spiritual matters is not clear and precise the way more scientific speech is, Clark appeals to the omnipotence of God: "If God is omnipotent, he can tell men the plain, unvarnished literal truth . . . in positive, literal, non-analogical, non-symbolic terms. . . . If God is omnipotent he could have made men capable of receiving literal truth."¹⁶ Clearly Clark believes not only that God could do that but did do that, because Genesis tells of Adam's conversing with God. For Clark real conversation means sharing the truth, and since that for him only comes in clear, literal propositions it follows that it was God's intention to enable human beings to speak with and about him in plain, literal speech. So that was the way God made us.

II. CONCLUSION

Clark's theory follows coherently from his initial assumption that geometry is the standard by which all thought is to be measured. That produces a philosophy that others call rationalist idealism. The rationalist aspect is his insistence on truth as perfect, on deduction as the only way of logic, on meaning as requiring clear propositions. The idealist aspect is his assertion that all knowledge is verbal and propositional and that reality is nothing other than "ideas." Together these various assumptions produce the view that metaphors are secondary, aesthetic and rhetorical devices for pleasure and persuasion. They are ornamentation, not truth—the pleasing packaging for the real thing, which is literal propositions. Thus his conclusion follows logically that only if that hidden treasure of literal propositions can be presented will the metaphor or analogy or parable have meaning.

Thus theology for Clark can and should exclude all metaphor (including Biblical metaphors presumably) because theology aims for insight and understanding and so should strive to be as clear and precise as geometry.

III. C. S. LEWIS ON METAPHOR

In this section I will follow Lewis' views in an order comparable to that used for Clark's. Lewis' roots are in different basic assumptions about reality, knowing, language and truth than Clark uses. Growing out of those roots are the trunk and branches of Lewis' understanding of the variety of types of metaphor. Then finally the flowers on the tree are his understanding of the role of metaphor in the Bible and theology.

1. Lewis suggests that our experience of knowing can be seen as taking two

¹⁵Clark, *Language*, 101.

¹⁶Nash, ed., *Philosophy*, 78.

distinct forms that he calls enjoyment and contemplation.¹⁷ Enjoyment here means direct experience by participation, while contemplation means standing away and observing like a spectator. This distinction is most clearly seen in knowing other persons which comes in the forms of "knowledge-by-acquaintance (*connaitre*)" and "knowledge about (*savoir*)."¹⁸

2. These two ways of knowing are related to two different types of knowledge. When we "enjoy" an experience by participation then our knowledge of it is "concrete" and specific. When we stand back and contemplate, however, we put the experience or object or process in a classification, "abstracting" out some general characteristics that this particular experience has in common with other such experiences. Each type of knowledge has its strengths and weaknesses: "As thinkers (abstracting) we are cut off from what we think about; as tasting, touching, willing, loving, hating we do not clearly understand."¹⁹

3. Parallel to these types of knowing is our dual mental capacity of imagination and intellect. For Lewis both are vitally important, as he suggests in this slogan-type aphorism: "Reason is the natural organ of truth; but imagination is the organ of meaning."²⁰ Imagination is required first of all for us to grasp the meaning of something, whether it be speech or action. Then in some cases our intellect can compare that meaning with what we know already and so decide whether the new meaning fits well enough to be called "truth." In many cases, such as with authorized metaphors, we do not know enough to be able to judge whether the meaning given is true, so we must accept it or reject it on the basis of our trust in the giver's authority.

4. As a literary historian and creative writer Lewis knew from continuous experience that words and meaning are not identical. Words are public (once uttered), while the author's meaning is something hidden in his mind. There is no way to observe the relationship between words and meaning, but from his experience Lewis suggests this metaphor: A two-dimensional drawing "represents" three-dimensional reality adequately but not perfectly; similarly, our words "represent" our meanings adequately (at our best) but should not be confused with them.²¹

5. This distinction between words and meaning is an example of another basic distinction Lewis makes: between "observables" and "supersensibles." Observable realities are those that are open to our five senses. Supersensible realities are those we cannot know directly by our senses and so cannot point out to and share with others. Examples of supersensibles include the infinitely great and infinitesimally small aspects of the physical world, inner human experiences (loving, meaning, valuing, knowing, feeling, etc.), and the eternal world. While these supersensibles cannot be directly observed, we can often observe their effects

¹⁷C. S. Lewis, *Surprised By Joy* (New York: Harcourt, 1955) 217 ff.

¹⁸C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt, 1960) 174.

