

Christianity in Narnia

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Readers around the world, young and old, have enjoyed C S Lewis' Narnia Chronicles since the first publication of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* in 1950. Combining timeless elements of fairy tale, medievalism and Christian allegory, Lewis created a fantasy world, Narnia, which rivals J R R Tolkien's Middle Earth and Ursula K Le Guin's Earthsea.¹ But Lewis's series is more than a children's fairy tale; its seven books contain a deeper meaning, introducing children to Christian morality and belief, and presenting numerous characters representing Christian believers of different types, at different stages of their journey towards a relationship with God. There can be no mistaking the theological undertone of the series, written by an artist of immense talent and imagination, who also was 'a Christian, dedicated to the purpose of making his faith both seen and heard'.² The religious symbolism and motifs threaded through *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* series is extensive. The vast amount of scholarly and literary research completed on the series to date makes it clear that the religious interpretation of the Chronicles is only limited by the amount of time and effort one has to spend.

Lewis uses the fantasy genre to convey his messages because the different beings within the fantasy realm – 'giants and dwarfs and talking beasts' – offer an 'admirable hieroglyphic which conveys psychology, types of character, more briefly than novelistic presentation'.³ Like many fantasy writers, Lewis sets Narnia in a

¹ Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* take place in the world of Middle Earth; Earthsea is the setting for Le Guin's Earthsea quintet: *A Wizard of Earthsea*, *The Tombs of Atuan*, *The Farthest Shore*, *Tehanu: the Last Book of Earthsea* and *The Other Wind*.

² E K Gibson, *C S Lewis Spinner of Tales; A Guide to his Fiction* (Washington, 1980) 132.

³ C S Lewis, *Of Other Worlds; Essays and Stories by C S Lewis* (New York, 1967) 27.

On a Panegyric Note

medieval⁴ world, conveying the idea of a society with stronger moral standards and codes of chivalry than those of today. By choosing to write in the fantasy style, Lewis also allows himself a much wider choice of characters, events and settings in which to present his 'Christian' fairy tales. Where but in the realms of fantasy can magic bring a lion back to life or transform a common carthorse into a magical Pegasus?

The series can be seen as an embellished and symbolic reiteration of classic biblical stories. The seven books attempt to recreate everything from major events in the Bible – Genesis and Revelation, the creation and end of the world – to popular medieval saint's *vitae*, like the *Voyage of St Brendan*. In *The Magician's Nephew*, the reader is first introduced to the world of Narnia, along with Polly and Digory, the first children from our world to enter it. As Genesis tells of the creation of the world, so *The Magician's Nephew* explains how Narnia came to exist and introduces the reader to Aslan, the creator and God figure, and Jadis,⁵ the Satan figure, through whose presence at creation evil enters the world. *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* introduces the four Pevensie children – Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy – and sets up a Narnian version of the crucifixion and resurrection, in which Aslan offers his life to save another's, ending the White Witch's harsh winter reign over Narnia. The issue of saving and converting the heathen is dealt with in *The Horse and his Boy*. The reader is introduced to Shasta, a young orphaned boy of pure heart, whose decision to warn King Lune of Archenland about an approaching threat from Calormene, culminates in what Donald E Glover describes as a 'Cinderella plot'.⁶ Aslan leads Shasta and his companions to the safety of Narnia, the 'Promised Land', during the course of which Shasta must conquer his fear of the unknown, blindly putting his trust in an unknown voice (who is of course Aslan).⁷ He is rewarded for his courage when, at the conclusion of the book, he discovers that he is really a lost royal Prince of Archenland.

⁴ Lewis had an academic background in medieval studies, becoming Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at the University of Cambridge in 1954.

⁵ Also known in the Narnia series as the White Witch.

⁶ D E Gover, *C S Lewis; The Art of Enchantment* (Ohio, 1981) 159

⁷ C S Lewis, *The Horse and His Boy* (London, 1980) Chapters 11–12.

