



# **Christian messages and moral values in *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe***

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### **Abstract**

This essay explores the similarities between *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* and the Bible. It argues that Christian messages and values are represented by several of the characters. Focusing on Aslan, the Lion who is a Christ-like figure, and Mr. Tumnus and three of the children: Peter, Edmund and Lucy; the essay examines the Christian messages of betrayal, resurrection and self-sacrifice. The essay also explores the Christian virtues: forgiveness and courage, which carry important lessons for the young reader. With the aid of the technique of close reading together with specific features of Lewis's life and belief where relevant, the essay examines the Christian messages and values. The conclusion of this essay further demonstrates the Christian aspects that Ward, Colbert, and Schakel to some extent mention in their studies. While they focus on Christianity in general, this essay analyzes the Christian messages of betrayal, resurrection and self-sacrifice as well as the Christian virtues forgiveness and courage, even further. The essay further demonstrates that Lewis intentionally included Christian messages and moral values.

### **Key words**

Christian messages, moral values, the Bible, Christianity and Narnia.

This essay compares the Christian messages presented in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (hereafter referred to as *Narnia*) to the Bible. It argues that Christian messages and values are represented by several of the characters. The use of animals and young children as characters makes it easier for children to relate to messages such as the moral values and lessons that are presented in the novel (Nodelman 72). Focusing on Aslan, the Lion who is a Christ-like figure, and Mr. Tumnus, the Faun, and three of the children: Peter, Edmund and Lucy; the essay examines the Christian messages of resurrection, self-sacrifice and betrayal as well as Christian virtues which carry important lessons for the young reader. These values include: forgiveness and courage. With the aid of the technique of close reading together with specific features of Lewis's life and belief where relevant, the essay examines the Christian messages and values; hence the complexity of this literary work is further unveiled.

Many critics such as Ward, Colbert and Dalton, deal with Christianity in general in Lewis's work. In this essay however, the focus is on specific Christian virtues: forgiveness, courage and as well as messages of resurrection, betrayal and self-sacrifice. As the following discussion demonstrates, Lewis's fictional characters represent Christian messages and moral values. The essay will approach the novel from a Christian perspective and it will be further discussed with the aid of authors such as Ward and Colbert who argue that there are many religious aspects hidden in the story about *Narnia*. Since the novel came out, many critics have analyzed and written about *Narnia*. Michael Ward, an expert on *the Chronicles of Narnia* and in Lewis's life, argues in *The Narnia Code* that he "liked the idea that there was a second level of meaning to [*Narnia*]" (Ward 4). The "second level" refers to the connection to the Bible, and that connection is further shown when he says: "Lewis himself...once wrote to a child explaining that the whole *Narnia* series was 'about Christ'" (Ward 4). This statement confirms the essay's argument. Ward also states that Aslan "is the most important character" (Ward 47) since he is a Christ-like figure, however, this essay will show that the moral values and lessons displayed by the children and Tumnus are just as important as the messages of resurrection and self-sacrifice presented in the Christ-like character Aslan who also displays courage and forgiveness when saving Edmund. Furthermore, the Christian

morals are discussed using critics such as Schakel, Bowden as well as Lewis. The essay will show, just as Shackle and Bowden argue, that the morality displayed in the novel is related to the Biblical moral values. This essay will display several examples of moral virtues supporting Schakel's and Bowden's arguments. Ward mentions several Christian messages in *The Narnia code*; however, his aim is to connect the *Chronicles of Narnia* to "symbolism of the seven heavens of this world" (Ward 42). While Ward, Schakel and Colbert have chosen not to involve all Christian messages and virtues they refer to many, this essay analyses a select few even further. The chosen messages have been selected since they are the most important ones and they are connected to one another. Forgiveness is given after a betrayal and the latter occurs before an act of self-sacrifice. Resurrection takes place after a self-sacrifice, which also takes a great deal of courage.

Christianity is often used in many novels such as *Narnia*. Marilynne Robinson argues that when novels involve Christianity and the Bible, its references come from "a well of special meaning...that can make an obscure death a martyrdom and a gesture of forgiveness an act of grace" (Robinson). The well Robinson discusses alludes to the great information which the Bible contains. She continues her discussion as she claims, "Biblical allusions can suggest a degree of seriousness or significance" (Robinson), thus demonstrating that novels include Christian messages to make them more sincere since; "[e]very fiction is a leap in the dark" (Robinson). According to Robinson, the essential ingredient in a "good" novel is seriousness, which is alluded to Christianity. Novels can convey seriousness without Christian aspects; however, in this case Christianity is a contributing factor since Lewis chose to include Christian morals and messages. Even though Robinson does not specifically write about *Narnia*, her words help to understand why Lewis chose to include Christianity in the novel.

John Ezard argues that *Narnia* has, "been among the most beloved stories in children's literature for 50 years" (Ezard). The sales figures and the fact that the book is still read by children and adults confirms Ezard's statement. Another aspect, that makes a classic novel withstand time and have new generations to read it, is "the significance of theme" (Lukens 30). Moral values are one of the sub-themes in *Narnia* that children are introduced to and to which the child reader might wish to emulate. One important theme discussed by Ward is

“the forgiving of guilt” (Ward 28), which in this essay is referred to as forgiveness. While Ward demonstrates forgiveness in a general sense, this essay analyses the virtue even further. As stated above, many children want to relate to a theme which they can do with the moral values and lessons provided by animals in a novel (Nodelman 72). Therefore, it is not a surprise, as noted by Colbert, that “Christ [takes] the form of a lion. It’s an old symbol...” (10); thus demonstrating Nodelman’s argument regarding the usage of animals. He goes on saying that Lewis made one of the main characters a lion because he had dreamt about lions before writing the novel (10). Lewis confirms this saying: “I think I had been having a good many dreams about lions” (Lewis 53). However, since Lewis was very familiar with the biblical text, the choice of using an animal was not unintentional which this essay discusses. To support this claim, one can turn to Robinson’s argument concerning biblical allusions in novels.

