Prologue

Who is he, the King of Glory?
The Lord Almighty –
He is the King of Glory.
Psalm 24:10.

The Inklings' Ideals of Kingship

I hope to explore the writings of the three central Inklings, the Oxford writers, Charles Williams (1886-1945), C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) and J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973), to discover and compare their concepts and ideals of 'Kingship', divine, human and mythological. This will involve investigating their beliefs as Christian writers in God as Creator and heavenly King, the nature of His very 'Being' and whether He is believed to be unique, rather than one among many. The relation between the earthly and the heavenly King will be considered, as will the extent to which the writers contend that earthly kings are God's vicegerents, act with His authority, and are duty-bound to establish and sustain just and joyous societies.

All three Inklings were Christians, Williams and Lewis as sacramental high Anglicans and Tolkien as a Roman Catholic. They all believed both in God and in His Creation. They saw God not only as Creator, but also as sustaining and ruling His creation as Creator-King. Their ideal of monarchy stemmed from this vision of God *as* King. This conceptual understanding has vital connections with their beliefs concerning love, justice and power, on earth as in heaven. An understanding of their individual but overlapping views of the essential meaning of kingship enhances an appreciation of their mental pictures of the world. To further our understanding of the 'world' that Williams, Lewis and Tolkien would have seen around them, the actual development of the historical notions of kingship will be referred to in order to contextualise the authors' writings.

I would suggest that all three writers ratify Christian ideals of kingship, running counter to the prevalent beliefs of their day (at least in intellectual circles) albeit we shall find different emphases when comparing and contrasting their distinctive views. These very emphases were themselves

not *in toto* original, but show their authors' sympathies with extant concepts of sacral kingship. What, then, *are* these extant concepts and from whence do they originate? Was, for instance, the king's office always regarded as in some way sacred? Let us look at the Inklings' own emphases in *their* concepts of sacral kingship.

Tolkien, both in his writing of 'Story' and the 'Primary' (or 'real' world), saw a divine Creator with a benign purpose that derives from His essential nature. Tolkien presents us with a paradigm – an iconic picture – of the Judaeo-Christian divine King, whose primary quality is love of 'the Other', and the selfless love (*agape*) for others that is the prime mover in His act of Creation itself.[1] The same quality is 'reflected' in the 'Secondary World' of Middle-earth, as His creatures are made in His image. The kings are God's vicegerents, whose essential role is to create and defend their societies, and who should be able to live in what I call 'Collegiate Joy'. By this, I mean that this 'Joy' is contingent upon reciprocity of love to each other.

Lewis showed profound belief in God whom he saw as Heavenly King. Lewis was convinced of the truth concerning God's Son, whom he believed to be both redeemer and King. To Lewis, God was primarily immanent, that is to say, 'close to us', though with his deep sense of awe, of wonder, he also saw a transcendent God, that is to say, a God far above us, in whom he glimpsed a 'Glory' that afforded him what he called 'stabs of joy'. Due to his Ulster Protestant background, Lewis may have been more keenly royalist than he might otherwise have been, his loyalty to the United Kingdom being given to the monarch rather than the Westminster government.

Williams goes daringly further theologically than most previous writers. In *The Image of the City* (edn. 1958), he says he is willing to accept Creation as good in itself. He also accepts making creatures to share God's joy as "credible", and even allows the increasing of that joy by giving them the power of free will, leaving them free to choose whether or not to look for joy in Him. He endorses God's 'maintaining and sustaining' the universe in what he calls a state of "infinite distress", only because God is "fundamentally responsible" for the "finite choice" that resulted in it, and was willing to share it.[2] In his sonnets in *The Silver Stair* (1917), Williams creates a picture of the crucified king, crowned with a "jewelled circlet or with thorn".[3] Renunciation is allied with Christ's sacrifice of His Incarnation. The thorn is here equated with the King of Love, the jewelled crown suggesting the King of Glory.

In the context of the Inklings' belief in God as divine King, the use of the image of *King* for God will be recurrent in this study. The image occasions a complex problem that can conveniently be divided into two classes, *viz*. 'contextual' and 'inherent'.[4] Some writers, contemporary with the Inklings, have objected to their beliefs, questioning their truth. For example, at the first meeting of the Socratic Club in Oxford, Dr R.E. Havard said he had "deserted Christianity in the face of the advance of science". Dr Stephenson said, "Man's ideas of religion . . . were a direct gratification of his aspirations . . . He created a God".[5]

There is also the problem inherent in the very use of the ancient image of *King* for God. Its very truth is challenged, asking if such use is actually valid. One must show, as Lewis says, *that* a belief is wrong before showing *why*.[6] The validity of using this image needs to be either upheld or opposed by reason. Is what is implied by the use of the image of *King* for God actually applicable? The reasons for the Inklings' beliefs, and the associated problem, provoke the underlying question, How does one *understand* their beliefs when one tries to imagine what it would be like if they were not true? To approach their shared and their individual tenets like this allows us to see more clearly what they actually were, why they held them and how they defended them.

