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ALLEGORY IN C.S. LEWIS'S  
*THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE:*  
A WINDOW TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

by

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Why would a Christian college student be reading fairy tales for homework? Or better yet, why would a Christian English teacher be using fairy tales in a college class on Biblical Literature? The answer might be found when a teacher chooses to introduce a particular book of the Bible with literature that is about the Bible. The gospel of John and one of C.S. Lewis's Narnian Chronicles, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, work well to illustrate the union of fairy tale with Biblical truths.

When focusing on the literary aspects used in the gospel of John, a teacher would naturally desire to include a study of poetry as used in John 1, allegory as found in the parables, description as utilized in the parables, dialogue, and thematic organization (Resseguie 295; Kermode 448-53).

But when focusing on the introduction of the gospel of John to students, the teacher might want to consider allegory, especially the allegory found in C. S. Lewis's fictional works. Lewis's Narnian Chronicles, and in particular the first of the series, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, "are an important addition not only to the library of children's literature, but also to the rare realm of Christian myth and symbolism. They can be profitably read by adults and will be reread by children after they become adults" (Cunningham 155).

Many students have already read *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* in their childhood years and if they have not, they will be treated to a book full of the medieval imagery of kings, queens and themes of good versus evil. Combined with the medieval images are the fairy tale elements of talking beasts, witches, fauns, giants and dwarfs. All is written in Christian symbolism and allegory: perfect devices for gaining students' attention and introducing, or opening a window, to John's gospel.

### **Why This Story?**

C.S. Lewis believed that "a children's story is the best art-form for something you have to say" (Lewis, *On Stories* 32). So he took a fairy-tale image from his childhood, a faun carrying an umbrella, inserted a lion about which he had been

having dreams (53) and began a delightful children's story that ended up as Christian allegory only because the Christian "element pushed itself in of its own accord" (46).

Children's narrative, in the form of the fairy tale, is simple and straightforward. Lewis liked the fairy tale form because it excluded a love interest and close psychology,

And the moment I [Lewis] thought of that [the Fairy Tale] I fell in love with the Form itself: its brevity, its severe restraints on description, its flexible traditionalism, its inflexible hostility to all analysis, digression, reflections, and 'gas'. I was now enamored of it. Its very limitations of vocabulary became an attraction; as the hardness of the stone pleases the sculptor or the difficulty of the sonnet delights the sonneteer. (46-47)

Lewis used the fairy-tale form to "steal past those watchful dragons" (47) of difficult theology that he felt froze the feelings of the individual towards the simplicity of the story of salvation. Therefore he was writing for children "only in the sense that I [Lewis] excluded what I thought they would not like or understand; not in the sense of writing what I intended to be below adult attention" (47). *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is basically the gospel story, written simply, for all (children and adults) to read and enjoy.

One finds a freshness, a serious delightfulness, in opening a section of God's book with Lewis's work. This book can help "steal past those watchful dragons" guarding students who have heard the salvation story many times and would therefore be inclined to tune out "one more time," while still appealing to students not raised in a Christian institutional system.

### **Who is C. S. Lewis?**

Lewis has been a major contributor and well-loved Christian author for both his non-fictional and fictional writings. His non-fictional books contain such well-known titles as *Mere Christianity* and *A Grief Observed*. The former was originally broadcast as three radio talks during World War II and is so packed with moral ponderings that Christians worldwide have kept it foremost on their bookshelves. The latter book was written after the death of his beloved wife, Joy, and has provided

much comfort and insight to those who have suffered the loss of a loved one. Lewis addressed major spiritual issues in his many non-fictional works, but he also addressed many of these same issues in his fiction.

Besides the Narnian Chronicles mentioned in this paper, one of Lewis's most popular fictional works is *Screwtape Letters*, a small book filled with ironic letters of a senior devil's communication and advice to a junior devil who is trying to devise ways of tempting humankind. Lewis seemed to enjoy the art of bringing out profound biblical truths in different genres.

Perhaps Lewis's delightful sense of humor and wit found in both his fiction and non-fiction is inherited from his Irish upbringing. Clive Staples Lewis was born in Belfast, Ireland in 1898. He was then sent to England for much of his schooling, including his university years at Oxford. Most of his adult years were lived in Oxford where he eventually was promoted to professor of Medieval and Renaissance literature. He died on November 22, 1963.

