



Undertones Of Christianity In The Works Of C. S. Lewis And J. K. Rowling: An Analytical Study

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Abstract

J.K. Rowling and C.S. Lewis are two most prominent authors of Children's literature. The books have captivated a large number of readers—both children and adults—even though they were not initially intended to be exclusively fantasy. C.S. Lewis's genius in *The Chronicles of Narnia* was his ability to skillfully combine traditional Christian themes and images with mythological symbols and his storyline elements. Lewis created Narnia, a fantasy world that rivals Middle Earth and Earthsea by J. R. R. Tolkien and Ursula K. Le Guin by combining timeless elements of a fairy tale, medievalism, and Christian allegory. However, Lewis's series is more than just a fairy tale for kids. Each of its seven books has a deeper meaning, teaches children about Christian morality and beliefs, and it features numerous characters who represent a variety of Christian believers at various points along their path to a relationship with God.

Regardless of how this is accomplished, the genre ought to be identified as fantasy written by a Christian and intended to promote Christian ideals. Christian fantasy fiction makes an effort to incorporate recognizable Christian ideals into the supernatural plot elements of fantasy. Lewis intended to inspire interest in Christianity in a different way than he had been exposed to Christianity and faith by combining fairy tales, legend, and mythological elements of fantasy. We discover that Lewis and Rowling both imply their Christian perspectives throughout their series when we use Christianity to interpret some of the elements in both series. While the differences convey the unique beliefs of the authors, the similarities hint at the Christian nucleus concept. In these comparisons, Lewis appears to be a conformist Christian, whereas Rowling is more moderate than Lewis. She presents her Christian argument in a manner that is more composed and reserved.

Keywords: Christianity, Religion, Biblical allusions, *The Chronicles of Narnia* series, *Harry Potter* series, Fantasy Literature, Children's Literature

INTRODUCTION

The Chronicles of Narnia by C.S. Lewis and *Harry Potter* by J.K. Rowling are two of the most widely read books of the 20th and 21st centuries. Over 100 million copies of both series have been sold, and they have been translated into numerous languages. Although Lewis is more conservative than Rowling, the paper proposes that both series share a largely Christian viewpoint. The authors' biographies are important before we look at the texts because they tell us about their Christian characteristics. Lewis was famous for using

logic and philosophy to explain his Christian faith as a writer of apologists. "The heart of Christianity is a myth that is also a fact," Lewis reasoned in his work *Mere Christianity*, which collected and published the contents of his radio broadcasts on Christians during World War II. Lewis explains why he thinks Christianity and myth are not as incompatible as it is generally believed to be. This is because Christianity is based on myth. He argued that Christian Fiction was the most natural form of writing for him to write.

C.S. Lewis was the first to combine concepts from Christian literature and fantasy, long before the Fantasy genre was even recognized. In a 1923 supplement to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oscar Wilde referred to himself as a "fantasist," which was the beginning of fantasy as a distinct genre (Slusser 26-35). Despite the use of the title "fantasist" for Wilde, the official title for all works in this category was "fairy tale." The real turning point in the official recognition of Fantasy Fiction as mainstream literature was J.R.R. Tolkien's 1937 novel *The Hobbit* (Pringle 558–561). Lewis's friend J.R.R. Tolkien also wanted to make fantasy and Christian literature compatible. Tolkien was Lewis' Oxford colleague, making him an ideal literary comparison subject. He was a significant member of the University of Oxford's informal literary group, *The Inklings*. They influenced one another, discussed their strategies for upcoming projects, and exchanged creative ideas, just like all of the writers in the exclusive group. This group put a lot of emphasis on narratively telling stories. The majority of them also liked to write in a fantasy style, and the two styles worked well together. It is remarkable that Margaret Drabble, a Lewis colleague and mentor for so long, has referred to Lewis as "the father of high fantasy." By combining spiritual themes and mythological imagery, Lewis contributed to the acceptance of Christian fantasy in mainstream literature with the encouragement of Tolkien.

