

Elin Götborg

SEN62L

Autumn 2011

School of Education and Environment

Kristianstad University

Jane Mattisson

## **The Complex Morality**

C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* Interpreted from a  
Christian and a Secular Perspective.

It has been claimed that: “The Narnia stories are well-placed and engaging, a reliable source of the refreshment and delight. But beneath their deceptively simple surface, the chronicles provide richly textured narratives of unexpected depth” (Downing, p. XVII). In C.S. Lewis’ *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* the complexity of the Narnia world that Downing describes, is demonstrated through the didactic lessons that are conveyed. There are several important principles represented in the novel, including forgiveness, friendship, responsibility, betrayal, compassion, brotherhood and temptation. The didactic lessons are examined from a biographical point of view and with a New Critical close reading. The essay argues that the lessons can be interpreted in two different ways: from the secular and the Christian perspective. The focus is on the five most important lessons: forgiveness, self-sacrifice, friendship, compassion, and temptation.

*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (hereafter referred to as *The Lion*), is written in 1950. By then, the author C.S. Lewis already was an established literary critic and scholar (Fleming, p. 15). C.S. Lewis was also a known Christian writer and apologist at this time, and was invited by the BBC to discuss the Christian faith after World War II (later published as *Mere Christianity* in 1952). In the preface to *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis concludes: “When you have reached your own room, be kind to those who have chosen different doors and to those who are still in the hall” (p. XVI). These words express a belief in every person's innate ability to find the path of life that is right and a great humility for the choices that each individual must make. In *Mere Christianity* Lewis writes that his intention is not to highlight the controversy that exists between different parts of the Christian church tree. Instead, he presents a belief system that is inclusive and that is founded on common values (Lewis 1952, pp. VIII-XVI). The way he describes Christianity, without intending to convince his readers that his view is

supreme, is an ability that is reflected in his fiction as well. The meanings of the moral lessons of the novel are not established in advance, but the reader is invited to be an active part of the interpretation.

Friendship is the mutual tie that connects people through respect and trust. In *The Lion* there are several examples of comradeship, for example between Lucy and Mr Tumnus and between the Beavers and the children. The relationship between Lucy and Mr Tumnus is the most important example since their connection determines the course of the story.

When Lucy comes to Narnia and meets Mr Tumnus for the first time, a superficial acquaintance develops a life-changing relationship (*The Lion*, p. 27). Trust characterizes their relationship and is clearly exhibited when Lucy decides to go with the stranger Mr Tumnus to his home for a cup of tea (*The Lion*, p. 19). Although Mr Tumnus initially intends to deliver Lucy to the White Witch, he decides not to do so. This is an important choice containing a moral message of brotherly love (*The Lion*, p. 27). Downing states that: "But the crucible of character is not moral precepts but actual moral choices, situations where the right decisions is not the easiest or the safest one. In the world of Narnia, all the major characters are faced with such choices..." (Downing, p. 96). Mr Tumnus is the first character in the novel to be put in the situation that Downing describes. The decision to let Lucy go free is rewarded not only with a clear conscience, but also with Lucy's loyalty, a loyalty that would prove crucial to Mr Tumnus's future. Downing continues by comment on the moral choices by saying that: "...readers are allowed to learn along with them" (Downing, p. 96). Based on Downing's words, the lesson that Mr. Tumnus is learning, also become a lesson for those who share the experience of Lucy's and Mr. Tumnus as readers of the novel.

The handkerchief is an important symbol of loyalty and trust in *The Lion*, constituting an important symbol of friendship. When Lucy hands it over, it represents a ritual act since Mr Tumnus asks for and receives Lucy's forgiveness (*The Lion*, p. 29). When the handkerchief appears the next time it is a token of the trustworthiness of the Beavers and a reminder to Lucy of her relation to Mr Tumnus (*The Lion*, p. 76). Edmund even asks: "How do we know you are a friend?" and get the showing of Lucy's belongings as an answer (*The Lion*, pp. 75-76).

The symbol of the handkerchief plays a significant role also for the Christian interpretation of the importance of friendship in *The Lion*. God established a covenant with his people and gave the rainbow as a symbol of it (Gen 9:12). Later he promised a new covenant (Jer 31:31-34); for the Christian, the arrival of Jesus is the fulfillment of this promise (Zilonka, p. 10). With the New Testament understanding of the covenant in mind, the importance of the handkerchief deepens. The handkerchief symbolizes the keeping of a promise that is fundamental in a relationship. Both the *Bible* and *The Lion* emphasize loyalty and trust in a relationship not only by a promise and a symbolic gesture, but also in the fulfillment of the promise. Lucy stands up to the friendship qualities when she decides that she has to rescue Mr Tumnus from the White Witch (*The Lion*, p. 68). When Lucy fulfills what is required of the friendship, she makes evil powerless. In *The Lion*, the diminishing power of the White Witch is indicated when Father Christmas arrives (*The Lion*, pp. 116-117). Lewis here connects the biblical narration about the realization of God's promise in the birth of Jesus with the fulfillment of friendship in *The Lion*. For the Christian, friendship in *The Lion* is equated with the promises of God.

