

# **The Wardrobe, the Witch, and the Lion: C. S. Lewis and Three Mysteries of the Christian Faith**

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## ***Abstract***

In this essay I muse upon three central, basic convictions of Christianity—the human spirit is boundless, the moral life is dynamic, and the Incarnation is paradoxical but historical. I will anchor my observations concerning each of these three mysteries to a term found in Lewis' title *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. The wardrobe suggests the wonder of embodied spirit, or our insides—measureless in depth, reach, and promise, measureless in imagination and moral potential. The witch suggests the dynamics of the moral life, one version of which is the self who descends into terminal nastiness, cruelty, and death. The lion suggests how the Incarnation can be imaged in the figure of Aslan both by the strategies of the mind's inferring the highest reality from a ontologically lower manifestation of it and by the New Testament understanding of God's suffering love.

## ***Keywords***

C. S. Lewis, Narnia, Aslan, Jadis, Christianity, inwardness, consciousness, spirit, moral process, choice, higher good, lesser good, evil, Incarnation, representation, paradox, hierarchy, suffering, magic.



C. S. Lewis was a university man, but with amazing skill, courage, and persistence he set himself against a fashion of thinking which has characterized the modern university and, indeed, the modern western world. This fashion, like the water the fish cannot see, is so encompassing and pervasive that, while we all may pick up hints of what we are in the middle of, it is nearly impossible to sustain any clear vision of the whole.

We may sum up this fashion as a strong prejudice against the truth of all that is most immediate to us by virtue of its being personal and subjective. Curiously, a few centuries ago, the term 'subjective' was honorific, while

'objective' denoted what was external and less certain. That has changed. The truths of inwardness have been heavily discounted. The modern prejudice distorts, denies, or ignores what cannot be quantified, measured, repeated on demand, or equated with other things in the external and public world.

I simplify only slightly when I add that Lewis insisted upon the final truth and significance of the qualitative over the quantitative. This was not so much a retreat into the warm fuzziness of poetry and story while rejecting the hard definiteness of the countable and the measurable as it was an insistence that the most important truths are not and never will be accessible to the objectifying methods of science.

I acknowledge that in some minor way Lewis' commitment to the truth of poem, story, and personal experience over what we might call 'scientific' truth owed to the fact that Lewis the scholar was so deficient in mathematical skill that Oxford had to make a special exemption for him to graduate with a degree. A scientist friend of mine says flatly that you cannot do science without mathematics. On the other hand, Lewis was no cripple as a publishing university scholar. He wrote a history of English Literature of the sixteenth century as well as an admired book on medieval romances and any number of books in the areas of philology and literary theory. He has been described as the great man at Oxford at his time, and another has said that he evidenced a most incredible memory. I would describe that memory as one of not only great storage capacity but also one of remarkable internal cross-referencing. When Lewis posed his memory a question or topic, as you or I might do a net search, he might come up with a dozen referenced drawn from several languages and literatures. And Lewis also had a well-trained logical mind which his spiritual autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, helps to explain to us. I believe he could not claim the same agility in logic and hyperlogics which we associate with trained mathematicians, especially the

dealing with the new geometries, but he was brilliant in argument, and typically his arguments drew into discussion the truth of the heart, or inner person, which can be very instrumental in persuading readers or hearers.

A perfect example of Lewis' skill in arguing persuasively, even when he is tilting against the whole trend of western thought, is in an introduction he wrote to a strange book by D. E. Harding, *The Hierarchy of Heaven and Earth*. Harding's book is about how to recognize realities superior to oneself, as well as inferior, in the great hierarchical scale of created things. For example, it seeks to answer questions like can we come to see an angelic being which is personal like ourselves but yet not visible to us the way that things on level with us (or, for that matter, beneath us) can be seen. Lewis commends the book as an effort to reverse an unfortunate trend that is two or three thousand years old. That trend, Lewis says, has been, first of all, to empty the natural world around us of presence or spirit. Then the external world, with the dawn of modern science, is emptied of color and value, for these things or qualities are said to be only projected upon objects by our subjective consciousness.

The process of this scientific alienation has continued its reductive movement toward a strange and confounding zero result. For we are finally assured that there is nothing inside us. Soul and spirit are denied. Consciousness, even, is routinely denied by major thinkers in psychology and artificial intelligence. I would say that the several books of John Searle mount a strong counter attack, saying that we cannot deny qualia, or the irreducible elements of our consciousness. (In essence, Searle pointed out that a computing machine can never have an idea of what it *feels* like to be a thinking being, but we can, and that this is the essential difference between AI and our own thoughts.) But his scholarly battle is firm evidence of how pervasive is the opposition with odd claims denying our human inwardness.