Dominique Wilson

Prince Caspian relates a story about the restoration of the true faith to Narnia after it has been repressed and degraded by the reign of a tyrannical king. The four Pevensie children are pulled back to Narnia to help restore Narnia to its true citizens, the dryads, dwarves and talking beasts, by placing a human of noble character who follows the true faith on the throne.⁸ *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* continues where *Prince Caspian* leaves off. Echoing elements of the *Voyage of St Brendan*, it explores the idea of the spiritual life, the journeys and trials of a life's journey, as Lucy, Edmund and their cousin Eustace unexpectedly join King Caspian in his search across the seas for seven lost lords. If *The Horse and His Boy* contains elements of a 'Cinderella' plot, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* contains a 'Sleeping Beauty' motif,⁹ in the idea that one must live morally and honourably, in order to reap the benefits of the spiritual life. This theme is personified in the character of Reepicheep, who never loses sight of his ultimate goal to find Aslan's country in the east and who is the only member of the ship's crew to enter this country before the last battle and final judgment.¹⁰

Where the sky and water meet
Where the waves grow sweet
Doubt not, Reepicheep
To find all you seek
There is the utter East¹¹

In *The Silver Chair*, Eustace returns to Narnia in the company of a fellow school companion Jill Pole. Together they are sent by Aslan on a quest to find and rescue King Caspian's son Prince Rilian, who

⁸ The story of Prince Caspian and his tyrannical uncle King Miraz is similar to that of David and King Saul found in 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel of the Christian Bible. When King Saul abandons Yahweh (1 Samuel 15), the people of Israel suffer under his rule until he is overthrown and replaced by David, under whose rule Israel prospers.

⁹ This 'Sleeping Beauty' motif is seen in the discovery of three of the Seven Lords, sleeping around a table at the Beginning of the End of the World. The crew of the *Dawn Treader* are instructed to perform several tasks in order to wake the lords from their slumber. C S Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (London, 1990) Chapters 13–14.

¹⁰ Similarly Enoch (Genesis 5:21 – 24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:1 – 18) are taken up to the Kingdom of God before they actually experience death on earth.

¹¹ Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 21.

On a Panegyric Note

has been missing for ten years. The theme of this book is similar to that of *Prince Caspian*, as Eustace and Jill attempt to complete their quest, following the four signs given to Jill by Aslan,¹² and continuing the war against the powers of darkness. *The Silver Chair* raises questions about the continuing practice of Christian faith, commenting on how easy it is to become wrapped up in life's harsh trials and simple pleasures. Lewis' underlying theme in this novel is that one must never forget to follow the guidelines that one is given, whether they concern a great quest or simple Christian practices, such as daily prayers and churchgoing.¹³

While the first of the Narnia Chronicles, *The Magician's Nephew*, reflects the events of Genesis, so too the events in *The Last Battle* emulate those of Revelation, the last book of the Christian Bible. These events include the coming of the Antichrist, an ape¹⁴ aptly named Shift, whose actions lead to the enslavement and wanton killing of the true citizens of Narnia. The talking beasts are enslaved, while the tree people, the Dryads, are killed for timber. The Narnians eventually lead a revolt against Shift and his companions, led by King Tirian 'the last of the Kings of Narnia'.¹⁵ The revolt sadly fails, even with the aid of Jill and Eustace, who are summoned back to Narnia to help in its final hour of need, and many true followers of Aslan are killed. But all is not lost: King Tirian, Jill and Eustace are pushed through a stable door during the final battle, only to discover another, 'more real and more beautiful'¹⁶ Narnia within the stable.¹⁷ The reference to a new Narnia echoes John's description of a 'New

¹² C S Lewis, *The Silver Chair* (London, 1985) 28-29.

¹³ P J Schakel, *Reading with the Heart: The Way into Narnia* (Michigan, 1979) 67.

¹⁴ In Christian art and literature, the ape is usually viewed negatively. Often represented with a mirror in its hand, it symbolizes (through the physical similarity between people and apes) humankind sunk to the animal level because of vices, particularly the mortal sins of greed, lust and vanity (all characteristics of Lewis's Antichrist figure, Shift).

¹⁵ C S Lewis, *The Last Battle* (London, 1956) 18.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 80.

¹⁷ The stable is a symbol used throughout *The Last Battle*. Lewis's intentions in using the stable door as the entry to the New Narnia (heaven) come to light when Lucy comments on the fact that 'In our world too, a stable once had something inside it that was bigger than our whole world'. Lewis, *The Last Battle*, 143.