The importance of friendship in *The Lion* has more angles than those discussed above. According to Lukens's definition, a classic novel is a novel that is: "attracting readers

from one generation to the next” (Lukens, p. 30). The power to attract readers is demonstrated through the fact that the novel was first published in 1950 and still in the 2010s is called a bestseller (Downing, p. XIV). Lukens states that one of the reasons that a novel survive decades and generations is: “the significance of theme” (Lukens, p. 30). Veith also gives an explanation of the novel’s popularity and states that: “C.S. Lewis’s stories also show children having to make hard choices, coming to terms with their moral responsibility, and undergoing spiritual trials and victories. Just as they do in real life” (Veith, p. 41). Both Lukens and Veith indicate that the novel’s theme is important for the strength of its appeal. Veith connects the reader’s real life and the novel’s theme. Johnson and Houtman agrees with Veith and states that: “...what Lewis succeeds in doing so well is creating in the fiction a reality that draws readers into worlds seemingly more real than those in which the readers live” (Johnson & Houtman, p. 75). Friendship is connected to real life experience and an example of a significant theme. It does not have to be seen through the Christian perspective to be meaningful in the context of *The Lion*.

As already established, the concept of friendship in *The Lion* is closely related to trust and loyalty. Through the experience in Narnia the four children, and above all Lucy, learn that friendly bonds are strong. The bonds are so strong that Mr Tumnus lets Lucy return to the Wardrobe even though he breaks the agreement with the White Witch and risks his security (*The Lion*, p. 27). That the bond of friendship is stronger than Lucy’s fear is well demonstrated when she does not hesitate to rescue the Faun (*The Lion*, p. 68). In the same way the bonds between the Faun and Mr and Mrs Beaver cause the Beavers to put themselves in danger when they help the children to find Aslan (*The Lion*, pp. 75-76). In *The Lion*, Lewis presents examples of how to take what Veith calls: “moral responsibility” (Veith, p. 41) based on the relationships that are

established between the characters. A good friendship means willingness to stand up for a friend even in difficult times.

In *The Lion* the concept of compassion is important in two ways: the compassion that characters feel for each other and the lack of compassion that also is demonstrated. The sympathy that is experienced through for example Peter, Lucy and Mr Tumnus is as interesting as the coldness that is represented in the White Witch and Edmund. Actually, Edmund sends out dual signals, which is an example of how both empathy and coldness can be accommodated in the same person.

Compassion, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is “Suffering together with another” ([www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com), compassion). The first example of suffering together with another in *The Lion* is when Lucy feels sorry because the Faun is crying. Her empathy leads her to encourage and comfort the Faun in several ways, for example: she puts her arm around him (*The Lion*, p. 24), she tells him he is a “great big Faun” (*The Lion*, p. 24) and she says that Mr Tumnus is “the nicest Faun” she has ever met (*The Lion*, p. 25). It is also because of the ability to understand the feelings of others that Peter gives Edmund a hefty reprimand when it is clear that he knew that Lucy was right all along. In order to make amends to Lucy and not discredit her anymore, Peter lets her be the leader when they visit Narnia together for the first time (*The Lion*, pp. 64-65). His compassion is demonstrated when he says: “goodness knows she deserves it” (*The Lion*, p. 65). Through the expression “goodness knows”, Peter underlines that Lucy really deserves being the leader. The expression does also signal that Peter knows that he has acted wrong. Another example of how compassion is one of Lucy’s qualities is when she and Susan notice that there are mice crawling on Aslan’s body. Susan finds the mice unpleasant but Lucy feels sorry for them because she believes that their untying is in vain (*The Lion*, p. 172). Susan calls the mice “little beasts” (*The Lion*, p. 172) which

indicates that they are not a pleasant view even in Narnia. Still, Lucy notices their actions and calls them “poor little things” which indicates that she feels sorry for them (*The Lion*, p. 172).