To return to Lewis. Committed as he was to the truths of the heart, or the

spirit, Lewis found it natural to see picture and story as apt media. Pictures have the power to encapsulate, to move us emotionally, to trap mystery for later reflection. Stories can sum up arguments more effectively than propositions can. To cite just one example of the latter, I recall the statement of the great missionary E. Stanley Jones that his Indian contacts might find the theories of the Christian atonement impenetrable, but the message of the parable of the Prodigal Son came through loud and clear: the Father-God is in His heart already reconciled, so let the wayward one turn and accept reconciliation.

Lewis is ever and always the persuader, the supreme rhetorician, appealing to heart as well as to head. The single finest book on Lewis that I am aware of is Corbin Carnell's *Bright Shadow of Reality: C. S. Lewis and the Feeling Intellect*. That subtitle is the vital clue to the book's content. Lewis is celebrated as a writer who keeps feeling and thinking together. A major theme in his life works is the effort to understand certain rare and precious feeling-stages, like those of joy, of awe or regard for the holy, and of mysterious recognitions of things not fully present. Because my own period specialty has been the English 17<sup>th</sup> century, I find this claim for Lewis especially suggestive. For a claim for the Christian metaphysical poets of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century was that they achieved the wonder of holding thought and feeling together. This was before the advent of what has been called a 'dissociation of sensibility.' I suppose the fact of the matter is that the best Christian writing of any age has in some wise held thought and feeling together in the exploring and teaching of truth.

Certainly this was true for Lewis. No writer in the last hundred years has been so effective in explaining important truths, not by science, but by couching them in pictures and stories that have unique persuasive power. No one finishes Lewis' last novel, *Till We Have Faces*, without some sense of the transcendent and holy conveyed in the tale of Psyche's romance on the

mountain top with Cupid the love-god. And no reader of the Narnia stories can leave them without certain pictures and events forever planted in memory, details which have important feelings associated with them.

With this frame now in mind, I want to now consider three well pictured themes in Lewis' Narnia story, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. I take up the three terms of Lewis' title in reverse order—the wardrobe, the witch, and the lion. Each pictures in splendid fashion a central mystery of the Christian faith. Of course, the best pictures can present mystery without dissipating it.

### *The Wardrobe*

On my first encounter with Narnia I had difficulty understanding what a wardrobe was, for in my family it simply meant a closet. I have since become acquainted with the freestanding English furniture pieces which may well have a double row of hanging garments. A wardrobe is not a room but a big box, and the particular wardrobe which seems to contain the whole of Narnia, or at least to open onto Narnia, is representative of an immense class of things which turn out to be much bigger—incredibly bigger—on the inside than on the outside.

Mystical and occult literature abounds with accounts of worlds that apparently are tucked away in the nooks and crannies of 'normal' objects and which can be entered into and known only through that object, which thus serves as a sort of cosmic portal. A friend who has been a career churchman in the Philippines tells me of the old conviction in that country that certain persons on the wrong side of the whole spiritual-power conflict can help you find a complete world in the trunk of the nearby coconut palm tree. To bring a recent genius into the discussion, I mention Dr. Seuss and his tale of McElligot's Pool. The boy fishing in the puddle is hopeful of finding something big, though the neighbor is doubtful. But the poet-artist

shows us a subterranean channel which connects with the vast ocean, and in that ocean is a fishy menagerie which only a person as uninhibited as Dr. Seuss could imagine.

Science-fiction, too, has its examples, not only in miniature universes at the subatomic level but in story. Take a story by a scientist's scientist like Arthur C. Clarke. In Clarke's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the giant monolith encountered by David Bowman beyond Jupiter proves to be a cosmic switchyard, granting access in its depths to the total universe. Clarke calls that section of his book "Grand Central Station." I find it interesting that Clarke once reported a dream of finding himself in New York's Grand Central Station but without any luggage. Given the fact that things bigger on the inside, like magic castles and monoliths, often provide trips for which one could hardly have packed luggage, his dream of Grand Central Station does tempt one to make connections with his space novel.

