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The Choosing

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This perplexing and certainly not positive view of marriage may be explained by the fact that C.S. Lewis was very reluctant to get married himself and was involved with Joy Davidman at this time.

The Magician's Nephew is a book for tying up loose ends. It is a book that explains the origins of the Wardrobe as well as how it came to be in the Professor's house. The Professor's name is Digory Kirke. "Kirk" is the Scottish word for "church", and what he does for the children -- providing asylum in the first story and coaching Peter for an exam in the third -- are examples of pastoral duties of the church, of the priesthood.

He starts out as a reluctant sorcerer's apprentice forced into service to save Polly from the experiments of his uncle, who we find out to be only a petty trickster descendant of someone named LeFay. Sorcerers, Magicians, Shamans, and Priests are of a similar calling. They function as power brokers. Queen Jadis, the evil sorceress, hoards her power and has a false notion of her importance. Digory sees only the good his power can be put to. Jadis eats her apple; Digory thinks only of his life giving power in bringing his mother back to health. Digory becomes a healer, bringing the grace of God to the ill. This life-giving Food can easily be compared to the Eucharist brought by a priest to the sick as Holy Viaticum, and only a priest can change bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. And finally, Digory completes his priestly duties by creating a channel from this world to the other by building a wardrobe from the wood of the tree grown from the seed of the apple he gave his mother.

Thus Lewis completes the cycle of the Seven Sacraments in the first six books. In the seventh he ends his tales. Could it be that there were no more stories once one has touched all of the main rites of passage in a person's life? This also reinforces the point of there being a lack of organization in the series. Seven Sacraments in six books is not very symmetrical. There are more symbols and more discussion possible here in relating the sacraments to the series but this is by no means an exhaustive analysis.

Christianity so pervaded the being of C.S. Lewis that anything he put his hand (or pen) to would be imbued strongly with a thorough Christian ethic. How unintentional the sacraments are infused here may be in direct proportion to the depth of Christianity that C.S. Lewis lived. The sacraments are the important rituals, the rites of passage in every Christian's life, what else could C.S. Lewis write about when he would write stories for children?

Footnotes

¹ From an idea of Lisa Mosier's and discussed at Search Summer Reflections 1985.

² C.S. Lewis "It All Began With a Picture..." in *Of Other Worlds*, ed. W. Hooper. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966, p. 42.

³ Lewis, C.S. *Letters to Children* ed. L.W. Dorsett & M.L. Mead MacMillan, 1985, p. 68.

⁴ Lewis, C.S. "On Ways of Writing for Children."

in *Of Other Worlds*, ed. W. Hooper. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966, p. 33.

⁵ Lewis, C.S. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* Collier Books 1971, pp. 135-36. All remaining references to the Chronicles of Narnia are from this boxed set edition.

⁶ *Prince Caspian*, p. 200.

⁷ *Voyage of the "Dawn Treader"*, p. 91.

⁸ *The Silver Chair*, p. 187.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

¹⁰ *The Horse and His Boy*, p. 216.

(Editor's Note: It is interesting to compare this article with a parallel one which focuses on an opposite theme. See "Narnia and the Seven Deadly Sins" by David Hulan, in the Narnia Conference Proceedings, published by the Mythopoeic Society, 1969.)

The Choosing from C.S. Lewis' *The Great Divorce*

*In the storyteller's vision
of a plain on the edge of dawn
the daytripping dead,
bearing a passport to choice,
disclose their gray town citizenship
in bodies like dirty gauze.*

*Venturing on that valley
too wide for the eye's compass,
their feet are slashed by blades of grass,
bruised by the foam of the stream.*

*But if they trudge away
from their transit's last stop,
renounce the return trip
for the trek to the sun-rimmed hills
whose shadow breathes the Shadow of Life.*

*Those thin souls will overflow with light,
transmute to blood and bone
like the firm, bright limbs of the Choosing Ones
whose tread shakes the mountains into song
and resonates the waiting air to praise.*

Nancy Ester James

Errata for Mythlore 53

Apologies to Steven Deyo for misspelling his name in the introductions to the issue.

Also, it should be noted that Donna R. White is participating in the Intensive *Residential* Course for Welsh Learners, not a "Presidential" Course. Lastly, it should be noted that Gwyneth Hood, referred to in Jorge Quinonez' letter on page 52 is a "she", not a "he." Among other things she teaches creative writing and is a regular contributor to the Society's fiction quarterly *Mythic Circle*.