

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

**ASLAN IN *THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA* AS A
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN GOD**

A Pro Gradu Thesis

by

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Tutkielman tarkoituksena on selvittää ja kuvailla C. S. Lewisin jumalakuvaa sellaisena kuin se *Narnian kronikat* (*The Chronicles of Narnia*) –kirjasarjan kautta lukijalle välittyy. Tutkimuksen kohteena on sarjan päähenkilö, leijona Aslan, joka edustaa Kristusta Narnian mielikuvitusmaailmassa. Aslanin hahmoa vertaillaan Lewisin teologisessa ja muussa kaunokirjallisessa tuotannossa välittyvään jumalakuvaan.

C.S.Lewisin jumalakuvaa Aslanin hahmossa tarkastellaan tutkimuksessa seuraavasti: 1) Aslanin/Jumalan suuruus 2) Aslanin/Jumalan hyvyys 3) Käytännön ongelmat Aslanin/Jumalan luonteeseen liittyen, esimerkiksi kärsimyksen ongelma.

Materiaalina tutkimuksessa on käytetty koko seitsenosaista *Narnian kronikat* –kirjasarjaa sekä Lewisin muuta tuotantoa. Teologisista teoksista lähteet ovat *Tätä on kristinusko* (*Mere Christianity*), *Kärsimyksen ongelma* (*The Problem of Pain*) ja *Muistiinpanoja surun ajalta* (*A Grief Observed*). Kaunokirjallisista mainittakoon *Science fiction -trilogia* (*The Science fiction trilogy*) ja *Suuri avioero* (*The Great Divorce*.) Lisäksi Lewisin omaelämäkerta *Surprised by joy* toimi pohjana hänen oman elämänsä tarkastelulle.

Tutkielma on kuvaileva. Metodina on lähteiden tarkastelu länsimaisen uskonnonfilosofian ja systemaattisen teologian valossa. Tarkoituksena on luoda mahdollisimman kattava kuva Lewisin jumalakuvasta. Varsinainen tulos on Lewisin jumalakuva kuvailu, ja sen toteaminen raamatulliseksi.

Asiasanat: C.S. Lewis. *Narnian kronikat*. Aslan. Jumalakuva.

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1. Introduction

C.S. Lewis is an admired author, especially among Christians, who believe in Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. C.S. Lewis himself was a devout Christian and a famous apologetic among Western Christians. His ideas on a good and caring, yet demanding and holy God have had a big impact on modern Western thinkers, who still believe in this same God. His apologetics and ideas on Christian God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are even today used for example in the Alpha-courses around the world. What is most appealing in Lewis's literature is that it has reached wide secular circles as well, receiving extremely positive feedback worldwide from both the audiences and the critics. One of Lewis's merits is that he has brought *the Bible* closer to today's generation.

The Chronicles of Narnia has a particular appeal to Christians, because of the biblical worldview and message behind the books, but it as well has been read widely in secular circles. *The Bible's* message about God's salvation in Christ has been put to the books in the form of fantasy and in the middle of fiction. Its marvellous fantasy world remains popular even today. C.S. Lewis and his literature have been studied a lot, but a major thing missing in at least Finnish research on Lewis and his works is the study of how his personally experienced view of God can be seen in his fiction. The purpose of this study is to describe Lewis's view of God and to report how it is reflected in his fiction.

The starting point for this study of C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* was a Pro Gradu Thesis of Marja Putus "*Fantasy Based on Reality*" - *The Study of the Christian Themes And the Forms of Fantasy in C. S. Lewis's Narnia-books* (1977). Even though her study covered the Christian themes thoroughly, something very essential was missing. The personality of Aslan

- the Christ figure in *The Chronicles of Narnia* was not treated in depth, even though some roles of his were studied. As roles suggest more of the deeds of a person, it is not enough only to describe them leaving the description of the actual characteristics and personality to a minor position. I have therefore chosen to concentrate on the personality and characteristics of Aslan as perceived by a reader of *The Chronicles of Narnia*. In so doing I will show that Aslan is alike Christ/God as understood in *The Bible* and Christian tradition, even though he sometimes resembles other literary characters as well.

To begin with, some information will be provided about the life of the author C.S. Lewis, and his works. Then a review of the plots of the *Chronicles of Narnia* is given, so that the reader would follow discussion later on more easily. Also Lewis's Christianity is discussed, in order to create a picture of his general world-view. Lewis belonged to the Church of England, being an Anglican, but in his production he maintained, and promoted a theology commonly accepted in most Christian denominations. The written source mostly used in this section is Lewis's *Mere Christianity*. This essential background knowledge about Lewis facilitates an understanding of his thoughts, and a valid interpretation of *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

Next, different views of God, provided by the philosophy of religion, are dealt with. Three philosophers of religion: Hick, Koskinen and Pyysiäinen are referred to, as their views are compared to Lewis's and *the Bible's*. As the two thousand year old Christian tradition in its most systematic form, systematic theology is listed and discussed: who and what is God according to the Christian tradition common to all denominations that recognise Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour, i.e. evangelical Christians. Two major sources are used here, Erickson's *Christian theology* and Grudem's *Systematic theology*. An

Introduction to Biblical Doctrine. Then, finally, it is seen how that is reflected in the fictive person of Aslan.

Following, through a description of Aslan's various characteristics I want to show that he is like Christ according to *The Bible* and the Christian tradition. I have included a fairly large amount of direct quotations from *The Bible*, in order to prove that Lewis's Christianity is biblical, i.e. conforms to the message of *the Bible*. The discussion on Aslan's characteristics is divided into three chapters, two of which come straight from one traditional Christian definition of God: Aslan as the Great God and Aslan as the Good God. The third chapter discusses the paradoxes between Aslan's different dimensions. Finally, conclusions are drawn based on the study, and questions raised for possible future study of C.S. Lewis's production.

2. C. S. Lewis

C.S. Lewis was an intellectual, but also a very practical man. He loved literature from his childhood, and reading had a great effect on his ideas and life. Thus it was only natural that he himself should become a writer, a scholar and in general a person who had impact on people around him. Later, he founded the famous group, The Inklings, with his Christian academic friends in Oxford. But Lewis's life was not solely focused on philosophical theories, but practical every day life as a Christian as well. He lived his life as a devout Christian, showing his Christianity in his deeds as well as in his words, obeying the commands of *the Bible*, even if it cost him a personal sacrifice.

2. 1 The life of C. S. Lewis

Clive Staples Lewis was born in Belfast, Ireland in 1898. His childhood was that of a normal British boy at that time, until his mother's death from cancer. This came as a great shock to Lewis himself, as well as to his brother and father. Lewis says in his biography *Surprised by Joy* (1955) that "[his] father never quite got over it." (Lewis 1955:22). The relationship between the two brothers, Jack, as Clive Staples was called, and Warren was good and close, but with their father it was more distant.

Even as a small boy Lewis escaped from the sorrows of this world to other worlds, especially to the imagined land of "Boxen", which he invented along with his brother, (Lewis 1955:80) and to fiction. Later, when Lewis went to school, and was bullied there by the older students, he used the same method to escape from his anxieties. From reading old Norse mythology and a love of the

music of Wagner, he also wrote a tragedy called “Bound Loki”. The form of the tragedy was Greek, and its theme Northern European. (Lewis 1955:116)

There was also another kind of a drive in his life: the longing for joy and beauty. This must have been the main impulse that made Lewis read books, mainly fantastic literature. The books he most loved included old Norse myths, William Morris, John Milton, George MacDonald. His literary reading, and its effects on *The Chronicles of Narnia* will be examined further below.

Lewis entered Queen’s College in Oxford, but he had already decided to join the army, and so he left to fight at the front in World War I. He came home wounded. (Lewis 1955:196-197) After that he completed two degrees in Oxford, in Philosophy and English. (Lewis 1955:211) During that time he also started taking care of the mother of a friend, Paddy Moore, who had died in the war. (Hooper 1982:13) This close relationship to Mrs. Moore and her daughter continued till her death, lasting for decades.

At the same time as Lewis was in the middle of the process of becoming a believer Christian, and getting into a personal relationship with God, he started working at Magdalen College. Before that he had been an atheist. Lewis gave lectures at first, and then participated in research. (Lewis 1955:214) He held the position of a Fellow and a Tutor at Magdalen College until 1954, when he became Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge. In Oxford he formed the famous group, The Inklings, also known by the names The Oxford Christians, and The Anglo-Saxon Group, with his friends J.R.R. Tolkien and Charles Williams, who shared his interest in the fantastic, and were fellow authors.

A radical change in the peaceful life of Lewis occurred when he got to know a Jewish American woman, Helen Joy Davidham, and fell in love with her,

as described in the biographical film *Shadowlands* (Stone, Howard, Nicholson 1985). Initially, they pretended that there was no romantic love in the relationship, and that they were only friends. Indeed, their first reason for getting married was so that Joy could live in England with her sons (Kuusimäki 1991:125), next door to the Lewis brothers. But when it was discovered that Joy had cancer and was going to die of that, Lewis realised his love for her, and this became the start of their real marriage. She soon died, and this almost made Lewis lose his faith in God. However, he recovered his faith and started taking care of Joy's sons David and Douglas Gresham. (Stone et al. 1985)

The latter phase of Lewis's life shows a deeper maturity that developed through his time of suffering. He remained a Christian till the end, even though he "never really recovered the loss of Joy" (Walsh 1961:147-149). His heart was broken, but he never stopped believing, taking the view that feelings might deceive a person, but the truth could still be found through reasoning. (Kuusimäki 1991:129) One of his great discoveries was that "for suffering one cannot really do much, only suffer it" (Kuusimäki 1991:129). Lewis died a few years after Joy, in Oxford 1963.

2.2 The literary background

C.S. Lewis read a lot of books already when he was relatively young. In *Surprised by Joy* (1955) he tells that reading was one of his greatest joys in life. As a child Lewis read Nesbit's and Beatrix Potter's children's books, as well as other fairytales. Later, in his youth he continued to read many mythologies, especially Norse literature, as mentioned above, but also ancient Greek, Roman and Celtic mythologies. He was also very excited about Wagner's music, which is closely related to Norse mythology. The love of the Fantastic developed very early in Lewis's life, and grew very strong, so it was only natural for him later to start writing fiction. As a professor of literature he had to write scholarly works, but in his free time he loved to read and write fiction, especially Fantasy.

As a part of his education Lewis had to read a lot of literary classics such as ancient Plato, Renaissance Dante, Romantic Goethe, Shaw, Yeats, and philosophers such as Spinoza. This was a very pleasant part of his studies, Lewis tells in *Surprised by Joy*. Romantic was clearly his favourite from the canon of the world literature. In his free time Lewis loved to read science fiction such as H.G. Wells, and other fiction. These also were a major influence to his writing, shaping it into the direction of the Romantic, and of science fiction. As told more precisely below, Lewis wrote many science fiction texts, such as *The Great Divorce*. His studies also must have had a great effect on the career he chose in the university, since reading novels was the favourite part of his previous studies, and he later chose to become a scholar of literature. Also the field he chose, Medieval and Renaissance literature, reflects the likes of his youth.

Apart from mythologies, fairytales, the Romantic fiction and science fiction, Lewis's writing was also shaped by texts written by Christian authors. In

Lewis's youth, when he was not yet a believer Christian and didn't have a personal relationship to God, he read McDonald, Morris and Milton, as mentioned above, and their writings, among many others, paved the way for his conversion to Christianity. One major literary influence on Lewis's thought and writing was *the Bible*. The marks of it are seen everywhere in his writing. For example of the over 60 books that he wrote, almost 40 dealt with Christianity, and the flavour of it can be seen in his other books as well. His books include numerous quotations and paraphrases from *the Bible*, as well as many ideas that are presented throughout *the Bible*.

Lewis's own writing is an interesting combination of faith, fiction and the intellect, which all co-operate creating a consistent world-view that appeals to many kinds of people. He would probably not have been able to create as many-sided a production had he not read as much himself, and gone through deep processes, including personal tragedies, in his life. Reading, as well as the tragedies of his life, helped Lewis to develop his thoughts, logic, and rhetoric. Further below we will shortly look at the effect of books such as Dante's *Divine Comedy* and the Arthurian tales on the view of God Lewis had, and on the fiction he wrote. The effect of *the Bible* will be seen throughout the text.

2.3. The works of C.S. Lewis

C.S. Lewis was an extremely productive writer. During his life he wrote both fiction and science, becoming a famous author of science fiction and children's stories, as well as a well-known literary critic. But the biggest part of his texts is apologetic writings to justify aspects of Christian belief. Since he became such a famous author, also parts of his correspondence have been published, as well as some poetry, and three autobiographical works.

Lewis only wrote two books before converting to Christianity, a poem collection *Spirits in Bondage* (1918), and a book called *Dymer* (1926). Before that he had been an atheist. Early works include a description of how he himself was converted to Christianity, *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1933). It resembles the famous *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan. The story of his turning to God he later rewrote, with the title *Surprised by Joy* (1955), that also describes his childhood and youth. Many books related to Christianity followed, on different topics: *The Personal Heresy* (1939); *Broadcast Talks* (1942), *Christian Behaviour* (1943) and *Beyond Personality* (1944), later republished under the title *Mere Christianity* (1952); *The Abolition of Man* (1943), *Miracles* (1947). Indeed, Lewis became a cult writer of popular Christian literature (Kuusimäki 1991:125). He did not avoid controversial topics, approaching them analytically in his various books. *Mere Christianity* (1952) will be discussed in greater depth below.

Some critics consider Lewis's scholarly works the core of his production; these include several books synthesising literary history, such as *The Allegory of Love* (1936) and *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* (1954). He also wrote *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (1942), *Studies in Words* (1960) and *The*

Discarded Image (1963). Less famous scholarly books are *Arthurian Torso* (1948), written together with Charles Williams, *Transposition, And Other Addresses* (1949), posthumously published *Studies in Medieval And Renaissance Literature* (1966) and *Spenser's Images of Life* (1967). Lewis's scholarly work was appreciated in his own time, and it is even now.

