

Biblical Elements and Symbolism in C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles Of Narnia : The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*

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Abstract

This article explores the rich Biblical symbols embedded in C.S. Lewis's 'The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe', the first published novel of 'The Chronicles of Narnia' series. Through an analysis of key characters, narrative structure, and thematic motifs, the study highlights how Lewis weaves Christian doctrine into the fabric of the novel. Central to this examination is the figure of Aslan, whose sacrificial role mirrors the narrative of Christ's redemption. The article also considers the allegorical significance of themes such as resurrection, temptation, and the struggle between good and evil, showcasing how Lewis uses Narnia as a platform for exploring complex theological concepts. By situating these elements within both the historical context of Lewis's own faith and the broader literary landscape, the article underscores the enduring impact of these symbols on readers' understanding of moral and spiritual truths. Ultimately, it argues that Lewis's integration of Christian symbolism not only enriches the narrative but also invites deeper reflection on faith and redemption in a fantastical context.

Keywords: Symbols, Christian Elements, Allegory, Aslan

Religion has been a powerful force in shaping British literature throughout the centuries, influencing not only the themes and characters but also the moral and philosophical questions that authors grapple with. From the allegorical narratives of medieval works to the existential inquiries of modern poetry and prose, the

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exploration of faith, doubt, and spirituality reflects the evolving relationship between individuals and their beliefs. This intricate interplay offers rich insights into societal values, personal struggles, and the quest for meaning, making religion a central pillar in the tapestry of British literary tradition. Certain texts are theorised to have been modified from their original form to incorporate religious elements.

Clive Staples Lewis was an Irish-born academic, novelist, and author of forty books, many of which are Christian apologetics. His most enduringly renowned works are *The Chronicles of Narnia*, a set of seven children's stories that have attained classic status in fantasy literature. C.S. Lewis asserts in an essay *Of This and Other Worlds* that numerous individuals appear to believe he commenced writing his children's literature with the intention of conveying Christian themes to a youthful audience. E K Gibson in his *C S Lewis Spinner of Tales; A Guide to his Fiction* declares that C.S. Lewis is "a Christian, who is dedicated to the purpose of making his faith both seen and heard" (132).

Subsequently, he selected the fairy tale genre as his medium, gathered information on child psychology, determined the target age group for his writing, enumerated fundamental Christian principles, and crafted allegories to represent them. Lewis himself proclaims about this fantasy realm in *Of Other Worlds; Essays and Stories by C S Lewis* that fantasy genre offers an "admirable hieroglyphic which conveys psychology, types of character, more briefly than novelistic presentation" (27).

The novel *The Chronicles of Narnia* is situated in Narnia, a realm inhabited by talking animals and legendary beings, governed by the malevolent White Witch. During their play, Lucy and her brothers discover a wardrobe that transports them to a mystical realm known as Narnia.

Narnia is a symbolic representation of the world created by Aslan with non-human residents that can be compared to the world created by God with human residents. Although Aslan comes from a heavenly kingdom, Narnia is close to his heart. He gives authority to human beings over non-human beings just like God gave authority to human residents over non-human beings. The new Narnia represents the Aslan's country whereas the New Earth represents the city of New Jerusalem as mentioned in The Bible. This incident is closely associated with the destruction of the world during the days of Noah. (240)

This article analyses the symbolism employed by C.S. Lewis which are used to reflect deeper themes of faith, morality, and the human experience. Set in a fantastical world, the series uses characters, events, and settings to convey complex ideas. At its core, Narnia serves as an allegory for the struggle between good and evil, with Aslan, the great lion, symbolizing Christ-like sacrifice and redemption. The characters' journeys mirror spiritual quests, illustrating concepts like courage, temptation, and the power of love. The wardrobe itself, acting as a portal, represents the transition between the mundane and the divine, emphasizing the idea

of discovery and transformation.

