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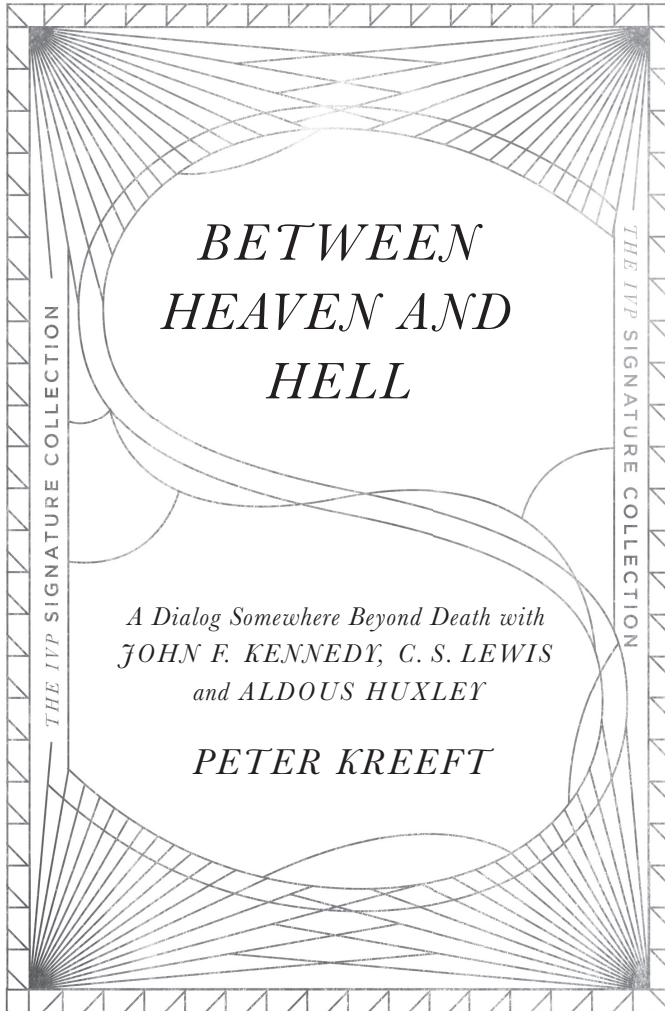
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**David Baggett**, professor of philosophy and director of the Center for Moral Apologetics, Houston Baptist University

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**David Mills**, *The Pittsburgh Catholic*, December 2009





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For the Rev. Theodore J. Jansma  
who kindled my knowledge of C. S. Lewis,  
energized my knowledge of myself  
and deepened my knowledge of Christ



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# Prologue

On November 22, 1963, three great men died within a few hours of each other: C. S. Lewis, John F. Kennedy and Aldous Huxley. All three believed, in different ways, that death was not the end of human life. Suppose they were right and suppose they met after death. How might the conversation go?

It would be part of “The Great Conversation” that has been going on for millennia. For these three men represented the three most influential philosophies of life in our human history: ancient Western theism (Lewis), modern Western humanism\* (Kennedy) and ancient Eastern pantheism (Huxley).

These three men also represented the three most influential versions of Christianity in our present culture: traditional, mainline or orthodox Christianity (what Lewis called “mere Christianity”), modernist or

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\*A word about the term *humanism*. It can be used in three different ways. (1) In its broadest sense, as an inheritance from ancient Greece and Rome, it signifies the importance and value of Man, especially as over against Nature. In this sense it is not only compatible with traditional biblical theism but is an ingredient in it. (2) In its narrowest sense, as a product of modern secularism and atheism, especially from the French Revolution, it signifies Man taking the place of God. In this sense it is not only incompatible with theism but its arch-enemy. (3) But the term is also often used in a third, middle sense, also distinctively modern: as an emphasis on Man rather than God; “horizontal” social activity rather than “vertical” religious experience; and religion without revelation, the supernatural, dogma, miracles, mystery or authority. This is the sense used here.

humanistic Christianity (Kennedy), and Orientalized or mystical Christianity (Huxley).