Edmund does demonstrate empathy, as indicated above. Interestingly, because of his role as the betrayer in the novel, his ability to feel compassion is the clearest example of the quality in the novel. When the White Witch turns the squirrel party into statues, Lewis describes Edmund’s feelings as follows: “And, Edmund, for the first time in this story, felt sorry for someone besides himself” (*The Lion*, p. 127). Edmund is suffering together with the squirrels and shows compassion. He also suffers in a more direct way since the White Witch is threatening him (*The Lion*, p. 127). This is the point in the novel when it becomes clear that Edmund is not completely lost to the magic of the White Witch. This illustration of compassion is not only the clearest one but also the most important one.

From a Christian perspective, the concept of compassion is important. In the gospel of John, Jesus says that it is more important to: “Love one another” (John 13:34-35) than to keep the old law of the Jews. The concept of compassion is also connected to the acts of Jesus. Throughout the gospels, there are several examples of how Jesus is said to have compassion on people he met (Matt 9:36, Mark 6:34, Luke 7:13). In the gospel of Matthew one of these examples are expressed: “When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick” (Matt 14:14). This verse exemplifies that the biblical understanding of compassion has to do with actions as well as feelings. The feelings of sympathy for another person evoke actions. In this case Jesus does not only feel sorry for the sick, he heals them as well. Thus from a Christian standpoint compassion means acting according to feelings.

Showing compassion through acting in favor for another person is demonstrated in the novel. Peter acts when he lets Lucy be the leader of the children (*The Lion*, pp. 64-65), Edmund acts when he asks the White Witch not to do magic on the squirrels (*The Lion*, p. 127) but Lucy does not act when she shows compassion for the mice (*The Lion*, p. 172). Even if Lewis is not consistent with emphasizing the discussed link, Edmund is the example that makes it possible to argue that *The Lion* expresses Christian values when it comes to compassion. The ambiguity of Edmund in *The Lion* represents the fact that the human nature is not flawless. The turning point in the novel is when Edmund shows empathy for the squirrel after he has understood that the magic of the White Witch is destructive (*The Lion*, pp. 124-127). When Edmund shows that he does have the ability to feel sorry for someone else, he makes the redemption from his sins possible to speak in Christian terms. After the incident with the squirrel, the narrator comments: “And his heart gave a great leap (though he hardly knew why) when he realized that the frost was over” (*The Lion*, pp. 128-129). Even if Edmund has fallen for the temptation and been, in the words of Peter, a: “poisonous little beast” (*The Lion*, p. 65), he experiences the turn from winter to spring here expressed as the frost being over. Following the new commandment and loving another (John 13:34-35) makes up for his flaws. Interpreting *The Lion* from a Christian perspective demonstrates that compassion is fundamental for those who wish to change for the better.

The link between compassion and the willingness to do good deeds for other people is not only representative for the Christian view of life. This link is supported by the secular interpretation of *The Lion* as well. In a comparison between the Eastern and Western views of compassion, Barada refers to Dalai Lama and says that: “He insists that the commitment, responsibility, and respect engendered by compassion impel us to help others if we can” (Barad, p. 13). Compassion from Dalai Lama’s, clearly non-



Christian perspective, is seen as a promoter for the key ingredients in a humane world where people have the intention to live in cooperation with each other. According to the Barad reasoning, commitment, responsibility and respect are all results of compassion. In the end of the novel, Edmund has left his position as the traitor due to the attitude shift he has been through (*The Lion*, p. 127). The consequences of this change are indicated in the description of the battle where the White Witch is being killed. When Peter retells what happened in the fight, he emphasizes that: “it was all Edmund’s doing” (*The Lion*, p.192). The use of the word “all” underlines the fact that Edmund is solely responsible for the outcome of the battle. Peter continues to praise Edmund’s effort and says: “...nothing would stop him” (*The Lion*, p.192). “Nothing would stop him” means that Edmund is convinced that the evil must be defeated and he does not give up even though others have tried and failed. In the battle with the White Witch, Edmund shows both that he takes responsibility for his bad choice to stand behind the evil power in Narnia and commitment in the mission to repair his mistake.

As demonstrated in the previous passages, the interpretations of the concept of compassion, even if they are made from different perspectives, have similar implications. Barad compares compassion with a gift and says that: “These cascading gifts have the potential to change the world” (Barad, p. 27). In *The Lion* her idea is demonstrated both seen from a secular and a Christian perspective. The world of Narnia is changing when the children driven by their sense of right and wrong may it be seen as God-send or not, comes to the rescue in a winter world. Moreover, their real world also changes when they decide to return to The Wardrobe since they are now aware of the complex reality and awaiting new adventures (*The Lion*, p. 203).

