



Mythopoeic Society

mythLORE

A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis,  
Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature

---

Volume 23  
Number 2

Article 4

---

4-15-2001

## Apologist for the Past: The Medieval Vision of C. S. Lewis's "Space Trilogy" and Chronicles of Narnia

Louis Markos  
*Houston Baptist University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore>



Part of the [Children's and Young Adult Literature Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Markos, Louis (2001) "Apologist for the Past: The Medieval Vision of C. S. Lewis's "Space Trilogy" and Chronicles of Narnia," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 23 : No. 2 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol23/iss2/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Mythopoeic Society at SWOSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature by an authorized editor of SWOSU Digital Commons. An ADA compliant document is available upon request. For more information, please contact [phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu](mailto:phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu).

To join the Mythopoeic Society go to:  
<http://www.mythsoc.org/join.htm>

SWOSU<sup>TM</sup>

---

## Mythcon 51: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

Albuquerque, New Mexico • Postponed to: July 30 – August 2, 2021



### Abstract

Shows how the medieval model which Lewis articulated in *The Discarded Image* influenced both the Space Trilogy and the Chronicles of Narnia.

### Additional Keywords

Lewis, C.S.—Medievalism; Lewis, C.S. Chronicles of Narnia; Lewis, C.S. The Discarded Image; Lewis, C.S. Space Trilogy (Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra, That Hideous Strength)

## Apologist for the Past: The Medieval Vision of C. S. Lewis's "Space Trilogy" and Chronicles of Narnia

Louis Markos

IN Chapter 13 of his spiritual autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, C. S. Lewis introduces us to a fellow Oxford student who would not only become a life-long friend but would radically alter Lewis's views of theology, philosophy, and history. That man was Owen Barfield, and to him Lewis owed the shattering of his chronological snobbery. Lewis defines this phrase, one that appears quite often in his works, as "the uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate common to our own age and the assumption that whatever has gone out of date is on that account discredited" (*Surprised* 114). It has been nearly fifty years since Lewis wrote those words; yet, like so many of his other critiques of the modern world, they have only become more true with the passage of time.

For it must be admitted that, at least in Europe and America, the great majority of people (whatever their religious beliefs or political convictions, their educational backgrounds or aesthetic tastes) simply take it for granted that we moderns have got it right (about science, about the universe, about human relationships, about the nature of man, etc.) and all those who came before us (slight condescending nod of the head here) missed the mark. Though such generational arrogance can (indeed, has) surfaced in all times and in all places, it has taken on an increasingly smug and self-assured tone since the ideals of the Enlightenment entrenched themselves in Europe about 1800. We do not just feel we are right; we know it.

Employing propagandistic language that was fashioned, not (as most suppose) by Renaissance thinkers like Petrarch and Machiavelli, but by such French *philosophes* as Voltaire and Diderot, many continue to speak of the medieval world as a Dark Age of ignorance, superstition, and obscurantism. Science, rationality, and technology have freed us from all that medieval doom and gloom, allowing Truth to take the place of outworn dogma, observation to take the place of scholastic authority, and liberty to take the place of corrupt and illicit hierarchy. A thousand years of scientific and cultural stagnation was to be drained like an offensive swamp; the whole colorful pageant of knights and nuns, pilgrims and pardoners to be swept away like so many chessmen. Ironically, though this Enlightenment platform

was to become increasingly anti-clerical and post-Christian in its focus, it would be built in part on a two-hundred-year-old foundation of virulent anti-Catholic propaganda fed by the presses of the Protestant reformers: they who have convinced lay and professional historians alike that the Spanish Inquisition was somehow more cruel, un-Christian, and anti-progressive than the numerous religious purges carried out by Protestant monarchs (according to Foxe, a Catholic martyr is an oxymoron!).

Let us thank our lucky stars that all those wobbly planks that once supported the Catholic Middle Ages have been systematically disproven (so we think) and toppled (so we hope): they really had nothing to teach us anyway and were, in fact, the main culprits in the halting of progress. They got it wrong, but we got it right. Indeed, even those poor Victorians were quite deluded in their own way (all that hankering back for social order and those antiquated moral codes), but don't worry, this time (definitely, this time), we got it right. Is it not self-evident? Has it not been proven?