Lewis' wardrobe is this sort of magical box hiding a world that logic tells us cannot fit inside it. In Christian apocalyptic, the New Jerusalem is a fine example of a box, in this case a perfect cube that appears to be ample enough to accommodate an innumerable multitude. In high school, I recall reading with annoyance and disbelief a book by one of my newspaper favorites, Bob Ripley of the standing feature "Ripley's Believe It or Not." In his book Ripley took it on himself to ridicule the very idea of the biblical New Jerusalem, spinning out the arithmetic of how such a box could hold all the saints. People would presumably be standing on each other's heads, or worse. The argument seemed foolish to me as a teenager, for if the Heavenly City could house God as its light, it seemed perfectly obvious that we were not talking about ordinary containers. One can easily imagine this New Jerusalem being the perfect cubical container for spiritual and redeemed bodies.

Fix upon that word *imagine* for a moment. The corresponding noun is

*imagination*, and that term is yet another descriptor of the mystery of inwardness. By *inwardness* I mean everything we associate with our personal human state, things like consciousness, will, and imagination. (One can, of course, also use this word to refer to the whole creation as it is commonly understood to be the inside of something much larger, the outside being what has traditionally been called ‘transcendence’ or ‘Heaven,’ or the ‘supernatural,’ or ‘God,’ or some combination of these. That is a whole further disputation.)

My point here is that this inwardness, although it is apparently bound within the object housing it, is in fact—as the wardrobe illustrates—boundless, and my illustrations to this point have shared this paradigm. Things bigger on the inside, tapping into immensity (whether high, wide, or deep) are illustrative of this inwardness, of the mysteries of the spirit, and especially of the spirit as it is contained, embodied, housed, or boxed. Every one of us is an embodied infinity. The word *infinity* in its sense of the boundless, or of that that has not end, measure, or limit, is the right word here, for there is no way to measure or limit or quantify what we are on the inside.

### *The Witch*

Of course, the witch is the principal villain of the Narnia book *The Magician’s Nephew*. She begins as the potentate of Charn but ends up as the nemesis of the new world, Narnia, sung into existence by Aslan. There are three things to notice about the witch. First, though her ancestry is jinn (or genie) and giant, she is a beautiful woman, seven-foot tall we are told. As a beautiful woman, she hints of the age-long sorcery associated with sexual temptation, though in a children’s book Lewis plays this down. Second, by virtue of queenly station and unchecked power, she has lived out a long career as a destroyer of worlds. Third, though she is evil in the extreme, we

see something of the choices that have hardened her in the way of evil and this is in keeping with Lewis' constant attention to the dynamics of the moral life, which he took to be not a state but a process.

While Lewis is all but merciless in presenting Jadis, he does show her to be extremely beautiful and also of great vitality. When she appears briefly in England, on a city street, she seems more alive, we are told, than many ordinary English citizens. On the last page of *The Magician's Nephew*, Uncle Andrew—definitely not the moral center of the book—reminisces about Jadis as a “dem fine woman.”<sup>1</sup> That foolish man doubtless took a silly pride in his brief time with royalty, and here he acknowledged her womanliness.

Witches have long implied the dark side of feminine allure and eroticism. Patriarchal males have historically been uneasy about their own weakness when confronted with seductive women. Lewis has little interest in exploring this in the book at hand, but allow me to cite a few observations from Marvin Harris' book *Cows, Pigs, Wars, and Witches*. It is estimated that in Europe between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries half a million women were convicted of witchcraft and burned to death. Their crimes? Pacts with the Devil, copulation with devils, kissing the devil's backside, flying though the air mounted on broomsticks, intercourse with incubi or night spirits. It takes little imagination to see how sexual threats and anxiety figures in such accusations.

Now the last half-century has seen an earnest effort to rehabilitate witches, all as a part of the feminist backlash against the patriarchal. If you doubt this, check out the New Age section in your local bookstore. I found perhaps forty titles on witchcraft at the bookstore I visited recently. But as nearly as I can determine, the new witchcraft, or 'wicca' as it termed, is much more concerned with power, magical or otherwise, than it is with

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew* 221.

affirming the witch as a creature of sexual appetite and allure.