Lewis lost his Christian faith early in life and remained a proclaimed atheist until his early thirties. Religious discussions with his good friend and popular fellow author, J.R.R. Tolkien, prompted Lewis's conversion to Christianity. After his conversion, Lewis authored almost a book every year and sometimes more, all religious oriented. He enjoyed Christian fellowship and shared many of his works in progress with The Inklings, a group of writers consisting of Lewis, Tolkien, Owen Barfield, Hugo Dyson and Charles Williams (Christopher 6).

Lewis's books range in genre from fairy tales to science fantasy to Christian apology and have touched lives in almost every aspect of the Christian walk. A teacher can provide an audience for this well-loved and thought-provoking literature by using Lewis's fairy tale, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, in a Biblical Literature class. This is one way of letting Lewis use his craft to retell an old story relevant to youth today. In the classroom, his story can lead students from an enchanted world to its allegorical counterpart in the Bible providing new insight and relevance for living a Christian life today.

### **The Narrative**

*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* begins taking shape during WWII when the four Pevensie children, Peter, Edmund, Susan, and Lucy, are sent to the countryside from London to live in a large house with an old professor and his housekeeper (the story must have been reminiscent to Lewis of when he also took London children into his country home during WWII).

One day, while the Pevensie children are playing, Lucy finds an entrance into the land of Narnia through an old wardrobe. She meets a faun, Mr. Tumnus, and over tea he tells her about the White Witch's spell on Narnia. The White Witch destroyed many of the good animals of Narnia and enlisted all the bad ones on her side. She made the land to be in a perpetual state of winter (yet never Christmas) and does her best to root out the remnant of good animals left in the land. The faun knows she will be especially interested in Lucy and her siblings since there is a prophecy predicting the witch's death if four children should sit on the thrones of Cair Paravel, the capital of Narnia.

Edmund is the next of the children to find his way into Narnia through the wardrobe. His first contact with the inhabitants is the beautiful but bloodless White Witch (similar to Snow White's witch) who feeds him Turkish Delight and convinces him he will become king of Narnia if he should only bring his siblings to her. With promises of more Turkish Delight swirling in his head, Edmund heads back home. Interestingly enough, no matter how much time the children spend in Narnia, not a minute passes in their homeland.

All four children next enter Narnia, and the adventure begins when they find out Mr. Tumnus has been taken captive by the White Witch for befriending Lucy. The children decide to stay in Narnia until they rescue the faun. A remnant of Aslan's people hiding in the caves and deep woods are delighted at finding the children and the expectation of the witch's overthrow. They protect the children and lead them towards Cair Paravel to meet Aslan, who is rumored to be on the march towards Narnia.

Meanwhile, Edmund, who has not told the others of his meeting with the witch, escapes and finds his way to the White Witch's castle. He is not greeted warmly, as he expected, and is given stale bread instead of Turkish Delight. The witch is furious with Edmund at not having brought his siblings to her and is exasperated at hearing the news of Aslan's return.

Peter, Susan and Lucy have many adventures on their way to Cair Paravel, including meeting talking animals and narrowly escaping the witch's police wolves. As they approach the capital they notice that Aslan's return is causing the snow to melt and the flowers to blossom--spring has returned to Narnia.

The White Witch drives her reindeer towards the three children to catch them before they meet Aslan, but she discovers her way hindered when the sledge runners stick in the mud from the melting snow. Edmund is put under the whip and kept hungry. He begins to deeply regret his desire for power over his siblings and realizes he will be lucky to get away from the witch alive.

The three children finally meet up with Aslan, the great golden lion, and are filled with joy and expectation. Aslan gathers his faithful from hiding where they have awaited his return. He then has a confrontation with the White Witch. She claims she has the right to take Edmund's life, since by law death is a traitor's sentence. The reunited four children despair as Aslan quietly talks with the witch. She leaves triumphant while Aslan's countenance is sad.

Later that night Aslan sneaks off (with Susan and Lucy following at a distance and watching) and turns himself over to the White Witch and her nasty crew of followers. He permits himself to be humiliated, beaten, and then killed with a stone knife put through his heart while tied to a stone table. Finally, the witch and her crew leave to find and slaughter the army of Aslan's followers.

Susan and Lucy come out of hiding and weep by Aslan's body. As the morning light appears they look up to see a broken stone table and a triumphant and alive Aslan. He greets the children joyfully and explains that although the witch knew the law, she did not know the deeper magic which allowed a willing victim to die in a traitor's stead, causing the stone table to break and reversing death itself.