Such has been the chronological snobbery of our modern age, a prejudice that the Lewis who attended Oxford in the years following the First World War shared in its fullness. However, with the help of such friends as Barfield and J. R. R. Tolkien, with the slow resurgence of his earlier love of fairy stories in general and Norse mythology in particular, and, above all, with his gradual acceptance of Christian orthodoxy, Lewis slowly shed his chronological snobbery and grew not only to love but to embody many of the values and ideals of that very medieval age that he had been taught to deride. Indeed, in both his fiction and non-fiction, Lewis would become a spokesman (nay, an apologist) for that oft ignored and misunderstood age, and he (along with Tolkien) would fight long and hard at Oxford to preserve the traditional, medieval curriculum.<sup>1</sup>

In the paragraphs that follow, I shall first survey the key elements of what Lewis calls the medieval model as they are presented in a still-read and still-respected academic work that Lewis completed shortly before his death in 1963. This work, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (published posthumously in 1964), began its life, as did most of Lewis's scholarly works, as a series of lectures, and, though arcane at points, it retains the directness and clarity of the spoken word. Having explored Lewis's non-fictional presentation of this medieval model (a model which, Lewis argues, was shattered not by the Renaissance, most of whose key figures retained it, but by the Enlightenment), I shall then move on to show how in both his "Space Trilogy" and *The Chronicles*

of Narnia Lewis conjures for his readers compelling worlds in which this model still operates and in which the values linked to it still exist.

### The Medieval Model

Contrary to wide-spread popular and even supposedly educated opinion, the medievals did not believe that the world was flat. Yes, it was believed (until Copernicus) that the Earth was at the center of the universe, but all educated medieval people knew that it was round: a fact that Lewis proves by quoting numerous pre-1500 scholars, all of whom were well aware of the shape of the Earth (as for the uneducated, Lewis adds, most of them just did not think about it at all). Furthermore, again contrary to entrenched modernist belief, the recent “discovery” of the vastness of space is not, in fact, a discovery at all. Numerous ancient authorities assert not only the vastness of space but the comparative insignificance (spatially speaking) of the Earth.<sup>2</sup>

Neither the ancients nor the medievals were fools. They had eyes that saw, and they used them quite well. But what they saw and, more importantly, how they saw were vastly different from what and how we see today. When they gazed at the heavens, they saw a cosmos of perfect order, balance, and harmony, an ornament (the root meaning of the Greek word *cosmos*) fashioned by a God who is himself a being of perfect order. Around a fixed, central Earth, a series of nine concentric spheres wheeled and spun in perfect circular orbits. These spheres, in ascending order, were: the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, the fixed stars, and the *primum mobile* (or first mover) which set all the other spheres in motion and was itself set in motion by God (the unmoved mover). As the spheres moved through the heavens, the differing pitches of their orbits produced a heavenly music so refined and ethereal that our dull, earthly ears could not hear it (*Discarded* 92-112).

As Lewis describes it in *The Discarded Image*, the medieval model was one that wholly satisfied, one that struck its contemplators with all the power and beauty of an epic poem: their universe was not (as ours is thought to be) a lifeless object, but a vital, animated presence that could be not only appreciated but also loved. Indeed, in accordance with the ancient principle of plenitude the medievals believed that “outer space” (as we call it) was not a cold, dead vacuum, but a warm, dazzling field throbbing with life. Even the spheres themselves were not, as it might at first seem, automatic, mindless gears in a cosmic machine; quite the contrary, each of them was impelled by an intelligence that moved its sphere out of love for the Creator.

Whereas our age reasons that the vast actions and interactions of the cosmos are best defined in terms of abstract, objective principles (e.g., the laws of gravity and of thermodynamics), the medievals saw a more personal, subjective universe whose intricate movements (like those of a dance) were set in motion and choreographed by divine influence.