Lewis also wrote science fiction for adults. The interplanetary trilogy, that became best known of his science fiction texts, consists of *Out of the Silent Planet* (1937); *Perelandra*, later entitled *The Voyage to Venus* (1943) and *That Hideous Strength* (1945). Writing this trilogy must have been quite a radical act for a Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature, at a time when science fiction was not greatly respected as a genre. However, when one examines his literary background, it seems only logical that he would be interested in this kind of writing, just like his good friend J.R.R. Tolkien, who also experimented with science fiction narratives. Lewis's science fiction includes two plays for adults: *The Great Divorce* (1945) and *Till We Have Faces* (1956), and posthumously published *The Dark Tower, And Other Stories* (1977). Also *The Screwtape Letters* (1961) and *The Screwtape Proposes a Toast* (1961) are Christian apologetics in the form of fiction: written apparently from the point of view of the devil, but actually showing the same concern for Christian topics as Lewis's other apologetic books.

Lewis wrote the famous series for children, *The Chronicles of Narnia* in less than ten years. The Narnia books will be looked at in greater detail in the following pages. Of interest to the reader might be the fact that they were not written in the order in which they are intended to be read. In fact, Lewis first wrote *The Lion, the Witch And the Wardrobe* (1950), that later became number 2 in the series. Then he continued to write *Prince Caspian* (1951),

number 4; *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952), number 5; and *The Silver Chair* (1953) number 6. Then he wrote a third book between *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, and *Prince Caspian*, called *The Horse and His Boy* (1954). Only after that did he complete the series by *Magician's nephew* (1955), which is meant to be read as the first book of the series; and *The Last Battle* (1956), which was meant to be the last book of the series. It should be noted that Lewis did not originally plan to write a series; nevertheless, six books followed the first one he had originally written.

During the last two decades of his life Lewis wrote more Christian apologetic and other theological books, such as *Reflections on the Psalms* (1958), *The Four Loves* (1960), *The World's Last Night, And Other Essays* (1960), *They Asked for a Paper* (1962).

A Grief Observed (1961) is very different from the apologetic books Lewis wrote before his suffering and depression. The difference is most remarkable when one compares *The Problem of Pain* (1940), that deals with the same topic, suffering, with *A Grief Observed*. In some ways the latter is quite shocking. Lewis discussed how he felt that God is unjust when allowing human beings to suffer without an apparent reason. Yet, as Kuusimäki reports in his study (1991), in the end Lewis returns to the faith he had when writing the previous apologetic books, by concluding that since his feelings contradict the idea of God's goodness and righteousness as expressed in *the Bible*, then his feelings must be wrong. Thus, *A Grief Observed* becomes perhaps the most powerful of Lewis's theological books, because it is based on a deeper experience of life, deep doubt from suffering, and a renewed sense of God's presence in it. It is not only a rational theory, but also a personally experienced reality. A deeper level of truth is achieved than in the previous apologetic books.

After Lewis's death in 1963, some of his other writings were published. They include poems *Poems* (1964), *Narrative Poems* (1969); correspondence *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (1964), *Letters of C.S. Lewis* (1964), *Letters to an American Lady* (1969), *They Stand Together: The Letters of C.S. Lewis to Arthur Greeves* (1979); essays and other collections *Of This And Other Worlds* (1966), *Christian Reflections* (1967), *Selected Literary Essays* (1969), *Undeceptions* (1971), *Fern-seed And Elephants, And Other Essays in Christianity* (1976), *On Stories, And Other Essays on Literature* (1982); and readings *The Joyful Christian* (1977), *The Visionary Christian* (1981).

As seen above, C.S. Lewis was an eager reader, writer and critic of literature, which left marks in his writing. But still more visible in both his life and his texts is his Christianity, his personal relationship and faith into God such as the Christian tradition sees him. Next follows a short description of the plots of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and then Lewis's Christianity is introduced.

3. Review of the plots of *The Chronicles of Narnia*

The Magician's Nephew tells "how all the comings and goings between our world and the land of Narnia first began." (Lewis 1955: 9). Two children, Polly and Digory find themselves in the middle of a wild experiment of Digory's Uncle Andrew. He makes the children try his magic rings, which make them vanish into another world. There they meet an evil queen Jadis, who accidentally comes into this world with the children. Polly and Digory need to take her away from this world because they were responsible for having brought her there. Using the magic rings they all end up to the land of Narnia. With them they accidentally take a cabdriver with his horse, and Uncle Andrew.

In Narnia, Aslan is just about to start creating life on that earth. The description of the creation is one of the most beautiful passages in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Aslan creates the world singing. He calls up the stars and the sun, and as he walks on the earth grass and trees starts growing on the places he has touched. Then animals appear from the earth, and become Talking Beasts, as Aslan breaths upon them. The same way trees become alive and waters get their spirits, too. "Narnia, Narnia, Narnia, awake. Love. Think. Speak. Be walking trees. Be talking beasts. Be divine waters." (Lewis 1955). By these words Aslan creates. This resembles very much *The Bible* story of the creation, which clearly has been the model for Lewis.

The story continues as it did in *The Bible*: the error of a human being has brought evil to the world, and so the human being must solve the problem, dealing with the results. Narnia needs to be protected against the evil queen Jadis, and Aslan asks Digory to make up for the harm he has caused by letting the evil Witch Jadis come to Narnia, for it was him who woke her up from her enchanted

dream. Digory agrees to do this, and together with Polly and a flying horse, Fledge, they manage to complete the task. After that Aslan gives Digory an Apple of Youth to give to his ill mother, so that she would be healed and would not die. Then Digory, Polly and Uncle Andrew get back to their own world. The theme of Digory's mother's illness in *The Magician's Nephew* describes the same kind of feelings Lewis himself probably had, when his mother was ill and died during his childhood.

The Lion, the Witch And the Wardrobe tells how the four Pevensies, Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy, accidentally find a door through a wardrobe in an old house to the land of Narnia, where evil White Witch is reigning. She has put Narnia under a spell, so that there is a continuous winter, and Christmas never comes. The four kids are called by Aslan to Narnia to free it from the spell. But Edmund becomes a traitor, and joins the White Witch. After a fight with the White Witch all the creatures she had turned into stone are made alive again, and the reign is settled for the Pevensies.

However, according to an old law every traitor belongs to the White Witch, so she claims her right over Edmund. But Aslan takes his place, and is offered as an innocent offering instead of Edmund. Now the White Witch thinks that she can take Narnia back to herself, having killed Aslan, but to her surprise Aslan is resurrected, because death cannot hold an innocent person. The model for Aslan's giving himself instead of a guilty one, is clearly from *The Bible*, where Jesus Christ gives himself for all the sinners. That scene includes also an ancient Greek myth, where mice save a lion, unbinding him from a trap. After this adventure the Pevensies reign in Narnia for a long time, until they are returned back to their own world.

The Horse And His Boy tells a story that happened at the time when Peter was still the High King of Narnia, reigning together with his brother Edmund and his sisters Susan and Lucy. It is about a boy, Shasta, who is the lost oldest son of the King of Archenland, a country next to Narnia. He has been kept as a slave in the country of Calormen, another country next to Narnia. He flees back to his own country with a Talking Horse Bree, and on their way they meet a Tarkhaan Princess Aravis, with her mare Hwin, who join their escape from Calormen.

On their way the children hear about a plot of Prince Rabadash of Calormen to invade Archenland, and in the end they fight against him, and win. Aslan changes Prince Rabadash to an ass, as a punishment for his pride and evil done by him. Now Archenland is safe again, and Shasta - now Prince Cor - is to rule it with Aravis, who becomes his wife. *The Horse And His Boy* resembles very much *the Bible* story about Moses, who was saved from a river in a basket, like Shasta, raised in a foreign country, and who later saved his nation from the oppressive enemy nation.

The story of *Prince Caspian* happens a long after the rule of Peter the High King, Edmund, Susan, and Lucy. An evil King Miraz is keeping Narnia under his power, and all the Talking Beasts, The Spirits of the Trees, and other real citizens of Narnia are in hiding in his empire. But then Prince Caspian takes up arms against Miraz, and together with his loyal band they try to win Narnia back to themselves. However, they find that they cannot do it by themselves, and are forced to call for help with Queen Susan's old magic horn. That takes the Pevensie children back to Narnia, to fight for it on Caspian's side, and together with Aslan they manage to win Miraz and his Telmarines. Then Aslan sends the children back to their own world. Prince Caspian becomes the lawful King of

Narnia. *Prince Caspian's* story reminds of the Israelite judges who fought for the freedom of Israel, saving it from the cruel rule of foreign nations, as told in *The Bible*.

The Voyage of the Dawn Treader tells how Caspian searched for seven lost friends of his father, as he had promised Aslan that he would do. Edmund and Lucy are sent to Narnia for his help, and together with them there comes their cousin Eustace. His character is remarkably changed during their adventures, as was Edmund's, and Digory's and Polly's before that. It seems to be that Aslan wants to change the children, so that they would be more loving, braver and wiser, and in general nicer than they used to be, because all the children that come to Narnia change at some point, usually through the mistakes they make. Edmund, Lucy and Eustace travel with Caspian and his crew to the end of the world, facing many adventures on the way. From the end of the world Caspian returns to his kingdom with his crew, and Aslan sends the children back to their world again. *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* reminds of *Ulysses* and *Gulliver's Travels*, which were both Lewis's favourites.

The Silver Chair tells the story of Caspian's son Prince Rilian, whom an evil enchantress, The Lady of Green Kertle, the Queen of Underland, has enchanted and kept as a prisoner in the Underworld for ten years. Aslan calls Eustace to Narnia to fetch him back. Along him there comes his schoolmate Jill, and the two children manage to find the Prince, with the help of a loyal marsh-wiggle Puddleglum. They break the enchantment binding the Prince, who destroys the Silver Chair that kept the Prince under the enchantment. The Evil Enchantress turns up and tries to get Rilian back to her power, as well as those wanting to save him, but the brave Puddleglum breaks the enchantment, Rilian kills the Enchantress, and the four of them flee from the Underworld that is collapsing after

its evil Queen has died. Rilian meets his dying father Caspian, becomes the King of Narnia, and the children are sent back to our world.

The Last Battle is the last of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, it takes place hundreds of years after the reign of Caspian and Rilian. The struggle between the forces of good and evil is finally to be decided. The last King of Narnia, Tirian, is in a terrible situation, when a fake Aslan appears and starts giving odd orders. Actually it is all arranged by a greedy Ape Shift, who only desires power, but when he becomes weak, the Calormenes, who were on his side, still want to enslave Narnia.

Aslan sends Jill and Eustace to help Tirian, who starts the final fight against the Calormenes and the Narnian traitors. The small loyal army of Tirian, all the good Talking Beasts as well as Jill and Eustace die in the fight, but Tirian enters the magic stable, where the seven Kings and Queens of Narnia, Peter, Edmund, Lucy, Digory, Polly and also the resurrected Jill and Eustace are waiting for him. It is actually a door to Aslan's country. The seven children see how Aslan calls all his subjects to him, and all the faithful Talking Beasts and other loyal subjects of Aslan get into his country, whereas all those who hate Aslan walk into a shadow, and are never seen again. Finally, the children find out that they have actually died in a railway accident, and they have now come to Aslan's country, that is, heaven, for good.

Next, we will look at C.S. Lewis's Christian ideology as presented in his works, in order to understand how that was reflected in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and in the person of Aslan, who is at the centre of this study. Thus we will see that Aslan resembles Christian God, as presented in *the Bible*, very much.

4. Lewis's Christianity

C.S. Lewis converted from atheism to Christianity already in his youth, as described above. He promoted his Christian world-view in his various books, and thus his faith and beliefs are fairly easy to be studied from his works. Especially the more personal writings of him, some of which were published post-humously, i.e. *A Grief Observed*, give a profound picture of what, how and why Lewis believed.

Lewis taught very orthodox Christianity according to *the Bible* and the central teachings of traditional Christianity. He belonged to the Church of England, i.e. was an Anglican, but in his faith he wanted to exalt God, not any singular Christian denomination. Thus, for instance, his book *Mere Christianity* (1952) was meant to be as free from denominational arguments as possible, reflecting what Lewis understood to be the core of Christianity, in common to all Christians. When writing it, as told in the book itself, Lewis sent a copy of the script to four pastors from four different denominations: Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Catholic, asking their approval and corrections. One of them would have wanted to emphasise one side of Christianity more than Lewis had done, another something else, but generally they were happy with the text. When published, *Mere Christianity* reached the popularity of lay Christians from different denominations, building a deeper unity between them.

In his books Lewis discussed many basic truths of Christianity, such as why do we have reason to believe in God and especially in the sense Christianity and *The Bible* talk about him, what has God done to us, what does he really want us to do and what is Christian moral. He also discussed some of the difficult problems that people usually raise when doubting Christianity or the message of

the Bible, questions such as why is there pain in the world created by a good and omnipotent God, why does God want to change us, what awaits us after death and so forth.

Since Lewis was strongly committed to the traditional Christianity as taught by *the Bible*, there was nothing radically new for Christians in his teachings except for the fact that he combined his intellect and wide cultural understanding in a modern way with the basic Christian message creating a highly appealing synthesis of old and new in his teaching. His efforts have helped many Christians to get deeper with their faith, and to find lasting foundations to their beliefs from *the Bible*, as well as many un-churched to find God for the first time in their lives. This is seen for example through the Alpha-courses around the world, where many people have found faith in Christ through the teachings of Lewis that have a central part in the course material.

4.1 *Mere Christianity*

Mere Christianity is actually a series of talks Lewis held in English radio. The talks were later collected and published with the names *Broadcast Talks* (1942), *Christian Behaviour* (1943) and *Beyond Personality* (1944), and later Lewis revised them into a new book, *Mere Christianity* (1952). The radio talks were very popular in their time, and so were also the later published books.

Mere Christianity talks about what is essential in Christianity, what is its core. It was largely written for people who do not consider themselves believing Christians, in order to persuade them that God's plan for them is worth accepting and receiving. Also many Christians have found the book very useful when considering what is the essential message of Christianity and *the Bible*, and what God really wants from us. The book is very popular among Christians, who believe in Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour.

The book is divided into four parts. The first and second part work as a prelude to Christianity explaining why Lewis believed in God, Jesus Christ and *the Bible*, and what reason is there for anybody to believe. The third part discusses Christian moral, and the fourth part God's personality as a trinity, and his plan for the salvation and transformation of people's lives.