A second thing to notice about Jadis, later the White Witch, is that by virtue of her queenly station and power, she is able to live out a cruel career as a destroyer of worlds. She destroys Charn, where Polly and Diggory find her, by speaking the deplorable word. She names three other worlds she had destroyed previously. She is plainly an example of what Lord Acton noticed when he observed that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. I remind you that Lewis was writing in a time of evil potentates capable of exercising unprecedented destruction upon whole populations. Think of Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin, all of them firmly in power in 1940, the year our story opens. The tenure of tyrants like this is unfortunately far from over. Recently, I read the review of a new book on Kim Jong II, absolute ruler of North Korea. It is highly probably that this man has overseen the largest mass starvation of a subject people ever in history. Here is a man that flies in French chefs to bake his pizza. The world has not yet found an easy way to deal with such monumentally destructive self-aggrandizement at the expense of others.

It is the third fact about Jadis the White Witch that interests me most. Though she is evil in the extreme, we see her making (or eventually learn of) the choices that confirm her on her course. She traces out a moral process, as do all of Lewis' truly interesting characters. For Lewis is concerned with the dynamics of the moral life. Lewis is not so much interested in what evil is as he is in what evil does. Evil is not a matter of being but of doing. It is a matter of the will. So Lewis is interested in temptation, opportunity, and choice. How do characters become better or worse? He does allow for a group of agents that are supposedly always and only bad, bad by definition, but he is not much interested in them. In the witch's grim entourage at the Stone Table we have "Cruels and Hags and Incubuses, Wraiths, Horrors,

Efreets, Sprites, Orknies, Wooses and Ettins.”<sup>2</sup> They are all of the witch’s camp, and just plan bad through and through, but they are no more than props. Yet while Jadis is by ancestry part jinn and part giant, neither category quite damns her. The jinn or genie part gives her magic in her genes, and the giant legacy means she is tall and amazingly strong. But there can be good magic, and there are good giants, like Rumblebuffin. Consequently, Jadis, we must assume, is evil by how she uses her power and station. This is to say that Jadis is a free creature. Moreover, without a world to spoil, Jadis is almost sympathetic. When in the Wood between the Worlds, Jadis is weakened, half-lost, and needing help. We can guess that the prolonged time in that wonderful place, which is void of worlds to wreck, she might actually be redeemable.

As I mentioned above, Lewis focuses on moral process. Characters can begin good, become bad, and end up good, as with Edmund Pevensie. Characters can begin bad, become worse, and still end up good, as with Eustace of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. Also, there are those who simply begin as part of a bad lot, as do the Calormenes, a cruel people, and end up good, as Emeth does in *The Last Battle*. Finally, there are characters like Jadis of Charn who move from bad to very, very bad. As the White Witch she ends up unredeemed and slain.

Like J. R. R. Tolkien, Lewis can be credited with giving the modern reader some of the most compelling pictures of evil. But the problem any honest artist faces is how to present evil without drawing upon the stereotypes of prejudice and the primal human fears of what is life-threatening. (I won’t go into the ways that both Tolkien and Lewis do not perfectly escape stereotyping, Tolkien with his orcs of uncouth names and Lewis with his vaguely Turkish Calormenes and his treatment of wolves and short people.) The problem is that all the simple ways to present evil is

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<sup>2</sup> Lewis, *The Lion* 165.

simply that they depend upon prejudice or prejudgment of categories and thus slight the way things that are at one time life-threatening can be at some other time life supporting, like the wolf which nurses Romulus and Remus, the legendary founders of Rome. Moreover, any thing which exists now or has existed is in some way good, according to classical formulations, since the ancient Western philosophers thought that all created things begin as good and although they may become diminished or perverted, all things with being still have a core, or at least an element, of goodness.

Lewis avoids many of the perils of such stereotyping simply by being faithful to the dynamics of the moral life. The good can become evil, and the evil good. Lewis is a passionate and insightful moralist. His *Screwtape Letters*, featuring profound understanding of temptation and the human will, has been immensely popular over the years, though Lewis said he would give twenty of that book for a personal favorite of his, namely *Perelandra*, the science-fiction classic which is also a story of temptation and the moral life. In a capsule, in the character of the White Witch, as in the case of most of his characters, Lewis shows us how choices add up for good or for ill, or for first one and the other in alteration. There is good to be discovered and honored. Lesser goods, like Turkish Delight, often prove to divert us from greater goods. Evil, or the lesser good, is always an available alternative, but so too is the greater good.

So on the positive side we have redemptions, as with Eustace and Edmund. On the negative side we have Jadis the White Witch. I scarcely need to point out that all we have been saying about good and evil can be related to the traditional doctrine of the Fall. Human beings are a mysterious mixture of good and evil, and either element can be enhanced at the expense of the other.