Medieval poets such as Dante and Chaucer (as well as such Renaissance poets as Shakespeare, Donne, and Milton) lived in a sympathetic (rather than a clockwork) universe, a universe in which all the parts were related, in which the stars did have something to do with us. Today, of course, any notion that we (and our world) might be influenced in any way by the movements and arrangements of the heavenly bodies is generally confined to the fringes of the New Age; in the days before Protestant iconoclasm and Enlightenment skepticism unweaved the rainbow and stripped the cosmos of its mystery, the Church was wide enough and (dare we say it) enlightened enough to find truth in the astrological speculations of the ancient pagan world. That is not to say that the Catholic Church condoned horoscopes and fortune-telling, but it did accept as a general rule the meaningfulness and inter-relatedness of the changing world below and the more perfect world above (*Discarded* 103f). If, as Christians say they believe, God fashioned both us and our universe, is it not right that there should exist some sympathy between the two? Was it not a heavenly body, after all, that led the gentile wise men to the Christ child?

For the medievals, it is not the laws of Newtonian physics but what Dante calls (in the concluding lines of *The Divine Comedy*) "the love that moves the sun and the other stars" that gives the cosmos its shape and its integrity (*Paradiso* 33.146). We are all (to borrow another Dantean image) like ships seeking to find our eternal port, our proper and assigned place *vis-à-vis* God. All in the universe is free to follow its instincts, yet nothing is haphazard. In all things, there is order and purpose. Every heavenly being (from seraphim to cherubim to archangel to angel), every man, every animal, even every plant has its place in that "Great Chain of Being" that stretches downward from God to the lowest form of inorganic life.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, one of the hallmarks of the medieval model, Lewis argues, was its ability to integrate a vast amount of speculative material (both pagan and Christian, philosophical and theological, scientific and poetic) into a unified system. Out of a chaos of forms and ideas, the medievals (like the God they worshipped) forged a unified system in which order and hierarchy were the rule (*Discarded* 10-12, 198-204). And yet, as difficult as it may seem to believe for us inhabitants of a democratic,

anti-aristocratic world, that order was personal and intimate and that hierarchy just, reasonable, and (in the most exalted sense of the word) human.

Despite its scholarly apparatus, *The Discarded Image* is a passionate book, and Lewis an equally passionate apologist. His desire is that his readers not only see but feel the universe as the medievals did. This does not mean, however, that Lewis advocates a simple return to the medieval model; he makes it clear that we cannot. Science has (he freely admits) disproven such medieval assumptions as the circular movements of the spheres and the unchangeable perfection of the heavens. Nevertheless, he insists, this awareness does not validate any smug self-assurance that this time “we got it right.” After all, our modern cosmological model is just that, a model: one that can, at any moment, be wiped away by some new scientific discovery (*Discarded* 216-23). We laugh at the medievals for their quaint metaphorical notion that heavenly bodies move through celestial influence, but is such a view any more metaphorical than our notion that all objects obey (like citizens) the laws of gravity? When it comes to models, you see, we find what we are looking for: just so in court, the lawyer’s questions often determine the shape of the testimony. Both we and the medievals sought to “save the appearances” (a phrase stressed by Barfield, and one that serves as the title of Barfield’s finest book), to fashion a model that would explain the nature of the observed universe. If the medievals were guilty of shaping their model in accordance with their love for pageantry and hierarchy, then we are no less guilty of shaping ours along legal, democratic lines (222-23). All people (whether ancient or modern, medieval or enlightened) have their presuppositions, and they cannot help but bring those presuppositions with them into their study of the cosmos. The medievals at least “owned up” to theirs; perhaps it is time we do the same.