Lewis took his Christianity straight, or “mere.” Instead of reinterpreting Christianity in the light of any other tradition, ancient or modern, Eastern or Western, he interpreted those traditions in the light of Christianity. Following the lead of the medieval Christian philosophers in this way, he used much of ancient Western culture, especially Plato and Aristotle, as an aid for his Christian apologetics.

Kennedy, though not a philosopher or theologian, was probably in a vague and general way a humanistic Christian in the sense defined above. Although he did not give public expression to his personal religious beliefs (which is itself a humanistic rather than traditional attitude: relegating religion to private life), there is good evidence for this classification of Kennedy. (Much of it is presented in Gary Wills’s *Bare Ruined Choirs*.) In any case, I take the literary liberty of supposing Kennedy to have been a typical modernist Christian in order to set up this complete and typical threesome. The purpose of the dialog is not historical accuracy; the *argument* is all, as it is with Plato’s Socrates.

The fact that Lewis was a Protestant (an Anglican) and Kennedy a Roman Catholic is irrelevant here. Traditionalist and modernist Christians exist in both churches, and the difference between them is far more important than the difference between Protestantism and Catholicism. Whether the Pope speaks infallibly *ex cathedra* and whether there are seven sacraments or two are far less important than whether Jesus is literally divine and literally rose from the dead.

Our third man, Aldous Huxley, expressed his deepest religious beliefs in an anthology of mystical wisdom, *The Perennial Philosophy*, though he is better known for his novels. Like Kennedy, he sometimes used Christian categories to hold a different substance, rather than, like Lewis, using Greek or modern categories to hold Christian substance. In Huxley’s case the substance was pantheism, and he reinterpreted Christianity as a form of the universal, “perennial” philosophy of pantheism. In historical fact, Huxley’s Gnosticism was closer to the heart of his religion than his pantheism; but once again I take literary liberties of emphasis for the sake of the argument in the dialog.

The events of November 22, 1963, almost seem to have been providentially rigged to set up the situation I have imagined in this dialog: a microcosm of humanity's tripartite intellectual history as well as of the current tripartite debate among Christian theologians. The trialog centers on the Center, the hinge of our history: its main question is the identity of Jesus.



## THE DIALOG

**Time:** November 22, 1963

**Place:** Somewhere beyond death

**Characters:** C. S. Lewis, Theist  
John F. Kennedy, Humanist  
Aldous Huxley, Pantheist

**Kennedy:** Where the hell are we?

**Lewis:** You must be a Catholic!

**Kennedy:** You could tell by the accent, eh?

**Lewis:** Yes. I say—aren't you President Kennedy? How did you get here—wherever *here* is?

**Kennedy:** Ex-President, I think: I seem to have been assassinated. Who are you? And—to return to my first question—where the hell are we?

**Lewis:** I'm C. S. Lewis. I just died too, and I'm pretty sure you're wrong about the location. This place just feels too good to be hell. On the other hand, I didn't see any God, did you?

**Kennedy:** No.

**Lewis:** Then it can't be heaven either. I wonder whether we're stuck in limbo.

**Kennedy:** Ugh! Do you really think so?

**Lewis:** Actually, I think it more likely that it's purgatory, especially if we end up getting out of it and into heaven. I did a bit of speculating about such places as a writer, especially in *The Great Divorce*. I don't suppose you've read it? No . . . well . . . But surely you should be familiar with such concepts if you were a Roman Catholic.

**One world  
at a time?**

**Kennedy:** Well . . . I was more of a modern Catholic; I never bothered about transcendental mysteries or mythology. I was too busy trying to take care of the world I lived in for escapist thinking. "One world at a time," as Thoreau put it.

**Lewis:** You can see now that you were wrong, can't you?

**Kennedy:** What do you mean?

**Lewis:** Why, first that it isn't mythology. It's real. Wherever we are, here we are, large as life. And second, that the rule *isn't*

“one world at a time.” Here we are in another world talking about our past life on earth. That’s two worlds at a time by my count. And while we were on earth we could think about this world too; that’s also two worlds at a time, isn’t it? Finally, it’s not escapism. In fact, *not* to have prepared for this journey while we were living on earth would have been escapism. Don’t you agree?