The plot and theme of *Harry Potter* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* are also similar and inspired by Christianity. As a child who had been abused, Harry Potter was taught that he is a wizard and that there is a wizard world perfectly concealed within this world. Additionally, he is the most well-known young wizard due to his escape from the evil wizard Lord Voldemort's dark magic. Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry is where he begins his secondary education. Ronald Weasley, a boy from a wizarding family, and Hermione Granger, a gifted witch from a non-magical family, become two of his new friends. Three of them form close friendships and engage in combat with evil wizards. In *The Philosopher's Stone* (1997), *The Chamber of Secrets* (1998), and *The Prisoner of Azkaban* (1998), Harry meets his old foe Lord Voldemort and his backers, and he manages to escape three times. *The Goblet of Fire* (2000) marked the beginning of a darker and more mysterious era for the series. Rowling released *The Deadly Hollow* (2007), *The Half-Blood Prince* (2005), and *The Order of Phoenix* (2003) after two years had passed. The events described in the books are linked chronologically. Each book depicts a different period of Harry's education

In an interview, Rowling acknowledged that *The Chronicles of Narnia* is also a source of inspiration for *Harry Potter*. In 2001, she stated to the *Sydney Morning Herald* that Rowling's series is more realistic than Lewis'. This disagreement suggests that Rowling disagrees with some of Lewis' religious perspectives. She points out that the concept of sex is problematic in the series by Lewis. The characters in C.S. Lewis can't mentally mature because their innocence will end. Rowling intends for her characters to be more like real people. Characters who have been to Narnia and wish to keep their memories of it are forbidden from getting married in the books by Narnia. Digory and Polly have been close friends since childhood, but it does not appear that their relationship has grown. In contrast to Ron and Hermione, they finally fall in love after being friends for a long time. Rowling views sexual desire as a normal human development. Even though *The Chronicles of Narnia* appears to be very religious and didactic, Rowling does not want her book

to become a religious doctrine. Rowling does not portray Harry Potter as an anti-Christ book, despite her disagreement with Lewis's strong Christian faith. Although not as explicit as in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the series contains Christian elements that readers can identify. For example, Albus Dumbledore's appearance and role can be linked to the Christian concept of God, and Voldemort's evil snake-eyed character can be used to represent Satan. In addition, the Christian theme of the series is emphasized in the series' final book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.

Regarding the presence of Christianity in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Bill McCarron writes, "The seventh and final *Harry Potter* (*The Deathly Hallows*) book is about Christianity, but it's hard to see or hear it because Harry's death and resurrection are similar to Jesus's sacrifice. "It is undeniable that Harry is a Christ figure," according to McCarron. As a result, this demonstrates that the *Harry Potter* series continues to be dominated by Christians. By utilizing Christian standards to justify the primary virtues in the series, Rowling also conducts a thorough investigation into human morality. *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *Harry Potter* are both cited positively and negatively by Christian critics. Some people applaud the stories' Christian didactic purpose, while others view them as anti-Christ, paganism, or even Satanism. Regarding the moral theme that runs through both series, some churches use both to spread Christianity. Churches like Memorial Drive United Methodist are putting *Narnia* into musical forms to teach Christian themes for *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The *Harry Potter* series is praised by Cardinal George Poll in the *Sunday Telegraph* for exhibiting values that are "deeply compatible with Christianity." However, due to its incorporation of Greek mythology, *The Chronicles of Narnia* is frequently criticized for its paganism and occultism. "The enticing pagan worlds nurtured by C.S. Lewis and his myth-making friends were not inspired by God's Word or Spirit," states the article by Berit Kjos. Those tales were the result of a lifetime spent immersed in the customs, values, languages, and ways of life of earlier pagan cultures.

Even after he professed his faith in Christ, C. S. Lewis was still obsessed with those old myths. He continued to recommend McCarron, as he did in his well-known "conversion" encounter with Tolkien in 1931. The *Deathly Hallows* that Christianity and paganism were, in some ways, mutually supportive, according to *Notes on Contemporary Literature*. Christian fundamentalists also say that *Harry Potter* promoted witchcraft and satanic elements. "It contains some powerful and valuable lessons about love and courage and the ultimate victory of good over evil," stated Paul Hetrick, a spokesperson for Focus on the Family. However, the positive messages are presented through a medium known as witchcraft, which is explicitly condemned in the Bible. *Harry Potter* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* stand out for their Christian undertones.

The main themes of both series are the conflict between goodness and evil, and love and bravery. The present work also intends to investigate the three primary components of biblical allusions in this study. First, the space and time, physical environment, and social structure—including order and disorder—of a real-world to a fantasy world. Second, the essential feature and the authority figure's function, and last but not least, the most important Christian virtue: faith, love, sacrifice, and mercy to learn more about the definition and the authors' perspectives. To interpret Christian aspects and identify similarities and differences. Many articles have been written about Lewis's Christian beliefs, such as Dr. Davin Brown's "Are *The Chronicles of Narnia* sexism and racism," Polly Toynbee's "*Narnia* represents everything that is most hateful about religion," and Berit Kjos's "Blending truth and Myth."