The first part of *Mere Christianity*, namely, *The Question of right and wrong – the key to understanding the meaning of the universe*, talks about the natural conscience of right and wrong that almost all people from all ages and all cultures have had. This inner conscience, Lewis argues, is the only way of knowing whether something supernatural exists beyond this reality, because it is the only thing we find in common to all people, and see from the inside, not from the outside, like for example the world and everything in it. He suggests that since

we see a rational pattern in human conscience, it is reasonable to assume that someone rational beyond our reality has revealed it to us, so that we would know what is good and fair and what is not. Lewis concludes that this being is not necessarily the God of Christianity, but that there has to be some being behind this all.

In the second part of the book, *What do Christians believe*, Lewis continues the discussion analysing different religions and their concepts of God broadly dividing the people into atheists and people who believe in either one or many gods. Then those who believe in God/gods he divides into pantheists and dualists. According to Lewis, the main difference between them is that pantheists see everything as good whereas dualists believe into two forces that fight against each other. The problem with the latter is the problem of pain, which is dealt in depth below. Then Lewis goes on to argue that people tend to look for easy answers even there where none are to be found, like for example

They give you a version of Christianity that would fit a six-year-old child, and then they attack against it. If you try to explain them how an enlightened adult understands Christianity, they start complaining that you make them confused, and that Christianity is too complex, and if God really existed, he would surely have given us a simpler religion because simplicity is so beautiful and so on. (Lewis 1952:46.)

Lewis states that reality is complex, and so is religion bound to be, if it has something important to say about the reality.

Lewis continues to say that even though Christianity is very close to dualism, it differs in one point. True dualists believe that the essence of goodness is good and the essence of evil is bad, and that they could not be anything else, but Christianity claims that evil is only good gone wrong. In other words, the devil chose to rebel against God, and thus became evil, whereas it could as well have

continued to worship God and be good, as it had been before. Here Lewis refers to what *the Bible* teaches about the origin of evil and Satan, exactly the same as he has told in his books. To those people, who fail to believe in the devil, Lewis has written a special comment:

Now some of my readers surely ask: 'Are you really going to talk about the devil, with its horns and hooves even in the modern times?' What the modern times have got to do with it, I do not really see. And with the horns and hooves it can be how so ever. But otherwise I answer: 'Yes.' I do not claim to know anything about the appearance of the devil. If someone wants to get to know him better, I would say: 'Do not worry. If you really want that, you will. Whether it is fun or not, is another thing. (Lewis 1952:51.)

Then Lewis deals with the problem of evil and pain in the world saying that according to Christianity it both is and is not the will of God. It is the will of God in the sense that God has wanted to give free will to human beings and heavenly beings such as angels, but of course he as a good God did not want us to use it doing evil. However, it is possible because he in the first place allowed us this free will that we nowadays use for evil purposes, such as our own gain. Some people ask why God then allowed this to happen, did he not know that we would use our will into evil purposes. The answer, according to Lewis and *the Bible*, is that God as an all-knowing being knew what would happen, but he still chose to make us free, because he did not want to make us robots but far more capable and precious beings. The root of all evil then, says Lewis, is trying to be content with something else than God, whereas God has meant us to live with him and to need him, while he still enables us to live without him if we choose so.

The problem of already existing evil God has dealt with in various ways, says Lewis. The first one is that he gave us a conscience so that we would know what is good and what is evil. Secondly, he has approached people by giving

them revelations about himself, religions. And then, through hundreds of years he has trained one nation, the Israelites, to understand who he really is, that he is one, and that what he really wants is that people would live right. Finally, he has solved our problems with evil and pain by becoming a human being himself, carrying our sins and pains to the cross and dying for us, so that we might live and be free of sin and be healed of our pain. Through his life and sacrifice Jesus Christ has given us the full revelation of God himself and his will towards us. This view of Lewis is the same as that of *the Bible*.

The fact that Jesus Christ appeared among Jews is one of the most shocking events in the world, Lewis continues. Among a nation, who believe that God is distant, and beyond this reality in every way, comes a person who claims to be exactly that God. Jesus Christ irritated, insulted and outraged the society he entered. Those outside it loved him, those in high positions hated and feared him. He was executed for blasphemy, for his claim to be God. A few hundred people who believed him established the world's largest religion on this claim that he was and is God. The amazing thing according to Lewis is that everybody seems to consider Jesus a good and a sane person, even though he would be the world's biggest liar if he was not what he claimed to be. Either he must have been a really evil person, who lied purposely, or then he was mad, or then he was exactly what he claimed to be, God. He was not, Lewis claims, what people often say he was: a good man and a great teacher.

Lewis continues saying that it is not very important to understand theories concerning salvation in Christ. The important thing is to accept him and his help. Lewis talks about repenting, which is a central concept of *the Bible*. He explains it as turning one's back to the wrong direction one had taken earlier, to the wrong things one has done, and starting to the opposite direction. This is impossible to

people, but not to Jesus Christ, and this is the thing he has done for us, Lewis explains, because it was absolutely necessary in order for us to gain a new relationship to God the Father. Lewis concludes this part of the book saying that we need to receive a new kind of life from God through baptism, faith and the holy communion. They are not necessary to accomplish good works, he claims, instead they are the channels through which God pours his life into us.

The third part of *Mere Christianity* is named *The Life of a Christian* and it describes Christian moral. Lewis starts with contrasting relative moral that only demands people to limit their aims into those not harming others with absolute moral that demands people to be good, not just to do good. According to relative moral people can do anything, if they do not harm anyone else. According to absolute moral people must always do only good things and thus become good by their essence. An example of the first is utilitarianism, of the second, Immanuel Kant's maxim, the categorical imperative. The teachings of Jesus Christ in *the Bible* clearly resemble the latter:

You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Empty-head,' is answerable to the high court. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. (NIV 1985: *Matthew* 5:21-22.)

Lewis states a reason to the extremity of Jesus: the eternal quality of human soul. If people are eternal souls as *the Bible* claims, it is of extreme importance what kind of people we are now, and to which direction we are developing, because both our virtues and our vices can reach amazing extents in the limitlessness of eternity. Here Lewis takes a view that is not often heard in morality discussions nowadays.

Lewis continues to explain the so-called cardinal virtues: wisdom, temperance, justice and valour, and the so-called theological virtues: faith, hope and love. He discusses social moral saying that Christians ought to bring Christianity into those different areas of society they work at, and naming some duties of biblical social moral: work, obedience to authorities and joy, among other things. Lewis comments psychoanalysis saying that it can teach us very much about psychology, but that Freud's religious opinions are not to be taken too seriously.

Then Lewis talks about one traditional hot issue: sexual moral, claiming that it is not even half as important a part of Christianity as people usually consider it to be, but that it definitely is an important one. Also, Lewis considers it of great importance to our age, which has an extreme appetite for sex. Still, Lewis reminds that some other sins might be far more dangerous to a human being than sexual, not to forget that largely there is nothing wrong with sex at all, if it does not get twisted. Then Lewis talks about the positive part of Christian sexual moral: Christian marriage. *The Bible* teaches that a man and a woman become one in marriage, not just in body, but also in soul and spirit, and that marriage is for life. Lewis talks about these issues, as well as the biblical teaching of husband being the head of wife, which is dealt in greater depth below.

Lewis continues to explain forgiving as a Christian virtue, then pride as the greatest sin, and then finally the so-called theological virtues: love, hope and faith. He says that when forgiving someone we do not need to accept what people have done to us, just to accept them as they are. Here we treat others in the same way as ourselves: even though it might seem to us that there is nothing to love and accept in another person, it is possible to treat that person well, just as we do with ourselves even though we had committed most horrible sins a while ago.

God loves us in the same way, says Lewis. *The Bible* also teaches the same ideal: Jesus taught people to "Love your neighbor as yourself"(NIV:1985 *Matthew* 22:39) and to forgive:

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. (NIV:1985 *Matthew* 6:14-15.)

Pride is usually not considered a sin in secular circles, but Christians see it as the greatest sin of all, says Lewis. He claims that pride is the root of all sin, because it leads to all other vices. What else could make people want even more than they could ever benefit from, profit of or use, asks Lewis, or what else could make some people heartbreakers? Hardly sexual lust, rather pride. Pride was also Lucifer's sin, reminds Lewis of the biblical view. As told in *Ezekiel*:

You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth. (NIV:1985 *Ezekiel* 28:12,14-15,17.)

About the theological virtues, Lewis talks a lot. At first he comments that love is not a feeling even though it includes also that. Instead, love is a decision to seek what is of the best interests of the person loved and cared for. He also suggests that what we do has to do with the increasing or decreasing of our love towards others. The way of learning to love others is to start by acting as if we did love them. Then our love to them increases, and so does the feeling of love, and after a while it is easier and more natural to love the same person that earlier was so hard to love. About this topic Lewis has written the book *The Four*

Loves (1960) that deals with different types of love including affection in family, friendship, erotic love and charity.

About hope, Lewis says that those who have hoped for God and heaven, and thought about it a lot, have had the greatest impact on society on earth. Christians have the hope that their deepest longing will be satisfied in heaven with God, and thus they do not need to run after the things of the world on earth. They are free to give their lives to God, as Jesus told them to do:

If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. (NIV:1985 *Matthew* 16:24-25.)

and to wait for heaven as the final place of fulfilment. Lewis also comments that

It is of no use to bother about people, who try to be funny and ridicule Christian hope of heaven saying that they do not want to spend their eternity by playing harps. It is best to answer that if they do not understand books written for adults, they should not talk about them either. The metaphors of the Bible are only parables, trying to describe the indescribable. (Lewis 1952:133-134.)

Lewis continues to explain that music means exalted joy and limitlessness, crowns mean becoming a partaker in God's glory, power and joy, and gold means timelessness.

When talking about faith Lewis corrects the widespread error that Christian faith would just be considering *the Bible* true. Faith includes that, but it is also something more. It is not relying on one's feelings, instead it is relying on what one considers true after having thought about the matter very carefully. Lewis suggests that people who find Christianity logical try it for six weeks and see if it works or not. After having done that, they should have found out the depth of the evil inside them, which should make them humble enough to pray for God's mercy and help. And then, people can leave it all to God and start a new life with him, under grace. *The Bible* talks about the same phenomenon in *Paul's*

letter to Galatians: “Clearly no one is justified before God by the law [the moral standards of *the Bible*], because, ‘The righteous will live by faith’” (NIV:1985 *Galatians* 3:11.)

The fourth part of *Mere Christianity*, called *Beyond personality: the first steps of understanding the trinity* deals with God’s person, and his plan for the humanity. Lewis starts with saying that through the sacrificial death of Jesus those who rely on him become God’s sons and daughters. This means that they are born again, into a new and a different kind of a life. This life is brought into us by the work of God the Father, who is the one aimed at, Jesus Christ, who is the sacrifice and the perfect model for us, a mediator between God and the human kind, and the Holy Spirit, who is the power of God within us. Lewis talks about God’s timelessness saying that all moments are ‘now’ for God, because he is in yesterday, today and tomorrow at the same time. The same idea is expressed in *the Revelation*: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is and is to come” (NIV:1985 *Revelation* 4:8), in *Hebrews* “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (NIV:1985 *Hebrews* 13:8), and in *Exodus*

Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?” God said to Moses, “I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I am has sent me to you.’” (NIV:1985 *Exodus* 3:13-14.)

Lewis continues to explain the very difficult concept of the trinity, treated in depth below, saying “Christians believe that a living, acting love has been in God always and created everything else” (Lewis 1952:166). He says that God is a dynamic action, beat or a dance between the persons of God the Father and God the Son, and that their unity is a dynamic person of the Holy Spirit. He says that the only way to become truly alive is to be in union with God, who is Life

himself, and that this is the point and aim of Christianity: that all should become like Christ and have union with God. Then he explains the quite as complex a concept of holiness, which means the process we go through when God plants his life into us and changes us into his likeness. Here Lewis also gives an answer to those who wonder why people originally became evil, why did God not make us good in the first place. Lewis answers that people chose to rebel against God and thus brought misery upon themselves, and still God saves us through Jesus if we just accept that free gift of salvation. God could not have prevented us sinning unless he had made us robots, and that was not his plan.

Next, Lewis talks about Christian life in practice and says that it is a sort of pretending to be good, and then later noticing that one has actually become good in the process. It is not just pretending, but receiving God's help into one's life, and that is what makes us holy, as *the Bible* puts it, or good. It is not just conforming to superficial standards like being polite to others, but actually starting to care about others when being polite to them, because one knows that it is good to be polite and that the aim is learning to love others. It is receiving Jesus's life into us, and thus becoming like him through his efforts and his power in us.

Then Lewis deals with the topic whether a Christian's life is easy or hard saying that it is both: it does not cost you anything, and it costs you all. "Jesus says: 'Give me everything you have. I don't want just a part of your time and money and work, I want you... My will shall become yours.'" (Lewis 1952:183). The hardest thing we can imagine is to give ourselves totally, yet it is easier than anything we try. It is easier than trying to remain as we are and still be good, even though everyone sensible knows that all human beings are bad, or what *the Bible* calls sinners, says Lewis. When we give ourselves to God we become like Christ, and thus really become able to be good and live wisely.

The next topic covered in *Mere Christianity* is counting the costs of following Jesus and becoming Christian, which literally means to become little Christs. He reminds us that God aims at perfection with us, and that he will not be satisfied with anything less. Still, it does not mean that we would have to do it all by ourselves, rather we keep on trying and he accomplishes it in us. Many people, according to Lewis, would want God to help them to get rid of some of their vices that irritate either them or people close to them. But then they would be satisfied with it, after having got rid of say alcoholism, bad temper or cowardice, and would not want to let him change their nature any more. But if we give God a chance, he will change us totally, not just the vices easily recognised by others, but also those not seen by anyone else than our Heavenly Father. This is what makes Christianity easy to start but hard to maintain till the end, says Lewis. *The Bible* also says that we should count the costs of following Christ, because doing his will won't be easy. (NIV:1985 *Luke* 14:28-33)

Then Lewis talks about the change God wants to work in us saying that we all should become like him, perfect. Thus it is right for other people to criticise us when we are not. But they should still remember the starting point and evaluate the process as well as the product, since the final product will be ready only after our death, says Lewis. Also *the Bible* says that we do not become perfect during this life. Then Lewis goes on explaining how it is possible that many believers are such miserable as they are, and many unbelievers such wonderful people. He reminds the reader of the fact that even when Jesus was on earth he seemed to draw near him such horrible people, and maintains that Christianity attracts evil and miserable people being the only choice in life for them.

