

# Reflections

SEPTEMBER 2020

## Dying to the World

**I**n October 1949, C.S. Lewis wrote a letter to Dr. Warfield M. Firor, an American professor of surgery who regularly sent him care packages of canned hams. Lewis confided that he had been pondering the subject of “Old Age.” In December, Lewis wrote a follow-up letter. An excerpt follows.

...I think that *Resurrection* (what ever it exactly means) is so much profounder an idea than mere immortality. I am sure we don't just 'go on'. We really die and are really built up again.

Now this — though I didn't foresee the fact till this minute — links up with what you were saying about the Peace of God... Our idea of peace expresses only the negative results of it: the exclusion of care, haste, fear *et cetera* but not the positive thing that excludes them... But (here comes the connection with what I was saying, and also the rub) does it not come exactly in proportion as we have, in some sense, *died*.

It is not the things, nor even the pleasure in them, but the fact that in such pleasures my heart, or so much of my heart, lies.



I am concerned about that at present, chiefly as a result of reading William Law. It's all there in the New Testament, though. 'Dying to the world' — 'the world is crucified to me and I to the world'. And I find I haven't begun: at least not if it means (and can it mean less) than a steady and progressive disentangling of all one's motives from the merely natural or this-worldly objects: like training a creeper to grow up one wall instead of another. I don't mean disentangling from things wrong in themselves, but, say, from the very pleasant evening which we hope to have over one of your hams to-morrow night, or from gratification at my literary success. It is not the things, nor even the pleasure in them, but the fact that in such pleasures my heart, or so much of my heart, lies. Or to put it in a fantastic form — if a voice said to me (and one I couldn't disbelieve) 'you shall never see the face of God, never help to save a neighbour's soul, never be free from sin, but you shall live in perfect health till the age of 100, very rich, and die the most famous man in the world, and pass into a twilight

consciousness of a vaguely pleasant sort forever' — how much would it worry me? How much compared with another war? Or even with an announcement that I should have to have all my teeth out? You see? And what right have I to expect the Peace of God while I thus put my whole heart, at least all my strongest wishes, in the world which he has warned me against?

Well, thank God (for there is still part of me, a tiny little infantine voice somewhere amidst all the strong, confident *natural* voices, which can just thank Him, or perhaps only thank Him for being able to wish to thank Him) we shall not be left to the world. All His terrible resources (but it is we who force him to use them) will be brought against us to detach us from it — insecurity, war, poverty, pain, unpopularity, loneliness. We must be taught that this tent is not home...<sup>1</sup>

Do you live your life in a way that reflects the understanding that “this tent is not home”?



*“But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”*

GALATIANS 6:14 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> *Yours, Jack: Spiritual Direction from C.S. Lewis*, edited by Paul F. Ford (HarperOne, 2008), pp. 148-149.