¹⁹C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970) 65.

²⁰C. S. Lewis, "Bluspels and Flalansferes," *Rehabilitations and Other Essays* (London: Oxford University, 1939) 157.

²¹C. S. Lewis, "Transposition," *The Weight of Glory* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 22-23.

(e.g., in human action and in God's action in history).²²

6. These various distinctions lead to Lewis' observation that there is a spectrum of languages with poetry (i.e., literature) at one end, ordinary speech in the middle, and scientific speech at the other end. Lewis' view is that none of these is the standard by which the others should be judged, for each has its own purposes, forms, effects and standards. He rejects the empiricist and rationalist claim that the scientific type is the norm. He does acknowledge the superiority of that type for measurement, for description of classes of observables, for manipulation of nature. Poetic speech, however, is the best way to share human experience. The concrete terms of poetry bring us in contact with the particular realities we experience. Scientific speech on the other hand abstracts out generalizations that are separated from concrete reality. "Religious" speech tends toward the poetic or literary end of the spectrum, for it is the concrete expression of human experience of God's self-revelation. "Theological" speech tends toward the scientific end of the spectrum, for it is more abstract and general, separated from the experienced realities of knowing God personally.²³

7. Lewis suggests that reality and truth should not be confused. Reality is what is there. Truth is always something linguistic, a statement that is "the reflection of reality."²⁴ Another way of noting this distinction is this: "Truth is always *about* something, but reality is that *about which* truth is."²⁵ Thus knowing truth (contemplation, knowledge about) is not the same thing as tasting reality (enjoyment, knowledge-by-acquaintance). For Lewis the purpose of the Bible is not primarily spectator knowledge but participant knowledge, tasting the reality of God himself.

8. Given Lewis' view that enjoyment of reality, imagination and poetry (literature) are at least as important as contemplating truth, reason and science, it is not surprising that he finds metaphor to be basic and not ornamental: "It is of the very nature of thought and language to represent what is immaterial in picturable terms. What is good or happy has always been high like the heavens and bright like the sun. Evil and misery were deep and dark from the first."²⁶ Lewis rejects the empiricist notion that language was first used for observables and later was extended metaphorically to refer to supersensibles. His view is that there was often an "ancient unity of meaning" that referred both to observables and supersensibles (e.g., the Hebrew *rûah*) and predated the distinction between literal and metaphorical uses.²⁷

9. The heart of Lewis' contribution to understanding metaphors is his distinction between master's and pupil's metaphors. A master's metaphor is one I have chosen in order to communicate something I know directly to a person who does

²²Cf. C. S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York: Macmillan, 1947) 88-89.

²³Cf. C. S. Lewis, "The Language of Religion," *Christian Reflections* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967) 129-141.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 61.

²⁵Lewis, *Dock*, 66.

²⁶C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (London: Oxford University, 1938) 44.

²⁷Lewis, *Miracles*, 94.

not know it directly. For me (the master) the metaphor is optional. If another person knows the reality directly too, then I can speak about it literally to him. A pupil's metaphor is one I have received from someone who knows the subject better than I do. In that case I am a pupil, and my thinking and understanding are dependent on the metaphor. If I know nothing else about the subject, then I am totally dependent on the metaphor for the slight inkling of meaning I have gained. If, however, I later come to know the reality directly, then the metaphor becomes optional. Then I can speak about the subject literally.²⁸

10. The question of whether all metaphors can be replaced by literal speech thus turns out to be the question of how much we can come to know directly. We can observe observables (the externals open to our senses) but not supersensibles. Thus metaphors about observables can often be replaced by literal speech, but metaphors about supersensibles can only be replaced by other metaphors: "The truth is if we are going to talk at all about things which are not perceived by the senses, we are forced to use language metaphorically."²⁹ Here Lewis is only concerned with "talking about" supersensibles—that is, describing or explaining them. He does not deny that we can refer to supersensible realities with terms used literally for that purpose. "I am thinking" uses the words literally. But if I try to explain "thinking" I will do so by likening it to other things (e.g., a computer's workings).