Meanwhile the word compassion is frequently used in the New Testament by Jesus himself; the Christian interpretation of the sacrifice concept rather is a picture of the

atonement that Jesus' suffering on the cross was. Through the sacrifice of Jesus, the sin of man is paid to God and the world is reconciled (Bowden, pp. 1072-1073). The idea that Jesus had to die because people have done wrong is important. Not only is it fundamental in the Christian belief, the idea as it is mirrored in *The Lion* is fundamental for the actions in Narnia as well. The sin of man is in *The Lion* represented by Edmund and his choice to support the White Witch. Edmund's wrongdoing is brought to a head in the negotiation between the White Witch and Aslan (*The Lion*, p. 154). In a compromise, Aslan gives his life to save Edmund's (*The Lion*, p. 168). From a Christian point of view, Aslan's self-sacrificing deed has biblical overtones, and the resemblance between the Narnian rescue of Edmund and the New Testament conception of man's salvation is clear. According to Christian belief, it is through the blood, i.e. the death of Jesus, the sins are forgiven (Ef 1:7). In *The Lion*, the blood of Aslan is given in exchange for the blood of Edmund that the White Witch is claiming for (*The Lion*, p. 155).

The self-sacrifice of Aslan, which could be seen as parallel to the sacrifice of Jesus, is by Kaufmann described as: "...Lewis bold picturing of a magnificent Christian conviction" (Kaufmann, p. 62). Kaufmann emphasizes the importance of Lewis as a Christian apologist by claiming that Aslan should be interpreted not only as a representation of Christ but also as statement in the Christological debate about Jesus as true God and true man (Kaufmann, pp. 60-62). Although many would agree with Kaufmann, and Lewis' Christian outlook on life is widely said to have made an impact on his writing (Russel, p. 63; Rogers Jones, p. 45; Nicholson, p. 16), the novel does not only connect with the Christian reader. Roger Jones expresses this view by arguing that: "...its rich images of faith and morality are relevant to Christian and non-Christian readers alike" (Rogers Jones, p. 46). The non-Christian moral image of self-sacrifice

that is conveyed in the novel is connected to the relationship between people. According to the Oxford English Dictionary Online, the word self-sacrifice is defined as: “Sacrifice of oneself; the giving up of one's own interests, happiness, and desires, for the sake of duty or the welfare of others” (www.oed.com, self-sacrifice). It is in the tension between a person's and others' needs that self-sacrifice occurs. Self-sacrifice is to give priority to others before oneself.

In *The Lion*, the willingness to prioritize the needs of others before their own is clearly demonstrated. The clearest and, regarding the literally life-changing consequences, most important example is when Aslan offers his life in favor for Edmund (*The Lion*, pp. 166-167). When Aslan is tied to the Stone Table and the White Witch is speaking to him, her words: “despair and die” (*The Lion*, p. 166), expresses what he actually is experiencing. Even if Aslan will return to the living (*The Lion*, p. 175), in the moment before his death he is restrained and depressed which is demonstrated in his words to Lucy and Susan: “I am sad and lonely” (*The Lion*, p. 162) and in the descriptions of his walk: “And how slowly he walked! And his great, royal head drooped so that his nose nearly touched the grass” (*The Lion*, p. 162). The description of how slowly he walks together with the picture of Aslan walking with his nose in the ground emphasizes his depressiveness. The mentioning of Aslan's “great, royal head” indicates that even though the situation is tough, Aslan should still be seen as the king of Narnia he is. The royal indication serves another purpose as well. It shows that even royalty can make difficult choices and sacrifices for someone else. The impact of the image that Lewis creates around Aslan's selfless act is that no man stands above another, not even a royalty. Drawn to its extreme as it gets in the negotiation with the White Witch, the life of Edmund is worth as much as the life of the king. The moral lesson that Lewis present through the act of Aslan is that fear, hesitation or social status is not reasons to give up

hard choices and and put oneself above anyone else. The implications of this lesson are also seen in relation to other characters in the novel. Mr and Mrs Beaver make the same moral decision and expose themselves to danger when they choose to help the children find Mr Tumnus (*The Lion*, p. 76). Exposure of danger in order to fight the evil is also seen when Peter battles (*The Lion*, p. 143) and when Mr Tumnus chooses to let Lucy return to the Wardrobe (*The Lion*, p. 27). The attitude change of Edmund could be interpreted in different ways but he is giving up a desire of his own when he no longer supports the White Witch. It is therefore possible to argue that he is self-sacrificing. This view is put forward by McBride who states that: “The new Edmund is brave, self-sacrificing and deferent to his siblings...” (McBride, p. 62). These examples do not demonstrate self-sacrifice in the sense that they are done without self-interest. Even so, they indicate the moral standard of the novel.