C. S. Lewis was a religious person who believed in the Christian God and in *Mere Christianity*; Lewis provides answers to Christian beliefs and moral values. He is not telling us what to do; he is just presenting “what Christianity is” (Lewis 115). This is something Lewis states throughout the book; he talks about Christianity with no intention of convincing the reader that Christianity is the right choice, he rather introduces the reader to the views of Christianity in different aspects such as; moral values and beliefs (Lewis VIII-XVI). However, MacSwain and Ward argue that Lewis shapes “the religious faith of thousands” (MacSwain and Ward 4); thus opposing Lewis’s “own” argument in *Mere Christianity*: “I am not trying to convince anyone to my own position” (Lewis VIII). Even if Lewis had no intention of convincing people, his novel *Narnia* provides a solid basis of Christian messages, moral values and lessons which have been woven in perfectly into the characters; thus, making the novel more appealing for child readers. Lewis objected to statements claiming that *Narnia* was an experiment to instill child readers with Christian virtues (46). *Narnia* alludes to the Bible because the narrator wants to express seriousness, which strengthen the story as noted by Robinson. Robinson further argues that “even when [the references] are unintentional — they are still a natural consequence of the persistence of a powerful literary tradition” (*The Book of Books*) which further supports the argument regarding Christianity in *Narnia*. Lewis did not intend to include the Biblical allusions from the beginning; however,

they found their way into the novel on their own (Lewis 46). Once the allusions were inside the novel Lewis did not abandon them. The unintentional allusions became intentional.

Forgiveness is an important aspect of Christian morality, which is shown by Lucy after she is almost betrayed by Mr. Tumnus. High King Peter further shows forgiveness when he forgives his brother Edmund for his mistake of joining the Witch. Both Edmund and Mr. Tumnus make wrong choices in the novel, but they are also forgiven, as will be demonstrated shortly. The Bible states that individuals should forgive one another (Luke 11:4). The Bible also states that: “If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them” (Luke 17:3). The quotation will be connected to Edmund's betrayal of his siblings later on in the story. The moral values and lessons of betrayal and forgiveness are interrelated; forgiveness is given after the betrayal has taken place. In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis argues that one can only be forgiven if one is capable of forgiving others (116). According to Ward, “the forgiving of guilt” is one of the main themes of *Narnia* especially when Edmund is forgiven of his betrayal (28).

When Lucy first enters the world of Narnia she meets Mr. Tumnus (hereafter known as Tumnus), who is a faun. What Lucy does not know is that Tumnus has, “taken service under the White Witch” (*Narnia* 25) meaning that he has to obey her laws and wishes. The most important order that Tumnus has is that if he, “saw a Son of Adam or a Daughter of Eve in the wood” (*Narnia* 26) he “was to catch them and hand them over to her” (*Narnia* 26). If the faun fails in this mission, the implication is that he will be punished in some way. The Witch does not forgive those who fail to obey her laws, she punishes them, which Tumnus demonstrates when saying: “she’ll have my tail cut off, and my horns sawn off, and my beard plucked out” (*Narnia* 27). The sentence indicates that the Witch is not a forgiving person like Lucy. Lucy’s forgiving personality is a contrast to the Witch’s traits.

So when Tumnus tells Lucy that he is “a kidnapper” (*Narnia* 25) she can see that he is sorry: “you're so sorry for it that I'm sure you will never do it again” (*Narnia* 25). The sentence indicates that Lucy is a very forgiving individual since she forgives him immediately after he confesses to kidnapping. The word “sure” is an indication that Lucy tries to comfort Tumnus while she also tries to convey her trust in him when saying “I’m sure you wouldn’t do

anything of the sort” (*Narnia* 26). The word “sure” shows Lucy’s confidence in Tumnus since she sees a better side of people who are not always friendly. In this case, her forgiveness changes the character Tumnus, from a betraying individual to a more dependable one. Tumnus becomes friends with Lucy and wants to repay her for being so openhearted.

After this, Lucy tries talking Tumnus into letting her go and not handing her over to the Witch. Once again, she tries to channel her trust and forgiveness by saying: “Oh, but you won’t...You won’t, will you? Indeed, indeed you really mustn’t” (*Narnia* 27). The repetition of the words “Indeed, indeed” and “will you” indicate that Lucy is nervous and anxious. Furthermore, “won’t” and “mustn’t” are her way of showing trust in Tumnus since she has already forgiven him for what he has done. Lucy’s words have the ability to change the faun for the better. Indirectly, Tumnus no longer works for the Witch since he helps the daughter of Eve and disobeys the Witch’s laws.

Another illustration of Lucy’s forgiving nature is shown when she says: “I do hope you won’t get into dreadful trouble on my account” (*Narnia* 29). Here she tries to soothe Tumnus by blaming herself for the dreadful event. Hoping no harm will come to him because of her. Instead of being deeply disappointed in the faun, Lucy just hopes that this will never happen again and that henceforth he will be a pleasant faun. The sentence demonstrates that Lucy hopes that Tumnus has learned something about forgiveness. The tension between “you” and “I” makes the overall message clear. Lucy is a prime example of a forgiving person, which is what this essay aims to demonstrate.