11. Many thinkers in such diverse fields as philosophy, politics, psychology, theology and physics suppose themselves to be speaking literally about supersensibles. Lewis believes they are mistaken. They have not noticed how our conventional speech is filled with metaphors—using a better-known reality (often physical) to think and speak about a lesser-known reality (often supersensible). If we try to explain the supersensible experience referred to in the phrase "I understand" we do so by the use of conventional metaphors such as "I see," "I grasp what you are saying," and "I follow you"—each of which uses something physical to suggest an aspect of the supersensible reality.³⁰

12. Lewis believes the Bible is filled with such conventional metaphors: God loves, forgives, judges, saves, and so on are all understood metaphorically by thinking first of our experiences of human beings loving, forgiving, and so on. Of course the way these deep human experiences are best expressed is in somewhat poetic speech, because that is the kind that communicates the quality of human experience. Thus the Bible's speech is mainly "religious" (concrete, dealing with human experience of God as enjoyed) rather than "theological" (the more abstract form dealing in generalizations).

Lewis stresses that the abstractions of theology are not literal speech but simply more abstract metaphors. Thus he does not give the more abstract speech of theology priority over the more concrete religious speech of the Bible. He thinks the abstractions of theology can be very misleading by themselves because they can suggest that God is impersonal. Still the abstractions are necessary, to keep beginning readers from taking the concrete Biblical metaphors (e.g., God as

²⁸Lewis, "Bluspels," 137-141.

²⁹Lewis, *Miracles*, 88.

³⁰Ibid.

the Ancient of Days with hair like pure wool in Dan 7:9) literally.³¹ Such vivid pictures are God's own authorized self-portrait. Church theology is man's inventing, a result of human wisdom, and so is secondary. In *Pilgrim's Regress* Lewis has God put human philosophy and theology on a lower level than the Bible's metaphors, parables, visions, and so on, which God calls "My mythology. The words of Wisdom are also myth and metaphor: but since they do not know themselves for what they are, in them the hidden myth is master, where it should be servant: and it is but of man's inventing. But this is My inventing, this is the veil under which I have chosen to appear even from the first until now. For this end I made your senses and for this end your imagination, that you might see My face and live."³²

IV. CONCLUSION

The key to Lewis' approach is his recognition of the complexities of all the major issues discussed. Instead of taking one end of the spectrum and making it the norm, he suggests that the spectrum is there because of the substantial complexity of reality. The most important insight, I think, is this: Both poetic-type speech and scientific-type speech are valid language-games, neither of them to be judged by the standards of the other. Metaphor is most at home in the poetic-type (including religious speech), for that is the way to speak of supersensible human experiences. It is best done by appealing to the imagination, using metaphors that enable us to taste reality rather than just talk about it. But even when we move toward theology and talk about God as if he were an object we could analyze, our abstractions are still metaphors, often unrecognized metaphors. Thus our choice in speaking of God is not between metaphor and literal speech. Rather it is a choice between the authorized, concrete metaphors of the Bible that enable us to participate in a relationship with God and the humanly-developed abstract metaphors of theology that keep us as spectators and are mainly valuable for marking out the limits of the more concrete metaphors.

V. COMPARISON

Clearly Clark and Lewis offer very different evaluations of the Bible's metaphors. A look at how they specifically differ will make the disagreement even clearer.

1. Clark believes that geometry is the standard for all thought and so judges poetry and metaphor as being essentially aesthetic rather than informative. Lewis' view is that the spectrum of languages running from poetic to scientific types exists because of the complexity of human needs in communication. In particular he rejects the theory that either end of the spectrum is the standard. In answer to Clark he suggests that poetry communicates concrete human experience, which the more abstract scientific type of speech is quite unable to do.

2. From geometry Clark takes over the idea that all knowledge is verbal and propositional. Lewis suggests that that is far too simple a view, for it ignores the fact that we know people's faces and know our own experiences even when we cannot express much of that knowledge in words. Verbal knowledge is mostly the

³¹C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm* (New York: Harcourt, 1963) 21-22.

³²C. S. Lewis, *The Pilgrim's Regress* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958) 171.

knowledge-about type, but much more pervasive is our knowledge-by-acquaintance that can only be hinted at by our words.

Lewis backs up this suggestion of the complexity of knowledge by pointing to the complexity of our mental functioning. We "enjoy" some experiences (loving, thinking, meaning, etc.) that can never be directly observed. We can also "contemplate" some realities, sitting back and observing them or their effects. In order to do these two somewhat distinct types of knowing Lewis suggests that imagination and intellect working in harmony are needed. Especially when a person is sharing with us a profound experience that goes far beyond available words we must use our imaginations to try to grasp their meaning.