Just as self-sacrifice, the concept of forgiveness is closely related to the basic of the Christian belief or as Bowden expresses it: “Forgiveness lies at the very heart of the Christianity” (Bowden, p. 470). Bowden continues by stating that: “Forgiveness was a key aspect of Jesus’ activity. He claimed the power to forgive sins...” (Bowden, p. 470). Not only does Bowden show that forgiveness is a fundamental element of the belief, he also states that it is closely related to the actions of Jesus. Likewise, Lewis connects the novel’s theme of forgiveness with the actions of Aslan. When the White Witch names Edmund as a traitor, Edmund is not worried because he had a conversation with Aslan earlier. “He had got past thinking about it” is how Edmund's attitude to the accusation is described (*The Lion*, p. 152). This demonstrates that Edmund is not unaware of his wrongdoing. “He had got past thinking...” indicates that earlier he actually was thinking about his role as a traitor but now something has changed and he is not anymore. Something has changed but it is not clear how it happens, more than

that it is something that happens after his rescue and before he meets his siblings (*The Lion*, pp. 149-150). There is an information gap regarding what happens between Aslan and Edmund after Edmund's rescue (*The Lion*, pp. 149-150). This lack of information is not a coincident. Rather is it something that draws attention to the greatness of what is happening and the feeling of, to quote from the chapter title in question, "deep magic" (*The Lion*, p. 154) is deepened. What can be established is that Edmund meets his siblings as a forgiven traitor and the only person he has met is Aslan. Thus forgiveness is mediated by or through Aslan.

The Christian stance is not only that God through Jesus forgive sins (Bowden, p. 470) but also that people should show forgiveness to one another (Luke 11:4). In *The Lion*, the same implications are seen. The most important act of forgiveness is, as stated before, the forgiveness that Aslan gives Edmund. As a consequence of Aslan showing mercy for Edmund; Peter, Susan and Lucy all decides to forgive Edmund as well. The genuine forgiveness that Lucy, Susan and Peter offers Edmund is demonstrated not mostly through their oral response to his apologize (*The Lion*, p. 150) but through the feelings that Lewis describes as: "...everyone wanted very hard to say something which would make it quite clear that they were all friends with him again..."(*The Lion*, p. 150). For the children, friendship is the ultimate sign that Edmund's treachery was now forgotten. The expression: "wanted very hard" indicates how serious they are in their attempt to reestablish their original relationship. According to the gospels, Jesus established relationships with converted sinners (Luke 19:1-10; Luke 7:36-50). Thus Lewis remains close to his pattern and it is possible to argue that even friendship as a consequence of the remission has biblical overtones.

An interpretation of the moral lesson about forgiveness without biblical overtones is based on the relationship between the characters. Bowden summarizes the Christian

view of forgiveness by saying: “To see God in the light of Christ...was, in the first place, to see a divine love that embraced all, offering forgiveness and reconciliation as a gift, not as anything a human being could earn or deserve” (Bowden, p. 89). Bowden here emphasizes the Christian view that reconciliation is given by mercy. Seen from the non-Christian perspective of the novel, forgiveness is not something that is deserved but as opposed to a gift it has requirements for the future conduct. The secular moral lesson about forgiveness teaches that the latter is crucial for well-founded relationships and that it has the power to diminish evil.

A strong relationship entails mutual consideration and trust and that is the consequence when the characters in *The Lion* demonstrate the act of forgiveness. There are several examples of repaired relationships in the novel; Lucy and Mr Tumnus, Lucy and Peter, and Edmund and his sibling are most important since they all are protagonists. The relationship between Lucy and Mr Tumnus from the beginning is characterized by a sham trust, something that Lucy does not become aware until the Faun reveals the truth about his promise to the White Witch (*The Lion*, p. 26). Even after Mr Tumnus revelation, Lucy states her trust in him by saying: “I’m sure you wouldn’t do anything of the sort” (*The Lion*, p. 26) and after the insistence of Mr Tumnus she repeats by saying: “I’m sure you will never do it again” (*The Lion*, p. 26). The repetition of the word sure indicates how strongly convinced Lucy is that the Faun is a good man. The firmness of Lucy’s thoughts makes the betrayal even greater and the coming forgiveness even more important. The nature of their friendship is changing in two steps. First, when the Faun decides to not send Lucy (*The Lion*, p. 27) and second when Lucy forgives him for taking advantage of her credulity (*The Lion*, p. 29). As a result of the forgiving spirit of Lucy, their relationship has now developed into mutual trust and they shake hands as a sign of their friendship. The use of the word “heartily”

