

### The Chronicles of Narnia as the Abbreviated Bible

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C.S. Lewis's is considered for his of Christian symbolism and biblical symbolism in his 7 books, *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Religion played a viral character in Lewis's life, and it affected his writings. This is apparent from the very inception of the first book of the series, *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*. The book reminds the picture of the resurrection of Christ and caters other Christian themes within the storyline. On account of coming out over 60 years ago, the story still breathes with a modern thought and remains a true piece of literature.

A reason for its regular success is partially owing to the social context in which it originated, as the series emerged from a highly Christian based society. Today, it manages to remain significant although the foundation of our society is primarily post-Christian. Many of the modern values and ethics compare to Christian based values. C. S. Lewis replaces the biblical stories with present allegories that have mixed subsequent generations and kept the traditional myths breathing. As a result, the story has become a logical part of the cultural heritage of contemporary readers. The story tells us to four siblings, Lucy, Edmund, Susan and Peter who finds the world of Narnia. While they confront personal trials that check their faith and moral values, each of their journeys tells the Christian process of self-search and redemption. After that we discover that they are predicted "Sons and Daughters of Adam," set to help Narnia prosper.

When the siblings first get in Narnia, the world is stricken with a consent winter under the reign of the White Witch, who plays as the story's main villain. She is the ruler of Narnia, turning anyone who dares cross her into statues. Where the parallel with the Christian, Satan is never explicitly mentioned, she is a symbol of evil and all that is wrong in the world.

The children set on their journeys where they eventually see the lion, Aslan. Reckoned the rightful ruler and creator of Narnia, he is a thinly veiled symbol of Jesus. Like Jesus he is bound, humiliated, and beaten, he sacrifices his life for the life of other people, and he is then resurrected. This corresponds to the story of redemption in the Christian faith and presents the

rebirth of Jesus. Like Christ, Aslan comes back in order to “give life back to the witch’s statues, as Jesus gave humans an opportunity for eternal life in heaven” (Wilson, 179).

Of the four children, the most remarkable journey is undertaken by Edmund, who becomes the victim of temptation of power and turns against his siblings. He shows the hubris of mankind turning from the world of God to pursue the way of sin. If each child shows the pious apostles in Christianity, Edmund is the Judas figure. He admits the offer of corrupted Turkish delight in exchange for turning his back on his siblings, just as Judas took silver coins as payment to betray Jesus. We also notice indications of biblical sources for Lucy and Susan, who see Aslan’s sacrifice and stand by his body’s side after his death, just as Mary Magdalene and Mary the Mother of James saw Jesus as he was ridiculed and crucified. Peter, the eldest of the siblings, is the captain of the siblings and like Jesus’ devotes Simon, represents the statue of a true and wise Christian. Once he is presented the chance to be led down the true path, he follows Aslan no matter the trials in his way. Most significant for Lewis, it also permitted for the readers to easily get the profound ethical ramifications of the Christian narrative. This is clear in Lewis’s presentation of Aslan’s sacrifice as Jesus’s crucifixion. Aslan was portrayed as a supreme and divine being. Readers are forced to recognize him as the noble ruler and leader. In some ways his sacrifice is more heart rendering than the story of the death of Christ. Kreeft argues that “the obsession of Aslan shakes people more than the real story in the gospels. In reading the real story, the real knowledge that one should feel in a particular way often inhibits the feelings” (Kreeft, 55). Aslan’s death is also accompanied by Lucy and Susan’s extreme sorrow and grief. These feelings carry over to the readers because they presented with all the characters and their spiritual journeys. Unlike the story in the gospels, the sudden destruction of Aslan permits the readers to relate to the characters feelings of loss.

While the fix target audience for C.S. Lewis’s *Chronicles of Narnia* is children, the religious symbolism within *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* is extreme. Lewis’ own Christianity is clear throughout the novel. However, according to Shanna Caughey, C.S. Lewis claimed that “in writing his tales he never consciously started with the moral or didactic purpose of conveying Christian principles” (Caughey, 74). Instead, his goal was to take out the Christian message of its theology and give it a new meaning by re-imagining it as a fairy-tale story. He trusted that this would heighten its full effectiveness as a story rather than decrease it to a didactic message. The use of fantasy was made to make his messages more sharp and digestible. It presented him access to a vital variety of characters to select from to express his points. This genre gave him the creative liberty to introduce Christian points to children and familiarize them with the morals and theological implications of Christian history and myths. The characterization of the siblings in the novel can be applied to anybody. Young readers could find out and sympathize with them on their journey. While each of the siblings has their own personal story, collectively their personalities are the symbol of a universal humanity, with each taking on individual aspects of human instinct.