The artistic technique known as 'symbolism' originated in France as a direct response to nationalism and realism. It encompasses spirituality, creativity, fantasy, and aspirations. A symbol differs from a metaphor in that a symbol is employed more consistently and broadly than a metaphor. A metaphor constitutes a statement, while a symbol is not always a statement. The shared characteristic of symbols and metaphors is that their literal, conventional meanings be surpassed or contradicted by non-literal interpretations.

Due to Lewis's Christian faith, numerous symbols pertain to the Bible, Christianity, Christ, God, sin, and other spiritual themes. Although Lewis did not rewrite the historical narrative of Christ, he incorporates the traits of individuals from the Bible. He used the concepts of events such as the creation of the world, the rationale behind its creation, the death of Christ, and his resurrection. He constructs locations and realms inspired by existent sites or those that could potentially exist as per the Bible.

The works of C.S. Lewis elucidate his own conception of God, confidence in God, and love for God. The major theme of much of C.S. Lewis's books is God or confidence in Him. God is the key theme in the majority of his books, particularly in *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Aslan, symbolising Christ, serves as the pivotal role in all the narratives, paralleling the significance of Jesus Christ in Christianity. Consequently, he aims to direct the readers' attention initially to the symbols that signify God, particularly Christ. Goodwin says that:

Aslan is an invention giving an imaginary answer to the question: What might Christ have become like, if there really were a world like Narnia and he chose to be incarnate and die and rise again in that world as He has actually done in ours? ... Allegory and supposals mix the real and unreal in different ways. The Incarnation of Christ in another world is mere supposal; but granted that supposition, he would really have been a physical object in that world as he was in Palestine and His death on the Stone Table would have been a physical event no less than his death on Calvary. (6)

Aslan, a lion, symbolises Christ. Aslan's demise to preserve Edmund's life and his ensuing resurrection serve as explicit allusions to the life of Christ. Lewis's story introduces significant modifications to the portrayal of Christ, rendering Aslan more relatable to children than the Christ they see at church. Lewis' approach proved effective, as evidenced by a letter from a distressed little boy imploring assistance due to his inability to love Aslan more than Jesus. Although he understood he was meant to prioritise his love for Jesus above all else. Peter Kreeft in his *C S Lewis, A Critical Essay* declares about the phenomenon of Aslan:

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. (55)

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe features numerous instances of religious symbolism, while also depicting the author's personal spiritual journey towards Christianity. The majority of the narrative unfolds in an imaginary and enchanted realm called Narnia. Narnia serves as a profound symbol of an ideal realm or paradise. At the beginning of the novel, a malevolent queen referred to as the White Witch has governed Narnia for one hundred years. Upon the reader's entrance to Narnia, one of the initial scenes portrayed is the White Witch's seduction of Edmund, a small boy and pivotal character in the narrative. The scene closely parallels the temptations faced by the Biblical figures Adam and Eve, as well as the temptation of Jesus Christ by Satan. Throughout the narrative, the Witch closely parallels the Devil, persistently luring the characters in a subtle manner, and seldom engaging in direct confrontation.

An early instance of symbolism in the novel is Mr. Tumnus, who serves the White Witch and betrays his sovereign. He embodies numerous Biblical figures, including Judas, who betrays his master for the adversary. He parallels the apostle Paul, as he initially serves the devil in the novel's outset, but ultimately returns to God by its conclusion. The novel serves as a representation of a Christian's pilgrimage towards Christ. Initially, numerous individuals succumb to the allure of the White Witch. Nonetheless, all of these people ultimately attain atonement by the conclusion of the novel. This closely parallels the author's personal journey from worldly temptation to spiritual liberation and tranquilly.

The narrative illustrates that even those who serve malevolence and have forsaken their sovereign can ultimately be redeemed by the love of their deity or Aslan. *The Chronicles of Narnia* effectively elucidates the Christian faith through the symbolism embedded in this fantasy narrative. The seasons in Narnia serve as a reoccurring motif symbolising the conflict between the conflicting powers of good and evil. Initially, Lucy falls into the icy forest of Narnia and perceives it as an enchanting paradise. The white snow symbolises purity and tranquilly; but, like the snow that conceals the ground and obscures visibility, this picturesque winter scene merely masks the more malevolent activities occurring beneath the surface.