(*The Lion*, p. 29) signals that Lucy attitude toward the Faun is now back to the initial. The gap in their relationship is overbridged. The relationship between Peter and Lucy is characterized by Peter being the rational, older brother that is worried about Lucy's state of mind and says: "It's getting beyond us" (*The Lion*, p. 54) about Lucy and her wardrobe world as a demonstration of his disbelief. Lucy on the other hand, demonstrates her disappointment when Peter rejects her experiences in Narnia, and she "...grew very red in the face and tried to say something, though she hardly knew what she was trying to say, and burst into tears" (*The Lion*, p. 32). The described facial expression and tears indicates that she is offended by Peter's mistrust. When Peter arrives to Narnia, he immediately realizes it and accepts the new world. Peter shows that he is aware that the magical world that he arrived to is the one Lucy has been talking about, by saying: "Why, I do believe we've got into Lucy's wood after all." (*The Lion*, p. 63). By using the expression "Lucy's wood", he acknowledges her experience. When Peter apologizes and asks if Lucy wants to shake his hand (*The Lion*, p. 63), this is a request for forgiveness that is recognizable from the previously discussed episode with Lucy and Mr Tumnus. Peter and Lucy shake hands, Lucy forgives Peter and their relationship is restored.

The restoration of the relationships between Lucy and Mr Tumnus respectively Peter is possible because Lucy forgives them their failure. In the case of Edmund, the most important relationships that he has to repair are the ones that he has with his siblings. Lucy forgives Mr Tumnus because he lets her return to the Wardrobe and she forgives Peter because he is penitent. The reason for the siblings' forgiving of Edmund is not as clear as the other two examples. The explanation is the deep love for Edmund that is demonstrated in the words of Peter: "we'll still have to go looking for him. He is our brother after all, even if he is rather a little beast" (*The Lion*, p. 95). The use of the

expression “after all” underlines the fact that Edmund is not always at his best behavior. Being described as a “beast” indicates that he has unwanted qualities. Even so, the siblings want to go and look for him. He is their brother and the bond of the family is strong. Although Edmund has put his siblings in life threatening danger, the bonds are strong and the reunion is more important than accusing Edmund for betrayal. Thus Edmund is forgiven, their relationship is restored and as a returning sign of forgiveness, they all shake hands (*The Lion*, p. 150). The importance of forgiveness is demonstrated through the development of relationships in *The Lion*. Broken relationships are repaired and reinforced. The reinforcement also makes it possible to reduce the power of evil since it empowers Lucy to save Mr Tumnus, makes Peter willing to risk his life in the battle and engages the siblings to fight together in a situation that one of them has put them in.

As mentioned before, sacrifice and forgiveness are fundamental elements of the Christian belief because they specifically relate to the role of the incarnated God. Comparing the role of Aslan with the role of Jesus, Dalton states that: “In embodying Christ’s role as the savior, it is only Aslan who can die and pay the price for Edmund’s betrayal, and it is Aslan who miraculously breathes upon and resurrects the statues, including Mr Tumnus” (Dalton, p. 133). The Christ-like qualities of Aslan are, in other words, his ability to save Edmund from the punishment for his iniquities and to give life to those who deserves it. The ability to resist temptation is not essential in a Christian allegory. The importance of resisting temptation is nonetheless a major theme in *The Lion*.

The important moral lesson regarding temptation is taught in connection to the development of Edmund. McBride states: “One of the issues Lewis wants his young readers to consider is what it means to grow up, to experience the process of



maturing...”(McBride, p. 59). Through the character of Edmund, Lewis illustrates the moral development that the process of maturing includes. From being led by his impulses and desires, Edmund evolves to a responsible young man. Edmund is, in the beginning of the novel, portrayed with a declining morale. His offhand manner towards his siblings is demonstrated several times. When he answers Lucy’s question about the strange noise by saying: “It’s only a bird, silly” (*The Lion*, p. 11), the word silly implies nonchalance towards Lucy’s feelings. The nonchalance is affirmed when Edmund: “sneered and jeered at Lucy and kept on asking her if she’d found any other new countries in other cupboards all over the house” (*The Lion*, p. 32). Edmund’s mocking of Lucy, indicated by the sneering and jeering, is “spiteful” (*The Lion*, p. 32). According to the definition of the word spiteful, his intentions are in other words: “characterized by contempt” (www.oed.com, spiteful). The decisive example of Edmund’s character when the novel begins is when he, after visiting Narnia for the first time, lies and still argues that Lucy is fantasizing (*The Lion*, p. 52).