### The “Space Trilogy”

Though Lewis’s “Space Trilogy” (*Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength*) was written several years before *The Discarded Image*, it embodies (both thematically and geographically) the full beauty, power, and majesty of the medieval model. To read these three novels is to be transported back to an older, more mystical conception of the cosmos, one where hierarchy, plenitude, and influence are still the rule. Thus, though Lewis adopts the modern, “correct” ordering of the planets, he presents those planets (Malacandra/Mars and Perelandra/Venus, at least) as bastions of life (both physical and spiritual) populated by rational creatures (or hnau) who live in unfallen, edenic worlds of peace and plenty. Moreover,

he explains in *Out of the Silent Planet* that each planet (or sphere) is watched over by a sort-of guardian spirit that he calls the Oyarsa. These Oyeresu (who are at once the archangels of the Bible and the intelligences of ancient astronomy) are both the servants of the Creator (Maleldil) and the masters of all those who live within their sphere. They bring order and harmony to their sphere, shedding over it and even radiating out into the cosmos their benign influence. Indeed, so great is their influence that it is felt on the Earth, but not, the books make plain, in terms of some zodiacal determinism.

Rather, their influence is felt in the more essential, more humanistic realms of poetry, myth, and dreams. The Oyeresu, that is to say, are the true origins (the Platonic forms or Jungian archetypes, if you will) of all our deepest yearnings and most noble ideals. Thus, Lewis explains in the penultimate chapter of *Perelandra* (199-202), the Oyeresu of Malacandra (Mars) and Perelandra (Venus) are at once the guardian spirits of their planets and the final origin of those twin deities of war and love that the ancients worshipped. But it goes even deeper than that. When Lewis brings us face-to-face with these two ageless Oyeresu, he insists that what we are seeing is, in fact, the very essence of masculinity and femininity. The distinctions between the sexes are not, as modern feminists would have it, mere social and linguistic constructs, nor are they, as the secular scientists would have it, mere products of biology; they are, instead, earthly reflections of a celestial reality. That which on our fallen, decaying, ever-changing world, retains only its mythic force is, in the perfect, unfallen world of the heavenly spheres, both historical and real. Indeed, in a brilliant touch, Lewis informs us in Chapter 13 of *That Hideous Strength* that King Arthur (whom medieval legend held was not dead but asleep on the isle of Avalon, where he awaits the day when Britain shall need him again) dwells now on Perelandra in company with those other deathless prophets of the Old Testament: Enoch, Melchizedek, Moses, and Elijah (274). In an even more striking episode, Lewis climaxes *That Hideous Strength* by having the Oyeresu of all the planets descend to Earth and shed their respective influences upon the forces of good in the novel, thereby empowering them to defeat their enemies (320-27, 343f, 374-82).

For, as we all know, all is not order and harmony in the universe. We learn in *Out of the Silent Planet* (130) that several millennia earlier, the Oyarsa of Earth (Satan) had rebelled against Maleldil (God), and that, to preserve the rest of the cosmos from the contamination of Satan's evil, God had quarantined Earth (which is thus called Thulcandra: the silent planet). Even worse, in imitation of their

“bent” Oyarsa, the inhabitants of Earth came to be rebels themselves and to see themselves as little Oyeresu (*Silent* 110). As a result, our world has become separated from the proper order and hierarchy of the cosmos, has become “enemy-occupied territory.” To restore Earth and its inhabitants to their proper place in the cosmos, Maleldil has sent his Son (Christ) to redeem Thulcandra; nevertheless, an ever-imminent struggle lies ahead, one that will take place on a spiritual level that modern man knows little about. In fact, in the wonderfully apocalyptic closing chapter of *Out of the Silent Planet*, Lewis warns us that if we do not start “reading up” on our metaphysics and our angelology we will be left unprepared to do battle. Unfortunately, he sighs, our post-Enlightenment books tell us nothing of such warfare, nor of such realities: for that, we must turn back to the medievals. Knowledge of the medieval model, it turns out, will not only make us into better students, scholars, and thinkers: it just may save our lives!