Finally, Lewis uses evolution as a metaphor of Christianity saying that for Christians the next step of evolution has already taken place in Calvary, it just did

not happen in the way the previous steps were taken. Jesus Christ, Lewis claims, is the first man of the new kind and also the one who has brought a new kind of life into this world. He concludes the book saying that God is the one and only person that there is, and we are only his reflections. If we want, we can become like him, and thus find our real personality, and that is the evolution he means. This process includes dying to oneself as *the Bible* describes it: “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” (NIV:1985 *Matthew* 10:39)

From this on, we will look mainly at Lewis’s Christianity in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, which is probably by now the most famous part of the variety of books written by him, and thus also his main influence in secular thought. The main emphasis will be on the character of Aslan, the main character in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, who is a representative of Christian God/Christ in it. It is very hard to define where exactly Aslan more resembles Jesus Christ, and where more God the Father or the Holy Spirit, since according to the Christian tradition they are perceived as parts of same godhead. However, the different parts of the trinity are looked at also separately, since some of the characters of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit contradict each other, and will be easier to look at when the difference is shown. Connections to other traditions and literature will be shown as well, even though they do not have as central a role as *The Bible* to *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

5. Views of Christian God

Before we start looking at Aslan as a Judeo-Christian representative of God, it is necessary to draw out some lines that will help us to concentrate on the essential characteristics of so called god/God. In modern secular, pluralistic society this is necessary, so that the reader and I would have an understanding on whom we are actually looking at, and what are the essential characteristics of him under discussion.

As Lewis was a Christian thinker and writer, we concentrate on the Christian sides of his view of God, and how that is reflected in the person of Aslan. Here I refer to Christianity common to all evangelical Christian denominations, not only the Anglican church. Thus controversial issues such as baptism were left out of this study. Luckily, they are not essential to the topic of this study, the view of God. Where Christianity is concerned, there is also *the Bible*, thus the frequent quotes from the holy book of Christianity.

However, I want to recognise that the Christian ideas are not the only sides of Lewis's view of God, even though they are the main ones. *The Bible* is also not the only book behind *The Chronicles of Narnia*, even though it is the main one. Thus, I want to define which characteristics of God/god the Western thinkers have considered most important. They shall be looked at from both the modern and the traditional point of view, meaning a few modern thinkers as the representatives of the philosophy of religion, and traditional systematic theology.

5.1 Philosophy of religion

The philosophy of religion discusses the possibility and probability of God's existence and his characteristics. It is not necessarily committed to any specific religion or theology. It can be purely philosophical, deontological, discussing different beliefs and theories. However, the main problems discussed in the philosophy of religion have usually concentrated on the Western Judeo-Christian concept of God, which is the centre of focus also here. Three modern philosophers of religion will be looked at below, the intention being to gain some pre-thoughts of God/god before looking at Aslan precisely as a Judeo-Christian representative of God.

John Hick is one of the best known Western philosophers of religion. His philosophy is widely accepted in Western thought, even though it has drawn far away from its original source, Christianity and Judaism. Hick's thoughts are pluralistic and theistic, reflecting today's Western scientific world-view as much as, or even more than traditional Christianity or Judaism. In his book *Uskonnonfilosofia (The Philosophy of Religion, 1992)*. Hick concludes that we cannot know scientifically whether there is a God or not, and even if there is a God, he would not necessarily have to be the kind of God that Christianity claims him to be. This certainly is a valid argument. Lewis discussed this problem in *Mere Christianity* (1952) saying that people should not blindly believe just for believing's sake, but to find out why and what is reasonable to believe. Lewis actually says that if there was no God and if Jesus was a liar, then it would be better to stop believing in him.

Hick describes the view of God presented in Christianity and Judaism naming as God's main characteristics monotheistic; infinite, self-sufficient;

Creator; Person; loving, good and holy. These characteristics he then divides into two categories: God's metaphysical and moral attributes. These attributes and their dividing into these two categories are also familiar from the traditional systematic theology, as will be discussed in the next section.

Hick writes about the problem of people trying to find out who and what God really is if he exists, and what kind of connection exists between the two types of God's supposed attributes. Lewis also discussed this problem in *Mere Christianity*, that even though we came to the conclusion that metaphysically there has to be such a being that we would call a God, we would not necessarily know that he is loving, morally pure, holy, and so on, as Christianity claims him to be. Hick answers to this question that God's moral attributes can be known because they were incarnated in Christ whereas the metaphysical attributes were not, and therefore cannot be known.

The Bible describes the incarnation of Christ giving the same idea as Hick, stating that Christ gave away his divine metaphysical characteristics when becoming a human being, but not his divine moral attributes:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

(NIV:1985 *Philippians* 2:5-11.)

When God became a man he had to give away his metaphysical qualities such as transcendence, limitlessness, self-sufficiency etc. Otherwise he could not have become a human being. However, all the written sources of the life of Jesus testify

that he was morally perfect, above every human being and in that sense, a God. Historians consider the four gospels more reliable sources than for instance the writings about many Roman emperors, and there are also other sources apart from the gospels that confirm the same about Jesus.

For Hick's claim that God's moral attributes can be known through Jesus Christ, Lewis states a reason in *Mere Christianity* saying that if a Jew claims that he has a right to forgive other's sins done against someone else than himself, then he is either bad, mad, or God. As everyone knows, and as proved in the gospels and several other written sources, nobody could consider Jesus bad or mad, and therefore Lewis among many others concludes that Jesus had to be God, and therefore we would better listen to what he said. Hick came to the same conclusion that Jesus Christ is all we know about the moral attributes of God.

Lennart Koskinen has written philosophy of religion for the new generation, transforming traditional language and concepts to modern terms, creating a view of God that is comprehensible to this generation, to which the ancient Judean culture and its language are no longer intelligible. In his book *Jumala (God)* Koskinen uses modern psychoanalysis, physics, philosophy, and mysticism as tools to understanding and describing God. Koskinen describes God saying

Not only Life itself, but also all Love, Beauty, Joy, Wisdom and Power originate from the same source [God]. They belong with their origin so closely that they can actually be said to be one with it. God is love and love is the same as God. But God is also something much more than that. (Koskinen 1998)

This view is very much that of *the Bible*, where all kinds of metaphors, parallels, and other forms of language are used to describe God. Jesus used parallels when teaching, many prophets used metaphors and metonymies, *the Song of Songs* (*the Song of Solomon*) is full of imagery, to name a few.

Koskinen describes God as the one that excels all limits, the Cosmic Conscience, the Creator behind physics, the God of human relationships, a sexless God, the mysterious God, and the Ancient God, to name the most important qualities of him. These new definitions of God have the same ideas behind them that many traditional definitions do. For example, *the Bible* describes God as eternal, timeless “For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night” (NIV:1985 *Psalms* 90:4); out of this world “Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God” (NIV:1985 *Psalms* 90:2); and above our understanding.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. (NIV: 1985 *Isaiah* 55:8-9).

God does not fit into our limited thoughts or language, but they must be used in thinking about him and discussing him, if we are to do it at all, for we are not capable of any better, either. For instance, *The Bible* teaches that God is sexless: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (NIV:1985 *Genesis* 1:27) – so he created both man and woman in his image. *The Bible* also describes God by several female attributes beside the male ones, for example when Jesus says:

‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!’ (NIV:1985 *Luke* 13:34).

Another example from the Old Testament: “As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you”. (NIV:1985 *Isaiah* 66:13) But still we have to choose to call God either him or her, because it would not show any reverence or understanding

of God's nature to call him 'it'. Thus, we end up choosing between 'he' and 'she', usually ending up with 'he' because of the sex of Jesus and the position of man in the world according to *the Bible*:

For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman but woman for man.—For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God. (NIV: 1985 *1. Corinthians* 11:8-9, 12.)

Koskinen concludes admitting that it is impossible to describe God, but he has wanted to try the impossible, because he believes that God wants to reach out to all human beings. The main point for him is not to describe the indescribable satisfactorily, but to give intelligent people a chance to get to know God in a way or another. This is the view of *the Bible* as well, as showed above, that God is above our understanding, and thus does not fit into our words. Still *the Bible* does not hesitate to talk about him, because it would be even worse than the imperfect language, for knowing God is having eternal life, not knowing him is lacking it: "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (NIV:1985 *1. John.5:11-12.*)

Koskinen's honest, intelligent and wide view on God resembles Lewis's theology very much. Also the motivation behind their writing seems to be the same. As they themselves have experienced the reality of God in their own lives, they want to release it in the lives of other honest, intelligent people, who are eager to find out the truth about God, his existence and his characteristics. Lewis invested a lot of his time into writing apologetics, which constitutes a large part of his production. Actually he said in the last book of *the Chronicles of Narnia, The Last Battle* that these books were written so that children could find a way to real God in Jesus. This clearly shows that the matter of people finding a

personal relationship to God was a priority to Lewis. Koskinen claims the same motive for his writing in *Jumala*, as mentioned above.

Koskinen's reflections in *Jumala* resemble Lewis's radical ideas about God's existence, his characteristics and getting to know him personally as presented in *Mere Christianity*, as well as Lewis's other apologetic books very much. Throughout his books Lewis shows a concern for an intelligent seeker, who really wants to know if there are any intelligible reasons for an honest thinker to believe in the God of Christianity. Patiently he goes on explaining the core truths of Christianity such as *the Bible* gives them, over and over again, clearing away all the possible obstacles to faith that he can think of. Many people have been comforted through his writings, and many have found faith through this thorough and profound style. It has also helped many believers to argue their beliefs better with *the Bible*.

One example of Lewis's radical thought and description that breaks the traditional barriers of thought in both Christian and atheist minds is *the Great Divorce*, where he describes heaven and hell in an unusual way. The idea created by him differs very much from the Middle Ages' view of hell as a dark fathom where horned devils and deuces stick their rakes into the meat of poor sinners. In Lewis's view it is a place of spiritual torment rather than that of physical, a place where people get what they want, but are still not satisfied, and continue to live eternally in gloomy loneliness, emptiness and want. *The Bible* describes hell as the lake of fire and a place of torment, but Christians disagree about whether this concretely means the traditional concept above, or if it is a metaphor of something inconceivable to us. However, *the Bible* clearly rejects the modern pluralist idea that everybody can get saved by their own faith and that hell does not really exist. Jesus Christ taught about hell very much and said that God never meant anybody

to end up there, but he won't force people to salvation if they persist in their pride.

Someone asked him, 'Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?' He said to them, 'Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.' (NIV: 1985 *Luke* 13:23-24.)

Heaven also is described differently, even though there is the same air of forgiveness, freedom and obedience as in the traditional descriptions of it. The God who created these places is seen as the great cosmic force and a person, who gives everybody what they want, not being the petty little anthropomorphic God on the cloud as people often consider him to be. Here as well Lewis breaks the old traditions, still remaining loyal to the message of *the Bible* that there is a heaven and a hell, even though we cannot really know what kind of places they are before we see them. The breaking of traditional thought barriers and limits is what unites Lewis and Koskinen.

The main unifying factor between Koskinen and Lewis is the startling knowledge about what it means to a person to realise that a loving God exists, and how that has motivated these two philosophers and writers. Lewis writes that when he found God, he found real joy, and the same joy can be felt and seen in Koskinen's *Jumala*. *The Bible* describes this as "the joy of salvation". "Restore to me the joy of your salvation" (NIV: 1985 *Psalms* 51:12). Lewis also writes that when we learn to know God, it makes us realise our responsibility before him, and the goodness of his laws, and to change our lives into his likeness and will. God loves us so much that he does not want to let us be the way we are forever, but shapes and moulds us like a potter. This is also the view of *the Bible*

'Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message.' So I went down to the potter's house, and saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was

shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. Then the word of the Lord came to me: ‘O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?’ declares the Lord. ‘Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, (NIV: 1985 *Jeremiah* 18:2-6.)

Ilkka Pyysiäinen is an atheist philosopher of religion. He has written the book *Jumalan selitys: ‘Jumala’ kognitiivisena kategoriana (The explanation of God: ‘God’ as a cognitive category, 1997)* that deals with the problems of God’s existence and his qualities from the point of views of different religions. Pyysiäinen notes that whether God exists or not is irrelevant for his study. Actually he admits that it is impossible to scientifically research God, so he concentrates on studying the effects of believing in God/god on a single human being and human cultures. His study is not restricted to Western concepts of God and religion, but he has taken a look at many different religious systems to reach an understanding of who and what God/god is to a human being from any culture and to the human culture in general.

Lewis discussed the effects on believing in God in his various books. In *Mere Christianity* he states that believing in God makes people behave as moral creatures, who are responsible before God. This transforms individuals and cultures, as morality is no longer optional, but obligatory. Lewis described Christian moral as presented in *The Bible* in his various books, for example in *The Four Loves* (1960). This view of a religion’s influence on people’s morals is almost totally absent from Pyysiäinen’s book, even though it deals with several other effects on human thought thoroughly. Pyysiäinen has focused in the effects on thought rather than behaviour, whereas Lewis has been more interested in the life-shaping value of believing in God, *the Bible* and Christianity.

Pyysiäinen defines God/god as any religious existent or non-existent being that represents an out-of-this-world person or point that is necessary to a human being, so that they could have the means to grasp or comprehend the limits of their known world and that which is beyond it. Without the concept of God there would not be a way for a human being to grasp that which is beyond the borders of their scientific knowledge. Religion gives peoples a way to touch the untouchable and to reach the unreachable, Pyysiäinen concludes. He does not see it as relevant to discuss the effect of believing in God/god on people's morals, as Lewis did, but concentrates on the cognitive effect of believing on a person's consciousness, finding this an important aspect of human life and culture.

What unites the thoughts of Pyysiäinen and Lewis is admitting that God, or the cognitive category of God/god reaches beyond the borders of this known world. Thus in order for a religion or a religious experience to exist, it requires a specific effort on the part of the believer to reach out over the boundaries of different realms and to touch God/god. *The Bible* adds to this God's initiative saying that we could really not know God if he had not first reached to us. "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God" (NIV:1985 *Romans* 3:10-11); "Jesus answered. 'No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him'". (NIV:1985 *John* 6:43-44) Lewis demonstrates this in his fiction, for instance in *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938) and *the Voyage to Venus* (1943), where the main character Ransom does not even realise that Maleldil, who represents God in the science fiction trilogy, is present unless he reveals himself to Ransom. Contact and communication is possible only because Maleldil wants to show himself to Ransom, and the latter wants to come into the contact with him.