Edmund’s attempts to assert himself by humiliating others as discussed above, does not lead him to success. Instead, he experiences anxiety and remorse. The weaknesses of Edmund lead him to fall for the temptation of the White Witch. The clarity of Edmund’s vision disappears due to the spell of the Turkish Delight. That is demonstrated by the fact that Edmund’s initial fear for the White Witch to drive away with him in her sleigh is forgotten when the box of sweets is empty (*The Lion*, pp. 44-45). When the White Witch offers to make him the Prince of Narnia and his siblings duke and duchesses (*The Lion*, p. 45), she alludes to Edmund’s desire to outshine his siblings. The similar argumentation of Downing states that: “Her flattery appeals to his pride and her magical Turkish Delight to his gluttony. And her promise to make him a king appeals to his rebellious instinct to rule his older brother Peter” (Downing, p. 93).

It has also been stated that *The Lion*: "...implies that Lucy and other 'good' children could and would resist that Turkish Delight; only the morally weak would give in." (Giardina, p. 42). Both Downing and Giardina emphasize that Edmunds immature characteristics are the reasons for the danger he puts himself and his siblings to. Because of his morally weak personality, he falls for the temptation.

The secular moral lesson in connection to temptation is two-folded. First, as a consequence of immoral actions, the succumbing for temptation is easier which Edmund clearly demonstrates. From Edmund it is possible to learn that being immoral has implications such as the failure to resist temptation. Second, the succumbing of the temptation implies a moral lesson in itself. In *The Lion*, Lewis demonstrates that being persuaded into something that is known to be wrong has implications and evokes feelings of remorse. When Edmund is on the sledge journey to find his siblings together with the White Witch, it is described as: "terrible" (*The Lion*, p. 123). Edmund is described as being "wet to the skin" and "miserable" (*The Lion*, p. 124). He is soaked and sad which is contrary to the royal dreams of luxury which he hoped would materialize when he betrayed his siblings.

The process of maturing is long for Edmund, figuratively but also literally speaking. The journey with the White Witch is long and Edmund has to: "walk far further than he had ever known that anybody *could* walk" (*The Lion*, p. 145). This walk represents the development that his character undergoes. It is a rough walk which is demonstrated by the description of Edmund's condition: "Edmund simply sank down...not even caring what was going to happen next provided they would let him lie still. He was too tired even to notice how hungry and thirsty he was" (*The Lion*, p. 145). His sinking down on the ground indicates that he has no more strength in his legs because of the long walk. Not caring about what was going to happen indicates that he felt as if the situation could not become worse. He does not even pay

attention to his fundamental need for nutrition which is an indicator of how serious his situation is. The decision to support the White Witch is exposing Edmund to large trials which almost cost his life. The lesson to be learnt from Edmund's experience is that even if something attracts and the foretaste is good, the consequences of bad choices can be severe. Giardina takes the reader's perspective on the discussed moral lesson and states that: "Although the text manipulates readers to feel Edmund's temptation, it actively prevents them from enjoying the experience by showing that sin results in guilt and punishment" (Giardina, p. 42).

Just as for Giardina in the previously mentioned statement, Edmund's falling for the temptation is from the Christian perspective regarded as a sin. According to the Dictionary of NIV Terms, sin is defined as: "to break the law of God" (*The Holy Bible*, p. 724). Bowden broadens the biblical understanding of the term sin, relates it with human weakness (Bowden, p. 1114), and states that sin is: a failure in a relationship of love (Bowden, p. 1115). The complex biblical interpretation of the term is similar to the definition presented by Giardina, when she argues that: "As *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* teaches, sin occurs when you know something is bad and you do it anyway" (Giardina, p. 41). Edmund's sin was that he was lead into temptation by the Witch even though he knew she was evil and as is previously discussed, this is clearly connected to the weaknesses of Edmund.

Temptation seen from a New Testament perspective is the devil's work which is demonstrated when the devil occurs and tempts Jesus under his forty day long stay in the desert (Matt 4:1-11). From a biblical perspective, the temptation of Jesus is not the first time the devil occurs as a tempter. In Genesis, Adam and Eve are tempted by the serpent and God punishes them for disobeying his rules (Gen 3:1-24). The Fall of Man did have implications just as the sin of Edmund did. Vaus argues that: "The serpent is

offering them something which is not his to impart and which, in fact, is already theirs. It is the same story of temptation with Edmund and the White Witch” (Vaus, p. 28). The forbidden fruit in *The Lion* is the Turkish Delight. What the devil offers to Edmund is the role as the Prince of Narnia, a role that he would righteously be given even without betraying his siblings and which the White Witch actually was not in position to offer. This is something that Edmund is paying a high price to gain knowledge of.