**Kennedy:** Hmm . . . I suppose you’re right. But look! Someone else is coming. Can you make out who it is?

**Lewis:** Why, it’s Huxley! Aldous Huxley. Aldous, welcome. How did you get here?

**Huxley:** Same way you did, I’m sure. I just died. Oh, I say! Kennedy and Lewis! What good company to die in—or live in, whatever we’re doing. Where is this place, anyway?

**Kennedy:** That’s what we’re trying to figure out. Lewis thinks it may be some sort of limbo or purgatory. I’m just hoping it’s not hell.

**Huxley:** Well, you’re both wrong. It’s heaven. It *must* be heaven.

**Kennedy:** Why?

**Huxley:** Because *everywhere* is heaven, if only you have enlightened eyes.

**Lewis:** Even hell?

**Huxley:** Oh, this is going to be fun! Lewis, you’ve lost none of your cantankerous penchant for Socratic questioning, have you? I remember you made Oxford a regular hornets’ nest when you debated back on earth, and now you’ve shipped your hornets to heaven. This is a nice challenge.

**Lewis:** Then reply to it. If everywhere is heaven, then either hell does not exist, or hell is part of heaven. Which way will you have it, Aldous?

**Is heaven  
every-  
where?**

**The  
question  
of method:  
how can  
we know?**

**Kennedy:** Wait, please! Before you two take off, could you give me some assurances about this sort of debate? I was a debater too, but we politicians confined ourselves to the concrete and tangible. I'm not at all convinced you can do anything more than talk through your hat about things you've never seen.

**Lewis:** So you want an assurance that there is some method of really finding the truth about things we can't see.

**Kennedy:** Yes. Before you take off, be sure you have a plane that can fly, and can get back to earth and land. Lewis, you said you wrote a book about heaven. How the hell—how in heaven's name—how on earth—do you know anything about heaven? Have you ever been there?

**Lewis:** Yes, indeed. I've been in and out of the back doors of both many times.

**Huxley:** You see, Mr. President . . .

**Kennedy:** Please call me Jack.

**Lewis:** That will be rather confusing. My friends called *me* Jack.

**Huxley:** Suppose we let rank have first choice. Would you mind if we called you Lewis?

**Lewis:** If you please. Clarity seems to be the thing here, not titles.

**Huxley:** Fine. Now Jack, Lewis meant that remark about heaven spiritually, not literally.

**Kennedy:** Oh, well, if that's all you mean . . .

**Lewis:** No, wait. Let's not get bogged down in the swamps of "spiritual senses." Let's use words as literally as we can. I have *not* been in either heaven or hell literally.

**Kennedy:** Fine. Then how can you possibly know anything about them?

**Lewis:** I've been told.

**Kennedy:** What? What do you mean?

**Lewis:** Do you know anything at all about Tibet?

**Kennedy:** Of course.

**Lewis:** Have you ever been there?

**Kennedy:** No.

**Lewis:** Then how do you know anything about it?

**Kennedy:** Oh, I see. I've been told. But that's *knowing* only if you *believe* what you've been told.

**Lewis:** Exactly. It's called "faith."

**Kennedy:** You just passively, uncritically believe?

**Lewis:** No, I believe for good reason, and then I explore my belief with good reason.

**Kennedy:** I certainly don't want to impugn your faith, but I think my faith is quite different from yours.

**Lewis:** How?

**Kennedy:** You're one of those theological conservatives, aren't you?

**Lewis:** That depends on what you mean by the label. I've always thought *liberal* and *conservative* were terms used not to think but to avoid thinking. You can classify *anything* as liberal or conservative, then simply declare yourself one or the other, and all your thought for the rest of your life can be a knee jerk.

**Kennedy:** Well, *fundamentalist*, then.

**Lewis:** What does *that* mean? Many people associate it with "No drinking, smoking or swearing." By that standard, I was *not* a fundamentalist.