After Lucy gets back to the real world, she tells her siblings all about Narnia and the faun that she met. Nevertheless, the response she gets from Edmund is: “He sneered and jeered at Lucy and kept on asking her if she’d found any other new countries in other cupboards all over the house” (*Narnia* 32). Even if her story is hard to believe, a person especially a sibling should not be mean in such a way. Lucy’s forgiving side is shown the second time Lucy enters the world of Narnia where Edmund follows her. When she meets him in the woods, she is happy and says, “If I’d known you had got in I’d have waited for you” (*Narnia* 49), implying that she is no longer saddened. She has forgiven him for not believing in her because he can testify to the existence of Narnia (49). The Bible says “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted,

forgiving one another” (Ephesians 4:32), and this is demonstrated by Lucy when she forgives her brother. Lucy’s actions are further related to Bowden’s argument, as already established: “Forgiveness lies at the very heart of the Christianity” (Bowden 470). Lucy is a prime example of Bowden’s statement because of her forgiving nature, which she demonstrates throughout the novel.

Lucy expresses her happiness: “I *am* glad you've got in too. The others will have to believe in Narnia now that both of us have been there” (*Narnia* 49). The word “am” is italicized and indicates that Lucy is very happy. The second sentence implies that Lucy can forgive Peter and Susan for not believing in her now that there is more proof of Narnia’s existence. However, Edmund is letting her down, telling them he played along with Lucy (*Narnia* 52). Edmund’s betrayal of Lucy can be connected to the Bible’s statement: “A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who breathes out lies will not escape” (Proverbs 19:5). Lucy believed that Edmund would testify about the existence of Narnia. However, he let her down. This is not Edmund’s first time lying and betraying people according to Peter who says: “You’ve always liked being beastly to anyone smaller than yourself; we’ve seen that at school before now” (*Narnia* 53). The word “beastly” shows that Edmund has a lying and betraying personality; the quotation additionally demonstrates that Edmund was a bad person before the adventure that started when they came to the mansion. Edmund’s action is not civilized, it is that of beasts. Lying is seen as a “beastly” action in this essay since it is an act against the Christian belief. The narrator tells us that the mentioned passage and Edmund’s behavior towards Lucy is one of the most obnoxious parts of the story (*Narnia* 51); thus suggesting that betrayal of a family member is one of the worst acts an individual can do, consequently a parallel is drawn to the Bible which also states that lying is one of the worst actions (Exodus 20). The third time when all the children enter Narnia, Lucy forgives Peter and Susan (*Narnia* 63), but she does not forgive Edmund until after he is rescued from the Witch (*Narnia* 150) which is the consequence of not telling the truth.

Peter’s forgiving nature is shown after Edmund leaves the beaver's hut to go to the Witch: “we’ll still have to go looking for him. He is our brother after all, even if he is rather a little beast” (*Narnia* 95). The word “still” indicates that Peter loves his brother even though he just

betrayed them, which is further shown in “after all”. However, even if there is a brotherly love, Peter still calls him “a little beast” which suggests some sort of undesirable aspect that Edmund possesses. One can also argue that it is a paradox to look for a person who has betrayed his own family. Still, this is connected to the Bible, which indicates that if the brother “repents” his wrongdoing, he shall be forgiven (Luke 17:3). When Edmund is rescued from the Witch, he meets up with his siblings and says “I’m sorry,” (*Narnia* 150) and they all shake hands. The Pevensie siblings demonstrate Bowden’s argument that forgiveness is a fundamental basis in Christianity (470). Just as the Bible states, the siblings forgive their brother. After the reconciliation, the siblings’ relationships are stronger than ever.

Betrayal is shown by Tumnus and Edmund; however, the most important betrayal is that of Edmund’s when he decides to side with the Witch (*Narnia* 46-47) which is also noted by Ward (28). He does not just betray his siblings; the betrayal stretches to all of the “good” animals in *Narnia* including Aslan who is “The king of the woods and the son of the great Emperor-beyond-the-sea” (*Narnia* 89). The sentence implies that Aslan is the son of God thus making him a Christ-like figure, which supports Schakel’s statement that Aslan is “the Narnian embodiment of Christ” (66) which is also conveyed by many other critics such as Ward who says that Christ is “The king of kings” (Ward 56). Ward’s statement is similar to Schakel’s and other critics’ description of Aslan. The fundamental theme of Christian messages and virtues, which this essay argues, are further shown by demonstrating the link between Aslan and Christ when it comes to self-sacrifice and resurrection of the Lion which will be demonstrated shortly. Edmund’s betrayal is similar to that of Judas in the Bible; Judas asked what he would get to deceive Christ and the answer was: “They paid him thirty pieces of silver” (Matthew 26:15). Instead of money, Edmund had become mesmerized with the Witch’s Turkish delight and is promised more if he hands over his siblings (*Narnia* 47). Edmund betrays his brother and sisters similar to Judas’s betrayal of Christ; however, Edmund’s reward is only a promise of sweets, which in this case is a little ironical since it does not take long for him to repent his action.

Edmund’s betrayal does not end with the forgiveness shown by his brother and sisters, because in the land of Narnia traitors belong to the Witch which she demonstrates when

talking to Aslan: “You have a traitor [...] You at least know the magic which the Emperor put into Narnia... You know that every traitor belongs to me as my lawful prey and that for every treachery I have a right to a kill” (*Narnia* 152-153). The repetition of “you” implies that the Witch stand above the Lion, pointing out that the Lion has made an error. The Witch is trying to invert the order concerning who has the most “power”, which is a form of parallelism. The quotation implies that each betrayal in the form of treachery must end with a killing from the Witch. This is a requirement set forth by “The Emperor” himself and cannot be overruled because if one does not obey the law, “all Narnia will be overturned and perish in fire and water” (*Narnia* 152-153); thus demonstrating that the Emperor’s laws are absolute. The sentence can be connected to the Bible: “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). The word “water” can be connected to Noah and the flood (Genesis 6:5-8:19).

