

Three Christian Symbols That Are Thematic Turning Points In “The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe”

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Abstract— Clive Staples Lewis was a British writer as well as a lay theologian who was born on 29th November 1898 and died 22nd November 1963. Around the world, he is best known for his fiction works and for his non-fiction Christian apologetics. For C.S. Lewis, the drama and joy of Christianity can be experienced in Narnia, which is more than a series of stories because they can be a moral journey. This series awakens in the readers an interest in the artistic circumstances of the gospel which has been there at the very start (Rogers xx). They are like a reminder in which if the gospel does not give immense joy, awe, hope, and fear, we may not have quite internalized what the gospel tells us (xi). "The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" is a beloved classic written by C.S. Lewis and is considered to be one of the most popular and enduring works of literature. The book “The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe” which is the first to be published, has three Christian symbols that are thematic turning points.

Index Terms— Three Christian Symbols, The Chronicles of Narnia.

I. INTRODUCTION

In literature, a thematic turning point pinpoints a particular moment or event in a story that manifests a significant change or development in the characters, plot, or themes. Thematic turning points are moments that accentuate the key themes and ideas of a story, and help to shape the reader's understanding of the complete story (Simmonds n.d). These moments can be discovered in the form of a character's decision, an event, or a revelation. These can also be found in the way of symbols, motifs and imagery that are used through the story. Many authors have written about thematic turning points in literature in their works. An example is J.R.R. Tolkien, who in his essay "On Fairy-Stories" states that thematic turning points in literature are pivotal for creating a sense of progression and development within the story. He contends that turning points serve to reveal the deeper meaning and purpose of a specific story and are essential for the reader's understanding of such story. As per Tolkien, these turning points should be weaved through a combination of plot, character progression, and the utilization of symbolic imagery. He pens: "The sudden 'turn' in the story or the revelation of a new aspect of it is a device to arrest attention and to lend liveliness. But it is not its prime purpose, and it is not an end in itself" (Tolkien 21). In the aforementioned essay, Tolkien delves on the significance of the turning points in literary pieces, as they act to manifest the deeper meaning

and purpose of a story, and are important for each reader's understanding of the story. He really believes that turning points should be made through a combination of plot, character progression, and the usage of symbolic imagery, and that it should not be an end in itself (21).

Thematic turning points are absolutely important in literature as they help to create a sense of progression and advancement within the involved story. They are also what makes a story worthwhile and memorable to each reader, as they help to convey the main message or moral of the story and its corresponding meanings. For instance, in "The Great Gatsby" by F. Scott Fitzgerald, the demise of Gatsby is a thematic turning point in that novel. It is the end of Gatsby's dream as well as the failure of the American Dream, and this serves as a reminder of the catastrophic nature of the pursuit of wealth and status (Fitzgerald 180). This event is actually a turning point in the story, highlighting the themes of that novel and shaping the readers' understanding of the story as a whole. Truly, thematic turning points are specific moments or events in a story that signal a significant change or development in the characters, plot, or themes that make the story meaningful and memorable to each reader (180).

Going back to “The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe,” the story is set in the magical land of Narnia and is about the adventures of four siblings as they explore this magical world and become entangled in a battle between good and evil. Such four siblings, Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy Pevensie, are sent by their parents to live in the countryside with an old professor during the war in London. While exploring the big house, these children find a wardrobe which leads to a mystical land called Narnia. They find out later that Narnia is under the curse of the White Witch a.k.a. Queen Jadis, who has made it forever winter and never Christmas. The children then meet Aslan, a lion and the real king of Narnia, who tells them that they are the selected ones to overthrow the White Witch and break her curse. Together with Aslan, the children set off on a journey to defeat the witch, with numerous adventures and challenges along the way. They eventually succeed in their quest and Aslan sacrifices himself to save Edmund who is labeled as a traitor. Aslan is murdered by the White Witch, but is resurrected and the curse is lifted, bringing the spring season to Narnia. The children return to their real world and discover that they have been gone for years (The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe 2002).

Amongst the most striking aspects of this story is the use of Christian symbols to convey deep and purposeful themes. In this short paper, we will be examining three of these symbols that serve as the thematic turning points in this Narnia novel.

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Each of these symbols represents a distinct aspect of Christian faith and serves to depict the deeper spiritual meaning of the story, playing a crucial role in the progression of the story and the characters. Through a closer look at such symbols, we will gain a better understanding of the elemental messages and themes of this timeless classic.

First, the lion Aslan is a symbol of God or Jesus Christ in the novel. He is a powerful and benevolent figure who sacrifices himself to save Edmund as well as the three other children and defeat the witch (The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe 32). This mirrors the story of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross to save humanity from sin. Aslan's resurrection also parallels the resurrection of Jesus (The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe Symbolism, Imagery, Allegory n.d.). Aslan serves as a guide and mentor to the children, teaching them about love, sacrifice, and redemption. His character definitely serves as a thematic turning point in the story, bringing hope and light to the darkness of the white witch's reign. Actually, the Bible has several references to lions and their symbolic meaning. In the Old Testament, lions are frequently characterized as powerful and fierce creatures, representing strength, courage, and royalty (Proverbs 28:1, Isaiah 31:4). Whereas in the New Testament, Jesus Christ is referred to as the "Lion of Judah" (Revelation 5:5), focusing on his strength and authority as the Messiah. The Holy Bible also talks about the perception of sacrifice and redemption, and in the New Testament, Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is seen as the eventual act of love and sacrifice for the salvation of humanity (John 3:16). He readily gave his life as a ransom for many people (Mark 10:45) and his resurrection is seen as the ultimate victory over sin and death (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). With regard to Aslan, this character can be considered as a representation of Jesus Christ and His teachings. The representation of Aslan as a powerful and benevolent figure who sacrifices himself to save the Pevensie children, and defeat the evil witch, manifests the story of Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross to save humanity from sin. This resurrection of Aslan is similarly compared to the resurrection of Jesus Christ emphasizing on hope and redemption. On the one hand, Aslan is considered as a guide, teacher, and mentor to the four Pevensie children. His leonine character indeed serves as a thematic turning point in the story, bringing hope and light to the darkness of the white witch's reign. (Proverbs 28:1, Isaiah 31:4, Revelation 5:5, John 3:16, Mark 10:45, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, Lewis 32, 45). Second, the white witch is a symbol of Satan or the devil. She is a powerful and malevolent figure who seeks to control and enslave the people or creatures of Narnia (C.S. Lewis, The Official Website of C.S. Lewis n.d.). Her character serves as an archenemy to Aslan, with her representing all the evil in the world. The witch's defeat by Aslan in the end of the novel represents the defeat of evil by good and the triumph of righteousness over sin (The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe 50). The Holy Bible has several mentions of Satan with his nature as a deceiver and archenemy of God. Satan is typically seen as a powerful and malevolent figure who wants to control and enslave people, leading them away from the Almighty God (John 8:44, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Ephesians 2:2). In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is portrayed as the final conqueror of Satan, defeating him through his death and