I make one further observation about the dynamism of the moral life as Lewis sees the matter. Wrestling with the perennial questions of moral

choice and predestination, Lewis edges towards the conclusions that moral progress is genuine and not an illusion masking the fixed givens of predestination, and that those whose progress has been thwarted by ignorance of one sort or another may achieve a purgatorial redemption. For that clouded subject, I refer the reader to Lewis' dream-fiction, *The Great Divorce*.

### *The Lion*

Now to the lion, Aslan, the true ruler of Narnia, indeed its creator. I know of readers who have missed the theological import of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, but I know of none who has missed the majesty of its great hero. The mere mention of Aslan's name, early in the story, brings a frisson to the Pevensie children:

At the name of Aslan each one of the children felt something jump in its inside. Edmund felt a sensation of mysterious horror. Peter felt suddenly brave and adventurous. Susan felt as if some delicious smell or some delightful strain of music had just floated by here. And Lucy got the feeling you have when you wake up in the morning and realize that it is the beginning of the holidays or the beginning of summer.<sup>3</sup>

A bit later the name is spoken again: "'Tell us about Aslan!' said several voices at once; for once again that strange feeling—like the first signs of spring, like good news, had come over them."<sup>4</sup> And in the same passage, when Susie asks who exactly is Aslan, Mr. Beaver responds, "Why, don't you know? He's the King. He's the Lord of the whole wood."

We are led to believe, with Lewis, that the human heart can recognize all sorts of wonderful things that are somehow present even in their absence. This would be true for the near-universal hunches about a lost Paradise. It

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<sup>3</sup> Lewis, *The Lion* 74-75.

<sup>4</sup> Lewis, *The Lion* 85.

would also be true, as in this case, of high things, of the things above us, supernatural and lordly, kingly, eminent, up and out-of-sight, the implied ideal. The sense clinging to the mere name of Aslan is of legitimate authority, rule, preeminence, and the minds of the children and of all the animals of Narnia recognize this.

Aslan is the king of the beasts, but he is in fact much more than that. He is a picture of the God who becomes incarnate in the creaturely. And it is this fact of the Incarnation that brings us to a great problem for the writer: how does the biblical or Christian writer portray the invisible and the transcendent? Scripture preserves a book-long counterpoint on this question. God cannot be seen. Yet Moses sees his back. For Isaiah, God's ways and thoughts are beyond us, yet the youthful prophet sees God in the Temple. No man has seen God at any time, yet Jesus says that the one who has seen him (Jesus) has seen the Father God. But Jesus had (and has) a material body—does this fact lead one into idolatry, especially when the bible asserts that God is a spirit? This is not a moot point. In graduate school I had a friend who had grown up as a strictly orthodox Jew in Brooklyn. I invited him to my house for lunch one day but we ended up in his because I had nothing in my house that he could eat in good conscience. Over lunch we had a rich theological discussion during which he asked a loaded question over exactly this point: how does the Christian worship Jesus without being idolatrous? Jesus, if both God and man, must involve the believer in idolatry insofar as his human side is included in the worship. We parted friends, but he left without a an answer from me that satisfied him.

The question about how we see God as, or as fully present in, Jesus is, of course, the great mystery of the Incarnation. God takes on flesh. It is the paradox at the heart of Christian faith. And the paradox persists, but in a lighter sense, when we move from trying to understand just how God is fully flesh to trying to understand exactly how to *represent* this God who is fully

flesh.

There are two approaches to this paradox of representing the transcendent or divine. The first approach is to make use of the fact that the transcendent can be pointed to by way of moving up a hierarchical scale. From lesser things we move to greater things, and eventually we guess at what lies above the top.<sup>5</sup> The second approach is to simply affirm the Incarnation, to claim that the highest possible stooped in descent to the lower rungs in order to be fully present to mortal persons. The transcendent is self-revealed, and the revelation is of suffering love. This is the way of divine submission; of getting inside and underneath; of bearing the world on your back, like Atlas; of taking everything the world can throw at you, like the crucifixion. This is, in short, the way of God's revealing himself as patient and unfailing love, in full identification with what he has made. By stooping in love, God reveals his essential nature as suffering love, or the love that endures or undergoes.<sup>6</sup>