Jerusalem' in Revelation.¹⁸ As night falls on the old Narnia, its inhabitants pass by Aslan for their final judgment, some entering into the new Narnia and the others disappearing into Aslan's shadow. The human children have crossed to Narnia – all except Susan – and discover that they have died. They also discover that the worlds they knew before – both their own world and Narnia – are just shadows of the ultimate reality, heaven, which incorporates the true essence of all worlds and is ruled by the one true creator, who wears many faces.

Then Aslan turned to them and said: 'You do not yet look so happy as I meant you to be'. Lucy said, 'We're so afraid of being sent away, Aslan. And you have sent us back to our own world so often'. 'No fear of that', said Aslan. 'Have you not guessed? ... There *was* a real railway accident', Aslan said softly. 'Your father and mother and all of you are – as you used to call it in the Shadowlands – dead. The term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream is ended: this is the morning'. And as He spoke He no longer looked to them like a lion.¹⁹

The Great Lion Aslan²⁰ is Lewis' symbol of the Christian God: who better to create and control a world of talking beasts than the king of the jungle? C N Manlove describes Aslan as 'a creation of such quintessential lionhood that becomes what he is, far more than a lion'.²¹ Through the course of the Narnia Chronicles, Aslan incorporates characteristics commonly associated with the Christian God. In *The Magician's Nephew*, he is presented as the almighty, the father and creator, singing Narnia into existence, as God is said to have spoken the earth into existence in Genesis:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ... Then God said, 'let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw the light, that *it was* good; and God divided the light from the darkness ... Then God said, 'Let the earth bring forth grass ... *and* the fruit tree ...'²²

¹⁸ Revelations 21:1–4. Biblical references are to *The New King James Version*.

¹⁹ Lewis, *The Last Battle*, 183.

²⁰ Aslan is Turkish for lion, and Lewis writes that he 'he found the name in the notes to Lane's *Arabian Nights* ... And of course I meant the Lion of Judah'. C S Lewis, *Letter to Children* (London, 1985) 29.

²¹ C N Manlove, *C S Lewis: His Literary Achievement* (London, 1987) 134.

²² Genesis 1:1-11.

On a Panegyric Note

The Lion was pacing to and fro about the empty land and singing his new song. It was softer and more lilting than the song with which he has called up the stars and the sun; a gentle, rippling music. And as he walked and sang the valley grew green with grass.²³

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, he plays the role of the Son who, being sinless, is able to take the place of and die for the traitor, saving the world. As Jesus died so that the sins of mankind could be paid for and forgiven, so Aslan offers himself as a willing sacrifice so that Edmund, who plays the Judas role in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, and Narnia may be freed from the White Witch's reign. Lewis' version of the crucifixion tale is a haunting and reverential retelling, which gently familiarizes children with the moral and theological implications of the events of Christian history. Setting the events in the medieval and chivalric world of Narnia, Lewis manages to tone down the poignant misery and iniquity of the crucifixion, while still conveying a sense of its horror, as of repercussions of what might have happened had good not triumphed over evil. Lewis' descriptions of the evil creatures, 'Cruels and Hags and Incubuses, Wraiths, Horrors, Efreets, ...',²⁴ who aid the White Witch in her killing of Aslan, are dark enough to convey their terror to any reader. Lewis manages to express the deeper moral ramifications of the crucifixion to his readers in a way that may be more easily understood than the gospels accounts, and he accounts for this by saying:

the reason why the Passion of Aslan (lion, symbol of Christ) sometimes moves people more than the real story in the gospels is ... that it takes them off their guard. In reading the real story, the fatal knowledge that one *ought* to feel in a certain way often inhibits the feelings.²⁵

Lucy and Susan's utter despair at the death of the great lion, followed by their confusion at the cracking of the Stone Table²⁶ and the

²³ C S Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew* (London, 1980) 97.

²⁴ Lewis *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, 138. See 136 – 141 for the full account of the death of Aslan.

²⁵ Peter Kreeft, *C S Lewis, A Critical Essay* (Virginia, 1988) 55.

²⁶ In a letter to his readers, Lewis writes that 'the stone table *is* meant to remind one of Moses' table'. Lewis, *Letter to Children*, 93.

disappearance of Aslan's body, echo the emotions of Mary Magdalene and the other women who attend the tomb of Christ only to find it empty.²⁷ This diverts the reader from the terror of the evil creatures. Lewis manages to replace the dark horror of the first passage and yet highlight the magnitude of the event: that something good and pure could be set upon by the evil powers of the world.