**Literal  
vs. poetic  
interpreta-  
tion of  
the Bible**

**Kennedy:** I guess I mean, Do you take everything in the Bible literally?

**Lewis:** Of course not. When Jesus says, “I am the door,” I don’t look for a knob on him.

**Kennedy:** And when he talks about heaven and hell, do you look for real angels and demons?

**Lewis:** Yes.

**Kennedy:** Why? Why not interpret that poetically?

**Lewis:** Because the speaker didn’t mean it poetically.

**Kennedy:** How do you know that?

**Lewis:** It’s just simple common sense. Look here: do you think anybody, either Jesus or any of his hearers, reached for a literal knob when he said, “I am the door”?

**Kennedy:** No.

**Lewis:** And when he talked about heaven and hell, do you think his hearers interpreted it poetically?

**Kennedy:** No. They probably weren’t sophisticated enough.

**Lewis:** Was Jesus a good teacher?

**Kennedy:** Of course.

**Lewis:** Does a good teacher take into account his audience, and how they are likely to interpret his words?

**Kennedy:** Of course.

**Lewis:** And does a good teacher deliberately use poetic language when he knows his audience will misinterpret it and take it literally?

**Kennedy:** No.

**Lewis:** You see what follows then. He meant to be taken literally when he talked about the existence of heaven and hell.

They're real places. We will certainly go to one of them forever. It matters infinitely which. *That* is certainly what he meant everyone to get out of his teaching about heaven.

**Kennedy:** So you really believe in a place with devils with horns and hoofs and all? You, a twentieth-century man?

**Lewis:** As I wrote in one of my books, I'm not sure what the time has to do with it, and I'm not particular about the horns and hoofs.

**Kennedy:** But otherwise, yes?

**Lewis:** Yes.

**Kennedy:** Well, I find it a lot easier to believe in the goodness of man than in the badness of God.

**Lewis:** The *badness* of God?

**Kennedy:** Yes; can you imagine a worse God than one who claps human beings into hell for all eternity?

**Lewis:** Yes, I can imagine a much worse God than that.

**Kennedy:** What God?

**Lewis:** One who would put people in hell *who didn't deserve it*. An unjust God. But the God I believe in is not only above injustice, he's also above justice. He's pure love.

**Hell and  
the God  
of love**

**Kennedy:** Wonderful! Then there is no hell.

**Lewis:** That does not follow.

**Kennedy:** Why not? How could pure love create hell?

**Lewis:** I don't think God creates hell; I think we do, or perhaps evil spirits do.

**Kennedy:** But God puts you there.

**Lewis:** No again. We put ourselves there by free choice.

**Kennedy:** Why would anyone do that? Who would prefer hell

to heaven if it was up to our own free choice?

*Lewis:* Anyone who found God uncomfortable, unendurable. Anyone who couldn't stand the light, the truth.

*Kennedy:* You mean it's not a matter of good deeds versus bad deeds, a kind of moral bookkeeping?

*Lewis:* No indeed. Look at the thief on the cross. He made it to paradise even though his life's red ink certainly outweighed the black.

*Kennedy:* I never thought of our destiny in any other terms than moral bookkeeping.

*Lewis:* That's why you never believed in hell.

*Kennedy:* Perhaps so. But I still don't understand how anyone could prefer hell to heaven.

*Lewis:* What do you think hell is? And what do you think heaven is?

*Kennedy:* As I just told you, I never gave it much thought. I suppose I thought of them in the usual way, as rewards and punishments, pleasures and pains, bliss and misery.

**Could  
anyone  
choose  
hell?**

*Lewis:* And you couldn't understand why anyone would freely prefer misery to bliss.

*Kennedy:* Exactly.

*Lewis:* Suppose the bliss is not a reward tacked onto a good life, like a grade tacked onto a school course, but the good life itself in its consummation. And suppose the punishment is also not external and tacked on but internal: the consummation of the evil itself. Do you see what follows?

*Kennedy:* I think so. We choose heaven or hell *in* every choice of good or evil.

*Lewis:* Exactly.

**Kennedy:** So that's what you meant by having been in heaven many times. But now you're interpreting the biblical heaven and hell poetically, not literally. Instead of golden streets and fire and brimstone, instead of physical rewards and punishments, your heaven and hell are spiritual states. I thought you insisted on interpreting heaven and hell literally.

**Lewis:** Their *existence* has to be taken literally, just as God's existence does. But their *nature* can only be grasped by symbols, just as God's nature can only be grasped by symbols.