The realisation of the greatness of God/god, the fact that if there is a God he is definitely out of the universe and not just a part of it, helps to understand how much greater God is than a human being, how powerful he is, and how unlimited in all his characteristics. He exceeds all limits of possibility in this world, because he does not belong in it and is not a part of this realm, but something much greater. Even though Pyysiäinen claims to be an atheist, he has interestingly widened the concept of God in a more realistic and biblical direction. He has abandoned the traditional prejudices of God as a guy sitting on a cloud conducting the angel choirs with their harps, glancing to the earth now and then, and wishing he could do something to the evil people who do not even want to believe he exists.

Unfortunately, Pyysiäinen does not discuss the greatness of Jesus Christ, as Lewis did in *Mere Christianity* and in many other of his books. Pyysiäinen finds it enough to discuss God as a Spirit, and thus the out-of-this-world God, but he does not see a need to discuss the incarnation, God becoming a man. Thus he misses the greatest point of Christianity, God reaching to humans by becoming like them, living with them, and sharing in their suffering. Also, Pyysiäinen deals only with human attempts to reach the unreachable God/god, whereas Christianity is mostly concerned of God's attempts to create a relationship of love with us.

Lewis has dealt with the incarnation in many of his books. For instance, in *Mere Christianity* (1952) he shows that Jesus Christ was not the mild Romantic hero as presented by the old church paintings, but a strong, powerful, yet loving man, who awoke strong reactions in everybody and shook the society he entered. *The Bible* makes it clear that the mission Jesus had was persistently loving God and people and thus making it possible for them to have a renewed relationship with each other. Jesus united people with each other, and with God, by his life

and death. He taught people to understand the Scriptures, to pray and to love their neighbours. Here Jesus showed God's moral, as discussed above, being not just a great transcendent God but a loving God and a man as well, a morally perfect being.

5.2 Systematic theology

Systematic theology is one branch of the Western theological tradition. It studies *the Bible* as a whole, listing important issues such as God, humanity, salvation, and finding out what *the Bible* teaches about them. It also aims at presenting *the Bible's* teachings as a coherent and harmonious whole and bringing them close to the contemporary generation and culture. Systematic theology is essentially practical, dealing with questions that are considered to be the most important for professing Christians, so that they would live their life as *the Bible* teaches them to. (Erickson 1998:23)

Lewis, in the sense described above, was also making systematic theology, when writing his *Mere Christianity* (1952). It deals with questions Lewis considered especially important to Christians, and it draws to *the Bible* as a whole, not just some part of it. He struggled to create a coherent whole about the biblical themes he taught, and always wrote to the modern generation. Other books that Lewis wrote could be considered into this category, too, but the case is clearest with *Mere Christianity*.

There are numerous systematic theological books in the world, and they include many different categorisations. Usually at least these basic themes are dealt with: God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, humanity, *the Bible*, sin, salvation, church, and the future (Erickson 1998:7-9, Grudem 1994: 7-11). The main

sources used here are Millard J. Erickson's *Christian theology* (1998) and Wayne Grudem's *Systematic theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (1994), and the focus is in God's person.

Systematic theology usually divides God's characteristics into sections. There are many categorisations, one of them was briefly mentioned in the philosophy of religion section above: God's metaphysical characters, and his moral characters as presented in Jesus Christ (Hick 1992). Other categorisations include such as God's communicable and incommunicable attributes; immanent or intransitive versus eminent or transitive qualities; the absolute and the relative attributes; the natural and the moral attributes (Erickson 1998: 292-293.)

God's communicable attributes refer to "those qualities of God for which at least a partial counterpart can be found in his human creation" (Erickson 1998: 293), whereas his incommunicable attributes are those unique qualities for which no counterpart can be found even in the smallest degree in humans. Love could be an example of the former and transcendence of the latter. Immanent or intransitive qualities of God remain within God's own nature, such as spirituality, whereas eminent or transitive qualities "go out from and operate outside the nature of God, affecting the creation" (Erickson 1998:293), like mercy, for example.

The absolute attributes are those that God has always had independently of his creation, infinity, for instance, whereas his relative attributes are those that he has in relation to his creation, eternity, for example. The moral qualities of God are "those which in the human context would relate to the concept of rightness (as opposed to wrongs)" (Erickson 1998: 293), whereas his natural attributes are non-moral. Holiness could be an example of the former, and power of the latter. Here, both the categorisation of God's attributes into communicable and

incommunicable as well as into his natural and moral qualities are used. Grudem treats the former and Erickson the latter model, they have been referred to respectively.

Grudem starts by God's incommunicable attributes describing God as an independent, unchangeable, eternal and omnipresent person with complete unity among all his attributes (Grudem 1994: 160-180). Lewis described God as independent for instance in *The Chronicles of Narnia* when saying that Aslan comes and goes as he himself wants, and that he is not restricted into any place or anybody. God is described in the same way in *the Bible*. It is said, for instance, that

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else (NIV: 1985 *Acts* 17:24-25).

God's independence from human beings is expressed in several other verses, too. Still, it is claimed that humanity can bring great joy to God by glorifying him in their lives, i.e. living like he wants them to live (Grudem 1994:162).

Aslan is not described as totally unchangeable, for when his meeting with Lucy is told in *Prince Caspian* (1951), it is said that Lucy noticed that Aslan had grown larger. When she expressed her amazement she was told that Aslan grows when she does, apparently so that when she is able to understand more, she perceives him in a new way, seeming larger. This is one of the most interesting points of Lewis's theology. However, the consistent view of his theology is not that God would be limited into human experience or be dependant of that, instead he makes himself known into us in ways and to the extent we can understand. So he cannot show his greatness to us totally, but only to the extent that we understand it. Thus the metaphor in *Prince Caspian*. This view is very biblical,

confirmed in for example the following commands in *the New Testament*:
 "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (NIV 1985 2.Peter 3:18) and "and we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God" (NIV:1985 *Colossians* 1:10). This does not mean that the Lord would grow, but that a Christian's understanding of him should.

Aslan is pictured as eternal, for example when it is told in *The Magician's Nephew* (1955) how he created the world. Also, in *The Last Battle* (1961) the world ends, but Aslan remains the same. Here Lewis uses the biblical perspective to God's timelessness: he was before the beginning of time, he is now and he will be forever. For example in *Revelation* when speaking about Christ it is said: "I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. " (NIV:1985 *Revelation* 1:17-18). Even today's physics confirm this when claiming that time and space can only exist in relation to matter, without matter there is neither time nor space. Still God, who is a spirit, not restricted to either time or space, has existed long before the beginning of the universe, and will exist even though the universe would collapse.

However, Lewis does not illustrate Aslan as being totally omnipresent. This is because he describes Aslan more like Christ than God the Father or the Holy Spirit, in the same way as *the Bible* does. Aslan is at first absent (in the similar way as Christ in heaven), and his people wait for him on the earth, then he appears in person to save his people, and then he goes away (like Christ ascending back to heaven) appearing only now and then to his disciples. In consequence, Aslan is not omnipresent, being sometimes here and not there, and

the other way round. This confirms to the biblical idea of Christ emptying himself of his metaphysical attributes when becoming a human being, as discussed above in the philosophy of religion section.

The unity referred by Grudem means that all of God's qualities add up to make a consistent whole, where all of the attributes are necessary to describe God's total being. God is not just attributes piled up, nor are these attributes additions to his real being, instead, God is all that these attributes claim, but also much more than all of them together. However, the purpose of the attributes and descriptions in *the Bible* and in Grudem's *Systematic theology. An introduction to Biblical Doctrine* is to illustrate something of God to us. This would be impossible, if none of his attributes were named (Grudem 1994: 177-180). The unity within Aslan is such great that the reader might, for example, not even perceive that different persons of the deity are referred to in different situations; for instance when Aslan contacts his followers apparently through the Holy Spirit, as described above. Also, none of his attributes seem added to his real being: he makes a consistent whole.

Grudem continues with an exhaustive list of attributes he calls God's communicable qualities. They are divided into five categories: attributes describing God's being, such as spirituality and invisibility; God's mental attributes, such as knowledge, wisdom and truthfulness; God's moral attributes, such as goodness, love, mercy, holiness, peace, righteousness, jealousy and wrath; attributes of God's purpose, such as will, freedom and omnipotence; and God's "summary" attributes, such as perfection, blessedness, beauty and glory (Grudem 1994: 185-186).

Lewis described God a spirit for example in his science fiction trilogy *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938), *Voyage to Venus* (1943) and *That Hideous*

Strength (1945), as well as in his other books. A spirit is naturally invisible, and so is Maleldil, the great spirit or God described in the trilogy. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, however, Aslan/God is not represented solely as a spirit, instead, he also has a lion's body. This can be seen as a metaphor of Christ's incarnation, where God became a human being, according to *the Bible* and Christianity. Also, *the Bible* gives lion as a metaphor of God, so this is not Lewis's own idea:

As a lion growls, a great lion over his prey – and though a whole band of shepherds is called together against him, he is not frightened by their shouts or disturbed by their clamor – so the Lord Almighty will come down to do battle on Mount Zion and on its heights (NIV:1985 *Isaiah* 31:4).

See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals. Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne (NIV:1985 *Revelation* 5:5-6).

Interestingly, Lewis also gives the traditionally more famous biblical Christian metaphor of Aslan/Christ as a lamb, in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952).

God's knowledge and wisdom that go beyond human limits is referred to in many Lewis's books, mostly in his moral teachings. One example is *The Great Divorce*, where it is apparent in God's judgments. The book deals with heaven and hell, the eternal glory and the eternal punishment. *The Bible* describes God's wisdom in many ways, for example in connection with the creation "How many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures." (NIV:1985 *Psalms* 104:24); with redemption "but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (NIV:1985 *I. Corinthians* 1:24); with judgements and ways "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!" (NIV:1985 *Romans* 11:33.)

In *Mere Christianity* Lewis uses Jesus's truthfulness as a ground on the argument that he is God – Lewis says that as Jesus was morally perfect and sane, in other words not bad or mad, he had to speak the truth when saying that he is God, and therefore he has to be that. So he clearly assumes that Jesus was truthful. *The Bible* also claims God to be truthful and faithful: "God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?" (NIV:1985 *Numbers* 23:19); "Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar" (NIV:1985 *Proverbs* 30:5-6.)

Lewis also describes Jesus as good, loving, merciful and holy, meaning that Jesus surpassed all possible human criterion to moral perfection. *The Bible* describes God as good: "For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations" (NIV:1985 *Psalms* 100:5); "Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him." (NIV:1985 *Psalms* 34:8); "You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees" (NIV: 1985 *Psalms* 119:68); loving:

God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (NIV:1985 *1.John* 4:8); This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us (NIV:1985 *1.John* 3:16).

merciful, when reporting the countless cases when Jesus had mercy on the crowd, preached and healed their sick; and holy, when refusing to do anything evil even when he was insulted, tortured and murdered by the pharisees. Lewis's point was that the Christian ought to show God's goodness, love, mercy and holiness becoming more like Jesus Christ and thus reflecting his glory to the world.

Lewis describes God as extremely righteous in all his books, being just and dividing justice among his creatures. For example in *The Chronicles of Narnia* Aslan never shows any favoritism to anyone, but judges his creatures according to their deeds. *The Bible* gives the same kind of idea about God: "God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right" (NIV: 1985 *Acts* 10:34); "Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism" (NIV: 1985 *Colossians* 3:25). God also continuously rebukes people who oppress others, or sin against others. He sets as a moral standard the taking care of the needy: "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (NIV: 1985 *James* 1:27); "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins" (NIV:1985 *James* 4:17.) God also helps his people Israel to get freed from the Egyptians oppression, as described in *Exodus*, and takes care of the poor and oppressed in several occasions through the history of the *Bible*.

Lewis pictures God's jealousy in for example *the Great Divorce* (1945) and *Four Loves* (1960) when he tells about people who are not willing to surrender their loved ones to God, but maintain that they only are to solely possess them. This is due to masked selfishness. These people are never able to know God or stay in heaven until they let go of their loved ones and learn to love them in the way that God does: not suffocating them into their selfishness but letting them be free. This idea of Lewis confirms to the biblical teaching of God's jealousy: he does not allow anyone or anything to separate people from him unless they themselves choose to be separated from him, and he wants to free bound people.

God's wrath is described in *The Last Battle* where the world ends and Aslan creates a new earth and a new heaven. This refers to the biblical end of the world. Then all those who have chosen to separate themselves from Aslan/God are cast away and never seen again. They have chosen to be without Aslan/God, and so be it, decrees he. In *the Bible* it is said that in the end of the world people get punished for the sins they committed unless they repent and turn to Christ. It is said that all the humanity is under God's wrath because of the evil we have done, but that God does not want anyone to perish but have eternal life with him in heaven. However, those who willingly choose to reject the free gift of salvation in Christ remain under God's wrath and are punished:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. (NIV: 1985 *Romans* 1:18-21.)

Lewis emphasizes the same aspect to God's wrath as *the Bible*: God has mercy on anyone who wants to accept salvation in Christ, but he does not force it upon anyone.

Aslan's will in *The Chronicles of Narnia* reminds the reader from God's will as expressed in *the Bible*. It is to create, bless, save, help and judge his creation. *The Bible* tells how God created the earth and everything in it by his will: "you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being" (NIV: 1985 *Revelation* 4:11); how God wants to bless his children by saving them and giving good gifts to them "He, who did not spare his own Son, but gave

him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” (NIV:1985 *Romans* 8:32); how God helps us in all situations

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NIV:1985 *Romans* 8:35-39).

God's will to judge his creation has been discussed above, in the section dealing God's wrath.

Aslan's absolute freedom is seen in the same text as his independence, when it is said that he comes and goes as he pleases, not being in need of anybody or anything, as mentioned above. Aslan's omnipotence is controversial in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Even in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), where Aslan is presented as weakest, he is able to beat the White Witch (the representative of satan) at any time he chooses. Still he refuses to do so directly, when the Witch challenges him. Aslan cannot break the eternal rules because he is righteous, so he has to give in to the Witch when she claims Edmund's blood because all traitors belong to her. Aslan saves Edmund through sacrificing himself instead, thus agreeing to the Witch's terms, yet taking total control in Narnia by breaking the evil enchantment. The story is a powerful metaphor of the salvation Christ accomplished, and it reflects both Aslan's/God's goodness and greatness, both justice and mercy, ability to do good in amazing amounts and total inability to do anything wrong. It is a lovely picture of God's perfection, beauty and glory.