I hope no one who reads this book has been quite as miserable as Susan and Lucy were that night; but if you have been – if you've been up all night and cried till you have no more tears left in you – you will know that there comes and in the end a sort of quietness. You feel as if nothing was ever going to happen again ... What did it matter? Nothing mattered now!²⁸

But Aslan, like Christ, is resurrected by the deeper magic formed in the 'stillness and darkness before Time dawned'.²⁹ In this way, 'he represents the Good' who returns to 'give life back to the witch's statues',³⁰ as Jesus gave humans the chance for eternal life in heaven.

In *The Horse and His Boy*, Aslan plays the part of the transcendent and yet immanent God, who seeks out the pure of heart and saves them, bringing them to his promised land. While in *The Voyage of The Dawn Treader* he takes on the role of the Holy Spirit, constantly there by the children's side to protect them but remaining unseen to the majority of the crew. He appears, for instance, as the albatross that leads them safely from the dark Island of Dreams. During the sea journey he is actually seen only by Lucy, in the house of the Magician Coriakin, and by Eustace, on Dragon Island. But, at the end of the novel, Aslan appears to all three of the children, Lucy, Edmund and Eustace, first as a lamb so pure and 'white on the green grass that even with their eagle's eyes they could hardly look at it', before turning into his magnificent self, 'towering above them and scattering light from his mane'.³¹ Lewis' symbolism in the *Voyage* is clearly Christian, the lamb representing Jesus, the pure and sinless sacrifice:

²⁷ Luke 24:1–7.

²⁸ Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, 144.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 148.

³⁰ Kath Filmer, *The Fiction of C S Lewis; Mask and Mirror* (London, 1993) 44.

³¹ Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 187.

On a Panegyric Note

‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’³² The lamb meets the children on a grassy plain, offering them food – ‘come and have breakfast’³³ – after their pilgrimage to the end of the world. Then he turns into the great lion Aslan, whom the children recognize at once. Here Lewis hints, rather obviously, at the religious significance of Aslan in the Narnia Chronicles as an allegorical figure for the Christian God. Aslan explains to Lucy and Edmund that they are now too old for fairy tales and must search for his identity back in their world.

‘Dearest’, said Aslan very gently, ‘you and your brother will never come back to Narnia ...’. ‘You are too old, children’, said Aslan, ‘and you must begin to come close to your own world now’. ‘It isn’t Narnia you know’, sobbed Lucy. ‘It’s *you*. We shan’t meet *you* there. And how can we live, never meeting you?’ ‘But you shall meet me, dear one’, said Aslan. ‘Are – are you there too, Sir?’ said Edmund. ‘I am’, said Aslan. ‘But there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there’.³⁴

If Aslan is Lewis’ figure for God, for all that is good and pure in the world, then Jadis, the White Witch, is his counterpart. Appearing in *The Magician’s Nephew* and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, she represents all that is evil, corrupt and life-destroying. In *The Magician’s Nephew*, she introduces herself as ‘Jadis, the last Queen, but the Queen of the World’,³⁵ the world in question being Charn, whose destruction she brought about by speaking the ‘Deplorable Word’.³⁶ The extent of her selfishness and maliciousness is evident in her lack of regard for the innocents who were killed by her use of the ‘Deplorable Word’ and her eagerness to find another world to conquer, reign and destroy.

³² John 1:29. Also Revelation 21:23: ‘The Lamb *is* its light’.

³³ John 21:12. When Jesus says to his disciples ‘Come and eat breakfast’, the breakfast in question is to be one of fish, like the breakfast offered to the children in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*.

³⁴ Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 188.

³⁵ Lewis, *The Magician’s Nephew*, 59.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 60. Satan is also spoken of as the ‘Lord of the World’, Matthew 4:8–11.