**Kennedy:** That sounds more like my modernism than your traditionalism.

**Lewis:** If you knew the writings of the saints and mystics, you would know that my interpretation is quite traditional. You modernists tend to dismiss tradition without much of a hearing for it, you know.

**Kennedy:** I'm still not convinced that an ordinary, sane human being could end up in hell.

**Lewis:** Read my friend Charles Williams's novel *Descent into Hell* and you will be.

**Kennedy:** And where am I to find a bookstore in this place?

**Lewis:** Heh! Touché. Score one for you. I do tend to get rather absent-minded at times.

**Kennedy:** Well, let's get present-minded. To return to my original question, where are we? And why are we here, if this is neither heaven nor hell?

**Huxley:** Perhaps this is a second chance.

**Lewis:** I rather think it's the place and time to become clear about our first chance. **Purgatory?**

**Kennedy:** What do you mean by that? What first chance?

**Lewis:** The choices we already made on earth.

**Kennedy:** I thought you said you thought this was purgatory?

**Lewis:** I do. What do *you* mean by purgatory?

**Kennedy:** You do love your questions, don't you?

**Huxley:** He's Socrates reincarnated, Jack.

**Lewis:** Forget the compliment and answer the question, if you please—that is, if you really want to find out where we are and what we're supposed to be doing. You see, I'm not sure either, and I'm asking these questions to clarify my own ideas and find the truth, not just to win a debate with you or to teach you something that I know and you don't.

**Kennedy:** Aldous was right. You do sound like Socrates. All right, I'll try to answer your question. What do I mean by purgatory? I never thought much about it. But most Catholics believed it was a place where you had to go to suffer for your sins. What do you think?

**Remedial  
reading  
of life**

**Lewis:** I suspect that idea is not wholly wrong, but not wholly right either. I think it's more likely that purgatory is a place for education rather than suffering—a sort of “remedial reading” of your earthly life. As such, it's really the first part of heaven, not a distinct place. So I think we are being prepared for deep heaven if this is purgatory.

**Kennedy:** I hope you're right.

**Lewis:** Why? Are you afraid we're in the other place?

**Kennedy:** Frankly, I'm not as bothered by the possibility of being in hell as I am by your belief in hell. I find the first quite remote, but the second quite present and threatening.

**Lewis:** Why do you find my belief in hell threatening if you don't find hell itself threatening?

**Kennedy:** For the same reason you'd find belief in witches threatening even if you didn't believe in witches.

**Lewis:** I see. Does it bother your mind or your emotions?

**Kennedy:** What do you mean?

**Lewis:** I mean, are you bothered by my intellectual error, or by my motives for believing it?

**Kennedy:** The second.

**Lewis:** I thought so.

**Kennedy:** How could a good and reasonable and kind man like you want to believe in a place of eternal torment? Are you a closet sadist?

**Lewis:** If a mother shouts to her baby to run out of the street because a truck is coming, is she a sadist?

**Kennedy:** Of course not.

**Lewis:** But she believes in the truck and the threat it poses.

**Kennedy:** Yes, but she doesn't want it to threaten her baby. She doesn't make up a scary thing like that.

**Lewis:** Precisely. And we don't want hell to exist. We didn't make it up.

**Kennedy:** Why do you believe it then?

**Lewis:** It's a doctrine of faith. The church has always taught it. The Bible teaches it. Jesus clearly taught it.

**Kennedy:** So you accept this terrible thing on faith.

**Lewis:** Yes.

**Kennedy:** Simply because you've been told.

**Lewis:** At first, yes. But then, investigating what I've been told—what *we've* been told, Jack—with my mind and my imagination, I find that it commends itself to my reason and invites exploration by my rational imagination.

**Kennedy:** "Faith seeking understanding."

**Lewis:** Yes. It's a very old enterprise. Augustine, Aquinas, Dante, Milton . . .

**Kennedy:** But you begin with faith.

**Lewis:** Yes.

**Faith,  
reason and  
authority**

**Kennedy:** And you believe in the first place simply on the grounds of authority, and only later try to prove some of it.