Such a method is based on a supposition, one that is not only a hypothesis put forward to cast the Inklings' beliefs into stronger relief, but is pertinent in view of the times in which the authors lived, and the ideologies then in vogue, political, theological and philosophical. To understand better the Inklings' notions of the Ideal of Kingship, we need to explore them in the light of this problem, *inter alia*. To do this, we have first to discover what actually caused the problem raised by using the royal image for The contextual reasons were on several fronts: the theological element was itself multi-faceted. For example, Lewis referred to the "barricades" built "across the high road" of the "wayfaring Christian", by the modernistic writings of "the 'de-mythologisers'", in particular the theologians Rudolf Bultmann and Dr John Robinson, a former Bishop of Woolwich.[7] Bultmann's writing de-mythologized the New Testament to remove the need to believe what Lewis called "repellent" doctrines. For example, Lewis firmly believed in miracles, and, difficult as this may be to understand, disproved of trying to give an historical event like the Resurrection, a seemingly more rational explanation, an explanation that derives belief in the miraculous. Such an explanation obviated the need for Bultman to believe in what Lewis thought Bultman saw as a "repellent" doctrine.

It was, as Lewis's secretary Hooper says, by "thinking them through" to the absolute end "that he [Lewis] arrived at his orthodox position".[8] Robinson had written, "In place of a God who is literally or physically 'up there' we have accepted, as part of our mental furniture, a God who is spiritually or metaphysically 'out there'". The bishop argued against belief in a transcendent God. "If God is 'above it all' he cannot really be involved". He also argued against the anthropomorphic image of "an old man in the sky", preferring Tillich's "ground of all being",[9] even if he (Robinson) *was* wary of ideas of either height or depth for God. In *Letters to Malcolm*, Lewis spoke of "the ground of the matter that surrounds me".

Of anthropomorphism, Lewis said, "Never . . . let us think that while anthropomorphic images are a concession to our weakness, the abstractions are the literal truth. Both are equally concessions", which he united dialectically in his idea of God.[10] He took, perhaps, a 'This also is Thou: Neither is this Thou' approach. The lion-King in Lewis's *Narnia* stories presents both a physical and an 'abstract' image as the Son of the Emperor-over-sea – allegorically God.

Controversially, Lewis contended in the revised version of *Miracles* (1960), that Naturalism gives us a "democratic" picture of reality and Supernaturalism a "monarchical" picture.

> In a real monarchy, the king has sovereignty and the people have not . . . in a democracy, all citizens are equal . . . for the Naturalist one thing or event is as good as another . . . The Supernaturalist, on the other hand, believes that the one original or self-existing thing is on a different level from, and more important than, all other things.

Lewis defined Naturalism as "the doctrine that only Nature – the whole interlocked system – exists". What the Naturalist believes "is that the ultimate Fact, the thing you can't go behind, is a vast process in space and time which is *going on of its own accord*".[11] In Lewis's *original* version of *Miracles* in 1947, he maintained that Supernaturalism may be suspected of rising "from reading into the universe the structure of monarchical societies". By contrast, "it may with equal reason be suspected that Naturalism has arisen from reading into it the structures of modern democracies". In chapter three, 'The Self-Contradiction of the Naturalist', he refutes the claims of Naturalism to explain the "'the whole show'" when he speaks of Naturalism's "irrational causes".[12] In the *later* version of *Miracles*, where he now entitles chapter three 'The Cardinal Difficulty of Naturalism', Lewis says, "Every event in Nature must be connected with previous events in the Cause and Effect relation. But our acts of thinking are events. Therefore the true answer to 'Why do you think this? ' must begin with the Cause-Effect *because*".[13]

At the Socratic Club in Oxford in 1948, the philosophy don, Elizabeth Anscombe, asserted that Lewis's contention that Naturalism was "self-refuting" was mistaken. Anscombe argued against the contention that "naturalism" is "self-refuting because it is inconsistent with a belief in the validity of reason", asking, "What sorts of thing would one normally call "irrational causes" for human thoughts?" Even Marxists and the Freudians claim to expose causes for various traditional beliefs. A Roman Catholic, she felt it unnecessary to go into his claim that one must either believe it (Naturalism) or be a Supernaturalist", that is, "believe in God".[14] It is notable that Lewis felt constrained to re-write chapter three of *Miracles* in view of the debate.