Why does Lewis dares to present us a lion as a figure of God and Christ? Because the creature as fit vehicle for the transcendent has been uncompromisingly affirmed in the historic faith involving the God-man who lived, was crucified, buried, and raised up to heaven to one day return in a consummate deliverance. In fact, Aslan illustrates for us how Lewis employs the two approaches, the one involving the metaphor of height, and the other, the metaphor of descent. He is regal, the high ruler, and we all have a sense for this by considering the reality of the lion itself as king of the beasts. Aslan is also the lion which submits to death on the Stone Table, bringing to play a magic from before the dawn of time. Lewis' biblical basis for that

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<sup>5</sup> *Climax* is a Greek term for the top rung of a ladder. And there are things beyond the climax which are not anticlimactic but super-climactic. In the same vein, *extrapolation* refers to (among other things) the process of inferring points that would lie on a line if that line is extended. In light of these words, I propose the term *ultrapolation*. As a term, *ultrapolation* would indeed well encapsulate this epistemological extending we do in order to picture or imagine what would be beyond the highest rung we can reach with our languages of description or analysis.

<sup>6</sup> From the Latin *sub + ferre*, to bear. Thus, 'to bear under' is a decent translation.

great phrase about primordial magic would be the reference to the cross that has always been a fact for God from before time. Thus Aslan represents the majestic, the high, the supreme (*supreme* from super, or above) and also the very low, the voluntary sacrifice submitting to the least worthy office.

Aslan's dual role merits further analysis. While the term *lion* appears more than a hundred times in the Old Testament alone, and while lions figure significantly in the stories of David, Samson, and Daniel, the bible does not apply to this animal our modern appellation of 'King of the Beasts.' That ascription developed over centuries. For much of human history all reality was to be understood hierarchically. Among other distinctions and classes, this resulted in the kingdoms of the vegetable, the animal, and the human kingdom. The lion, as nearly as I can determine, was denominated king because of his magnificent head and mane, and a broad face plainly binocular, all of which prompted comparisons with the human countenance and head.

Lewis makes much of Aslan's face and head, especially in the nightmarish scene of his being shorn and sacrificed. I quote:

Snip-snip-snip went the shears and the masses of curling gold began to fall to the ground. [. . .] "Oh how *can* they?" said Lucy, tears streaming down her cheeks. "The brutes, the brutes!" for now that the first shock was over the shorn face of Aslan looked to her braver, and more beautiful, and more patient than ever.<sup>7</sup>

Do not miss the edge on Lucy's term *brutes* for the tormentors. In contrast to them, Aslan—even a shorn Aslan—is no mere brute. In his death he preserves a majesty, an intrinsic worth and dignity greater than what any of his tormentors can muster.

I believe Lewis would claim that we all have some sense for natural

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<sup>7</sup> Lewis, *The Lion* 168.

hierarchy, for relative value, for dignity which commands respect, if not worship. At the top of the scale and beyond is the God who is always high and lifted up, supremely authoritative, supremely worthy. As Lewis' figure for the divine, Aslan hints all of this. But Aslan dies on the Stone Table, having submitted himself to a deep magic, according to which one life can be offered for another. I am happy that Lewis calls this 'deep magic,' for I have never fully understood the tit-for-tat, the mathematics, by which such a substitution can occur. The arrangement is mysterious and remains mysterious, just as magic at its core is supposed to be mysterious.

A graffito of early Christian times showed a crucified donkey with the inscription beneath, *Jacob worships his god*.<sup>8</sup> Here is the patent ridicule of a fundamental affirmation. God can die for the creature. But of course it is neither a donkey nor a lion but a unique human person who suffered the cross in what has mysteriously come to be the definitive revelation of the loving God who enters his world, suffers it all, and so redeems it. Aslan, the king of the beasts, lord of the wood, represents Lewis' bold picturing of a magnificent Christian conviction. The transcendent and divine can be pictured. Such picturing will draw upon notions of hierarchy and high things, and also upon the Gospel conviction that God is definitively revealed in the suffering yet finally triumphant person of Jesus Christ, God in the flesh.



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The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe is a fantasy novel for children by C. S. Lewis, published by Geoffrey Bles in 1950. It is the first published and best known of seven novels in The Chronicles of Narnia (1950–1956). Among all the author's books, it is also the most widely held in libraries. Although it was originally the first of The Chronicles of Narnia, it is volume two in recent editions that are sequenced by the stories' chronology. Like the other Chronicles, it was illustrated by Pauline