**Lewis:** Yes.

**Kennedy:** In other words, you give up your mind to the church.

**Lewis:** No, for two reasons. Not my mind first of all but my will, and not to the church first of all but to God. But the God to whom I say "Thy will be done" replies, "It is my will that you believe what I have revealed to you."

**Kennedy:** Through the church?

**Lewis:** Through the church and the Scriptures, whatever their proper interrelationship. I'd rather not go into the whole Protestant-Catholic question now.

**Kennedy:** Why? To avoid hurting anyone's feelings?

**Lewis:** My goodness, no. I hope we're all at least mature enough not to have to worry about *that*. We're trying to find the truth, not put each other down.

**Kennedy:** Why, then?

**Lewis:** For two reasons. First, whenever I wrote any apologetics back on earth, I carefully avoided that question because I believed God had put me to work on the front lines, where Christianity faces the world, not behind the lines, where a civil war rages among Christians. My business was to defend "mere Christianity," not any one particular church. Second, because we two are not representative samples: I'm more Catholic than most Protestants, especially concerning church, tradition and

authority; and you're more Protestant than most Catholics, de-emphasizing just those things—if I'm not mistaken.

**Kennedy:** No, you're not mistaken. And I think we ought to argue about authority as such rather than about hell, because it's on the grounds of authority that you believe in hell—and many other things as well.

**Lewis:** Fine.

**Kennedy:** I feel I'm really sticking my neck out, though, debating with a professional theologian.

**Lewis:** I'm *not* a professional theologian. But real debate, debate to unearth the truth, not to beat your opponent, seems to be the right thing to do here—as if we were brought here just for that purpose. Do you have that feeling too?

**Kennedy:** Yes, very strongly.

**Lewis:** Aldous, we've been leaving you out. Do you have the same feeling?

**Huxley:** Yes, and I'd like to keep listening for a while, if it's all right with you. As far as authority goes, I think I'm on Jack Kennedy's side; but I'm with you, Lewis, in being a traditionalist. My tradition, however, is broader than yours. It includes the whole of what I call "the perennial philosophy". . .

**Lewis:** Thereby stealing an epithet from the medieval Christians . . .

**Huxley:** Who don't deserve exclusive rights to it! The truly perennial philosophy goes back to the Hindu Vedas. But I'd like to hold my own trump card for a while and see how Jack fares against you, Lewis. I'll jump in later, on Jack's side, I'm pretty sure.

**Lewis:** I'm doubly pleased: that you both will *debate* with me and that you *both* will debate with me.

**The plan  
of debate**

**Kennedy:** Aren't you cowed by the odds? Two against one.

**Lewis:** The odds always favor the truth.

**Huxley:** Beware this man, Jack. No one has ever cowed him in debate. He's a Chesterton, a Shaw.

**Lewis:** Thank you, but the comparison is inaccurate on two counts.

**Huxley:** There he goes again!

**Lewis:** First, Shaw and Chesterton were giants; second, they were *wits*. I'm neither.

**Kennedy:** What are you, then?

**Lewis:** Just a plain Christian trying to think clearly.

**Huxley:** See, Jack? He's a Socrates. Mock humility!

**Lewis:** Not mock.

**Huxley:** So you're really humble, eh? And proud of it, no doubt?

**Kennedy:** Could you Britishers stop the badinage and start the debate? I'm anxious to hear Lewis's defense of authority.

**Huxley:** Go ahead, Lewis. I promise to be the silent audience for a while.

**The  
Christian  
authority:  
Christ**

**Lewis:** Please jump in whenever you like. Well, now, I'd rather not defend authority in general, only the authority on which I believe in heaven and hell, which was the question we began with. That authority is the authority of Jesus Christ. It's not *authority* but *Christ* that is the center of my faith, and if we ever get out of this place and into heaven, he will be our way out and in. So the issue of Christ has the primacy, both theoretically and practically.

**Kennedy:** I believe in Christ too, but I'm not comfortable with the concept of authority in relation to him. Didn't he say his only authority was love?