Linked with Supernaturalism and its association with Lewis's monarchic picture of reality is the question of Theism and valid reasons for belief in God. Lewis suggests that to the Naturalist everything "would still be 'the whole show' which was the basic Fact, and such a God would merely be one of the things . . . which the basic Fact contained".[15] Thus, to Lewis, it erroneously makes God appear to be 'one among many other things'. The choice tends to imply that God could not be both transcendent *and* immanent. Robinson had asserted that belief in a transcendent God suggested that He could not 'really be involved'.

With Theism and its attendant problems, if the image of *King* for God

is to be even feasible, the idea of God *qua* God first needs to be feasible also. At the Socratic Club, Professor H.H. Price spoke of "the present phase of Western Civilisation". Price was debating the question: "Is Theism important?" Amongst other things, he said that he "would almost venture to suggest that no one can be a genuine Theist unless he has some sympathy with Polytheism, and some sympathy with still more primitive attitudes, such as Animism and Polydaemonism".[16] He said one needs to "pass through" such phases to "reach something better". Lewis "welcomed most cordially his sympathy with the Polytheists".

> We must admit that Faith, as we know it, does not flow from philosophical argument alone; nor from experience of the Numinous alone; but from historical events which at once fulfil and transcend the moral category, which link themselves with the numinous elements in Paganism, and which (as it seems to us) demand as their pre-supposition of a Being who is more, but not less, than the God whom many reputable philosophers think they can establish.[17]

Lewis said this (above), which indicates that, in this respect, he held similar beliefs to Williams. Williams affirmed his belief in the Incarnation, in an immanent God who, by definition, "permanently pervades the universe",[18] demonstrating in *The Image of the City* belief, unlike Robinson, in God's willing 'involvement'. Williams quotes Joseph Conrad: "Charity is divine and universal Love, the divine virtue, the sole manifestation of the Almighty which may in some manner justify the act of creation".[19]

Williams believes in God's justice. He states, "This then is the creation that 'needs' . . . justifying. The Cross justifies it to this extent . . . just as He submitted us to His inexorable will . . . He consented to be Himself subject to it . . . He deigned to endure the justice He decreed". [20] The 'decreed' justice is *partially* parallel with that of Lewis's Emperor-over-sea in the *Narnia* chronicles, where the lion-King frees Narnia through His self-sacrifice. The atonement through Substitution had, indeed, been 'decreed', but *not* actually caused, by the Emperor.

The lion-King, Aslan, is relevant only as taking part in an allegory of one version of the Atonement, in the form that Williams paradoxically, and perhaps surprisingly, seems to avoid, a simple, unconditional and straight Substitution. In fact, Substitution with certain provisos is not only a central thread of Christianity, but also one of Williams's central tenets. Neither in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) nor in *The Magician's Nephew* (1955) does Lewis acknowledge Williams's difficulty that God actually accepts responsibility for out pain and injustice because He upholds the universe. In *The Image of the City*, Williams says the Cross "does enable us to use the word 'justice' without shame, which otherwise we could not. God therefore becomes tolerable as well as credible."[21]

Williams's view of Christ to whom he refers in 'The Redeemed City' in *The Image of the City* as "Christ the King"[22] is also found in *The Silver Stair*

where, *as* Love, Christ the King of Love makes an act of Substitution for us. In 'A Dialogue on Hierarchy' in *The Image of the City*, Williams talks about the relevance to Society of "equality" and "degree". He speaks of almost a 'contention' between the "Hierarchy" and the "Republic", feeling that "both imaginations are necessary". His hierarchy is 'movable' from person to person, a movement he calls "Equality", his angelic and "heavenly occasions of movement". Society must also see these changes.

There are "stable hierarchies", but "in the organization of society . . . they are rather of honourable function than of individual merit. . . . The ancient monarchy of the English is one such. The anointed figure of the King does not 'deserve' to be royal . . . The hierarchies of function remain fixed". Williams sees in the King and his people a co-inherence (i.e., living in, and for, each other): "Each exists and is understood in the other, and their fruit in them".[23] 'Co-inherence' is an important idea in Williams's thought. In 'The Image of the City in English Verse' in *The Image of the City*, Williams upholds the unique position of 'the King', saying of hierarchy and the City, and alluding to Agincourt in *Henry V*, "'We few, we *happy* few, we band of brothers'. Falstaff has not, and could not have, *brothers*: the King is universal".[24]

