

# Three Types of Baptism in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*

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『朝びらき丸 東の海へ』における三つのバプティズム

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## I . Introduction

*Prince Caspian*, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* and *The Silver Chair* are called “the Caspian trilogy”, and depict Caspian’s childhood, his sailing, and his death and resurrection. Each of these volumes has a particular theme and depicts a particular way of living. The second volume in the Caspian trilogy, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, portrays Caspian’s sailing, and it is said that its central theme is one of obedience to the clear instructions of Aslan regarding Caspian’s quest, even in the face of confusion.

Furthermore, it seems that the story has an additional theme of three types of baptism. The first is Eustace’s repentance. Although he was a problem child, after his body changes into a dragon, he repents of his sin and returns to his right mind. The second is at Deathwater Island’s pool. The protagonists discover a pool and find that anything which is dipped into the pool turn to gold. In using the pool, Caspian and Eustace become greedy, and they get into an argument. It might be said that the pool shows a type of anti-baptism. The third is regarding the purpose of writing of *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The author, C. S. Lewis, says, “I am aiming at a sort of pre-baptism of the child’s imagination”.

In this essay, I intend to look at these three types of baptism; Eustace’s Baptism, Anti-baptism in Deathwater Island, and Pre-baptism in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, and I

would like to find how three baptisms might be considered relevant to the author's religion.

## II . The Understanding of Baptism

The terms 'baptize' and 'baptism' indicate an action of washing with water or plunging into water. It is based on Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist in the four Gospels, and His command in Matthew 28:19 to "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". In addition, baptism is depicted in the Old Testament as an antetype; Noah and his family were saved through water; Moses and the Israel passed through the sea; and Exodus 30:17-21 shows that Israel used baptism as a purification ceremony. Furthermore, as a Christian, C. S. Lewis describes the meaning of baptism in *Mere Christianity*:

Give up yourself, and you will find your real self. Lose your life and save it. Submit to death, death of your ambitions and favourite wishes every day and death of your whole body in the end: submit with every fibre of your being, and you will find eternal life. (465)

Thus, through the water, human beings can die to their old spirit and be raised again, and at the same time, they receive a strong impression of renewal. Baptism is strongly linked with death and new life which has been provided by Jesus Christ.

It could be said that baptism is the outward washing with water signifying an inward cleaning of the soul. Hence, baptism portrays spiritual death and new life, and is one kind of type of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. Through baptism, people can confirm their way to new life. Now I will look how baptism is used in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*.

## III . Baptism in Dragon Island — Eustace's repentance

In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Eustace, Lucy and Edmund join the voyage with Caspian, and Eustace shows himself to be disagreeable and selfish child. When their adventure starts, he complains about their sailing, food, water, and everything else. He is too proud to get along with others, so bosses others around and bullying them. Lewis describes 'Pride' as the worst of vices in *Mere Christianity*:

According to Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere fleabites in comparison:

it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind. (398)

Eustace is the child whose pride leads his vice, and so he is the most obvious person to be changed.

After many days of sailing, they reach an island, there Eustace's body turns into a dragon. Once Eustace finds himself turned into a dragon, he realises his own selfishness, laziness and greed. He begins to see life in a new light. Rather than seeking revenge on Caspian and Edmund, he longs to be friends. He finds Caspian, Edmund and Reepicheep whom he hated were his true friends, and has a proper awareness of his own self.

After six days pass, Aslan comes to him and he is rescued. Aslan makes him scratch away his scaly skin. When he finishes scratching half of the scales from off his body, he feels pain and cannot continue. Then Aslan helps him to tear his skin from him. This action means killing his old body and mind. As previously mentioned, one sees in this Lewis's words: "Give up yourself, and you will find your real self". (465)

After Aslan renews Eustace's body, he takes him to a pool in a garden on a mountain, and puts him into the water. Aslan plunges him into the water and gives him new clothes. This scene can be understood as his baptism; through the water he is left with a strong impression of renewal. The baptism symbolizes human beings' spiritual union with Christ. It is linked with Jesus' salvation and forgiveness through his death, and it could be seen through the image of washing by water.

Eustace finds that he is turned into a boy again. His sin is forgiven and he begins his new life. Lewis shows one boy who discovers his own sin, repents in his mind and body, and is renewed through baptism.

Thus, Lewis is successful in portraying Baptism in this chapter, which is death to the old and gaining of new life. Through the water human beings can die to their old spirit and be raised again, and at the same time they can have a strong impression of renewal.

#### **IV . Anti-baptism — Deathwater Island's pool**

Eustace rejoins the party and they land on the next island. It is rocky and rugged with a tall central peak where only seagulls live. They find two streams which flow to a pool. The visitors find a terrible thing: anything dipped into the pool turns to gold. At the

bottom of the pool, there is a golden statue which looks like one of the missing lords, Restimar. The pool can change everything to gold and he must have been turned to gold while bathing.