The analogy between the Bible and *Narnia* is fascinating because Lewis, as mentioned earlier, had no intention of including Christianity in the novel from the beginning; Christianity moved into the novel by itself (Jacobs 267). When Jacobs observes that Christianity moved in, he draws attention to the fact that it was not Lewis’s original attention to incorporate Christian ideals. This happened automatically and is reinforced in the novel through narratorial comment. The resemblance between the Emperor and God is hard to deny. The Narnian people must fear the Emperor and the laws constituted by him. The Bible’s texts concerning untruthfulness explicitly state: “There are six things that the Lord hates... a lying tongue [and] a false witness who breathes out lies will perish” (Proverbs 6:16-19). Both the Emperor in the novel and the Bible emphasize the seriousness of lying; thus Edmund has gone against the Lord’s words in the Bible and the Emperor’s in the fictional world. The punishment of lying and consequently betrayal, according to both the Bible and the novel, is death.

The betrayal must in this case end with death, however, the Witch does not say that it must be Edmund who must die, only that someone must die, which Aslan knows; thus the Lion takes it upon himself to obey “God’s” law and protects Edmund by making the ultimate sacrifice (*Narnia* 155-156). Here a parallel is drawn to the death of Christ: “Greater love has no one

than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Both Aslan and Christ offer their lives to save others; Aslan saves Edmund from his betrayal while Christ died for humanity's many sins. One can also argue that Aslan did not only save Edmund, he saved the whole world of Narnia and its inhabitants since he believes in the prophecy which says that Narnia will be in order when two Sons of Adam and two Daughters of Eve sit at the thrones of Cair Paravel (*Narnia* 90). According to this essay, Aslan is not the most important character, since the Lion demonstrates that the most important individuals, in the story, are the children because if they do not sit on the thrones the prophecy will not occur; hence, Narnia will not be saved. One can argue that Aslan knows that he is the tool that is required for the prophecy to occur. This contradicts Ward's statement that Aslan is the most important character.

The deep magic in the fictional world, which Edmund breaks when betraying his siblings, is the same as moral law in reality according to Schakel (50). According to Schakel, Lewis's view on morality in real life is similar to the moral virtues in the novel *Narnia*. Schakel's view concerning morality extends to the fictional world presented in *The Magician's Nephew*, which further demonstrates that the narrator included morality in *The Chronicles of Narnia* (Schakel 50). Furthermore, Schakel says, “Morality grows out of faith, not just out of a desire to ‘do better’” (Schakel 51). The sentence is connected to Edmund after his talk with Aslan, where Edmund starts to have faith in the Lion. Through the newly achieved faith, a new moral attribute emerges in the form of courage which will be shown later on when discussing bravery. Schakel's view on deep magic is similar to that of Colbert's, who argues that deep magic “is the Narnian version of Lewis's belief in God's grace” (Colbert 33). In *Narnia*, grace is given after a betrayal has occurred. Instead of using the expression, moral law, in the story, Lewis embedded moral virtues in the form of deep magic because “magic” appeals to children more. Through imagination, children experience these values such as forgiveness and bravery, which is noted by Schakel (62). Even though Lewis claimed that the novel should not contain moral lessons, Colbert and Schakel demonstrate the opposite.

Before Aslan sacrifices himself to save Edmund from his betrayal, Edmund receives forgiveness from the Lion when the two of them are talking after Edmund's rescue (150).

Aslan's action can be connected to Schakel's statement above and especially Bowden's expression: "Forgiveness was a key aspect of Jesus' activity. He claimed the power to forgive sins..." (Bowden 470). Bowden shows that forgiveness is an important part of the Christian belief, and he connects it to Jesus's life. When Edmund is back with his siblings, Aslan says "there is no need to talk to him about what is past" (*Narnia* 150). The sentence shows that Aslan has talked to Edmund concerning his betrayal, and it also implies that he has forgiven Edmund; thus indicating that the siblings should also forgive him, which they do, as already mentioned. The forgiveness shown by Aslan and the children, interrelate with the Bible's statement that if the brother apologize he shall be forgiven (Luke 17:3). The sentence also demonstrates that Aslan helps the children to become better people, because if he initiate the forgiveness part; Lucy would have forgiven him because of her forgiving nature; however, Peter would not had shown forgiveness because this was not the first time Edmund did something wrong. In Peter's eyes, Edmund would still be "a little beast".

When Aslan announces that he "settled the matter" and the Witch had "renounced the claim on [Edmund's] blood" (*Narnia* 155) it demonstrates, as mentioned before, that he offered his life to save Edmund from his treacherous betrayal; thus demonstrating the Christ-like act of self-sacrifice. This is in accordance with Worsley's findings: "Aslan's forgiveness of Edmond is clearly without price to the boy, but at cost to himself" (Worsley 163). Worsley's statement is in accordance with Ward who also argues that Aslan saved Edmund from his treachery (3-4). The Oxford dictionary's definition of self-sacrifice: "Sacrifice of oneself; the giving up of one's own interests, happiness, and desires, for the sake of duty or the welfare of others." (Oxford dictionary) is exactly what Aslan does when he saves Edmund and the land of Narnia. Lippit is in agreement with the dictionary's statement when saying "self-sacrifice involves giving up the self, or life itself, altogether, for some other person(s) or good" (Lippit 131). Aslan absorbs the consequences made from his follower Edmund. The Bible argues that: "offering one's own life to save the life of another is the greatest act one can do" (John 15:13). This further demonstrates that the Lion makes the ultimate sacrifice.