Of Justice, Williams quotes *Measure for Measure*: "'If we lose this justice', Angelo says, 'the form of the State will break down'". Of the one thing necessary, living together in the 'City', in *Coriolanus* (1605-8), Williams tells us:

> The nobles cannot bear to live in poverty; Coriolanus will not allow of freedom, and the tribunes will not allow of obedience. It is not easily possible to find words for these opposed outside the play; they are made up of details, they are all of them right and yet all of them wrong in their rightness . . . The only way out would be for someone to accept the apparently impossible.[25]

Williams is interested in this kind of situation, implying that such 'Impossibility' is normal in human experience. He coined the term "the Impossibility" for what he saw as apparently contradictory, even "a contradiction in terms".[26]

A second facet of the contextual reasons for a problem in using the image of *King* for God is seen in the somewhat atheistic *Zeitgeist* of the mid-twentieth century. The forties were inclined to be secularist and the following decades were increasingly so, apart from the fifties. The 'death of God' and the Nihilism of Nietzsche, the Existentialism of Sartre and the atheistic Communism of Karl Marx, who said, "Religion . . . is the opium of the people",[27] were influential. There were also the atheistic psychoanalyst's claims of Freud. Humanist ethics is known by the way it makes the purpose of moral action the welfare of humanity rather than doing the will of God. The drift of the twentieth century was, therefore, 'anti-monarchical', with ideas like 'gods are deified rulers' being rife.

However, a classic twentieth century defence of monarchy is to be found

in Harold Nicolson's *King George V: His Life and Reign* (1952). Nicolson said, "The influence which any British King or Queen is able to exercise is derived, not merely from the personal qualities of an individual Sovereign, but also from the respect and affection with which the Monarchy, as an institution, is generally regarded".[28] Nicolson was, in fact, an Atheist, who did not validate monarchy *via* the idea of a divine King. Defending it for different reasons, Walter Bagehot says in *The English Constitution* (1867), that "the best reason why monarchy is a strong government is, that it is an intelligible government". He said the King "was the Lord's Anointed", and the Monarchy "was a divine institution", and "the place of a constitutional king has greater temptations than almost any other", also that "A Republic has insinuated itself beneath the folds of a Monarchy". He said of royalty, "Its mystery is its life. We must not let daylight in upon magic".[29] Charles Williams was later in *James I* (1934) to describe the King as "Mystery",[30] though here Williams was *not* referring to a 'constitutional monarch'.

Some aspects of the problem of using the image of *King* for God are not purely from the philosophical ideas 'in vogue', but are actually inherent in the very notion of such imagery. The problem stems from questioning the reasonableness of using *any* image at all for God, as it would be bound to be inadequate, limiting the unlimited, indeed irrationally anthropomorphic. Portraying God as King, some would say, makes Him simply not credible. Even the idea of a '*good* king' is to some minds impossible. They do not (so they say) exist, thus seeming to invalidate the image. The greater the power of the king, (even in Tolkien's mythology) the greater is the risk of corruption. Some would argue that the foundation for using a royal image is based on impossibility.

However, Williams, Lewis and Tolkien took the converse view, saying what, as vicegerents, the earthly king *ought* to be in the light of the divine King's own attributes. Tolkien actually appears to have believed in the rightness of an absolute monarch in council. In a draft letter of c.1963, he described his ideal king as "*monarch*, with the power of unquestioned decision in debate",[31] advocating subservience, reminiscent of King Richard II's idea of "the subject's obligation of obedience to the king".[32]

Williams and Lewis, on the other hand, tend to stress the *symbolic* 'functions' of a monarch. The problem of the royal image relates to the need to underpin earthly monarchy with devolution from a supernatural being, king or otherwise. The Atheists would say that the ideal monarchy *could* not, therefore, be founded on the Creator-king since one does not exist. The Inklings suggested mythologically their image of *King* for God.

In the essay 'Myth Became Fact' (1944), Lewis suggested that "in the enjoyment of a great myth we come nearest to experiencing as a concrete what can otherwise be understood only as an abstraction".[33] Alluding to the myth of Eurydice's vanishing when Orpheus looked back at her too soon, Lewis is "trying to understand something very abstract indeed – the fading,

vanishing of tasted reality as we try to grasp it with the discursive reason". The Inklings would look for 'reality' rather than 'truth', as Lewis says:"Truth is always *about* something, but reality is that *about which* truth is". Lewis maintains that:

> the heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact. The old myth of the Dying God, *without ceasing to be a myth*, comes down from the heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history . . . By becoming fact it does not cease to be myth: that is the miracle.[34]

I would suggest that the Inklings see kingship applied to God in a mythical way of imagining Him. Tolkien said, regarding imagination, that "The mental power of image-making is one thing, or aspect; and it should be called Imagination".[35] It is difficult, however, to imagine God, not as an abstract 'truth' – even though He may well be that too – but as an existential reality.