We can see the Christian views of Lewis and Rowling through the setting, the God figure, and the principal virtue in *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *Harry Potter*. Additionally, authors like J.R.R. Tolkien, Phillip

Pullman, and J.K. Rowling have expressed their thoughts on the Narnia series' Christian undertone. Although some critics, like Bill McCarron, have written about Rowling's Christianity in "Christianity in Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows," an analysis of Christian symbols in the series' final book, few articles have been written about it. To demonstrate their Christian beliefs, Lewis and Rowling also use their protagonists to convey virtue. Both authors present perspectives that are similar but distinct. The primary Christian virtue that is evident in the series: is mercy, the idea of death and resurrection, faith, love, and sacrifice. Rowling seems to bring up the most complicated conflicts, whereas Lewis defines each virtue. The authors' significant Christian faith can be seen in these perspectives on Christian morality. Rowling juxtaposes and questions each virtue, while Lewis uses Aslan as the moral center to demonstrate its definition.

From a Christian perspective, the fantasy world and the real world in both Lewis' and Rowling's works can be seen as spiritual and secular, respectively. However, in terms of space and time, atmosphere, and the protagonists' relationships with each world, there are both similarities and differences between the two authors' depictions of the two worlds in their novels. Both Lewis and Rowling's depictions of the dual worlds, which are similar and distinct, also reflect their distinct Christian perspectives. The separation of the magical world from the everyday world is the first significant difference between how *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *Harry Potter* depict the ordinary and fantasy worlds. Lewis and Rowling position their magical worlds in distinct ways. While the wizarding world of *Harry Potter* is a part of the ordinary world in which he is completely hidden from ordinary people, Narnia appears to be an entirely separate world. The significant gap between Narnia and the wizarding world reflects the authors' distinct Christian beliefs.

Lewis' Christian belief in the distinction between the secular and spiritual worlds is exemplified by the complete separation of Narnia from the real world in terms of space and time. He thinks that these are two different worlds. Since the setting of Narnia includes several biblical allusions, the spiritual world is also distinct from the secular world and is restricted to a small number of people: the beginning of time, the Garden of Eden, Paradise Lost, and the afterlife. The long winter and the battle in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* also refer to the battle between God and Lucifer, and the final resting place of the dead in *The Last Battle* is a reference to the apocalypse in Revelation, the final book of the Bible. Narnia is a plentiful world where humans and animals can coexist, just like the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2:8–15. Lewis's traditional Christian faith is suggested by these biblical illustrations. Narnia is a metaphor for heaven as well as an allusion to the Garden of Eden and the final resting place of the dead, as only a few people are permitted to enter this everlasting land in the series.

Lewis argues that Christianity is right and that other religions are wrong in his nonfiction book *Mere Christianity*. This idea asserts that Christianity is superior to other religions in that it can illuminate the truth, in contrast to other religions' inability to do so (Lewis, 1943, p. 21). Additionally, Lewis expresses his viewpoint regarding Christian hope: If you aim for heaven, you'll get earth "thrown in." According to his perspective, Christians can perform good deeds while on earth once they anticipate heaven. To put it another way, Lewis emphasizes the concept of salvation because he believes that Christianity is a promise of heaven. Christians can hope to enter heaven if they obey God. J.K. Rowling's wizard world, in contrast to C.S. Lewis's Narnia, is a hidden world within the ordinary world. It coexists with the normal world, despite being inaccessible to non-magical individuals. Rubeus Hagrid tells Harry Potter in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* about the Ministry of Magic that "their main job is to keep it from Muggles [non-magic folk] that there are still witches and wizards up and down the country" (Rowling, 1997, p. 51). Even

though they are not required to communicate with one another, ordinary people and wizards share the same space. Additionally, the wizarding world and the ordinary world share a similar period. After a year has passed, Harry returns to Hogwarts to live with the Dursleys. Rowling seems to present a more liberal Christian perspective than Lewis does in this portrayal. Rowling integrates the world of the hidden wizard with the everyday world, whereas Lewis shows that the secular and spiritual worlds are separate. Lewis' Christian perspective appears to be older than Rowling's. She doesn't think there are any special places in the spiritual world. The Dementor, the magical shooting stars, and other non-magical characters can occasionally be aware of the existence of the magical world in the series.