As already established, the act of self-sacrifice was made to protect others; however, one can also argue that Aslan did it because he knew that, "when a willing victim who had committed

no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead...Death itself would start working backwards" (*Narnia* 176). This resembles the resurrection of Jesus, "who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Romans 4:25). Both Christ and Aslan were delivered to death because of others, and they were resurrected. In the Christian belief, sacrifice and forgiveness are essential aspects because they are linked to the actions of Christ. Dalton compares Aslan with Jesus when stating: "In embodying Christ's role as the savior, it is only Aslan who can die and pay the price for Edmund's betrayal, and it is Aslan who miraculously breathes upon and resurrects the statues, including Mr Tumnus" (Dalton 133). Aslan displays Christ-like characteristics when saving Edmund from his error in the same way Jesus did when sacrificing himself on for the redemption of all sins on behalf of mankind. Aslan's character does indeed resemble the characteristics displayed by Jesus in the Bible. Dalton's statement coincides with Ward's regarding Aslan as the most important character. Nevertheless, according to this essay, the Lion acts as a tool to fulfill the prophecy since it cannot occur without the children. However, Aslan continues saving the animals that were turned to stone, of which more shortly.

Before the Lion goes to the stone table to fulfill his promise to the Witch concerning the self-sacrifice, Aslan completes a last supper: "Supper that evening was a quiet meal. Everyone felt how different it had been the previous night or even that morning. It was as if the good times, having just begun, were already drawing to their end" (*Narnia* 159). The sad emotions that everyone is feeling are a contrast to the good times everyone had felt since Aslan arrived. Ever since the Lion "had settled the matter" with the Witch, there has been a feeling of unease in the camp among the Pevensie children and the Narnian animals. Everyone knows that something bad will happen however, no one knows what. Aslan's last meal is similar to Christ's last supper stated in the Bible: "When it was evening, he [Jesus] reclined at table" (Matthew 26:17-30, Luke 22:7-38). When Jesus sat down, he proclaimed that someone at the table would betray him. What differs is that Aslan had already been betrayed by Edmund and also forgiven him before his last dinner while Jesus announced the future betrayal at the final supper; still, the final meals are very much alike, even though the narrator does not go into detail about Aslan's last supper. Both the Lion and Jesus knew that they were going to die, however, neither of the two tried to oppose their impending fate; they embraced it. Jesus

sacrificed himself for humanity's sins while Aslan dies to protect Edmund and the world of Narnia.

The act of self-sacrifice does not only involve Aslan, it also extends to Edmund, who demonstrates this courageous action on the battlefield where he fights against the white Witch. When talking to Aslan, Peter says: "It was all Edmund's doing" (*Narnia* 192). What Peter is referring to is when Edmund sacrificed himself in order to break the Witch's magical wand. It is evident that Edmund did not only think of himself, he acted to save others; which is in accordance with The Oxford dictionary's definition that one should "give up one's own interests". Due to Edmund's action to engage a fight with the Witch and break her wand, he was wounded: "He was covered with blood, his mouth was open, and his face a nasty green colour" (*Narnia* 193). Edmund's daring act was not without consequences, just as Aslan's self-sacrifice, Edmund had offered himself to save others and was now in a critical state, as revealed in the words "covered with blood". The critical wounds suggest that it is not just an act of bravery; it is also an act of self-sacrificing that have been shown by Aslan and Edmund. Edmund's action is one of the aspects which this essay hopes to enlighten.

Furthermore, Tumnus demonstrates self-sacrifice after his betrayal of Lucy as already established. When Lucy forgives Tumnus, he realizes that he must let her go (*Narnia* 27) which is also noted by Ditchfield (49). Tumnus's decision is contrary to the Witch's proclaimed law, which states that all Sons and Daughters of Adam and Eve should be delivered to her; consequently, the punishment for not obeying the Witch's law is torture (*Narnia* 26-27). Tumnus demonstrates the Witch's punishment when talking to Lucy: "[The Witch] will have my tail cut off, and my horns sawn off...my beard cut off" (26-27). The words "cut off" show that betrayal is punished with pain. Even though Tumnus knows the outcome of betraying the Witch, he still does it; thus demonstrating the act of self-sacrifice since he does not care what happens to him as long as Lucy is safe. Tumnus's action resembles that of Aslan and Edmund from a biblical perspective since the Bible states that giving one's life to save another individual's life is one of the most important acts a person can do. Through the selfless act, Tumnus has saved Lucy from the Witch and also gruesome torture and persecution just because she is a daughter of Eve.

Self-sacrifice takes a great deal of courage which is demonstrated by Aslan, Tumnus, and Edmund. When Aslan sacrifices himself in order to save Edmund, he demonstrates great courage since he knows that he is going to die and the Lion stands firm in his decision, never doubting it since both Edmund and Narnia are going to be saved (*Narnia* 155). Ward describes Aslan's act as a demonstration "of true kingship" (Ward 51). The Lion's action is further described with the aid of the Bible, which states: "Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:6). The virtues "strong, courageous" are shown by Aslan when he decides to follow the Emperor's law and the Witch's demand for blood. While the Bible says that one should not "fear", Aslan shows "fear" when talking to Lucy and Susan on his way to the stone table: "I am sad and lonely". The words "sad" and "lonely" demonstrate that Aslan is afraid of the impending torture and death. Here Aslan differs from the Bible's statement even though he has a deeper knowledge about "God's laws" than the Witch (*Narnia* 176). Colbert, who also argues that Aslan possesses considerable knowledge of deep magic (33), notes this deeper knowledge. Aslan knows that he is going to be resurrected however; he is still scared, which is ironic since he is characterized as brave throughout the novel except in this particular instance.

Edmund's selfless act when he engages the Witch to break her magical wand is an act of bravery as noted by Peter when saying:

It was all Edmund's doing. We'd have been beaten if it hadn't been for him. The Witch was turning our troops into stone right and left. But nothing would stop him. He fought his way through three ogres to where she was...And when he reached her he had the sense to bring his sword smashing down on her wand. (*Narnia* 192)

Even if Peter fought directly with the Witch, he was not as brave as Edmund as seen in the first sentence: "It was all Edmund's doing". Peter is the eldest of the siblings, however, he takes a step back and highlighting his younger brother; thus suggesting the battle was won all because of Edmund. Edmund's heroic act does not only involve him fighting the Witch, he

has to fight “three ogres” which takes a lot of courage since he is not only young; he is inexperienced when it comes to battles and swinging a sword.