Erickson (1998) uses the natural versus moral model starting with attributes he calls God's greatness, including spirituality, personality, life, infinity, constancy. As mentioned above, Lewis described God in the biblical manner of being a spirit apart from the time when Jesus Christ was a human being on the earth. God is also clearly described as a person, not just a force of some kind. This is seen for example in the science fiction trilogy, where Lewis describes the main character Ransom continually discussing with Maleldil, the representative of God in the books. He is not speaking to a force, but speaking like with a close friend. In the same trilogy Maleldil is also described as being the source of all life and the creator of worlds, the infinite being above all other spirits and beings. He is described as constantly the same, even though many things might be different in different planets and the surroundings change, but his person remains the same, as the thing that uniting all.

Erickson continues with attributes describing God's goodness, as he puts it: moral purity, integrity, love. Jesus's moral purity, as discussed in Lewis books was mentioned already above. Also his integrity and love were dealt with already earlier. All these qualities are clearly seen in the person of Aslan in *the Chronicles of Narnia*, and will be looked at in greater detail below.

6. Aslan as a Great God

Moving to the main topic, Aslan as a representative of the Judeo-Christian God in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, we start by looking Aslan's identity as a Great God. Here attributes, defined by systematic theology, are used. Erickson's natural versus moral model works as the loose base for the examination. Other aspects under inspection were defined by the above-mentioned philosophers of religion, as well as famous literary classics of Western civilisation, such as Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Also some views provided by the world mythology will be shortly looked at, because these as well as Dante were familiar to Lewis, and probably affected to his writing.

At first, we will look at the complicated yet important concept of monotheistic trinity as reflected in the personality of Aslan. This will be done through the various roles taken by Aslan in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. After that, Aslan as Life and as the source of life is discussed, as well as the wide topic of his limitlessness. Finally, we will look at the constancy of Aslan.

6.1. Monotheistic trinity

One of the traditional concepts of God is that he is both a spirit and a person. This is true of Aslan as well, he is both a lion-god, i.e. a person, and a spirit that resembles Christian Father God or Holy Spirit.

In *The Magician's nephew* Lewis describes how Aslan creates the world of Narnia, in *The Last Battle* how he judges his creatures, and in the books between these two how he saves his subjects on various occasions. In creating the world he resembles both God and Christ, because as told in *Genesis*, God created the earth and all that is in it, and as told in the *Gospel of John* he did it through Christ, his Word. An interesting resemblance is that Aslan creates the world singing, as God in *The Bible* creates the world by his words.

In his role as the Saviour, or incarnated Christ, Aslan saves the traitor Edmund, as told in *The Lion, the Witch And the Wardrobe* (1950). However, this differs remarkably from *The Bible* in the sense that only one individual is saved, not the whole of mankind through the offering. Anyhow, the symbolic value of the death and resurrection of Aslan is very clear, and intended to save a life, which is essentially the same as the offering of Christ for the whole mankind. Aslan is a saviour in other ways as well, saving his creatures from various trouble in all the books of *The Chronicles of Narnia*. This agrees with what *The Bible* tells about both God the Father and Christ: they both save people from various troubles.

The presence of a separate Father resembling the Christian God the Father is only felt when Aslan himself is physically present in Narnia. Otherwise it is always Aslan, who is longed for, and the Spirit of Aslan - clearly referring to the Holy Spirit - hovering at some place encouraging the creatures of Narnia by his

presence. It is Christ who is the most central godhead from the Christian trinity in *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

However, also the Holy Spirit plays an important part in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, even though it is easier not to notice him than to fail to acknowledge the presence of Aslan as Christ. According to the Christian tradition and *the Bible*, the Holy Spirit is a teacher, reminder, helper, and the one through whom God acts in this world giving the will and the means to communicate with God and the strength to obey Him. His presence is the thing that counts when defining who is a child of God and who is not. Also in *The Chronicles of Narnia* the Spirit of Aslan is the one that changes individuals from inside and helps them to start communicating with Aslan and becoming more like him. He teaches the children, reminds them of the commands given by Aslan, and helps them to accomplish their tasks. Only by being with Aslan and obeying him the children find their way and survive till the happy end in their various adventures.

As the judge, Aslan resembles Christ; for it is Christ who according to *The Bible* is going to judge all depending on how they have lived. It is remarkable that at this point there are no separate godheads felt in *The Last Battle*. The situation is very much different from many traditional Christian concepts of the end of the world, where God the Father is seen as the Judge, and Christ as the advocate of the sinners taking their blame on himself. The view of *The Last Battle*, as well as the whole *Chronicles of Narnia* is strictly monotheistic, the difference between God the Father, Christ and the Holy Spirit being a minor one. However, it does present different characteristics of God traditionally attached to either Father, Christ or the Holy Spirit. According to *The Bible*, the Christian theology, and apparently to Lewis's own view, these three godheads make one very consistent God.

6.2 Life

Aslan is the source of all life in Narnia, because he has created Narnia, as told in *The Magician's Nephew*. He is also the restorer of life in Narnia, as for example when he helps sick and wounded Narnians to recover as told in *The Lion, the Witch And the Wardrobe* and *Prince Caspian*. Here he reminds us of Jesus, who healed many sick people when he was on the earth, and even resurrected Lazarus from death proving that he has the power over illnesses and death. Also *the Old Testament* tells about God giving life to people and animals, taking care of their needs and restoring their lives after illnesses and catastrophes. *The Last Battle* draws this attribute to conclusion by telling how Aslan recreates the worlds of Narnia, the “real world” and all that ever existed. *The Bible* also prophesies that in the end of this world Jesus will make new heavens and earth. (NIV:1985 *Revelation* 21:1.)

The idea of God as Life and the source of all life, as well as its restorer is widespread in theology, religious writing and in literary classics such as Dante's *Divine Comedy*. In its last part, *Heaven* Dante describes God as a sun-like source of life and light. This image was known to Lewis. However, Aslan being a hero in children's books, became a very concrete kind of hero, a lion, instead of an abstract being such as Dante's. Still, the emphasis on God being the source of life is the same in the books of both writers.

In his other books Lewis wrote that heaven, as the place where God reigns, is really becoming more alive, free and real, more one with god and people, whereas hell, as the place where people get the evil they want instead of God's will for them, is a place of death, bounds, solitude and the unreal. This

image of heaven and hell is discussed for instance in *The Problem of Pain* (1940), *The Great Divorce* (1945) and *The Screwtape Letters* (1942). Thus Lewis is saying that God is not only the source of life in this world, but also the absolute life, the life itself. This idea is nothing new, but was said already by Plato, for example. Also, many other thinkers have shared this idea of God as life.

Aslan resembles the Christian metaphor of life also in the sense that he triumphs over death by his resurrection, which is described in *The Lion, the Witch And the Wardrobe* (1950). This famous metaphor was not only fulfilled by Christ according to *the Bible*, but also many literary heroes have been claimed to have accomplished the same. An example of this, familiar to Lewis, was Balder in the Norse mythology. John Grant tells in *Myths And Legends: Viking. Oriental. Greek* (Bellingham et al.1992) that Balder was the most beautiful of gods. He was killed by Loki's evil scheme, but promised a resurrection if all the world would mourn over him. However, Loki spoiled this plan and thus Balder had to remain dead in the kingdom of death, Hel. Also a South American god was believed to have resurrected from death, as reported by Ions in *The World's Mythology in Colour* (1987). However, only Jesus Christ was resurrected through his own power, as did Aslan in *The Lion, the Witch And the Wardrobe*, thus showing the unique teaching of Christianity.

One side of the immortality of Aslan is that his subjects wait for his coming back to them when he is absent. This is a biblical metaphor of Christ's return, but there is also an interesting connection to the English Arthurian tales, where King Arthur's return is waited upon as eagerly. King Arthur is described as immortal, and his people wait for his return, because he is remembered as a good king, and he is believed to set everything right in his kingdom when he appears back to them. Castleden's *King Arthur: The Truth behind the Legend*

(2000) shows the connection between Arthurian tales and Christian mythology. In the science fiction trilogy of Lewis he also describes King Arthur coming back to England, not as Christ, but as a great hero.

6.3 Infinite (omnipresent, timeless, omniscient, almighty)

Aslan's identity as an infinite, limitless, sovereign God is complex in *The Chronicles of Narnia* in the same way as is Christ's role in Christianity and *The Bible*. On the first hand Aslan seems to be sovereign Lord, but then on the other hand he does not always have all the characteristics traditionally considered as the essential characteristics of the divine. Some of these characters were discussed to some extent also above.

In *The Last Battle* Aslan's sovereignty becomes obvious, when the Talking Beasts and the King Tirian, and others pray to Aslan like people in our world pray to God. (Lewis 1956: 43) Also when describing another god, the demon Tash, the divinity of Aslan is shown in his sovereignty even over Tash, who has got a lot of power, too. But Tash cannot touch anybody who is pure, because they are under the protection of Aslan. He can hurt only those, who have called to him, and given themselves to serving evil instead of good, like Ginger the Cat (Lewis 1956: 97, 104-105). In *The Last Battle* Emeth the Tarkaan, one from the Calormene who had opposed Aslan, meets him after his death, and finds that even though he has been serving Tash all through his life, Aslan takes it as a service to himself, because "I [Aslan] and he [Tash] are of such different kinds that no service which is vile can be done to me, and none which is not vile can be done to him." (Lewis 1956:156)

At some points Aslan is also clearly omniscient, omnipresent and in control of everything, which are some of the characteristics of a limitless, infinite God. This is shown fairly well in *The Silver Chair* (1953), when the children are following the signs given by Aslan and find themselves as prisoners in the Underworld, without a way to get back to Overworld. Jill gets desperate, but the marsh-wiggle Puddleglum encourages her that as they are obeying Aslan once again, he will surely take care of the rest, which he does, and saves the whole lot with the Prince Rilian, of whom he sent the children to rescue from the Underworld. Aslan also reads the minds of the children, and of every creature in Narnia.

However, when Aslan is among his people in *The Lion, the Witch And the Wardrobe*, he does not seem to know everything, because for example he does ask questions. He does not seem to ask them just to know whether his subjects are honest, rather because he really does not know the answers, even though he knows a lot about what is going on, and understands the situations much better than the others seem to. This might imply that at the time Aslan represents Christ on earth, taking the same limitations he had then. Because it is said in *The Bible* that Christ gave away all his divine power and qualities and became totally human, as we are: not omniscient, not in control of all situations, and obviously, not omnipresent, yet remaining God, as discussed earlier. (NIV:1985 *Philippians* 2:6-7.)

Aslan is timeless in the same sense as God in Christianity is. In *The Lion, the Witch And the Wardrobe*, where he represents Christ, there are some limitations to what Aslan can do and where he can be at the same time. But in the other books, where he takes more the role of God the Father or the Holy Spirit, he can be present in many places and situations simultaneously, doing various

things at the same time. An interesting connection to this is the fact that the Narnian time is different from the time of the real world, usually it goes faster, sometimes slower than the latter. This is a clear implication to the eternal realm in the Narnian fantasy world.

Aslan is almighty, “the King above all High Kings in Narnia” (Lewis 1954:152), even though he does not himself get involved with the governing of the land. He only teaches the children to govern, and then gives the responsibility to them. But still he is there all the time, not always visible, yet ready to come to help for his subjects. He never abandons them, even though they sometimes think he does, as told in *The Lion, the Witch And the Wardrobe*, when the evil White Witch is in control of Narnia, in *Prince Caspian* when an evil King Miraz is keeping Narnia under his power, or in *The Last Battle* when Ape Shift rebels against the last King of Narnia, Tirian. Aslan’s presence is felt very strongly even though he is not physically present, when for example in *The Last Battle* Ape Shift persuades Ass Puzzle to wear a lion’s skin and pretend to be Aslan, and there is a great thunderclap and an earthquake as Aslan’s warning to them (Lewis 1956:16-17). Here he resembles clearly God the Father, who is omnipresent according to *The Bible*, and the Holy Spirit, but not the incarnated Christ, who could only be in one place at a time. The warning sign given by the thunderclap brings to mind the Norse god Thor and the Greek god Zeus, who used thunder and other nature forces as their weapons and warnings to the mankind.

It becomes very clear in the various books of *The Chronicles of Narnia* that Aslan does not want to interfere with whatever takes place in Narnia, unless it is absolutely necessary. Instead, he nominates all the kings, and gives them authority to govern Narnia independently, remaining faithful to him and behaving justly. This is what he orders the first king Frank and the first queen Helen to do in

The Magician's Nephew (Lewis 1955:128-130): they are to guard Narnians, to farm the land, to be kind and fair toward their subjects. Aslan wants them, as well as all his subjects to take care of each other, and to help each other in their time of need. Nevertheless, it is Aslan who actually reigns in Narnia through the kings and queens he nominates, and his power is limitless, everything is under his control - even though it is clearly hinted at some points that there is one even higher than him, the equivalent of the Christian God the Father. Thus Aslan here resembles Christ, who according to *The Bible* has been given all the power and authority on the earth, but who is still subject to God the Father.

Aslan even uses the Witches and all the dark powers to do his will in Narnia: they only rule when he lets them rule, and for example in *The Lion, the Witch And the Wardrobe* it is implied that he could stop their power at once if he wanted to, as God could according to the Christian tradition. But it is apparently more useful to let them be, and to use them to teach the children and other subjects to know Aslan and to draw near to him. This is because it is often in the hard times and in the trouble caused by the evil forces that the children and the creatures of Narnia especially long for Aslan, and a call for help is often the beginning of a close relationship with Aslan. For example, in *Prince Caspian* the main character Caspian desperately needs Aslan's help when his evil uncle Miraz pursues him desiring to murder him, the rightful heir to the throne. But when Caspian calls for Aslan to help, he receives not only the help he asked for, but also the privilege of getting to know Aslan personally. (Lewis 1951:192-193, 203-204) After that Caspian is close to Aslan at all times, and consults his help when in need, as we read in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* and *The Silver Chair*.

This seems to be God's aim and the way to act as described in *The Bible*, as well. For example God's people, Israel, remained faithful to God only for short periods between difficult times, and when they went astray God used hardships such as wars, famines and slavery to lead them back to him. However, this method inevitably brings to mind hesitations about God's/Aslan's goodness. This problem is dealt in a greater depth in a separate section "The existence of evil and the problem of pain" in the last chapter "Practical Problems".