To study the connection between Tolkien's idea of 'Imagination' and his creation myth helps our understanding of his underlying beliefs about God and divine Kingship. There were, indeed, gradual changes and philosophical developments in his view of 'Imagination'. However, was Tolkien actually deliberately and interminably ambiguous about different meanings of the idea of 'invention' or 'discovery' of what he calls 'Fantasy', or were there really gradual and definite 'changes' in his beliefs, especially regarding creation? Tom Shippey suggests that Tolkien's "conviction is that fantasy is not entirely made up", and that because he did not actually *say* this "in so many words", he "continually equivocated with words like 'invention' and 'no idle fancy'"[36]

Tolkien's definition of 'fantasy' was born "with a long haggle over the inadequacies of the *O.E.D.* [on which he once worked] and S.T. Coleridge", both as a "sub-creative Art" in itself, and also "a quality of strangeness and wonder in the Expression, derived from the image", thus implying that the 'Image' was there before anyone derived any expression from it at all. Tolkien "insists" that Elves "form an image, a true image, of the 'Elvish' craft of fantasy itself.[37] The 'gradual change' in Tolkien's outlook makes us question Shippey's assertion that Tolkien "*continually* equivocated" over the idea of 'invention'.[38] What, we ask, *had* Tolkien said 'in so many words' apropos of fantasy not being 'entirely made up'?

In a letter of "probably" 1951 to Milton Waldman, Tolkien said, "I had the sense of recording what was already 'there', somewhere: not of 'inventing'."[39] This was a clear retrospective account of his actual *experience*, including a decisive affirmation of his original philosophical attitude to the divinely-created world. The "Primary World" was, he said, "entirely the act of God".[40] Nevertheless, what do the Inklings say of God's existential reality?

As Lewis said, "Indeed, it is a speculative question as long as it is a question at all. But once it has been answered in the affirmative, you get quite a new situation. To believe that God – at least *this* God – exists is to believe that you now stand in the presence of God as a Person".[41]

In *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*, Lewis discusses the experience of placing himself "in the presence of God". He remembers two 'representations', 'God' and 'me', which Lewis said he had created. He must, he says, "break the idol". He can, after this, "'place [himself] in the presence of God'". The "momentary confrontation . . . is certainly occurring". He stresses that "there is no question of a God 'up there' or 'out there'; rather, the present operation of God 'in here', as the ground of my being, and God 'in there' as the matter that surrounds me".[42]

This image is recurrent, we recall Tillich's – 'the ground of my being'. Lewis continues. "Thus and not otherwise, the creation of matter and the creation of mind meet one another and the circuit is closed. He is earnest when he adds, "May it be the real I who speak. May it be the real Thou that I speak to". God, he says, "must constantly work as the iconoclast. Every idea of Him we form, He must in mercy shatter",[43] which, of course, eventually must include the image of King.

Criticism has been levelled at the Inklings for a patriarchal view of monarchy. Tolkien and Lewis were for the greater part of the time "dogmatic patriarchalists", unless Lewis altered his usual view in *Till We Have Faces*, where he creates a convincing picture of a 'good' queen, in spite of her earlier exploitation of her servants. She is depicted in sharp contrast to her tyrannical and brutal father.[44] Lewis's heroine here stands out in what is otherwise a male-orientated word.

I hope to discover the meaning of Tolkien's Ideal of Kingship through exploring his mythological 'Story' found in the various versions of his Creation Myth, *inter alia*, and in the *History of Middle-Earth*, edited by Christopher Tolkien, who has graciously afforded me some valuable insights into his father's work. The Creator-King's creative thought and action, and the significance of the part given to the Angels – the Valar – in Creation will be sought. Tolkien's profound ideas were communicated through what he termed 'Story' rather than through discursive philosophical discussion, except, of course, in his letters. It was, indeed, in 'Story' that Tolkien told us what he had, as he put it, 'discovered' of the Creation of his Secondary World by a mythological divine Creator. We shall look also at the ultimate purposes of the Creator-King; and Tolkien's concept of an 'Ideal King', in whom he depicts a 'type' of Christ, who will establish, sustain and maintain justice, and create a joyous society. I hope to show how the Inklings believe that Creative writers play a part in revealing truth; and how divine kingship is 'reflected' in creating Collegiate Joy in Middle-earth.