Personifying the merits which make up our own human phenomenon created the opportunity for the readers to get deeper look into the origins and reasoning behind the motivations of the characters, at last affirming that the actions and selections the characters make are understandable and true.

Lewis' ideas on a good and caring, yet demanding and holy god have had a big impact on modern western thinkers, who still believe in this same god. His apologetics ideas on Christian god, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are even today used for example in the alpha-courses around the world. What is most striking in Lewis's literature is that it has approached distant secular circles as well, attaining extremely positive feedback worldwide from both the public and the critics.

*The Chronicles of Narnia* has a particular appeal to Christians, because of the biblical work view and message behind the books, but it as well has been read widely in secular circles. The Bible's message about god's salvation in Christ has been put to the books in the form of fantasy and in the middle of fiction.

Lewis taught very orthodox Christianity according to *the Bible* and the central teachings of traditional Christianity. He belonged to the Church of England, i.e. was an Anglican, but in his faith he wanted to exalt God, not any singular Christian denomination. Thus, for instance, his book *Mere Christianity* (1952) was meant to be as free from denominational arguments as possible, reflecting what Lewis understood to be the core of Christianity, in common to all Christians. When writing it, as told in the book itself, Lewis sent a copy of the script to four pastors from four different denominations: Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Catholic, asking their approval and corrections. One of them would have wanted to emphasize one side of Christianity more than Lewis had done, another something else, but generally they were happy with the text. When published, *Mere Christianity* reached the popularity of lay Christians from different denominations, building a deeper unity between them.

In his books Lewis discussed many basic truths of Christianity, such as why do we have reason to believe in God and especially in the sense Christianity and *The Bible* talk about him, what has God done to us, what does he really want us to do and what is Christian moral. He also discussed some of the difficult problems that people usually raise when doubting Christianity or the message of *the Bible*, questions such as why is there pain in the world created by a good and omnipotent God, why does God want to change us, what awaits us after death and so forth.

Since Lewis was strongly committed to the traditional Christianity as taught by *the Bible*, there was nothing radically new for Christians in his teachings except for the fact that

he combined his intellect and wide cultural understanding in a modern way with the basic Christian message creating a highly appealing synthesis of old and new in his teaching. His efforts have helped many Christians to get deeper with their faith, and to find lasting foundations to their beliefs from *the Bible*, as well as many un-churched to find God for the first time in their lives. This is seen for example through the Alpha-courses around the world, where many people have found faith in Christ through the teachings of Lewis that have a central part in the course material.

As Lewis was a Christian thinker and writer, we concentrate on the Christian sides of his view of God, and how that is reflected in the person of Aslan. Here I refer to Christianity common to all evangelical Christian denominations, not only the Anglican-church. Thus controversial issues such as baptism were left out of this study. Luckily, they are not essential to the topic of this study, the view of God. Where Christianity is concerned, there is also *the Bible*, thus the frequent quotes from the holy book of Christianity.

However, I want to recognize that the Christian ideas are not the only sides of Lewis's view of God, even though they are the main ones. *The Bible* is also not the only book behind *The Chronicles of Narnia*, even though it is the main one. Thus, I want to define which characteristics of God/god, the Western thinkers have considered most important. They shall be looked at from both the modern and the traditional point of view, meaning a few modern thinkers as the representatives of the philosophy of religion, and traditional systematic theology.

The philosophy of religion discusses the possibility and probability of God's existence and his characteristics. It is not necessarily committed to any specific religion or theology. It can be purely philosophical, deontological, discussing different beliefs and theories. However, the main problems discussed in the philosophy of religion have usually concentrated on the Western Judeo-Christian concept of God, which is the centre of focus also here. Three modern philosophers of religion will be looked at below, the intention being to gain some pre-thoughts of God/god before looking at Aslan precisely as a Judeo-Christian representative of God.

C.S. Lewis converted from atheism to Christianity already in his youth. He promoted his Christian world view in his various books. Since Lewis was strongly committed to the traditional Christianity as taught by *The Bible*, there was nothing radically new for Christians in his teaching except for the fact that he combined his intellect and wide culture understanding in a modern way with the basic Christian message creating a high appealing synthesis of old and new in his teaching. His efforts have helped many Christian to get deeper with their faith, and to find lasting foundation to their beliefs from *The Bible*

Lewis takes advantage of profound Christian beliefs in Western society and incorporated storytelling to present moral guidance. Yet the messages he offers are practical, and as useful to non-religious individuals as to Christians. The characters are modern incarnations of the legacy of Christian merits and gives as ideal characters to model ourselves after. Narnia shows a fantasy world whose world reflects our own. By reimagining our world as Narnia in quest of saving, Lewis presented insight into what actions needed to get to achieve salvation.

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