Aslan goes to the witch's castle and restores (by breathing on them) all the animals she had turned into stone with her magic wand. The witch is then defeated in battle, and the children, who fought courageously, are set up on the four thrones of Cair Paravel where they rule for many long years.

One day while the children, who are now grown, are out hunting a white stag, they discover the door to the wardrobe and after passing through it are back in the professor's home. To their astonishment, no time has passed and they are again four young children at play.

### **Allegory**

One may find many directions, besides those addressed in this paper, in which to take the symbols and allegory of Lewis's fairy tale. For example, the development of each child's personality could demonstrate the qualities of good and evil and Christ's as well as our response to those qualities. Plato could also be discussed in connection to what is reality and unreality. The real world of Narnia is challenged at the start of the story when only Lucy enters Narnia and the other children, concerned for her stories of another world, take their concerns to the professor. The professor causes the children to question their underlying belief in the reality of only one world. Paul Ford, author of the *Companion to Narnia*, feels that "not only is this method of examining one's fundamental assumptions recognizably Socratic, but an important Platonic theme is touched upon here which Lewis develops throughout the remaining books" (221). Many other implications, such as those mentioned above, could be raised from reading Lewis's work, but the focus in this paper will be almost exclusively on the allegory which relates to the salvation story.

M. H. Abrams defines allegory as

a narrative in which the agents and action, and sometimes the setting as well, are contrived so as to make coherent sense on the "literal," or primary, level of signification, and also to signify a second, correlated order of agents, concepts, and events. (4)

Abrams clarifies his definition by drawing a difference between using allegory to represent historical or political personages and the allegory of ideas, which has a plot incorporating a doctrine or thesis, and literal characters representing abstract concepts (5).

Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* is an example of political allegory. He uses specific characters and places in his work to represent particular people and places in the political realm of his day (Flimnap, the Treasurer, represents Sir Robert Walpole, the Whig head of government; Skyresh Bolgolam represents the Earl of Nottingham, an enemy of Swift; Blefuscu represents France, and so forth). He also provides a delightful narrative for children that has been adopted for television.

John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* provides an excellent example of abstract allegory. The narrative can be read purely for the story's pleasure or by relating the characters in their allegorical sense to their names (Christian represents a Christian person, Mr. Worldly-Wiseman represents a man who is wise to the ways of the world, and so forth).

The beast fable, which includes talking animals representing human types, is one of many different literary genres representing a special type of allegory "in that they all narrate, though in varied forms, one coherent set of circumstances which signify a second order of correlated meanings" (Abrams 6). Fables, folktales and fairy tales are among others that can fall into the special type of allegory should the author write with this intention.

It is precisely this written "intention" that Lewis lacked in his writing of any of the Narnian Chronicles. Lewis denied that his works were allegory (Lewis, *On Stories* 46, 53). In terms of a narrative like *The Pilgrim's Progress* where every character symbolizes a Christian or non-Christian trait, his works are not allegorical. But if one considers Abrams's definition which embraces different literary genres, then Lewis has indeed written a narrative that is good story telling on a primary level and also where a "correlated order of agents, concepts, and events" (4) is viable on a secondary level.



Madeleine L'Engle, an author shedding some light on the thoughts of a fellow author of fiction, says she "understand[s] Lewis's protestations that he is not writing allegory; of course he isn't. Nevertheless, there is an allegorical level to his stories . . . the writer cannot strive for it deliberately for that would be to ensure failure" (xiv). She says it does not bother her that Lewis did not feel he allegorized at all in the *Chronicles of Narnia*. L'Engle feels that all kinds of things happen when a writer opens up to a fantasy world that is often more real than the daily world and that Lewis listened well and set down what he saw and heard (xv). In the Christian sense, she considered, "If grace comes during the writing of fantasy, the writer writes beyond himself, and may not discover all that he has written until long after it is published, if at all" (xv).

Even though Lewis did not write his stories to be allegorical, his Narnian Chronicles fit Abram's definition of allegory. Readers from all backgrounds, including fellow authors, read them as allegory. Many readers feel as Madeleine L'Engle, that God must have tremendously blessed Lewis in the production of his book. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is so perfectly symbolic of the story of salvation, it could not be an accident that it came out as it did.