Rowling is met with harsh criticism from devoted Christians due to the distinctive image of the wizard that the Harry Potter series portrays. Some claim that Satanism is present in Harry Potter. "The Potter books open a doorway that will put untold millions of kids into hell," Chick Publications wrote in a comic book titled "The Nervous Witch" in 2002. "Behind Harry Potter hides the signature of the king of the darkness, the devil," Father Gabriele Amorth adds. The books, he added, "does not exist, because magic is always a turn to the devil," so the distinction between black and white magic "does not exist," he told the Daily Mail. The series' magical aspects are the primary focus of these negative opinions. However, Rowling demonstrates that wizard society is comparable to the rest of the world. Racism, crimes, and both good and bad wizards are included. It would appear that the wizard is a member of the human race. This suggests that Rowling is attempting to dispel the belief that wizards are evil. She wants people to place more importance on human morality.

Using a variety of methods, such as an allegorical image or an allusion to the Bible, C.S. Lewis, and J.K. Rowling convey their Christian perspectives through the depiction of their novels' settings, God figures, and principal virtues. However, their approaches differ in that Rowling seems to use human imperfections, such as the imperfect authority figure, while Lewis relies on biblical images like the Creation, the crucifixion, and the Apocalypse. While Lewis tries to define the better world, God, and morality, Rowling injects conflict into these three concepts to provoke readers' reflection and allow them to come up with their answers. With his complex and unpredictable traits, which many readers discuss, Snape is a good illustration of Rowling's style. Lewis views Narnia as significantly superior to the rest of the world. The main characters have more freedom in Narnia. Aslan is a perfect God who keeps everything in order and teaches other protagonists morals like faith, love, and mercy. However, Rowling's wizard world has similar issues to the real world, such as bullying and racism. Dumbledore is only a flawed human being. Harry Potter contains more diverse and intricate moral quandaries than *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Lewis is a totalitarian and dictatorial figure; His religious conservatism is implied by the numerous biblical allusions. The allegorical images of the Creation, apocalypse, and sacrifice in Narnia are comparable to those in the Bible and appear in the function of the two worlds chapter. The universe is made by God's voice. The other people are seduced by the ant-Christ. The earth is scorched by the falling shooting stars. Before Aslan dies, he is mocked. The Bible is nearly identical to each of these images. As Lewis later acknowledged that Aslan is an allegory for Jesus. Like in his non-fiction, Lewis emphasizes his goal for the contents of *Mere Christianity*: "Only in the presence of those who have already come to believe that there is only one God and that Jesus Christ is His only son should our divisions ever be discussed" (Lewis, 1943, p. 4). Lewis's goal demonstrates that he is also a Christian and aims for a Christian audience. This shows that Lewis takes the Bible seriously and uses it as his primary source of inspiration. He makes it abundantly clear that there is a perfect God who can rescue people from their sins and the rotten world. Lewis, on the other hand, is a more conservative Christian than Rowling. The most significant and obvious point in her series is the human

flaw. This flaw is apparent in both the God figure and the setting. Additionally, she always leaves some moral issues up to the readers' discretion. Even though Rowling answers all of these questions at the end, readers might still be wondering things like, "Is Snape good or bad?" How much longer can Dumbledore be relied upon despite his flaw? How appropriate is Harry's action in this circumstance? These human actions make readers think, which suggests that Christianity can be questioned and that it's okay to have doubts about one's religion. Rowling tries to find a middle ground with Christianity while Lewis highlights the benefits of Christianity. She brings Christianity and human behavior into harmony. Her important point is that no human being can be as perfect as God (or Jesus), but Christian morality is something that everyone should learn and practice. Rowling is another person who doesn't share Lewis' traditional Christian faith. Children are taught morality and social values through the use of moral teaching tools like Christianity. Christian perspectives differ due to the authors' different periods. Lewis wrote during the chaos of two World Wars, so his series had to be full of simple messages and religious tension to keep people's faith up. Rowling, on the other hand, appears to have a more laid-back upbringing than Lewis did. The humor and various aspects of Christianity are the main themes of her series.

In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Lewis directly addresses how children should behave themselves, following the tradition of children's literature from the 19th century. In addition, Lewis, a fervent Christian, endeavors to simplify Christian philosophy to instruct his readers. The biblical allusions in the series may not be immediately obvious to young viewers, but they will either be taught about them by an adult or become aware of them as they get older. Rowling, in contrast to Lewis, does not employ the series' intense didacticism, but it appears to have been inevitable to include it. Even though Rowling leaves a lot up to the readers to decide, they are aware that Harry and, at times, the readers learn a lot from Dumbledore's writing. Rowling is therefore more liberal than Lewis. This demonstrates that Rowling strives not to portray Christianity as authoritarian. She makes concessions to readers who do not share her beliefs.

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