However, it is not only in its wider spiritual and geographical dimensions that the “Space Trilogy” works as a fictional apologetic for the past. More effective even than its celestial backdrop or its spiritual-warfare plot is the way Lewis allows us to experience the medieval model through the eyes of a modern protagonist who, like the Lewis of *Surprised by Joy*, progresses from a modern, scientific-minded, myth-exploding skeptic to a man of deep faith and humility whose eyes are permanently opened to greater spiritual realities. The story begins when Ransom, a philologist whose character is patterned partly on Lewis and partly on Tolkien, is kidnapped by two evil men and taken to Mars. From here, he quickly undergoes an “education” in the wonders of the unseen world, an education that begins when he looks out the window of the space ship:

He had read of ‘Space’: at the back of his thinking for years had lurked the dismal fancy of the black, cold vacuity, the utter deadness, which was supposed to separate the worlds. He had not known how much it affected him till now—now that the very name ‘Space’ seemed a blasphemous libel for this empyrean ocean of radiance in which they swam. [. . .] He had thought it barren: he saw now that it was the womb of worlds, whose blazing and innumerable offspring looked down nightly even upon the earth with so many eyes—and here, with how many more! No: Space was the wrong name. Older thinkers had been wiser when they named it simply the heavens [. . .] (*Silent* 29-30)

The heavens, it seems, are not as he imagined them.

But the shattering of Ransom’s chronological snobbery does not stop there. Once on Mars, he encounters a medieval (even Homeric) type of society (the

Hrossa) whose simple nobility force him to rethink not only his modern assumptions about the universe but his post-Enlightenment privileging of technological advances (the Hrossa have none) over such traditional, chivalric virtues as honor, courage, and loyalty (all of which the Hrossa have in abundance). Even more difficult, he must overcome his modern suspicion of authority and religion in order to see the Oyarsa of Mars for what he is: not a cold, arbitrary deity, but a warm and personal patriarch who loves the creatures he rules and seeks what is best for them. No such change occurs in the hearts of his abductors, Devine and Weston; they remain, from beginning to end, blind to the beauties of Malacandra and deaf to the gentle entreaties of the Oyarsa. To them, the inhabitants of Mars are nothing more than savages controlled by a witch doctor. Like the Pharisees of the Gospels, they have eyes but do not see, ears but do not hear. So sure are they of their modernist presuppositions, that they simply refuse to see what to Ransom—and through him, the reader—is so abundantly and overwhelmingly clear.

In the second novel, *Perelandra*, Ransom, now apprised of the medieval model in all its glory, is carried by the *eldila* (angels) to *Perelandra* where he engages in a titanic struggle to prevent the demon-possessed Weston from tempting Tinidril, the innocent Queen of Venus. In the breath-taking closing chapter of that novel, Ransom, exhausted from his ordeal, is vouchsafed a truly sublime image of the final purpose and goal behind the spiritual battle he has waged on Venus and will (in *That Hideous Strength*) continue to wage on Earth. Like Dante in the final cantos of *The Divine Comedy*, Ransom's eyes are fully opened and he glimpses the true nature of paradise and the ultimate state of the blessed. For Dante, that image comes in the form of a Mystic Rose; for Lewis, who shares Dante's model, it comes in the form of a Great Dance. In both symbols (for that is finally what they are) the dominant image is one of perfect order fused with ceaseless interchange: a courtly pageant that is as stately and decorous as it is vital and joyous. As Lewis describes it, it is a hierarchical dance whose center ever shifts because its center is ever God, and whose participants get their turn at the center only because they remain within the hierarchy:

Each figure as he looked at it became the master-figure or focus of the whole spectacle, by means of which his eye disentangled all else and brought it into unity—only itself to be entangled when he looked to what he had taken for mere marginal decorations and found that there also the same hegemony was claimed. (218)

The beauty that lurks in perfect unity, the creativity that is discovered only in strict form, the freedom that comes only through surrender: all these things our modern world has forfeited. In the “Space Trilogy,” Lewis restores them to us in all their glory.<sup>4</sup>

### The Chronicles of Narnia

If the “Space Trilogy” carries the medieval model up into the heavens, then the Chronicles of Narnia bring it back to Earth. Lewis’s concern in the latter series is not so much to contemplate the influence of the spheres or to uncover hidden angelic forces as it is to create a magical world in which nature is still alive and in sympathy with man. The fauns and dryads and talking horses that populate Narnia and its surrounding countries are more than just testaments to Lewis’s wide reading in the annals of ancient myth and legend: they mark as well an attempt by Lewis to revive in his readers a sense of awe and wonder at the numinous presences that dwell all around us. What the reader often remembers about the Chronicles long after the plot details have faded is the intense vitality of Narnia: everything in that wondrous land seems to shimmer with life.