### ***The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe: General Allegory***

Lewis's delightful narrative fulfills Abrams literal or primary level by making coherent sense without the allegorical application. It can be enjoyed by children or adults purely for its good story telling, although an adult will be more apt to apply the symbolism. There are many ways in which to focus on the second or allegorical level of ideas. How the plot exemplifies the doctrine of salvation would be the major application used in a Biblical literature class.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Before applying the allegory, it would be profitable for students to have already gained an understanding of allegory by definition and to have read Lewis's work. A teacher would then feel comfortable involving students in a collaborative effort, first by example and then on their own, to search and find any general allegorical components obvious to them. The rest can be pointed out by the teacher.

*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* does not give any background as to how evil entered the world (Lewis addresses that in another book); instead, the Narnia to which the reader is introduced is already enveloped in the grasp of the evil snow-covered Narnian world that is "always winter and never Christmas" (16). It seems quite a wonderful world when Lucy, the first of the Pevensie children to enter Narnia through the Wardrobe, meets Mr. Tumnus, the enchanting faun who takes Lucy home for tea. Lucy believes the stories Mr. Tumnus tells her about the White Witch's evil spell over the land and some of the animals and how four humans sitting on the thrones in Cair Paravel can break the spell.

Later, Edmund enters Narnia and meets the White Witch. When he sells his soul for some Turkish Delight, Lewis has set the groundwork for his narrative. Here is a world enveloped in evil; humans enter the scene: one standing on the side of good and the other on the side of evil. At this point the Christian allegory begins to develop. Both our world and Narnia are enveloped in sin, but in Narnia Lucy is always willing to believe and takes steps of faith before the other children. We see Lucy, as perhaps a character type, or perhaps the side of us that Jesus comments on when He says "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt 26.41). Her spirit is always willing, but she is also chided by Aslan for disobedience (176-177).

Along comes Edmund, another character type or possibly the flesh, giving in to those seemingly tasteful moments of pleasure. He later learns what it is to be fully in the grasp of sin: there is no more Turkish Delight and the White Witch makes him totally subservient. How like sin! It is so delightful to look at and taste, but once within its evil grasp, the shackles start forming and we find ourselves in where we cannot possibly get out. Lewis's Turkish Delight here could have an obvious direct correlation to drugs or any addictive substance such as opium, heroin, nicotine, or alcohol. But it could also be sin called by any name (as in thievery, drunkenness, adultery, and covetousness 1 Cor 6.9-10) and which is addictive in just the same way as drugs.

Peter and Susan enter Narnia and the drama continues as the group splits up: three children heading off with Mr. and Mrs. Beaver to find Aslan, and Edmund

going in search once again for the White Witch and her Turkish Delight. Here we find many lessons about sin: Edmund does not see the White Witch for her evil because of the Turkish Delight; he is not even able to rationally listen to others speak of her evil because she has blinded him; and, he eventually is even willing to do harm to his brother and sisters for his habit and his quest for power. Lewis easily points out the sinful nature of man through Edmund and his childish desires.

Aslan comes and saves the world from the White Witch, just as Jesus comes and saves this world from sin. Both die for the sinner: Aslan for Edmund and Jesus for mankind. In both stories, the Law had been written from before the Dawn of Time that any traitors or sinners had to die for their sins. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the White Witch makes a bargain with Aslan, his life in exchange for Edmund's life, just as in the gospel story Jesus takes the place of fallen humanity. The witch thinks she will rule the world if she can kill Aslan, and Satan worked all his wiles to put Jesus to death thinking the world would be his once the Son of God was dead.

Neither knows the complete power of God. The Deeper Magic, as Aslan called it, from before the Dawn of Time, is unknown to the White Witch. The Deeper Magic says that when a willing victim gives its life for another, the spell will be broken. Aslan, in a parallel with Jesus, has the power within himself to be resurrected. The two Mary's are the first to see the resurrected Jesus, and Susan and Lucy are the first to see the resurrected Aslan.

Aslan's first job is to return life to all the good Narnian creatures the White Witch has turned to stone with her magic wand. He breathes on each one and life returns to their souls. Jesus's gift in the resurrection is to give the Holy Spirit to His followers which He does by breathing on them (John 20.22). Aslan and the good army then conquer the White Witch and set the children up to rule on the four thrones of Cair Paravel until he comes again. Jesus set up his kingdom of priests on earth (Rev 5.10), His children (Matt 18.3), and promises his people he will come again (Acts 1.9-11; John 21.23).