6.4 Constant

In the world mythologies gods usually show some kind of change, whereas according to *the Bible* and the Christian teaching God does not change. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." (NIV:1985 *Hebrews 13:8*) Lewis has followed this idea in his writing saying that, as for God, there is no time, he does not either change, but is forever the same. Still God does change his mind, as reported in various places in *the Bible*, (e.g. *Exodus 32:14*), and as Lewis also commented in his *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (1964).

In *The Lion, the Witch And the Wardrobe* Lucy meets Aslan and recognises that he seems bigger than the previous time they met. Aslan tells that it is true, and that it has happened because Lucy herself has grown, stating that he grows at the same pace she does. This change, however, depends only on the point of view of the experiencer, as mentioned above, whereas *The Chronicles of Narnia* does not have other comments on Aslan changing his shape, form or character in any way. In his other books, for instance *The Problem of Pain* (1940), *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (1964), Lewis describes God as eternal, unchangeable and out of our concept of time.

One important side of Aslan's constancy is that his grace towards his subjects does not change. This conforms to the biblical ideal of God, whose love is steadfast like a rock, on whom people can build their lives (NIV:1985 *Psalms 19:24, 40:2, Matthew 7:24*). A good example of this is Aslan's behaviour towards the traitor Edmund: he forgives him, and gives him a share with his sisters and brother even though he had committed a terrible crime. Aslan does not even want to talk about what happened or remember it after it has been dealt with by his own sacrificial death instead of Edmund's.

7. Aslan as a Good God

This chapter deals with the second major group traditionally associated with God, basically defining God as good, and it asks how true that seems to be of Aslan. The first thing dealt with is the moral purity of Aslan, his holiness, righteousness and justice. Then his being true, his faithfulness and trustworthiness are examined. Finally Aslan's love; his benevolence, grace, mercy and patience, is studied.

7.1 Moral purity (holy, righteous, just)

Being righteous, Aslan abhors all evil and injustice. He is therefore angry at any of his subjects who do not obey him, and who hurt those that are weaker than them. Here, too, Aslan conforms to the Christian image of God as uniquely pure and holy, separated from the mankind due to the contrast between his goodness and the evil nature of human beings. Jesus, as well, is shown to hate violence, injustice and lovelessness. Aslan is closer to the image of Christ in this matter, not being very particular about cleanness, health or sacrifices as God the Father is in *The Old Testament*. Quite in contrast; Aslan does not scold the children when they eat this and that, he approaches his subjects even when they are ill or dirty, and he does not want any other sacrifice than the obedience of his subjects. But Aslan is as fierce as Jesus in rebuking people who hurt others.

In the end the evil doers are paid according to their deeds, just as the virtuous are rewarded according to theirs, as told in *The Last Battle* (Lewis 1956:146). However, Aslan does not want to judge his subjects right away; he gives them time to change their ways. He has patience even with the unjust, since he sees the faults of everyone, and still loves them. Here Aslan's character brings

to mind the *Bible* verse that describes God as “compassionate and gracious, slow to anger abounding in love” (NIV: 1985 *Psalms* 103:8). For example, all the children who visit Narnia do something wrong at some point. Each is scolded by Aslan, and later forgiven for everything. This side of Aslan is discussed in greater detail below.

Aslan wants to teach the children to love each other, as he loves them, and to treat each other correctly. This leads to peace in Narnia, a peace that is shattered only when someone decides to rebel against this law of love. Aslan allows that to happen, but he always deals with both the wronged and the guilty party, if not straight away, then later on: he helps the former out of their trouble, and heals their wounds, and the latter he teaches to behave correctly towards their fellow creatures. Here Aslan resembles both God the Father and Christ - God the Father in *The Old Testament* punishing the guilty ones and defending the weak and the poor, and Christ rebuking sinners as well as healing their wounds.

7.2 Integrity (true, trustworthy, faithful)

Aslan is a true person and a true God in the fantasy world of Narnia in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, as Jesus Christ is true human being and God, according to *the Bible*. There is no deceit in either. Aslan, like his model Jesus Christ, does not lie, manipulate or seek his own good, but always aims at the victory of truth and justice. Aslan is also trustworthy, if he promises something, he keeps it. He never lets anyone down.

It is remarkable, how Aslan himself remains faithful even when the children or his other subjects fail him. In *The Lion, the Witch And the Wardrobe*, for instance, Aslan saves Edmund from death by dying for him instead, even though Edmund has failed Aslan and his own siblings by going to the White Witch's side. Edmund has done nothing but behave as a traitor before coming to Aslan, but still Aslan instantly wants to save him from his troubles, and deals with him accordingly. He does not allow anything to hurt him, and takes all the hurt onto himself by taking his part as the tortured and executed offer to the White Witch. This is a metaphor of Christ's sacrificial death for the sins of the mankind, as told in *The Bible*. In contrast to Christianity, Aslan's sacrificial death is only mentioned a few times in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, whereas *the Bible* has a rich reference chain to Christ's sacrifice. Even in *The Lion, the Witch And the Wardrobe*, where it is the climax of the book, it is dealt quite shortly, in only a few chapters. Aslan's sacrificial death is not as central a value to *The Chronicles of Narnia*, as salvation through the sacrificial offering of Christ is in *The Bible*.

The main theme in *The Chronicles of Narnia* - if there is any, since the books differ quite much from each other - could be the faithfulness of Aslan. This is revealed for instance in connection to Edmund's fate, as well as the character of

the White Witch: Aslan loves Edmund no matter what the price, and is ready to do anything to save him, even though Edmund does not deserve it. But the Witch only wants to kill and destroy Edmund, and is using him as a means to kill and destroy others and to increase her power. Edmund's fate also shows how Aslan is never far away from anyone; everybody is free to come to him. And Aslan always comes to help, or sends someone else, if anyone asks him to, as is seen in the various books of *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

7.3 Love (benevolent, gracious, merciful, patient)

Aslan is loving towards all his subjects. He wants good to all his subjects, and that is the motive for all his activity. His love is unconditional, it does not require that the object of it would also love him back, or even be grateful about his love, he simply loves everyone regardless of whether they love him or not.

One way of showing Aslan's love in *The Chronicles of Narnia* is by showing how all his subjects love and adore him, and how they trust that he will help them in their time of need. Of course some do not trust him when they are tested, but all the noblest and finest remain faithful to him even through the hard times, for example Roonwit the Centaur, and Reepicheep the Mouse. The deep love and faithful service given to him suggests that these creatures really know whom they serve, and that they truly love him. This is very much alike the relationship Christ had with his disciples, as told in *The Gospels*; how the people he had helped clung to him and seemed to love him very intently. It also brings to mind the description of the relationship between God and the few faithful of Israel in *The Old Testament*. However, service based on love rather than law is much less frequent when attached to the Father in *The Old Testament*, than when attached to the usually more intimate relationship people had with Jesus. In the Old Testament times people often served God because of a sense of duty, when in *The New Testament* people are ready to give their lives and everything they have just because they love Jesus Christ.

Aslan's love is shown towards those who love him, and they always get their reward in the end. Yet Aslan also loves those who do not love him, a characteristic commonly attached to both Christian God the Father as told by prophets in *The Old Testament*, and to Jesus, as told in *The Gospels*. Aslan

loves figures such as the dwarfs in *The Last Battle*. The problem with such individuals is not so much that Aslan would not want to give them the same gifts and blessings as he gives to others, but that they cannot receive what is offered to them because they have decided not to trust anyone else but themselves. It is because of this that they are unable to enjoy freedom in Aslan's country, or the feast. They still think that they are living in a dark stable, eating old turnips and hay.

Uncle Andrew has the same problem in *The Magician's Nephew*: no matter how gently Aslan talks to him, and tries to get closer to him, Uncle Andrew only thinks that either he must be going crazy, because lions do not talk or sing, or else that the lion must be dangerous, and about to attack him. He runs away, and Aslan decides not to disturb him any further: after all, he has chosen his way, and there is no turning him from that way without violating his free will. Aslan is presented as respecting everybody's right to free will, and explaining it to the children, who enquire about it. This is a very central aspect of God in Christianity, where God is described as loving human beings so much that he does not force them into anything, even though he is almighty and could easily do it. Christ is described as respecting towards people as well, refusing manipulation and force when tempted to use them as a means to achieve his goals.

Next we will look at some controversial topics in God's nature and see how they are shown and solved in Aslan's person. Some of these have been discussed very widely both in Christian and secular circles, and to Lewis as an apologist these questions were very important. He wanted to show that God is what he claims to be in The Bible, and that we can trust him in everything.

8 Practical problems on the nature of God/Aslan

There are some tensions between God's different characteristics, as presented by Christian tradition. This chapter describes how Lewis has dealt with them in the personality of Aslan in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. First of the famous paradoxes of God dealt with in this chapter is the tension of how God can be out of this world (transcendent) and yet in this world (immanent/available) at the same time. The next problem is how God can be completely righteous while at the same time being merciful. After that a less known problem, namely the demanding quality of God's love, and his terribleness will be considered. Finally, the problem of pain and evil, which was personally very important to Lewis, will be discussed.

8.1. Transcendent - immanent (available)

Pyysiäinen discusses this side of God thoroughly in his book *Jumalan selitys: 'Jumala' kognitiivisena kategoriana*. (1997) Also Koskinen discusses this in his *Jumala* (1998), as mentioned above. Christian tradition has solved this problem by explaining that according to *the Bible* a transcendent God has reached out to this world through his son Jesus Christ, who became a human being just like us, giving away some of his divine qualities such as being limitless, yet remaining divine. (NIV: 1985 *Philippians* 2: 6-8) This way God became immanent, as prophesied in *Isaiah*. (NIV:1985 *Isaiah* 7:14. When writing *The Chronicles of Narnia* Lewis showed what could happen and how it would be if Jesus Christ appeared in a fantasy world such as Narnia. Thus the tension between transcendence and immanence is not as sharp as it could be in an other kind of book. Still, some of the tension remains, and it is discussed below.

Aslan is demanding, the tasks he sets are not easy, but he is there all the time for the children in a way or another. For instance, in *The Lion, the Witch And the Wardrobe* Aslan gives a magic horn to Susan and tells her to use it when the children need help. This magic horn is then later used in Prince Caspian's times as well, to call for help from Aslan, who at the time is not physically present in Narnia, even though his presence is felt in the spiritual world. (Lewis 1951: 89-93) At first Aslan sends the children from their world to Narnia to help Prince Caspian in his fight against the mean tyrant Miraz, whom they overcome with the help of Aslan. Only after that does he come himself. This is the way God acts in *The Bible* as well: either he sends his prophets like Moses to help his people in their time of need, or else he comes himself in the form of the incarnated Christ, which of course has happened only once according to *the Bible*, in contrast to Aslan appearing to his subjects numerous times in the physical form of a lion.

Even though Aslan helps the children to complete the tasks and to get out of trouble, he sometimes apparently lets things go wrong, or take a turn in a direction his subjects cannot understand, as discussed above. Only afterwards do they understand that it happened for their best interests. Thus, in *The Silver Chair* Eustace, Jill and Puddleglum are captured by the gnomes of the Underworld, and taken as prisoners to meet its evil queen, the Lady of the Green Kertle. But in her town they actually find the lost Prince Rilian they have come to look for, and manage to free him and flee from the Underworld to Narnia, before the total collapse of the Underworld. As the marsh-wiggle Puddleglum puts it: "There *are* no accidents. Our guide is Aslan. and he knew already all things that would come of them; including *this*." (Lewis 1953:135) This agrees with the Christian view on God's guidance: no matter how things seem to be, "in all things God works for the

good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”
(NIV: 1985 *Romans* 8:28)

8.2 Righteous versus merciful

Aslan does not usually force anybody to do anything: that happens only exceptionally, when it is absolutely necessary. For instance in *The Horse And His Boy* Aslan forces Aravis and Hwin to meet Shasta and Bree (Lewis 1954:23-26, 150-151). That is because they need to get to know each other, so that they would help each other on the way to Narnia. But in the end Aslan judges everybody according to their deeds, and then they no longer have any alternatives, but need to subject themselves under his authority. That is where their free will ends: after the judgement they either enter Aslan’s country, or if fall short of that, perish eternally. (Lewis 1956:146) Here Aslan resembles Milton’s view of God/ Christ as the righteous Judge, who as the sovereign God has divine right to judge the universe according to his view on it. This is also *the Bible’s* view on the subject.

Lewis’s view on God’s judgement is told more precisely in the book *The Great Divorce*, but he makes his basic idea very clear in *The Last Battle* as well. He emphasises the end of a world as being only the start of the real life, when looked at from a different angle. This is because all the important questions in Narnia have actually been about the decision between good and evil, good being always the will of Aslan, and bad refusing to obey him. In the end total separation of good and evil takes place, and the prelude is over, and the total, full and the whole life starting. The greatest divorce from Aslan is not to have anything to do with him, as will happen to those who hate him. That is also the greatest

evil. And the greatest good is to be with Aslan eternally, in a perfect state of harmony and good, which is achieved in Aslan's country. Thus it could be said that all the creatures themselves decide whether they want to obey Aslan and enter into his country, or whether they want to do things in their own way and perish in the end.

This is a biblical view of the subject, and it reflects the Christian image of God as the ultimate good, whereas there is no single devil in the world of Narnia as there is in *The Bible*. Instead, he is represented through various Witches in *The Magician's Nephew*, in *The Lion, the Witch And the Wardrobe* and *The Silver Chair* and the god Tash *The Horse And His Boy* and *The Last Battle*. Also, Lewis does not describe hell as clearly as it is in *The Bible*, but vaguely mentions that the creatures that perished walked into Aslan's shadow, and they were seen never more. In addition to that he only mentions that the Talking animals lost their understanding and became ordinary animals, losing their ability to talk. (Lewis 1956: 146)

The most important basis for Aslan's judgement is whether the subject loves Aslan or not (Lewis 1956:146). This may seem shocking at first, bringing into mind pictures of earthly dictators, and totalitarian states with their authorities, who make the same claim as Aslan. But the difference lies in that Aslan is good and just, like God in *The Bible*, and following his orders does not simply mean pleasing him for his own sake, for he is a self-sufficient sovereign who does not lack the service of his subjects. Aslan, like the Christian God, simply asks his subjects to love their neighbours. Thus it follows that loving Aslan - as the image of God - and obeying his orders makes his subjects to love others and make good decisions. Given this assumption all those who love him do good, and all those who hate him do evil (Lewis 1956:156). Thus those that have loved him

have deserved to be taken to his country, whereas those who have hated him do deserve condemnation according to the Christian moral that Lewis also shared.