Tumnus’s exhibition of disloyalty towards the Witch suggests bravery from the faun’s side. However, Tumnus does not come off as a brave creature, when he is introduced to the readers, in his meeting with Lucy by the lamppost: “when he saw Lucy he gave such a start of surprise that he dropped all his parcels” (*Narnia* 16). The sentence shows that Tumnus is shy and afraid from the start. It can be interpreted in two different ways: Firstly, he is shy since he was not expecting to meet anyone thus becoming afraid; secondly, shyness is shown because Lucy is a daughter of Eve and he is therefore afraid of her on account of the Witch’s law. When Tumnus learns that Lucy is indeed a daughter of Eve, he becomes insidious and entices her with toast and cake (*Narnia* 19), since he knows what will happen to him if he disobeys the law, as mentioned. However, as mentioned earlier, when Lucy forgives Tumnus, he defies the Witch and demonstrates courage. Due to the encounter with Lucy, the faun has gained courage which is shown again when he participates in the battle, after the animals get rescued in the castle by Aslan when he says: “Our day’s work is not yet over” (*Narnia* 187). The phrase indicates that Aslan is talking to all the rescued animals; one of which is Tumnus, who will participate in the battle thanks to the courage he gained when he defied the Witch. The Bible’s statement regarding courage: “Be strong and courageous” (Deuteronomy 31:6) is a suitable interpretation of the bravery shown by Tumnus when he defies the Witch.

Another individual who becomes courageous in the fictional world is Peter who from the beginning is not brave. He becomes more courageous and less frightened as the novel progresses. The first encounter between Aslan and Peter demonstrates Peter’s cautious side:

“Go on,” whispered Mr Beaver.

“No,” whispered Peter, “you first.”

“No, Sons of Adam before animals,” whispered Mr Beaver back again.

“Susan,” whispered Peter. “What about you? Ladies first.” (*Narnia* 139)

Peter does not want to be the first one to walk up to Aslan and talk to him. He tries to persuade Mr. Beaver and then Susan since he is too afraid to be the first one to greet the king of the woods. The repetition of the word “no” and the shortness of the sentences indicate that Peter lacks courage and is timid of going first. However, animals are not allowed before humans. When it comes to Susan, Peter tries to act as a gentleman which is seen in the words “Ladies first” but he is turned down by his sister because she is also scared as indicated by the word “whispered”. Since both the beaver and Susan reject him, Peter is forced to “act like men, [and] be strong” (1 Corinthians 16:13). Peter shows that he is strong and courageous when saying: “Come on. Pull yourself together” (*Narnia* 139) and walks up to Aslan. Peter overcame some of the fear which takes courage to do.

Courage is further shown when Peter has to save his sister from the wolf sent by the Witch (*Narnia* 142-143). Peter acts in a similar way as he did at the meeting with Aslan. He is not brave at first, “Peter did not feel very brave; indeed, he felt he was going to be sick” (*Narnia* 143). The sentence demonstrates that Peter is afraid which is seen by the words: “not feel very brave...sick”, since he has never been in similar situation. Peter’s courage, at this stage in the story is something that he develops. Even though he is afraid, he must save Susan from the wolf. Peter decides to rush “straight up to the monster”, thus displaying bravery because he engages in combat with the wolf in order to protect his sisters. The Bible states: “Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong” (1 Corinthians 16:13). Peter believes that he can save Susan, thus suggesting firmness in his faith; he is strong because he confronts the wolf even though he is afraid, thus acting as a man.

Peter’s decision to face the wolf results in him killing the wolf: “[Peter] plunge his sword, as hard as he could...into the heart” (*Narnia* 143). Again, Peter demonstrates firmness in his faith, as mentioned earlier, in defeating his opponent. Moreover, it takes a great deal of courage to kill another individual, even though he does it to protect his sister. Aslan rewards the courageous act displayed by Peter by dubbing him (144). One can argue that Peter had to engage this fight to further develop his courageous quality which is seen when Aslan, before the conflict, says: “Back! Let the Prince win his spurs” (*Narnia* 142). The sentence suggests that no one except for Peter could participate; furthermore, the clash was needed so Peter

could command Aslan's army in the upcoming battle against the Witch and her army. It takes firmness, faith and strength to lead an army even for a future King as noted in the Bible: "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). Peter's brave battle with the wolf is an example of conduct and faith that make up for his young age.

Bravery is shown again in the battle between the two armies, where Peter is not only commanding his army; he is also fighting with the Witch (*Narnia* 190). Despite Peter's young age and limited combat experience, he engages the enemy's leader, the Witch, thus demonstrating courage. The decisions and actions, displayed by Peter, are examples of the moral development undergone by Peter from the beginning of the story up until now. The moral value concerning courage is a needed quality in a leader. Professor Warren Bennis, an expert in leadership studies, argues: "Leaders are made rather than born" (163), which applies to Peter's development regarding courage. Aslan started Peter's moral growth including leadership ability, when Peter had to fight the wolf. Henceforth, one can argue that Peter is made a leader through his moral value: courage.

Furthermore, Peter has shown weakness in the form of fear up until the fight with the Witch where he only demonstrates bravery which indicates that he has overcome the fear, the weakness (*Narnia* 190). Both Peter and the Witch were "going at it so hard...Peter's sword flashing so quickly" (*Narnia* 190). The sentence suggests that Peter is fighting without fear, demonstrating firmness and courage. There are no instances in the fight indicating neither fear from Peter's side, nor does he tremble since he has faith in himself that he will win; thus acting as the Bible observes: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed" (Joshua 1:9). Peter's character in the story is strong and courageous and in the mentioned battle, he is not frightened. One can fight because of fear, which Peter did in the fight against the wolf, however, is it out of courage that he fights the Witch.