The general allegory tells the story of salvation found in the gospels. As Richard Cunningham expresses,

He [Lewis] touches the nerve of religious awe on every page. He evangelizes through the imagination. . . . The fairy tale can help to set before the imagination something that baffles the intellect. And then, having returned from fairyland to the blinding glare of our own world, perhaps--just perhaps--one will see more clearly the deeper dimensions of life. (155-156)

So Lewis, in his Narnian Chronicles, of which *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is the first, through a kindling of the imagination, brings his readers to God (156).

Lewis alludes to the identity of Aslan as Christ when in another of the Narnian Chronicles, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, he tells Lucy and Edmund they will not return to Narnia:

"Dearest," said Aslan very gently, "you and your brother will never come back to Narnia."

"Oh, Aslan!" said Edmund and Lucy both together in despairing voices.

"You are too old, children," said Aslan, "and you must begin to come close to your own world now."

"It isn't Narnia, you know," sobbed Lucy. "It's *you*. We shan't meet *you* there. And how can we live, never meeting you?"

"But you shall meet me, dear one," said Aslan.

"Are--are you there too, Sir?" said Edmund.

"I am," said Aslan, "But there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there."

Lewis's allusions to the gospel story are obvious, and as he demonstrates in the dialogue above, he all but comes out and tells his readers Aslan's true identity. This is not the abstract allegory found in *Pilgrim's Progress*. It is rather the allegory of the beast fable, the folktale and the fairy tale, narrating a coherent set of circumstances on one level and representing a second order of correlated meanings.

### A Window

Lewis's fairy tale contains allusions to many books of scripture. Paul Ford in his *Companion to Narnia* suggests allusions to Old Testament scripture such as Isaiah 65.16 where God promises through his prophet that the former troubles will be

forgotten. Lewis draws a parallel in his text by presenting the repentant Edmund to his siblings and admonishing them with, "There is no need to talk to him about what is past" (136). Ford also suggests allusions to other New Testament books besides the gospels such as Hebrews 12.2, "fixing our eyes upon Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith . . .;" and compares the verse with Edmund's forgetting about himself when he sees Aslan (even while he is being accused by the witch for treachery): "He just went on looking at Aslan. It didn't seem to matter what the Witch said" (138). Even though the fairy tale has allusions to many books of scripture, it dwells mainly on the death and resurrection of Aslan and therefore can be used most easily as an introduction to the book of John.

Emphasis is placed on this particular gospel simply because it begins by acknowledging the deity of Christ, something Lewis also addresses in his work. The other gospels begin with genealogies which do not provide any parallels for classroom use. John is the only gospel where students can begin their correlations with the first chapter. After beginning with the introduction to John, students can progress through the rest of the book and finally concentrate on the crucifixion and resurrection scenes where they will find the majority of the parallels.

Students will probably be excited about finding parallels in a specific book of the Bible. But the teacher should first introduce them to the idea that the gospel of John opens with an encomium, a formal expression of high praise, in this case praise of Jesus Christ, and should be written in poetry form to highlight the patterns of repetition (Ryken 300). A handout of John 1.1-18 typed on one page in poetry form, using eight stanzas, would serve as an introduction to the literary component of John as well as begin the correlation with Lewis's allegory (300-3).

It would also be a good idea to remind the class that they are not looking for abstract allegory as found in *Pilgrim's Progress*, but as Paul Ford suggests, parallels that are actually closer to biblical allusions, "indirect hints of actual biblical phraseology or suggestions of biblical themes or scenes" (52).

Then by using Ryken's poetical reading for John 1.1-18, the teacher can begin pointing out parallels to the class as a whole. The first stanza (verses 1-2) reads:

In the beginning was the Word,  
and the Word was with God,  
and the Word was God.  
He was in the beginning with God.

Although *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* does not present Aslan as creator (Lewis alludes to that in another book, *The Magician's Nephew*), he does refer to him as "the son of the great Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea. . . . Aslan is a lion--*the* Lion, the great Lion" (75). John 1.1-2 praises the ancient ancestry of its subject (Ryken 300), Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Son of God the Father, and Lewis offers his comparison with Aslan, "the great lion" son of the Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea.