Father Christmas serves as a symbol employed by C.S. Lewis in the novel. Father Christmas epitomises the generosity and plenty inherent in Christianity. Lucy's initial acquaintance in Narnia, a Faun named Mr. Tumnus, informs her that the malevolent White Witch has usurped the throne, resulting in a perpetual winter devoid of Christmas in Narnia. The perpetual winter caused by the White Witch in Narnia can be seen as spiritual desolation.

On their way to meet up with Aslan, the children run into Father Christmas; he has come bearing presents for the Beavers, as well as Lucy, Susan, and Peter. The gifts he gives three siblings are not mere toys, but tools that he urges them to use in the upcoming battle against the Witch. (65)

C.S. Lewis illustrates that Christianity, embodying the quintessence of love and benevolence, provides its followers with the necessary tools to navigate the world and confront temptation, brutality, and evil. As Father Christmas goes, he extends Merry Christmas wishes to all the youngsters and proclaims, “Long live the true King” (10). Father Christmas is referencing Aslan, the true sovereign of Narnia.

The stone table is another symbol employed in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. It pertains to the stone tablets that Moses descended with from Mount Sinai, as stated in the Bible. These tablets encompass The Ten Commandments and signify a more archaic, stringent interpretation of religion. In the era when the mountain, transgressions against God were subject to capital punishment, retribution was immediate, severe, and irreversible. As Aslan resurrects, the stone table is fractured, symbolising the conclusion of a harsher epoch and the emergence of a more benevolent one. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* has only a few fleeting mentions of the sea, although these references hold considerable significance due to their context. We receive a brief insight into the water and discover that the Emperor-Over-the-water, who is the father of Aslan, is God himself. The water serves as a demarcation between Narnia, Earth, and “Aslan’s country,” or Heaven. In subsequent works, including *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Lewis discloses that one can physically navigate the sea to reach Aslan’s realm. Furthermore, the sea serves as a demarcation between Narnia and our world. In conventional symbolism, the sea frequently signifies death, which appears fitting in this context; nonetheless, it denotes death not in a literal sense, but rather as a transformation into a heavenly existence.

Empress Jadis is portrayed as the White Witch, who embodies a paradox. Witches are typically linked to black magic and malevolence. The depiction of Empress Jadis as the White Witch reflects her perception of Aslan as her equal. Her fixation with power leads her to perceive Aslan as her one worthy adversary. She consumes the forbidden fruit of life to preserve her youth for a millennium in her quest to dominate Narnia, and she entices Digory to partake in the apple of life. Jadis is renowned for her arrogance and seeks to dominate the City of Charn. She is afflicted and transported to an alternate realm. Empress Jadis represents Satan.

The qualities of Jadis have been inspired by the qualities of Satan. Satan wants to prove his authority over the God and the world. His glory has been taken from him the moment he considers himself superior to God. Ever since he is thrown out of the heaven he is surrounded by darkness but he pretends to be a bright Angel mentioned in The Bible that Satan disguises himself as a light bearing Angel. (210)

Narnia is ensnared in the White Witch’s frigid hold, an extension of her own white body, characterised not only by pallor but by a hue reminiscent of snow, paper, or icing sugar. The Witch embodies death itself. In contrast to Aslan, who can revive petrified beings with his breath and is himself resurrected, the Witch’s power is limited to the ability to extinguish life; she transforms beings into stone, imposes a

harsh winter that stifles growth in Narnia, and her dominion relies on thwarting the ancient prophecy by eliminating at least one of the four siblings. The perpetual winter in Narnia symbolises death, scarcity, and stagnation; growth and transformation are impossible in Narnia.

In *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, C.S. Lewis employs Christian symbols and metaphors. He appropriates elements from the Bible and mythology. The lion symbolises the individual with the strongest confidence in supernatural topics, while the horn serves as a symbol of prayer. Lewis selected the lion as a representation of the wildness, stability, majesty, and authority of Jesus Christ. This metaphorical representation is also evident in the White Witch, as her look suggests the realities of her nature and ambitions.

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