Aslan is, of course, an allegory for (or, better, a type of) Christ—indeed, he is Christ in another form and by another name as he intimates to the children on the final page of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*—but he is also the embodiment of Spring. In Chapter 8 of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Mr. Beaver shares the following prophetic poem with the children:

Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight,  
At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more,  
When he bares his teeth, winter meets its death  
And when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring again. (74-75)

Just as all the prophecies of the Jews about the coming Messiah and the myths of the Greeks about sons of the gods who die and rise again find their perfect and historical fulfillment (according to traditional Christian teaching) in the person of Jesus Christ, so Lewis combines both the Gospel narratives and the ancient pagan mysteries (particularly those celebrated at Eleusis) in the character of Aslan. The salvation that Aslan effects in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is not just theological but natural. He ransoms both Edmund and Narnia from the White Witch, but he also brings fertility back to the land. This sympathetic relationship between the divine and the natural is, as we saw above, a vital aspect of the medieval

model, and, in the Chronicles, Lewis helps revive in his readers a sense both of the connectedness of all things and of the significance of the physical.

Though Lewis was an Anglican Protestant, he knew the dangers that come with excessive Puritanism: denigration of the flesh, suspicion of the arts, and an abstract spirituality divorced from nature and the sacraments. In the medieval Catholic world of Narnia, such beliefs more naturally attach themselves to the White Witch (who hates all kind of revelry and all kind of natural life [*Lion* 112]) and to the Emerald Witch (who, in Chapter 12 of *The Silver Chair*, tries to demythologize everything that Jill, Eustace, and Puddleglum hold sacred). During the tyrannical reign of the Telmarines in *Prince Caspian*, not only is the natural world suppressed and rendered mute (modern science, Barfield taught Lewis, has transformed nature from a kindred subject to a dead object), but the tales of Aslan and the four children who defeated the White Witch and became kings and queens are both forgotten and forbidden (a very Enlightenment-type project that would expunge not only the Gospel narratives but the romances of the middle ages too). The Telmarines have not only rejected Aslan; they have rejected the joy and the magic that go with him. It is only appropriate then that when Aslan returns to reclaim Narnia both for himself (divine) and the talking animals (natural), he does so in tandem with Bacchus (*Prince Caspian* 193-98).

This scene has confused some of Lewis's readers (who ask, "Why bring the Greek god of 'wine, women, and song' into a nice Christian allegory for children?"), but it is fully consistent with the medieval conception of Lewis's series. First, the fusion of pagan and Christian was not, as we saw above, a problem for medievals like Aquinas and Dante who took great joy and pride in their ability to synthesize and order vastly diverse elements. In true medieval fashion, Lewis incorporated into his Chronicles anything and everything that ever gave him a sense of the numinous, of that special awe that mingles beauty with fear (a sense, by the way, that Lewis captures most fully in Shasta's meeting with Aslan in Chapter 11 of *The Horse and His Boy*). This eclectic aspect of the Chronicles has bothered some of Lewis's critics (it particularly irked Tolkien the purist), but it is consistent with the medieval ethos. Second, to link Aslan to Bacchus is to make a point that the medievals understood but which modern Protestantism has more often found suspect: that though the Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection are real, historic events, they are also archetypal stories with great mythic force. Christ is (historically speaking) the Son of God, but he is also (mythically speaking) Bacchus, Balder, Osiris, and the Corn-King.<sup>5</sup> Finally, and most pertinent to the argument above,

Bacchus embodies life at its most ecstatic: that raw, earthy, bodily kind of life that shatters all hypocrisy and helps enable us to receive that fullness of life that Christ promises in John 10.10. It is a kind of life that is also a kind of richness, a desire to grow and develop, to break down barriers, to achieve our full (God-given) potential.