When Giardina presents her view on the Christian interpretation of temptation in *The Lion*, she states that: “The underlying religious message was clearly that sin is dangerous because it is so tempting and seems so sweet” (Giardina, p. 41). Sweet but dangerous is a suitable description of the apple the serpent offers Eve and likewise it is suitable for the forbidden fruit of Narnia, the White Witch’s Turkish Delight. Bowden states that sin in a popular understanding is: “synonymous with life’s little luxuries: gourmet food, designer clothes, refined perfumes, deluxe automobiles and so on”(Bowden, p. 1114). These luxuries of life are also connected with the royal life that Edmund desires. Edmund’s longing for a life of luxury coincides here with evil disguised as temptation. That is why he falls over and must face the consequences of his sin. The moral lesson is that sin of man always will have consequences.

As mentioned before, Giardina talks about the Christian moral lessons in *The Lion* as: “The underlying religious message” (Giardina, p. 41). Her use of the word underlying emphasizes that the Christian messages are there if looked for but not clearly stated. This view of *The Lion*, Giradina also demonstrates when she discusses the Christian messages from the readers’ point of view and states that: “Many who read the stories as children say they never noticed the religious elements and understood the stories as plain fantasies, but some, as adults have felt betrayed by Lewis’ subterfuge” (Giardina, p. 35). Her words indicate that the religious overtones in *The Lion* which are partly

demonstrated in this essay, is not obvious for all readers. That in turn supports the dual interpretation of the didactic lessons of the novel.

The dynamic situation that appears as a result of the different possibilities for interpretation makes the novel interesting. It has been claimed that Lewis is: "...a passionate and insightful moralist" (Kaufmann, p. 57) and that claim is supported by the variety of moral lessons occurring in *The Lion*. It has also been stated that Lewis: "...believed there is a fabric of interwoven moral laws in the world that are just as universal and unalterable as the laws of the physical world" (Downing, pp. 90-91). Based on Kaufmann's and Downing's statements about Lewis, the didactic qualities of *The Lion* are not necessarily to be interpreted as deliberate moralizing allegories. Instead *The Lion* could be read as the fantasy story it is, a story whose diverse images give rise to further reflection. According to Lewis: "...moralizing is the wrong way to write stories. The author's job is to tell a story as well as he or she can. If there is to be any moral, it will rise from whatever spiritual roots you have succeeded in striking during the whole course of your life" (Gormley, pp. viiii-ix). Hence, the interpretation of the moral message in *The Lion* is related to the attitude of the reader rather than to the intentions of the author.

Even if the interpretations of forgiveness, self-sacrifice, friendship, compassion, temptation and other important moral themes that are demonstrated in *The Lion* are presented from different perspectives, these major themes share similar characteristics. They are all connected to the life-changing experiences of the four children and to the development of meaningful and mutual relationships. The moral choices that each of the protagonists in *The Lion* have to make is mind-opening. Kaufmann describes Lewis' writer qualities and states that he is: "...effective in explaining important truths, not by science, but by couching them in pictures and stories that have unique persuasive

power” (Kaufmann, p. 50). The words of Kaufmann are relevant in several ways. The “important truths” are the moral lessons in *The Lion*. Kaufmann uses the word truth in its plural form and does leave the door open for the possibility that several different truths are represented in the novel. Furthermore, Kaufmann argues that Lewis’ persuasive ability lies within the stories he is using. In other words, even if *The Lion* is read without awareness of the didactic quality, the moral lessons will not pass without leaving marks, consciously or unconsciously. This is the “unique persuasive power” (Kaufmann, p. 50) of *The Lion*.

*The Lion* has been described as a Christian allegory, but that is to simplify the work. Giardina argues that: “...Narnia is much more than a vehicle for Lewis’ lessons of Christianity: it also reveals his understanding of childhood and his desire to make a special connection to his child readers” (Giardina, p. 35). This special connection is the fantasy narrative that engages its readers. The children’s exciting experiences in Narnia, i.e. the story that capture the reader, is what Downing calls a: “deceptively simple surface” (Downing, p. XVII). After examining different perspectives of *The Lion*, the fact remains that the novel is complex and multidimensional. About the persuader C.S. Lewis it has been stated that he: “is...the supreme rhetorician, appealing to heart as well as to head” (Kaufmann, p. 50). This is clearly demonstrated through *The Lion*. It is both deep for the mind and touching for the heart and it is possible to view both from the secular and the Christian perspective. Reading *The Lion* is like stepping in to the imaginative hallway of C.S. Lewis (Lewis 1952, p. XVI) from which he invites the reader to further open any appealing door. Just as for the four Pevensie children and the Wardrobe door to Narnia, what to be experienced behind the door is individual.

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