The qualities courage, faith and firmness demonstrated by Peter makes him an ideal role model for children as discussed by Nodelman (72). Nodelman argues: "Children's stories should contain positive role models: characters who act in acceptable ways and get rewarded for it" (Nodelman 72), the qualities mentioned match Peter's characteristics that he shows in

his fight with the wolf. Nodelman points out that a role model has to be “rewarded” in some way which Peter is when Aslan dubs him “Sir Peter Wolf’s-Bane” (*Narnia* 144). Nodelman’s discussion suggests that the Christian messages and morals displayed, by the narrator, in the book about *Narnia* are similar qualities that children look for in a text. Peter’s qualities correlates to the Biblical descriptions.

The moral virtues and lessons: forgiveness, betrayal and courage are connected to Nodelman’s theory concerning what a classic children’s novel is and why it is read by children, when he writes: “Good children’s books teach valuable lessons about life, but to do so unobtrusively. They make learning fun” (Nodelman 73). *Narnia* provides important education through the Christian moral lessons, as the discussion has showed. However, this is not the reason why children choose this book; they read the novel because it is as Nodelman states: “anyone who likes to read knows that, whether we are children or adults, we do so primarily because we enjoy it, not because it’s good for us” (Nodelman 20). Children read the book since it is amusing and enjoyable; thus making moral lessons a side effect. While Nodelman argues that a book is read since it is amusing and enjoyable, Schakel argues that “The chronicles appeal to readers...because they satisfy an imaginative impulse. The appeal is...the making of stories involving the marvelous and supernatural” (62). As discussed in this essay, *Narnia* contains “supernatural” aspects such as resurrection which will be shown shortly. Schakel continues his argument by saying that “explorations of matters beyond and above everyday life” (62) are the reasons why the *Chronicles* and thus *Narnia* are read by children and has been for several generations. The moral values and lessons demonstrated by the children are just as important as the Christian messages displayed by Aslan, of which more shortly.

Aslan’s resurrection in the fictional world (*Narnia* 174-176) coincides with the Biblical text concerning Jesus: “so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (Hebrews 9:28). Peter and Edmund were waiting for him to save Narnia and end the battle. Aslan’s resurrection is also noted by Ward who briefly mentions the Lion’s courageous act (3). Lucy and Susan, who had seen Aslan die on the stone table, were mesmerized when they

saw him after the resurrection. They had stayed at the stone table hoping that it was just a bad dream, and deep down one can argue that they waited for him. They had faith in Aslan that he would come back and save them all which he also did when he killed the Witch. Jesus was strong when alive and dangerous for the higher priests, as Aslan is strong when alive. Both are then vulnerable before their sacrifice which is a paradox. Before Aslan dies on the stone table and completing his self-sacrifice, he is shaved, insulted and spat on (*Narnia* 164-165) to make him more vulnerable just as Christ was in the Bible: “They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him... and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said” (Matthew 27:28-29). Both Jesus and Aslan were humiliated before their respective deaths which is also discussed by Ward (51) when he talks about the Christian connection in the story. Self-sacrifice is one of the links between Aslan and Christ and it is in accordance with this essay’s argument.

Another similarity in the self-sacrificing act of Christ and Aslan is that neither Jesus nor Aslan ever speak a word to the accuser, they were silent even though they were humiliated and exposed to horrible mental and physical abuse, as mentioned above. Christ’s silence is shown in the Bible when Pilate accuses him: “he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed” (Matthew 27:14). Aslan demonstrates the same silent behavior, from the moment he approaches the enemies at the stone table and all the way through the abuse until he is dead. To be silent in the face of imminent death requires restraint since Aslan could have killed many creatures but he did not (*Narnia* 164-165); thus suggesting bravery, since he keeps his promise to the Witch. Aslan has courage to go through with the promise because he wants to save Edmund. Silence can also be interpreted as fear and not courage since neither Christ nor Aslan could change the outcome concerning their deaths. Many individuals are afraid of death, both in reality and in the story, however, an essential message, argued by many critics such as Colbert is: “death should not be feared because what lies beyond is better” (38). Colbert’s argument applies to Aslan who knows that he will be resurrected after his death, which also resulted in the salvation of both Edmund and Narnia. However, if Edmund dies the prophecy would be contradicted. It is to be noted that the “amazed” expression shown by Pilate is similar to the Witch’s reaction when Aslan

approaches the stone table to fulfill the self-sacrifice: “for a moment even the Witch seemed to be struck with fear” (*Narnia* 163). The words “struck with fear” imply that the Witch is amazed to see Aslan and that he kept his promise and conviction. Why the Witch was amazed is shown when she tells the Lion that he has not saved anyone, however, he has given her Narnia.

The stone table where Aslan sacrifices himself is similar to the execution of Christ discussed by the Bible. Instead of a stone table, Jesus was crucified on a cross and resurrected three days later; however, it did not take three days for Aslan to resurrect, only a matter of hours (*Narnia* 171). One can argue that the decision to make Aslan resurrect only hours later is because Aslan is needed in the battle against the Witch and her army. This argument is strengthened by the fact that it is Aslan who kills the Witch, thereby ending the bloodshed between the two armies. The Lion acts as noted by the Bible: “save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (Hebrews 9:28). Neither Peter nor Edmund knows anything about Aslan’s self-sacrifice or resurrection; the only knowledge they have concerning Aslan’s disappearance, is that he went away for some reason. Despite the fact that Peter and Edmund are brave enough to command the army and participate in the conflict, they have faith that he will return.