3. Apparently Clark does not accept the distinction between words and meaning that for Lewis is very important. In geometry the words used are very closely related to meanings because geometry is composed entirely of mental constructs. Thus if we take geometry as the norm we do not need to think much about relating words and meanings. In all other speech, however, we are closer to reality if we say the words "represent" meaning. Thus words should not be confused with meaning, any more than a press secretary's words should be confused with the president's meaning that the words adequately communicate. We all have experience in ordinary life of not finding adequate words to express our meaning and of not being able to grasp another person's meaning fully, even though he is articulate and trying hard to communicate. That kind of experience is central to Lewis' theory, especially because we have most difficulty when we are trying to speak of supersensible realities like profound human experiences (such as God's presence in our lives).

By ignoring the way we speak of profound experiences by groping for words, Clark offers his standard for meaningfulness: "What cannot be expressed clearly is not meaningful." Like the logical positivists' "verification principle" this is an attempt to impose the rules of one language-game (geometry in this case) as the rules of all language-games. It is like a chess player coming to the beach and telling surfers that they should conform their sport to the rules of chess.

In addition this rule is probably self-defeating, for the central term "clearly" is not at all precise and thus not clear. Standards for applying this rule probably cannot be successfully established. Rather it seems that whether a statement is "clear" is a function of the ability of the hearer, not simply an attribute of the statement. Many metaphors that are clear to Lewis (who has spent a lifetime "enjoying," "contemplating" and creating them) would probably be unclear to Clark. Thus talking about "clear" statements is perhaps more accurately to be thought of as talking about successful communication.

The speech-act of calling a string of words "meaningless" needs to be examined. It is intended as a criticism (and semantic positivists take it as a death blow), but it is actually a confession. "That is meaningless" really implies "meaningless to me," which is simply the confession that "I do not understand." If anyone finds a statement meaningful then it is meaningful, for it then has succeeded in representing meaning.

4. Clark limits the word "true" to only those propositions that are perfectly, absolutely true. Here again the standard comes from geometry. Lewis adopts a standard that is closer to our ordinary use of the word when he says true statements are adequate "reflections of reality." A witness' story is called "true" if it generally reflects what happened, even when it is wrong in peripheral details.

Limiting "true" simply to absolutely true propositions would mean that almost everything we say would have to be called false. That does not adequately distinguish among pure lies, generally false statements, mixed statements, generally true ones. There is a spectrum here that matters immensely. By setting up "true" and "false" as clear and discrete categories Clark has succumbed to "the fallacy of ideal types."³³

By defining truth in this way Clark essentially excludes all human thought except geometry from the realm of truth. He explicitly excludes all sense perception, all the sciences, all historical conclusions, because they are all only approximate. He believes that the Bible gives us God's perfect truth and seems to conclude that what we gain from it is identical with that truth. Unfortunately we have to use our senses and historical processes to interpret the Bible, so our interpretations are only approximate also. By Clark's standard they also must all be false.

5. For Clark the standard of truth is the coherence of the system, a perfectly adequate standard for geometry. For Lewis coherence matters greatly, as his arguments against naturalism make clear.³⁴ In addition, however, he sees that our views must also correspond to reality as we experience it. That is why Lewis' approach continually explores the complexities of reality, while Clark is not concerned with them because he thinks our experience of reality only provides approximations while his system is the truth.

6. The last preliminary difference is that for Clark reality and truth are apparently identical as they are in geometry. For Lewis that identity in geometry is a special case. For all our speaking about human experience, truth is a linguistic reflection of reality, not to be confused with reality any more than a mirror image of our face is to be confused with our face. This distinction is especially important for our speaking about supersensible realities, for with them our words are even more approximate reflections than they are for the simplest observables. Clark takes no notice of this distinction between observables and supersensibles because he does not believe we gain knowledge of truth through human experience but only through the Bible and reason.

Given these wide differences over knowing, meaning, speaking, truth and reality it is quite understandable that Clark and Lewis understand and evaluate metaphor quite differently.

7. For Clark metaphor is rhetoric, fancy packaging for the real thing, which is the literal truth (if any) that is contained in it. Lewis agrees that that is often the case (e.g., when public speakers try to dress up their platitudes to make them more attractive). Lewis, however, knows that there is a great deal more. Sometimes speakers offer metaphors in order to give hearers a beginning understanding of something they do not know. For the speaker the metaphor is optional (master's metaphor), but for the hearers it is all the meaning they have (pupil's metaphor). Only if the pupil comes to know the reality directly can the metaphor become optional for him.

8. Clark's definition of analogy as a comparison between two things we know is much narrower than Lewis'. For Lewis that is just one kind of analogy. In addi-

³³W. T. Jones, *The Sciences and the Humanities* (Berkeley: University of California, 1967) 130.