‘But the people?’ gasped Digory. ‘What people, boy?’ asked the Queen. ‘All the ordinary people’, said Polly, ‘who’d never done you any harm. And the women, and the children, and the animals’. ‘Don’t you understand?’ said the Queen (still speaking to Digory). ‘I was the Queen. They were all *my* people. What else were they there for but to do my will? ... Now let us be going. It is cold here at the end of all ages’. ‘Going where?’ asked both the children. ‘Where?’ repeated Jadis in surprise. ‘To your world, of course’. ... ‘I’m sure you wouldn’t like our world at all’, said Digory. ‘It’s not her sort of place is it Polly? Its very dull; not worth seeing, really’. ‘It will be worth seeing when I rule it’, answered the Queen ... ‘Do you not think the I, with my beauty and my Magic, will but have your whole world at my feet before a year has passed?’³⁷

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the reader is told that Jadis is the daughter of the evil Lilith,³⁸ Adam’s first wife and, as such, a ‘vampire’ who draws life from things to herself.³⁹ In Aslan’s absence, she has gained a tyrannical hold over Narnia by ‘spread[ing] herself over all Narnia in the form of a dead white frost, allowing nothing else independent life: the unchanging monotony of winter is her symbol’.⁴⁰ This contrasts nicely with the bright, warm and colourful imagery that Lewis uses for Aslan: ‘In the doorway was Aslan himself ... and he was solid and real and warm and let her kiss him and bury herself in his shining mane’.⁴¹

Jadis is not the only witch to appear in the Narnia Chronicles: in *The Silver Chair*, Prince Rilian finds himself enamoured of, and captured by, a Green Witch, who ‘represents the power of intellectual deception which can invert good and evil and dethrone reason’.⁴² The depths of her immorality, unlike that of the White Witch, are not easily seen, and Jill and Eustace are also taken in by her beauty and enchantments. Lewis aligns her symbolically with a green serpent, green being the colour of greed, envy and lust. The serpent, its smooth and shiny exterior concealing a poisonous bite, is counted among the unclean animals in the Old Testament, appearing as the

³⁷ *Ibid*, 62–63.

³⁸ Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, 102.

³⁹ Manlove, *op cit*, 131

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 130–131.

⁴¹ Lewis, *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*, 123.

⁴² Glover, *op cit*, 165.

On a Panegyric Note

prototype of sin and of Satan.⁴³ Both Jadis and the Green Witch are initially presented to the reader as exceedingly attractive women, who use their exterior beauty as a mask to conceal their true evil, just as Satan disguised himself as an angel of light in II Corinthians, 11:14.⁴⁴ Lewis explains his use of the witch to represent all that is wicked in the Chronicles by suggesting that they are ‘reminiscent of Circe, Alcina, and the archetypal witch of all fairy tales, a character ... almost know[n] by instinct’.⁴⁵ His use echoes the Judeo-Christian opposition to witchcraft, seen in the biblical stories of Saul and the Witch of En Dor⁴⁶ and Simon Magus.⁴⁷

The character of Lucy first appears in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, where she is introduced as the youngest of the four Pevensie⁴⁸ children who are sent to stay in a country house during the War. Lucy is the first of the children to discover the magical world of Narnia and, taking the books in order of their production,⁴⁹ she is the first of Lewis’ human characters to step foot in this otherworldly realm. Thus it is both significant and fitting that Lewis chooses to bestow on her the name of Lucy, which means ‘lucidity’ and comes from *lux*, meaning light.⁵⁰ Lucy is the innocent child who believes blindly what she is told; she is the light that shines, whose radiance encourages others into the circle of light or truth. Lucy represents the true Christian believer who, once having found Aslan/God, puts her trust as blindly and completely in him as is humanly possible. She is a true disciple who, once having discovered Narnia, insists on its

⁴³ Matthews, *The Herder Symbol Dictionary* (Illinois, 1986) 169.

⁴⁴ Kilby, *Images of Salvation in the Fiction of C S Lewis* (Illinois, 1978) 59.

⁴⁵ Glover, *op cit*, 173.

⁴⁶ See 1 Samuel 28.

⁴⁷ See Acts 8:9–25.

⁴⁸ Pevensie is a place name in Sussex, England.

⁴⁹ The order in which the books were originally published is as follows: *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, (1950), *Prince Caspian* (1951), *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952), *The Silver Chair* (1953), *The Horse and His Boy* (1954), *The Magicians Nephew* (1955) and *The Last Battle* (1956); the order in which the series chronologically flows (according to Narnian time), is *The Magicians Nephew*, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *The Horse and His Boy*, *Prince Caspian*, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, *The Silver Chair* and *The Last Battle*.