Indeed, it is the same richness evident on the first day of Narnia's creation when the power of Aslan's song is so strong that anything planted in the earth (from a piece of candy to a bit of a lamppost) will grow (*The Magician's Nephew* 111-12, 154). Unfortunately, the evil characters in *The Magician's Nephew* (like Weston and Devine in *Out of the Silent Planet*) are unable to see or hear the beauty of Aslan's song (100-01), for, like the Telmarines (and, incidentally, like the dwarves in the stable at the end of *The Last Battle*), they are afraid of life, hate joy, and mistrust magic. Just so, we moderns do not see in the heavens the life, joy, and magic that the medievals did: not because it is not there, but because we simply refuse to see it. Again, we have eyes but do not see, ears but do not hear. Of course, we could see and hear again if we did one of two things: revive in our minds the power and beauty of the medieval model or become in our hearts like children again. To read *The Chronicles of Narnia* as a modern adult is to be empowered to do both at once.

The *Chronicles* at their most effective allow us to see our own world afresh, and, by so doing, gain some needed humility. When reformed brat Eustace Scrubb learns that Ramandu the magician is actually a retired star, he exclaims that on Earth stars are only huge balls of flaming gas (*Voyage* 180). Ramandu's answer is at once a slight reprimand to the over-eager Eustace and a not-so-slight rebuke to all moderns who think they can reduce to abstract laws the glories of the heavens: "Even in your world, my son, that is not what a star is but only what it is made of" (180).

#### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Cf. Lewis's inaugural address as Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge, "De Descriptione Temporum."
- <sup>2</sup> Cf. *The Discarded Image*, 26-28, 83, 140, etc.; Stephen Jay Gould, "The Late Birth of a Flat Earth" in *Dinosaur in a Haystack: Reflections in Natural History*, 38-50; and Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Inventing the Flat Earth: Columbus and Modern Historians*.
- <sup>3</sup> For more on medieval hierarchy, cf. Chapter 11 of Lewis's *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, another of Lewis's works that mounts a defense of traditional beliefs and values, as well as Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* and E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture*.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. also David C. Downing, *Planets in Peril: A Critical Study of C. S. Lewis's Ransom Trilogy*.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. "Myth Became Fact" for Lewis's reflections on this topic.

### Works Cited

- Alighieri, Dante. *The Paradiso*. Trans. John Ciardi. 1961. New York: Mentor, 1970.
- Barfield, Owen. *Saving the Appearances*. New York: Harcourt, 1965.
- Downing, David C. *Planets in Peril: A Critical Study of C. S. Lewis's Ransom Trilogy*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1992.
- Gould, Stephen Jay. "The Late Birth of a Flat Earth." *Dinosaur in a Haystack: Reflections in Natural History*. New York: Harmony Books, 1995. 38-50
- Lewis, C. S. "De Descriptione Temporum." *Selected Literary Essays*. Ed. Walter Hooper. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1969. 1-14.
- . *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1964.
- . *That Hideous Strength*. New York: Macmillan, 1965.
- . *The Horse and His Boy*. New York: Macmillan-Collier, 1970.
- . *The Last Battle*. New York: Macmillan-Collier, 1970.
- . *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. New York: Macmillan-Collier, 1970.
- . *The Magician's Nephew*. New York: Macmillan-Collier, 1970.
- . "Myth Became Fact." *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*. Ed. Walter Hooper. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970. 63-67.
- . *Out of the Silent Planet*. New York: Macmillan, 1971.
- . *Perelandra*. New York: Macmillan, 1978.
- . *A Preface to Paradise Lost*. New York: Oxford UP, 1961.
- . *Prince Caspian*. New York: Macmillan-Collier, 1970.
- . *The Silver Chair*. New York: Macmillan-Collier, 1970.
- . *Surprised by Joy*. London: Geoffrey Bles, 1955. Rpt. in *The Inspirational Writings of C. S. Lewis*. New York: Inspirational Press, 1991. 1-130.
- . *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. New York: Macmillan-Collier, 1970.
- Lovejoy, Arthur O. *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1936.
- Russell, Jeffrey Burton. *Inventing the Flat Earth: Columbus and Modern Historians*. Westport: Praeger, 1991.
- Tillyard, E. M. W. *The Elizabethan World Picture*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1943.