³⁴Lewis, *Miracles*, chaps. 2-5.

tion there is the analogy that is at the heart of every metaphor, for the metaphorical use of a word is related analogically to the literal use. Thus for Lewis analogy and metaphor are overlapping concepts.

9. The central difference between the two men is over the interpretation of metaphors. Clark believes that all the informative meaning of a metaphor can be expressed in plain, literal speech. Lewis suggests that that is approximately true for metaphors about observables but is quite untrue for metaphors about supersensibles. The latter can only be interpreted into other metaphors.

Lewis would agree with Clark that Jesus as "the Lamb of God" can be helpfully and approximately interpreted in legal terms as "the vicarious satisfaction of divine justice." The difference between the two men is that Clark claims this is literal speech, the real thing, the truth. Lewis denies those conclusions. For Lewis this interpretation has these characteristics: (1) By moving into more abstract (less concrete, less immediately experienced) speech it becomes less adequate to the original concrete experience that was the subject; (2) the legal abstraction ignores the way the original metaphor worked for the original hearers—by evoking the experience of temple sacrifice as a way to enable hearers to experience something of what Jesus' death meant; (3) thus the interpretation does not begin to communicate all the information the original did; (4) the more abstract language is still metaphorical, for it presents the divine-human interaction in legal terms, using the satisfaction of human justice as the basic metaphor; (5) thus this more abstract metaphor cannot be used deductively as can the precise, literal axioms of geometry; (6) unfortunately such abstract metaphors are often hidden because they are quite conventional, and this misleads some hearers into thinking they are literal (and precise) propositions.

10. Clark probably believes that "satisfaction of divine justice" is literal speech because he thinks he has two independent concepts: Justice_H (human), and Justice_D (divine). Lewis' view is that those concepts are not independent, for the only way we can think of and explain Justice_D is on analogy with Justice_H. Thus divine "justice" is a metaphor for Lewis. The decision on which of these two views is correct can be made by observing how a theologian explains the concept of divine justice—i.e., how he relates it to what hearers know better. If Clark can explain it without bringing in human justice at all, then he may be right. Lewis' observation is that we always explain the lesser known by the better known. Thus when the word "justice" is used we inevitably think first of human justice and then use that to go beyond to divine justice. It is the fact that divine justice cannot be directly observed—i.e., is supersensible—that forces us to speak about it in terms of better-known realities.

11. Here we see the great gulf between Clark's and Lewis' views of the value of the Bible's metaphors. For Clark they are only surrogates, while the real thing is the more abstract interpretation provided by his tradition. For Lewis the Bible itself, especially its concrete metaphors for God, is the best means by which we can come into personal contact with God, who is himself the Real Thing. The Bible's own metaphors are for Lewis God's own way of communicating himself, while our more abstract theologies are only commentary. Of course the commentary is valuable, as indeed are modern concrete metaphors offered to help suggest the meaning of the Bible. But none of them is an adequate substitute for the Bible's own metaphors, for they are authorized by the Author himself.

12. Finally, a comment on the origins of language and speech may be useful.

Everything said on this topic is speculative, so nothing should be built on these speculations. Clark asserts that God was able in his omnipotence, and acted in fact, to give human beings the capacity to speak literally to and about him. Clark believes this because for him only literal speech can be true and because he does not recognize his abstract theology as still metaphorical. Lewis' view is that God made humankind able to receive his presence, both by speech and by other means (sacraments). Just as we know another person intimately and adequately by means of metaphors he offers us, so also the Bible expresses God's intimate communication with us—to a large extent by metaphor but also by literal description of his acts in history.³⁵

VI. CONCLUSION

Clark has adopted his rationalistic theory in opposition to the naturalism of empiricists and the subjectivism (he calls it irrationalism) of existentialists. Lewis does not come close to either of those extremes, and thus Clark's very successful critiques of them do not touch Lewis. Lewis' critique of Clark would be quite simple: Geometry is not the norm for thought but a special case, because it is concerned solely with abstract mental constructs. Christian thought, by contrast, is concerned with the real world, with human experience of God's presence and power, with the eternal world that transcends this one and is known only insofar as God reveals it to us. Thus geometry cannot begin to offer a norm for Christian speech, thought and experience. It is the Bible itself that offers us the norm in its history, parables, poems, proverbs, images, visions, and so forth. It is by this variety that we are enabled to see God's face and live.

³⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.