

**NARRATIVE THEOLOGY AND BIBLICAL TYPOLOGY IN C. S.
LEWIS'S *THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA***

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Abstract

This article analyses the theological imagination inherent in *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis, contending that the series functions not as a strict allegory but as narrative theology organised through biblical typology. This research situates Lewis within twentieth-century Christian apologetics and contemporary literary theology, examining sacrificial substitution, resurrection motifs, eschatological imagery, moral transformation, and mythopoeic imagination across the Narnian corpus. This article utilises a recent study to address questions regarding allegory, creativity, and doctrinal transmission in children's fantasy fiction. It argues that Lewis's employment of "supposal" and narrative transposition allows theology to operate experientially rather than propositionally. Through the integration of scriptural paradigms within a secondary universe, Lewis constructs a literary realm in which theological truths are imaginatively explored. The work enhances current discourse in literary theology, myth studies, and children's literature by reconceptualising Narnia as a continuous exploration of narrative theology.

Keywords: Narrative theology, Biblical typology, Mythopoeia, Children's fantasy, Christian apologetics, Literary theology.

Introduction: Transcending Allegory

Few twentieth-century authors have provoked as enduring a discourse about theological depiction in fantasy as C. S. Lewis. Since the release of *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950–1956), reviewers have debated whether the series should be interpreted as allegory,

Christian apologetics, mythic romance, or children's fiction. Although initial readers frequently classified Narnia as a simple metaphor, Lewis dismissed that designation. In differentiating allegory from what he referred to as "supposal," he urged readers to envision the nature of Christ if he were to inhabit a realm akin to Narnia.

Lewis elucidates that allegory originates from abstract facts and creates symbolic representations, whereas supposal poses the question: "What if there existed a world akin to Narnia and Christ opted to incarnate there-what could have transpired?" (Lewis 96–98). This divergence is critically significant for interpretation. Allegory assumes a stable connection; supposition envisions religious reality manifested in a different ontological framework.

This article contends that Narnia ought to be interpreted not as a schematic allegory but as narrative theology organised through biblical typology. Lewis illustrates themes of sacrificial redemption, resurrection, eschatological renewal, and sanctification within a mythopoeic narrative. The Narnian stories engage in scriptural imagination through typological resonance rather than allegorical substitution.

Contemporary research increasingly endorses this recontextualization. Monika Hilder asserts that Lewis creates "participatory imagination" instead of didactic allegory, enabling readers to undergo transformation via narrative immersion (Hilder 45). Devin Brown contends that "Lewis's fiction embodies religion in narrative form, countering propositional reductionism" (Brown 112).

Kevin Vanhoozer's seminal research on theatre and theology elucidates Lewis's methodology. According to Vanhoozer, doctrine serves as "a script for fitting participation in the drama of redemption" (Vanhoozer 89). Although not centred on Narnia explicitly, this paradigm elucidates how Lewis engages readers in creative involvement in the narrative of redemption history. Sorina Higgins underscores Lewis's belief that "myth communicates truths that transcend rational expression" (Higgins 67). Jessica Hooten Wilson positions Lewis within a tradition of moral development via narrative, contending that mythic storytelling cultivates virtue more successfully than theoretical instruction (Wilson 94). Consequently, modern literary theology asserts that Narnia functions as a story theology conveyed through typological imagination. However, ongoing interaction with biblical typology is relatively underexplored—a gap this work seeks to fill.

Narrative Theology And Biblical Typology:

Narrative theology perceives story as the principal medium of revelation. Instead of compartmentalising doctrine into abstract ideas, it contextualizes belief within the dynamic narrative of redemption. Biblical typology enhances this approach by recognising recurring

patterns of divine action-figure and fulfilment throughout history. Lewis adopts this figurative reasoning. Aslan is not a direct allegorical representation of Christ; he is a typological re-creation of Christological truth within an alternate created realm. Typology relies on theological continuity, whereas allegory is based on symbolic substitution.

Lewis's reflections corroborate this perspective. According to him, Christianity is the "myth that became fact" (Lewis 127). Myth is not a falsehood but a narrative framework that renders divine truth imaginatively comprehensible. Narnia expands upon this understanding of fictitious realms. The most explicit manifestation of narrative theology is seen in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Aslan's vicarious death for Edmund reflects Pauline soteriology and Isaianic anguish. The Witch invokes "Deep Magic," appealing to cosmic justice; Aslan acquiesces to death under that law. However, the "Deeper Magic from before the dawn of time" refutes her assertion.

The scene reflects crucifixion and resurrection without mechanically replicating them. The emotional trajectory-humiliation, quiet, despair, and dawn- embodies what Tolkien referred to as "eucatastrophe." Instead of imparting religion abstractly, Lewis urges readers to experience atonement emotionally. Brown notes that Lewis encourages readers to "experience grace imaginatively before articulating it doctrinally" (Brown 118). Hilder contends that the episode fosters humility via dramatized substitutionary love (Hilder 72). Consequently, Aslan's death operates typologically: it recontextualises the Passion within a different narrative framework.