One can also argue that Aslan’s self-sacrifice resurrected Edmund in a way that he became the person he was meant to be; a brave individual and a future King of Narnia. Rodney L. Basset, a professor of psychology, argues that, “self-sacrifice may help people to self-identify” (134). Aslan’s life-giving act helped Edmund to “self-identify” himself in order to become his true self which was lost somewhere on the way to where he is now in the story; a courageous boy who sacrifices himself for others. When reading the novel, one does not expect Edmund to do any courageous acts, least of all, giving up his own life for other people since he has been a “little beast” for the most part of the novel.

When Aslan is resurrected, there was “a loud noise – a great cracking, deafening noise as if a giant had broken a giant’s plate” (*Narnia* 174). The repetition of how loud the noise is, demonstrates how important Aslan’s character is. It is a “deafening noise” just because it is the Emperor’s son who is resurrected. The quotation displays an irony when Lucy and Susan

who hear this great sound expect to see a giant however; they see Aslan, which is ironic because of the immense sound. The cracking of the stone table is similar to the death and resurrection of Christ as the Bible states: “[the] earth shook, and the rocks were split...there was a great earthquake” (Matthew 27:51, 28:2). The Bible’s version of Christ’s death and resurrection is similar to that of Aslan in the novel; thus supporting this essay’s argument

After the Lion is resurrected on the cracked stone table, he is larger than prior to his death (*Narnia* 175). The fact that Aslan’s appearance has changed indicates that he is more powerful than before. The Lion’s new appearance is similar to Jesus’s when God brought “him [Jesus] to life in a new, glorified state” (Biblegateway). Both Christ and Aslan changed after their respective fathers resurrected them. Due to the resurrection, the Lion gained new powers, which are shown when Aslan flies over the castle walls (*Narnia* 179). The new abilities: flying and to resurrect others, of which more shortly, demonstrate divine powers. Instead of flying and resurrecting others the Bible states that Jesus walked on water which no ordinary individual can do; thus, indicating that it is a divine ability (Matthew 14:25-26). The Bible also states that Christ could turn water into wine, which further shows Christ’s divine power (John 2:1-11). One can argue that Aslan demonstrates divine powers in the fictional world because Christ displays godlike skills in the Bible; thus, the link between Aslan and Jesus is additionally established.

Resurrection is additionally demonstrated when the Lion enters the Witch’s castle to save the animals who are held captive there (*Narnia* 179). The animals have been turned to stone by the Witch’s magical wand; however, the stone transformation is reversed by Aslan with one of his newly gained abilities, the ability to resurrect others simply by breathing on them (180). Aslan’s power is noted by Ward when saying that the Lion “gained authority...over death” (Ward 51) which is also mentioned by Ditchfield (68) and Shackel (175-176). When Christ resurrected, many people’s spirits were also resurrected suggesting that the resurrection of Christ played a part in the spirits revival thus indicating that Jesus was no ordinary man, he was the son of God (Matthew 27:52-53). As mentioned earlier, a parallel is drawn to Aslan who is the Emperor’s son. All of the stone animals inside the castle, “were coming to life” (*Narnia* 181) and the narrator tells the reader how colorful the castle

becomes. The castle changes from a dull, colorless “museum” to a colorful, lively “zoo” which is a direct contrast. From death to life.

In summary, *Narnia*, through its motifs of Christian virtues of forgiveness, courage and betrayal, presents the reader with meaningful moral lessons which have a practical usage in the real world. By camouflaging the Christian morals and the lessons to be learned from them within the characters in the mesmerizing, magical world of Narnia, the morals and the lessons are absorbed simultaneously as the fantasy novel is savored. In the words of Schakel:

Lewis in [*Narnia*] uses magic to give concrete embodiment to divine mysteries. He uses the phrase ‘Deep Magic from the Dawn of Time’ to describe the ‘Law of Human Nature,’ the ‘magic’ of proper values and behavior that, the story says, God implanted in the universe to show how people are supposed to behave and to enable to society to function in an orderly way. (Schakel 176)

Schakel argues that Lewis hid Christian messages, virtues and the lessons to be learned, inside the characters. Shackle’s findings are similar to Ward’s statement concerning Lewis’s letter to a child clarifying Christ’s involvement in *Narnia*, as earlier mentioned (Ward 4). Although the scope of this essay does not present it, an interesting feature for future research would be to connect the novel to other religions in addition to Christianity. The essay’s view concerning moral lessons and that they can be learned is similar to Schakel’s perspective since he argues that moral teachings need to be embedded into a story. This essay has presented the moral values: forgiveness and courage as well as messages of resurrection, self-sacrifice and betrayal from a Christian perspective since Lewis was a very Christian individual, as earlier mentioned. The virtues and messages are displayed to the reader through animal and child characters because it is more enticing to children. Children readers want to connect with the novel, as noted earlier and in that sense, *Narnia* is ripe with biblical messages and values for child readers to pick up on.

In *Narnia*, there is, as this essay has demonstrated, a mesmerizing world which does indeed provide Christian messages of resurrection, self-sacrifice and betrayal as well as moral values and lessons that can be learned from the virtues. Even though Lewis had no intention of

bringing in Christian allusions into *Narnia* and *the Chronicles*, he has provided a phenomenal story that is brimming with Christian messages and virtues. The moral values and the Christian messages shown by the children make it clear that these are crucial in the *Narnia* novel. As a novel about moral lessons and values, *Narnia* remains important to both children and adults. Through the words of Schakel: “With Narnia: we want the story to last, the joy of being in Narnia to be permanent; but the book ends and we must, like the children in the books, return to our own world” (*Narnia* 69), this essay and all its findings come to an end.

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