What needs to be remembered is the fact that all Aslan's subjects do make mistakes, and therefore fall short of his demands. This becomes very clear when reading any of the books from this series. Thus both the children and all the other Narnians need his grace. And all those who accept it become good, perhaps not instantly, but very clearly that is what happens to all of them. For instance, Edmund, Eustace, and Jill all change remarkably during their adventures in Narnia, through various trials, and through meetings with Aslan. It can actually be said that they do not, in the end, deserve Aslan's goodness, his gifts and his mercy, nor to be taken to Aslan's country when others perish. All this is in a way deserved only by Aslan himself, who gives this mercy as a free gift to anyone, who wants to accept it, like God does, according to the Christian teaching. Aslan's nature, as merciful God, is central in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, it runs through it the same way God's mercy runs through *The Bible*.

8.3. Demanding in his love

The fact that Aslan's mercy is a free gift does not mean that it would be easy to accept, or that what follows would be easy to take. After breathing courage to Susan, who has "listened to her fears" (Lewis 1951:143) instead of obeying his call, Aslan tells her to obey him next time. This is what Aslan does with everyone: when he has put things right with someone who has disobeyed him, he always expects them to change after that, and to do the right thing next time. In Christian tradition this is called repentance, and it was a central aspect in the teaching of Jesus and John the Baptist, as well as other Christians of all times. This was shortly dealt with above.

In obeying Aslan's commands, the children and all the other subjects of Aslan face unbelievably hard tasks and trials, yet they overcome them by following Aslan's advice and receiving his help in their time of need. For instance, in *The Silver Chair* Jill and Eustace have the task of finding the lost Prince Rilian, even though nobody knows where he is, and they manage to do it in the end, by following Aslan's advice. He also needs to help the children during their mission, since they could not survive without him (Lewis 1953:103-104). That is because they have disobeyed him, and Jill has forgotten the signs that were to lead them to Prince Rilian. Nevertheless, after the adventure Aslan does not scold the children, but thanks them for performing the task well (Lewis 1953:201).

Interestingly, when performing these quests children learn to know Aslan better, and to love him more, and during the process they become more faithful to him than they were in the first place. For instance, as told in *The Magician's Nephew*, when completing his mission with Polly, Digory learns to know Aslan's compassion for his pain, and for his mother's sickness. (Lewis 1955:131-132)

And in the end Aslan actually heals her, but by that time Digory has learned to trust Aslan anyway, no matter what he would do. (Lewis 1955:163) By his compassion toward the unhappy Digory Aslan has won his trust and love, and he no more listens to voices that tell him to do it his own way. He wants to obey Aslan. (Lewis 1955:150-152) This resembles Christian teaching, where it is believed that through the hard times and trials in life Christians learn to know God's character and his mercy towards them better, and start loving him more. Lewis promoted this aspect of Christianity in several of his other books, too, for example in *Mere Christianity*.

8.4. Terrible

Aslan is described as being terrible, but by no means bad, or harmful. His sovereignty causes his subjects to tremble before him, for instance in *The Lion, the Witch And the Wardrobe*, when the children meet Aslan they are frightened of him, but not in a horrible way. Everyone in Narnia seems to know that they need to respect and obey Aslan, or else they will be punished. To most of his subjects this is a joy, considering his wonderful character and his love for everybody. But to some this is a cause of horror and hatred, since they do not want to subject themselves to his authority and power. The old and ill woman welcoming Aslan with tears of joy in *Prince Caspian* (Lewis 1951:190) is an example of a respectful and loving kind of relationship with Aslan; by contrast, Prince Rabadash, who considers Aslan a demon in *The Horse And His Boy* (Lewis 1954:201) represents a rejecting and hating way of relating to him. *The Bible* tells about the same kind of ambiguity towards God the Father and Christ alike: some listened to them and obeyed them with delight, some grumbled and disobeyed, resenting God and especially Christ even violently at times.

Aslan's punishments are motivated by love: they aim at teaching something to the person punished. Thus in *The Horse And His Boy* Princess Aravis is hurt by Aslan himself, because she has caused her slave to be whipped. She needs to know what that feels like, so Aslan scratches her, and through the punishment she learns compassion towards other creatures (Lewis 1954:186). This resembles the *Old Testament* law of eye for and eye, and probably shows its motivation in Lewis's view: to teach compassion through the experienced punishment. This side of God's love was discussed in greater depth above. In the process Princess Aravis also learns humility before her Creator: to trust that obeying him is best for

herself and for all others in the long run, even though it might be painful at the moment.

Some of the terribleness of Aslan results from his appearance, and by his physical power. He is clearly very strong physically, for instance when the White Witch and her crowd kill him on the Stone Table, in *The Lion, the Witch And the Wardrobe* it is said that it would be easy to him to free himself and kill all the others. In this physical strength Aslan resembles Samson from *The Old Testament*, or Hercules and various other mythical heroes, but in the use of his physical power he differs from them remarkably.

Aslan has other powers than physical as well, and these are shown through this limiting of his physical power, when he proves capable of arising from the dead. A dying god's resurrection from death is a recurrent theme in the world mythologies, so Aslan resembles Norse god Odin, Greek god Adonis and one South American god here. However, accepting this vulnerability of God/Christ, Lewis not only accepts the view of Christianity, and the mythologies close to it, but at the same time rejects the view of the old English poetry on God/Christ, where he was perceived as a mythical kind of hero much alike a warlord or a feudal lord. Even though Christ fought the forces of evil, he did not do that by his physical power, but by his spiritual power, through his sacrificial death. Aslan does the same in *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

8.5 The existence of evil & the problem of pain

The existence of evil is present in every book of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, as usually in fantasy books. It takes various different forms. In *The Magician's Nephew* evil is personified by Queen Jadis, who has destroyed one world and wants to continue in her conquest of worlds. She represents a destructive personality or a spirit, but a more abstract form of evil is also recognisable in *The Magician's Nephew*. In *the Lion, the Witch And the Wardrobe* the White Witch keeps Narnia under her control in eternal winter. She, as well as Queen Jadis, represents a controlling person or a spirit, who does not care about others, but simply wants to gain and keep all power to herself. Here evil is very strongly personified to the White Witch and her assistants. She is clearly the equivalent of satan. In *Silver Chair* the equivalent is the Queen of Green Kertle, who keeps Prince Rilian as her captive.

In *The Horse And His Boy* a form of a demon, named Tash, is introduced, later fully developed in *The Last Battle*. He is a god of another nation, the Tarkaans, who are the enemies of the Narnians. Thus evil is presented in twofold form: through the opposing nation Tarkaans, and their god Tash, who actually represents a demon from the point of view of Christianity and the Narnians. Tash is represented at first only as the name of a foreign god, but then later it becomes very clear that he exists in the Narnian world, and actually harms those who serve him by doing evil. Tash also tries to harm the good and the loyal ones, but cannot because they are under the protection of Aslan. The interesting point is that Aslan accepts the service of good men that has been done to Tash as a service done to himself, and blesses those good people. In *Prince Caspian* the

evil is presented in the form of the opposing nation, Tarkaans, as well as in *the Last Battle*.

The concept of evil is probably most abstract in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, where a personified evil cannot be recognised, but the presence of evil is felt in different situations from different directions. Even in one situation when the presence of evil men appears at first to be very clear, it later becomes apparent that they were actually fully harmless creatures.

The existence of evil brings with it pain, and the theological problem of theodicy: how can a good and loving God - Aslan - allow pain in the universe he created? As mentioned above, Lewis wrote two books dealing with this famous paradox of Christianity. In *the Problem of Pain* Lewis explains that pain originates from the fall of mankind, and all evil is consequence of that, either in the form of our own sins, the sins done against us by others, or the fact that we live in a fallen world, that we have effected in numerous ways. *A Grief Observed* describes Lewis's own suffering, and how he found God in the midst of it. *The Chronicles of Narnia* does not deal the problem of pain as analytically and deeply, but the existence of pain is felt very concretely in it. Many of the heroes suffer, as well as the main character Aslan himself, even though he is God. That is the same way it goes in Christianity: even though all have to suffer, God himself takes the greatest pain.

The Narnians suffer from different causes similar to our world, such as physical pain caused by violence, disease, natural catastrophes, hunger and death. Examples of these are Prince Rilian's pain when he is held captive against his own will by the Lady of Green Kertle in *The Silver Chair*, Digory suffering from his mother's disease in *The Magician's Nephew*, as well as Eustace suffering from Caspian's death in *The Silver Chair*. Another form of pain felt in Narnia is social

pain such as problems with relationships, depression, loneliness, poverty, and injustice. Examples of these could be the fight between Edmund and Lucy in *The Lion, the Witch And the Wardrobe*, the depression and loneliness of Eustace in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, and the social oppression and injustice felt by the Narnians under the evil tyrant Miraz in *Prince Caspian*. Also pain caused by loss, such as Caspian losing his son Rilian in *The Silver Chair*; disappointment, such as Caspian feels when Aslan does not let him do his will and continue to the other side of the world, but makes him come back to his kingdom in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*; temptations such as felt by Jill, Eustace and Puddleglum when the Lady of Green Kertle tempts them in *The Silver Chair* are familiar to the Narnians.

The Narnians take different attitudes towards evil and pain in their lives. *The Last Battle* shows at least three different ways to react to evil and pain. Some of the Narnians do not accept or believe it that evil and pain exist before they are forced to experience them. Others get paralysed by pain or fear, and cannot get over it, while some learn to cope with difficulties and reach greater maturity with the help of Aslan. Usually those who have committed themselves to Aslan's service find their way back to him even when they get lost or lose their motivation, as happens to Jill when completing her hard task with the help of Aslan in *The Silver Chair*.

9. Conclusion

My interest has been in C.S. Lewis's personal view of God in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. I have shown that Aslan resembles the Holy Trinity of Christianity and *The Bible*, God the Father and Christ mostly emphasised, and being the representative of the Holy Spirit only occasionally. I have shown that there exists a clear harmony between *The Chronicles of Narnia* and Lewis's other production. I have also pointed out that there are important resemblances to other literary sources, such as mythologies, which were familiar to C.S. Lewis.

This continues the work started by Putus, who studied Lewis's Christianity in *The Chronicles of Narnia* in a wider sense, not concentrating specifically on his view on God, as I have done. Her study, *Fantasy based on reality. A pro gradu thesis* (1977), included many important Christian themes, which were all dealt with quite shortly. She also used Lewis's science fiction trilogy as a source. Also, Kuusimäki's study *Jumalakuva muutospaineessa (A view of God in a transformation process. C.S. Lewis and the problem of pain, 1991)*, which deals with Lewis's view on God, only studied his view on God as reflected in *A Grief Observed* versus *The Problem of Pain*, concentrating on Lewis's concept of the problem of pain. I have studied *The Chronicles of Narnia* mainly together with *Mere Christianity* but included references to many other of his books as well. I have shown that Lewis's fiction interacts with his apologetic theology with the view of God it gives.

As Lewis was a devout Christian, it is essential to look at his ideas in the light of his personal experience of God/Christ. Also, I believe that studying Lewis's idea of God/Christ through *The Chronicles of Narnia* and other fiction might actually prove more useful than through his apologetic books, because here

his views become less a theology, more an experience. They are also fascinating, since presented in the forms of fantasy rather than by the means of rationalism. Aslan being the central character in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, as God/Christ is in *The Bible* and in Christianity it was only natural to choose him as the centre of my study.

Further research on Lewis's Christian ideology would be enriching to modern literary study, since Christianity and *the Bible* form the basis of our Western culture, but are not researched much nowadays. Lewis's person and works have not been studied much in Finland, even though there are some excellent works available here, too, like Kuusimäki's (1991), and Putus's (1977). More research could be done for instance in describing the growth and development of the Pevensie children in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and comparing that to John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Process*, or some other book describing a Christian's growth; inquiring into the themes and plots of *The Chronicles of Narnia* and trying to find out why Lewis chose exactly these themes and how he developed the plot; and looking into the different mythological characters in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Also several other topics could surely be studied from either *The Chronicles of Narnia* or other Lewis's books.

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Aslan the lion shakes his mighty mane and roars out across Narnia and eternity. CS Lewis's seven children's books, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, will be with us now and for many Christmases to come. Only *Harry Potter* has outsold these well-loved books' 85 million copies. How suitable that one fantasy saga should follow on from the other, despite the immense difference between the writings and magic worlds of these two old Oxford dons. The Christian radio station Premier is urging churches to hold services on the theme of *The Gospel According to Narnia*. Even the Methodists have written a special Narnia-themed service. And a Kent parish is giving away £10,000 worth of film tickets to single-parent families. (Are the children of single mothers in special need of the word?) This article is an explanation of the Christian imagery in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. It explores how Aslan is not Jesus Christ but an incarnation in a different world. God has dealt with humans in a specific way to redeem them from the consequences of the Fall that occurred early in human history. Regardless of whether other worlds have fallen like earth has, God is not likely to reveal himself to them, redeem them, or interact with them in the exact manner as he has with humans (*Miracles* 201-2; *The Problem of Pain* 80-1). *The Chronicles* are Lewis's attempt to illustrate just this concept. They concern what such other worlds might be like. In *The Magician's Nephew*, there is a forest full of entrances to other worlds. I'm currently reading the *Chronicles of Narnia* for the first time as an adult. I used to identify as atheist/agnostic but now consider myself a... The Christian metaphors are so important to the impact the stories are meant to have on readers. I'm curious if there are any non-religious people who enjoy the books. Aslan was pretty evidently God at a certain point in the books but it was toward the end when it was blatant. [permalink](#). [embed](#). The Pevensie children help Aslan, a talking lion, save Narnia from the evil White Witch, who has reigned over the land of Narnia for a century of perpetual winter with no Christmas. The children become kings and queens of this new-found land and establish the Golden Age of Narnia, leaving a legacy to be rediscovered in later books. *Prince Caspian: The Return to Narnia* (1951) Completed after Christmas 1949 and published on 15 October 1951, *Prince Caspian: The Return to Narnia* tells the story of the Pevensie children's second trip to Narnia. They are drawn back by the power of Susan's horn, blow