Myth And Transformation:

Lewis's essay "Transposition" elucidates his aesthetic theology. Elevated realities can be articulated through inferior forms without being diminished by them. In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Lucy comes across allusions to "a cup, a sword, a tree, and a green hill." These allusions reference Gethsemane and Golgotha without full elucidation. Kevin Hart observes that religious significance frequently arises "through aesthetic excess rather than explanatory closure" (Hart 53). Lewis's legendary symbolism radiates with scriptural significance while evading definitive moral conclusions. Narrative theology functions through imaginative acknowledgment rather than theological explanation.

Moral Development And Sanctification:

Narnia illustrates the process of sanctification beyond mere atonement. Edmund's treachery exemplifies Augustinian disordered desire. His rehabilitation transpires by grace, rather than self-repair. The designation of "Edmund the Just" signifies a moral reformation. Wilson contends that Lewis "constructs virtue through narrative rehearsal rather than didactic assertion" (Wilson 94). Mark Pike similarly thinks that Narnia exemplifies "transformative encounter rather than behavioral instruction" (Pike 132). Sanctification

occurs gradually, especially in characters such as Eustace, whose transformation into a dragon and subsequent restoration illustrate repentance. Through narrative immersion, readers engage in ethical development. Theology becomes an experiential rather than a propositional discipline.

Defence Of Faith And Re-Enchantment:

Despite Lewis being a prominent apologist, Narnia does not operate as a deductive argument. Rather, it conditions the imagination for credence. Lewis anticipated that the narratives would facilitate children's acceptance of Christianity in the future. David Brown posits that beauty may serve as an "epistemological opening" to transcendence (Brown 54). The artistic richness of Narnia—the melting of winter, Aslan's roar, and profound realms—elicits yearning before necessitating agreement. In a period of disillusionment, Lewis reinstates transcendence via myth. Higgins asserts that "myth communicates truth through creative understanding rather than logical reasoning" (Higgins 73). Narrative theology functions as aesthetic apologetics.

eschatology: progressing beyond and advancing within:

The Last Battle depicts Narnia's annihilation, resulting in regeneration. The deeper Narnia completes the original. The expression "further up and further in" encapsulates Lewis's apocalyptic vision. David Russell interprets this conclusion as restoration rather than escapism (Russell 389). Hilder underscores its endorsement of corporeal rejuvenation (Hilder 141). The structure reflects the new creation in Revelation: death precedes fulfilment. However, the Susan debate confuses interpretation. Her exclusion from the final vision has elicited feminist critique. Reassessments conducted after 2015 contend that her narrative remains unresolved rather than unequivocally criticised (Hilder 134). From a narrative theological standpoint, Susan embodies misdirected desire rather than gender-based exclusion.

Postcolonial And Pluralistic Issues:

Critics have expressed apprehensions about Calormen in *The Horse and His Boy*. The presence of Orientalist themes necessitates examination; however, the acceptance of Emeth in *The Last Battle* confuses exclusive interpretations. Aslan acknowledges Emeth's earnest dedication to truth. This episode implies theological inclusivism. Wilson contends that Lewis endorses divine justice while broadening imaginative empathy (Wilson 147). Narnia, while culturally contextualised, defies straightforward ideological classification.

Typology And The History Of Salvation:

The narrative evolution is structured by biblical typology throughout the series.

- Autumn (Edmund; Eustace)
- Judgment (perpetual winter; draconic lineage)
- Sacrifice (Stone Table)
- Resurrection (Aslan's reappearance)

➤ Consummation (“Progressively advancing”)

These patterns operate figuratively, reflecting Erich Auerbach’s notion of fulfilment. Aslan is not a disguised Christ but rather a reinterpretation of Christ in an alternate realm. Typology maintains theological gravity while permitting imaginative liberty. Hart observes that religious truth frequently emerges indirectly (Hart 61). Narnia illustrates mediated revelation.

Conclusion: Narnia As Theological Narrative

This paper contends that *The Chronicles of Narnia* ought to be seen as narrative theology organised through biblical typology instead of strict allegory. Lewis’s differentiation between allegory and supposal allows theology to operate both imaginatively and experientially. The themes of sacrificial redemption in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, moral transformation throughout the series, and eschatological fulfilment in *The Last Battle* exemplify typological continuity with salvation history. Myth and transposition make ideology visually approachable.

Engagement with modern study (2015–2025) affirms that Narnia is crucial to literary-theological investigation. Feminist, postcolonial, and pluralist critiques enhance rather than reduce interpretative depth. Ultimately, Lewis illustrates that theology can be expressed through narrative. Narnia beckons readers to venture “further up and further in”-not just into fiction, but into a more profound engagement with the divine narrative.

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