**Lewis:** Where is he recorded as having said that?

**Kennedy:** Well . . . something like that, anyway. The point is, I'm a Christian too, but a different sort than you, and I think a more mature sort—one who doesn't need as much reliance on authority as you do. Perhaps if you had ever been a president you would have come to be suspicious of authority too.

**Lewis:** Weren't you suspicious of authority *before* you came to acquire it?

**Kennedy:** Well . . . yes.

**Lewis:** Why are you suspicious of authority?

**Kennedy:** Because it sounds like a cop-out, a handing over your mind to someone else, a blind leap in the dark, a security blanket, a return to the womb. It's the easy way out to let someone else tell you what to think.

**Lewis:** Do you really think that's the motive for my acceptance of the authority of Christ?

**Kennedy:** I don't claim to judge you and your motives personally, Lewis, but those seem to me in general the motives for authoritarianism, yes.

**Lewis:** Let's let that pass for a moment, rather than delving into psychoanalysis. Let's just suppose that those *were* my motives (which I do not grant); do you conclude from this that my old-fashioned beliefs are not true?

**Kennedy:** If you only believe them for those reasons, yes.

**Lewis:** Isn't that the genetic fallacy?

**Huxley:** That means determining the truth or falsity of an idea by its origin, its genesis.

**Kennedy:** I knew that. You know, I went to Harvard. Not everything west of Oxford is Yahoo territory.

## Suspicion of authority

**Huxley:** Sorry. Just trying to help.

**Lewis:** Well? *Haven't* you committed the genetic fallacy?

**Kennedy:** Frankly, I'm not sure it's a fallacy. If I believed something without good reason, isn't that sufficient grounds for your discounting my belief?

**Lewis:** But that's not *disproving* it. An idea is false only because it fails to correspond to reality, and true only because it does correspond to reality, not because of its psychological origin. I might arrive at a true idea by nonrational means.

**Kennedy:** So you admit authority is irrational.

**Lewis:** No, I don't. I may have good reason for trusting my authority.

**Kennedy:** I also dislike your simple definition of the truth of an idea. I don't think you can define truth in any simple way, like "correspondence to reality." All sorts of problems lie sleeping in those polysyllabic abstractions.

**Lewis:** Shall I put it into even simpler, concrete words of one syllable?

**Kennedy:** What?

**Lewis:** Truth.

**Kennedy:** You mean you will define truth in words of one syllable?

**What is  
truth?  
A simple  
answer**

**Lewis:** Exactly. It's not my invention by any means. It goes back to Aristotle, and it's not at all difficult.

**Kennedy:** All right, let's hear this nondifficult definition of truth in words of one syllable.

**Lewis:** Here it is. If one says of what is that it is, or of what is not that it is not, he speaks the truth; but if one says of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, he does not speak the truth.

**Kennedy:** That's amazing!

**Lewis:** But true.

**Kennedy:** Why, yes it is. A masterpiece of simplicity.

**Lewis:** I'm glad to see you recognize genius. *And* truth.

**Kennedy:** But even if I know what truth is, I still don't know why the genetic fallacy is a fallacy.

**Lewis:** Because a true idea can still have a nonrational cause.

**Kennedy:** Give me an example.

**Lewis:** Gladly. Most people in the Middle Ages accepted the two ideas that the earth was round and that the universe was enormously large simply because of the authority of Ptolemy, just as they accepted the idea that the sun revolved around the earth rather than the earth around the sun because of Ptolemy, not because they proved it for themselves. Yet the first two ideas were true, even though the third was false.

**Kennedy:** Wait a minute. Isn't that a false example? Didn't everyone think the earth was flat in the Middle Ages? And that the universe was tiny and cozy? Wasn't it modern science that opened up the universe and made it so difficult to believe in a providential divine plan for this little out-of-the-way planet?

**Lewis:** Sorry, Jack, but you're simply misinformed about that. Most of the modern world is, you know. Nearly every school-boy is taught what you've been taught, and it's simply not true.

**Kennedy:** Can you prove that?

**Lewis:** Yes. Read Ptolemy's *Almagest*, book I, section 5. It's the authoritative astronomy text that everyone accepted in the Middle Ages.

**Kennedy:** That's quite a shock, and I went to Harvard. At any rate, the point of this example of yours is . . . ?