The third stanza (4-5) praises Christ's life-giving quality and relates just as well to Aslan who gave life to Edmund and brought spring to Narnia. Neither Satan in our world or the White Witch in Narnia could overcome the light that Jesus and Aslan brought to their respective worlds:

In him was *life*,  
and the *life* was the *light* of men.  
The *light* shines in the *darkness*,  
and the *darkness* has not overcome it.

John's gospel is known primarily for its symbols of light and darkness and in this passage the author sets light and darkness in conflict. Lewis also sets light and darkness in conflict by comparing the warm golden colors of Aslan to the bloodless White Witch, and the barren snow-covered Narnian world which is melted gradually and replaced with vegetation as Aslan approaches the land.

After one or two parallels such as the above, students could work in small groups to find the rest of the parallels in John 1. When John 1 has been exhausted, the body of the gospel could be addressed excluding the crucifixion and resurrection.

Direct parallels can be found in the body of John. An obvious parallel is Jesus's feeding the multitude with five barley loaves and two small fish (John 6.1-14). Lewis's alludes to the story when Aslan feeds the army after winning the battle with

the witch, "How Aslan provided food for them all I don't know; but somehow or other they found themselves all sitting down on the grass to a fine high tea at about eight o'clock" (178). Another obvious comparison is found in Jesus's statement in John 10.16 that He has other sheep that must also hear his voice. Lewis's version finds Aslan having "other countries to attend to" (180). Students should be limited to working with John 2 through John 17 for parallels in the body of the gospel.

Although parallels exist within the introduction and body of John's book, the majority of the allusions (and the most class time spent) will embrace the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, and the death and resurrection of Aslan. John 18 is the beginning point for the crucifixion scenes found in the gospel. The scenes in both books begin at night. When the Roman battalion with "lanterns and torches and weapons," initially approaches Jesus, they draw back and fall to the ground (John 18.3-6). When Aslan approaches the Stone Table, monstrous-looking creatures such as Ogres, Hags and Horrors stand around carrying "torches which burned with evil-looking red flames and black smoke" (148). At the first sight of Aslan, "A howl and a gibber of dismay went up from the creatures" and "for a moment the Witch herself seemed to be struck with fear" (149). The captors in both books quickly recover and bind their prey (John 18.12 and *LWW* 149) while disciples in both books think their King will exert His power (John.10 and *LWW* 149). Both are disappointed and confused (John 18.15-18, 25-27; *LWW* 150-1).

Step by step the two stories can be minutely paralleled through the death scenes. The resurrection scenes are just as close. Both scenes occur at sunrise. Jesus's first resurrected appearance is to Mary as she is weeping by the tomb (John 20.11-17) and Aslan's first appearance is to Susan and Lucy as they are weeping by the Stone Table (154-159). Another gospel (Matt 28.1) where there are two Marys found at the tomb could be mentioned to account for the difference between their being two children and one Mary in the gospel of John. Later, Jesus breathes on the disciples saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20.22) and Aslan breathes on the animals the Witch turned into stone and they all come to life (164-166). These are just a few of the

allusions teachers can start students on in their groups and then let them find the remainder.

Without realizing it, students have made the transfer from a fairy tale into the most profound truths of the gospel. In an exciting moment of correlation they have seen Jesus through the form of Aslan. They have seen Him as the supreme acknowledged Son of God come to this world to save those who accept the light shining in the darkness (John 1). They have seen Him as the light triumphant, beaten in both stories and killed in both stories for each disobedient "Edmund," each son of Adam and daughter of Eve. They have seen Christ through Aslan win the battle over death through resurrection. He can breathe the Holy Spirit into their hearts of stone, turn their hearts into flesh and give them a life of fullness in Him.

### **Conclusion**

So, I return to my original questions in the introduction of this paper, "Why would a Christian college student be reading fairy tales for homework? Or better yet, why would a Christian English teacher be using fairy tales in a college class on Biblical Literature?" I believe the answer is found by considering allegory which leads the reader into the book of John. Such allegory is found in C.S. Lewis's book, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

By approaching John's gospel in this delightfully unique manner, a teacher finds a way to, as C. S. Lewis said, "steal past those watchful dragons" guarding our students against what John so wanted them to know: God eternal in us. After all, what lies beneath the totality of Christian education is the hope that something we say or do in the classroom will lead our students to sit at the feet of the great Teacher, Jesus Christ, or, as seen through a glass darkly, the great Lion King, Aslan.



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