⁵⁰ Manlove, *op cit*, 135.

existence, standing up to her elder siblings' disbelief and Edmund's cruel teasing.⁵¹ In *Prince Caspian*, she is the only one of the company to see Aslan at the gorge and instantly knows that he is there to lead them safely to their destination. Her elders, Peter, Susan and Trumpkin the dwarf, doubt what she has seen:

'Look! Look! Look!' cried Lucy. 'Where? What?' asked everyone. 'The Lion', said Lucy. 'Aslan himself. Didn't you see him?' Her face had changed completely and her eyes shone. 'Do you really mean – ?' began Peter. 'Where do you think you saw him?' asked Susan. 'Don't talk like a grown-up', said Lucy, stamping her foot. 'I didn't *think* I saw him. I saw him'.⁵²

What message about religion and faith is Lewis trying to convey through Lucy's steadfast belief and the other children's disbelief? David Holbrook suggests that Lewis is making a profound point about the 'existence of spiritual reality', that Lewis 'aspire[s] to *teach* us', to show us that those 'who belong to the world of the common light-of-day are not able to accept reports from that "other" world'.⁵³ This is an explanation for Peter, Susan and Edmund's inability to recognize the truth of Lucy's claims. Her ability to place her faith and trust blindly in her love of Aslan makes her the most spiritually perceptive of all the human characters of the Narnian Chronicles.

Through the series, Lewis develops the character of Lucy, using her experiences to portray the problems faced in the real world by even the most pious of Christians and showing how such problems can be overcome with the help and affirmation of Aslan/God. When Lucy later meets with Aslan, after the incident at the gorge, she discovers that her faith in him (in spite of the others' skepticism) is not enough. She must learn to act on her faith and follow his guidance, even if it means leaving her friends and family. He suggests that her ability to act on her faith may induce the others to see and follow her faith:

⁵¹ Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Chapters 3 – 5.

⁵² C S Lewis, *Prince Caspian* (London, 1980) 110–11.

⁵³ D Holbrook, *The Skeleton in the Wardrobe* (London, 1991) 32.

On a Panegyric Note

‘But it wasn’t my fault anyway, was it?’ ‘Oh’ Aslan’, said Lucy. ‘You don’t mean it was? How could I – I couldn’t have left the others and come up to you alone, how could I? Don’t look at me like that ... oh well, I suppose I *could*. Yes, and it wouldn’t have been alone, I know, not if I was with you ...’⁵⁴

In later books, she becomes the happy Queen, whom all look up to and love: ‘But as for Lucy, she was always gay and golden-haired, ... and her own people called her Queen Lucy the Valiant’.⁵⁵ She bears qualities of both Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene. While she possesses an almost naive faith in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, she becomes more intuitive as the series unfolds, gaining more confidence in herself and in Aslan’s great plan. Lucy is Lewis’ model of a true and faithful Christian, ready to see the good in all things and people, to see the world for what it could be, and ready to forgive and guide those who do not at first see the light.

In the characters of Peter and Susan, the eldest of the four Pevensie children, Lewis juxtaposes two types of believer. Peter, the ‘rock’ or ‘stone’ and the name given to Jesus’ disciple Simon, represents the true and wise Christian who, once on the true path, follows Aslan wholeheartedly though whatever trials are placed in his way. Susan, Hebrew for ‘lily’, the symbol for light and purity,⁵⁶ is eager to believe in Aslan while in Narnia but, once alone in the real world, loses faith and becomes more interested in ‘nylons and lipstick and initiations’ and is ‘a jolly sight too keen on being grown-up’.⁵⁷ Peter is rewarded for his unwavering faith by becoming ‘Peter the High King over all Kings in Narnia’,⁵⁸ while, by *The Last Battle*, Susan is no longer a believer, ‘no longer a friend of Narnia’;⁵⁹ she has been lost to the material world and is deaf to the call of Aslan. Lilies are also known as the flower of death.

⁵⁴ Lewis, *Prince Caspian*, 124 – 125.

⁵⁵ Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, 167.

⁵⁶ Matthews, *op cit*, 120.

⁵⁷ Lewis, *The Last Battle*, 138.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 137.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 138.