resurrection (Colossians 2:15, Hebrews 2:14). In connection to the witch in "The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," her character can be seen as a representation of Satan or the devil. The depiction of the witch as a powerful and wicked figure who seeks to control and enslave the people or creatures of Narnia is reminiscent of Satan's nature as a deceiver and archenemy of God. The white witch's defeat by Aslan represents the defeat of evil by good and the triumph of righteousness over sin, which is quite similar to the Holy Bible's teaching about Jesus Christ defeating Satan through his death and resurrection. (John 8:44, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Ephesians 2:2, Colossians 2:15, Hebrews 2:14, Lewis 15, 50)

Third and last, the wardrobe serves as a symbol of the doorway between the ordinary world and the spiritual world. The Pevensie children go to the magical land of Narnia through this wardrobe, with this physical entering representing their spiritual entering to another world (The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe 10). The wardrobe is considered as a means of escape from the reality of war and the children's simple lives, leading them to a world of excitement and adventure. This could symbolize the idea of finding salvation in Christianity and the idea that faith can bring new perspectives and meanings to one's life. The Holy Bible has various references to the idea of entering a spiritual realm or experiencing a spiritual transformation. In the New Testament, Jesus talks about entering the kingdom of God (John 3:5) and being born again (John 3:3), which both attribute to the idea of going through a spiritual transformation. The apostle Paul also mentions about the idea of being transformed by the renewing of one's mind (Romans 12:2) and putting on a new self (Colossians 3:10). C.S. Lewis knows how frequently the door is utilized metaphorically in the Bible's New Testament.

References are made to "striving to enter [heaven] by the narrow door" (Luke 13:24), to "the door of faith" (Acts 14:27), to "a wide door for effective service [being] opened" (1 Cor. 16:9), to "a door [being] opened for me [Paul] in the Lord" (2 Cor. 2:12), and to God opening up to us a door for the word "(Col. 4:3). Jesus Himself is often associated with a door. For example, after Jesus relates to His disciples some of the signs of the end times, He says: "When you see all these things, recognize that He [God] is near, right at the door" (Matt. 24:33). Better known perhaps is Christ's famous statement in Rev. 3:20: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me C).

According to Lewis, Jesus Christ said after His crucifixion: "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father, by through Me" (John 14:6). Lewis' knowledge about such Scriptural passages are seen throughout his famous series "The Chronicles of Narnia." Doors are mentioned significantly in the "stories and echoes of the Biblical references made above resonate clearly. Four specific points about Lewis' use of doors are noteworthy: 1) Literal doors lead to the Door, Aslan; 2) Aslan is a two-way door; 3) Passage through the different literal doors into Narnia is

always unplanned; and 4) All who enter the doors are called into Narnia, but none are compelled to stay; indeed, some who are called do not seem to belong (King 25).” The wardrobe is also seen as a means of escape from the reality of war and the children's mundane lives, leading them to a world of magic and adventure. This could symbolize the concept of finding salvation in Christianity and the idea that faith can spring forth new perspectives and meanings to one's life (John 3:5, John 3:3, Romans 12:2, Colossians 3:10, Lewis 10)

Undoubtedly, C.S. Lewis uses a variety of Christian symbols and themes to convey the novel's themes and to serve as thematic turning points in "The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," with the above-mentioned three as the most prominent, being in the book's title itself: The lion Aslan, the witch, and the wardrobe,, each representing a different aspect of Christianity.

To sum it all up, the lion, the witch, and the wardrobe are really considered thematic turning points in "The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" because aside from each one representing a different aspect of Christianity, each plays a crucial role in the progression of the story and the characters. These three symbols are the focal point of the novel and are the key to understanding the Christian themes that are present throughout the story. They act as thematic turning points because they help to shape the characters' understanding of themselves, their world, and their relationship with God. Indeed, Lewis uses a variety of Christian symbols in this novel so as to manifest the novel's themes and to serve as thematic turning points. The lion Aslan, the White Witch, and the wardrobe are the three main prominent symbols in the novel, each bringing a different aspect of Christianity and having a significant role in the story's development as well as the characters. Aslan stands for self-sacrifice, redemption, and love, the white witch for evil and the impact of standing against it, and the wardrobe for the entrance into the spiritual world and also the idea of finding salvation through Christianity. These three symbols, along with the characters' reactions to them, serve as outright thematic turning points that lead the readers to understand the novel's themes and messages, making the story more interesting and meaningful (Lewis 15, 32, 45, 50, 10).

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