The fourth of the Pevensie children is Edmund. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, he plays the role of the traitor. His actions in Narnia lie in opposition to Lucy's: where, on the first visit, Lucy is forgiving and helpful to Mr Tumnus, Edmund is swept into the presence of the White Witch, who plays on his greedy, 'jeering and rather malignant'⁶⁰ nature, setting him up later to betray his brothers and sisters. He plays the role of Judas in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe's* crucifixion tale, selling his soul to the White Witch/Satan in exchange for turkish delight and the promise that 'if he would bring her brother and two sisters to her she would make him king'.⁶¹ Yet Lewis gives him the chance to reform and redeem himself by accepting the truth that Aslan offers as the series progresses. One such example occurs in *Prince Caspian* in the gorge incident discussed above: whereas in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, it is Edmund who teases Lucy for her stories of another country though the wardrobe, here he is the only one to back Lucy's claim to see Aslan.⁶² And, in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, he comforts Eustace after his episode as a dragon: 'That's all right', said Edmund. 'Between ourselves, you haven't been as bad as I was on my first trip to Narnia. You were only an ass, but I was a traitor'.⁶³

Eustace Clarence Scrubb, the cousin of the Pevensie children, enters the series in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. Drawn into Narnia against his will, he refuses to believe that he has entered another world. During the first part of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* Eustace is presented as an unbearable, whining young boy, a 'snob whose parents brought had him read economics instead of fairy tales'.⁶⁴ Eustace is Lewis's depiction of someone who refuses to acknowledge the existence of the honour, beauty and morality right under his nose. Eustace's problem is that he has no imagination and needs to have the 'adult' mental trappings of his progressive schooling stripped away before he can be open to the truths before him. Eustace's awareness of the larger picture is awoken through the

⁶⁰ Manlove, *op cit*, 135.

⁶¹ Kilby, *op cit*, 40.

⁶² Lewis *Prince Caspian*, 112.

⁶³ Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 87.

⁶⁴ Kilby, *The Christian World of C S Lewis* (Appleford, 1965) 127.

On a Panegyric Note

transformation of both his character and his spirit, a process which begins when he finds himself turned into a dragon:

But in that instant he realized the truth. The dragon face in the pool was his own reflection ... An appalling loneliness came over him. He began to see that the others had not really been fiends at all. He began to wonder if he himself had been such a nice person as he had always supposed.⁶⁵

Once a dragon, Eustace begins to change: he becomes ‘anxious to help’⁶⁶ the rest of the crew in their endeavour to continue the journey east. But his true spiritual transformation occurs high in the mountains, when Eustace meets Aslan, who strips him of his dragon skin and throws him into a well in a kind of ‘baptism, from which he emerges as a new person’.⁶⁷ Like Edmund, Eustace is offered the chance to reform, to have his horizons broadened, to see the light. As the series progresses, Eustace changes from the annoying coward first introduced in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* to become a champion of Narnia, a fighter for Aslan’s truth, by the conclusion of *The Last Battle*.

In his series *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Lewis has managed to present some of the most pivotal events and significant truths of the Christian faith in the pages of a popular fantasy series. His stories concerning the adventures of nine humans in the lands of Narnia are convincingly real to the young at heart. But more importantly, his offerings also convey a deeper moral meaning regarding the nature and practice of Christianity. His characters are not only likeable and very human, but also symbolise different types of Christian believers. The stories not only entertain and allow one’s imagination to soar, but bear the dual purpose of expressing Lewis’s most personal beliefs about his faith. And while, in this day and age, religion and faith are often seen as best left out of children’s books, the general morality and humble messages of faith, trust and honour

⁶⁵ Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, 73 – 74.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 80.

⁶⁷ W E Knickerbocker Jr, ‘From Fairy Tale to Fairy Tale: The Spiritual Pilgrimage to C S Lewis’ in *Essays on C S Lewis and George MacDonald: Truth, Fiction, and the Power of Imagination* (New York, 1991) 112.

Dominique Wilson

that can be traced through these novels explains their continued popularity among children (and adults) of all backgrounds around the world. The books have enchanted readers for the last five decades, as can be seen in the forty-one languages in which the books have been published, the two television series and the 2005 feature film. Lewis proves himself not only as an imaginative and moral storyteller, but also a writer of depth and complexity, to whom every detail, from character names to plot placement, holds symbolic and religious meaning.