This scene can be seen as one kind of an anti-baptism type. Water is a common symbol of cleansing, baptism expressing purification. While real baptism gives people new life through water, anti-baptism brings about death.

Furthermore, through creating gold, the water leads people into evil. Caspian and Eustace become greedy, and try to use the pool to get wealth which leads to an argument between them. Caspian names it Goldenwater and declares that it is in Narnian possession, which means that Caspian owns the pool. He imagines that he will become rich in worldly terms because the pool creates gold. However, Edmund claims that he was one of the ancient kings and that Caspian is under allegiance to the High King.

Lewis thinks that the sinful nature demands ownership. In *The Screwtape Letters*, Screwtape talks about how the idea of ownership plays right into Satan's hands. Lewis thinks materialism is fundamentally the wrong way of life. Screwtape advises Wormwood;

Don't waste time trying to make him think that materialism is true! Make him it is strong, or stark, or courageous – that it is the philosophy of the future. (741)

Prosperity knits a man to the World. He feels that he is 'finding his place in it', while really it is finding its place in him. His increasing reputation, his widening circle of acquaintances, his sense of importance, the growing pressure of absorbing and agreeable work, build up in him a sense of being really at home in earth, which is just what we want. (813)

The scene of argument between Caspian and Edmund warns against materialism which attaches importance to money. And materialism leads human beings into evil and finally death. Lewis says in *Mere Christianity*;

The vice I am talking of is Pride or Self-Conceit . . . . A proud man is always looking down on things and people: and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you . . . . The vain person wants praise, applause, admiration, too much and is always angling for it. It is a fault, but a child-like and even (in an odd way) a humble fault. It shows that you are not yet completely contented with your own admiration. You value other people enough to want them to

look at you. (398-401)

The argument between Caspian and Edmund is ended by the appearance of Aslan. They suddenly realise they are wrong. Because of the water in the island, they nearly fall into evil ways which lead to death. Finally, they call the island Deathwater Island, and leave there.

Lewis portrays the anti-baptism type in this chapter. Although Eustace gains new life through water, Caspian and Edmund nearly lose their life through the water.

## V . Eucharist in Ramandu's country — Baptism and Eucharist

Before I look at the third type of baptism, I would like to examine the relationship between baptism and the Eucharist. It can be seen at the scene of Ramandu's country in Narnia.

The protagonists arrive at the last island, Ramandu's country, where they find three the last of the lost lords, Reilian, Argoz and Mavramorn, sitting and sleeping at a table. According to David Colbert, the cup, the tree, the sword, and a green hill, are all symbols from the story of Christ's death and resurrection.

[The cup]

At the last supper before Christ's crucifixion, he drank from a chalice or cup. And stained glass church windows throughout Europe show Joseph of Arimathea and Mary Magdalene, disciples of Jesus, catching his blood in the cup while he is on the Cross.

[The tree]

The tree is a symbol of the Cross. Some Bible texts refer to Jesus being hanged on a tree. There are people who take this literally. Others say it is a question of translating old texts, and that a wooden cross would have been described with the same words.

[The sword]

Christ was pieced in the side by a sword during the crucifixion, according to the John's gospel.

[The green hill]

Calvary, the hill on which Jesus died, is often referred to as a green hill, most notably in the popular hymn 'There is a green hill far away'. Lewis knew that young British readers of the *Chronicles*, at least in his time, would encounter this hymn soon if they had not already.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, the feast seems the Narnian equivalent of the Eucharist of Christianity. It is a table of remembrance; the stone knife is the same one the White Witch used when she killed Aslan.

The Eucharist is rooted in the beginning of the Church, which was the focus of everything Jesus did and said in his meals and his ministry. Bread signified His body and wine was His blood. It is his body which is broken and his blood which is poured out in atonement. Now the Eucharist is a meal of remembrance and thanksgiving, of fellowship, and of anticipation.

Some theologians say there are three meanings of the Eucharist: First, it has the function of a memorial meal. Through the Supper, the participants can remember Jesus' life and death, and they can fulfil the Lord's command to 'Do this in remembrance of me'. The second function is that the remembrance of Christ is a Gospel proclamation. By eating and drinking, people proclaim the Lord's death. Breaking bread shows the giving of Christ's body, and pouring wine, the shedding of his blood. Third, the Lord's Supper becomes an enactment of the participation in Christ himself. Eating and drinking form appropriate symbols of this participation. The act of ingesting bread and wine is merely the means of taking food to human beings for physical vitality, and faith is essentially the appropriation of Christ's completed work on mankind in behalf for our spiritual vitality.

Eucharist reminds the participants of the great saving event of Jesus. They can not only remember His death and resurrection, but also have a relationship with God. It is linked with future fulfilment, as he promised his disciples that he would one day drink the cup with them anew.

The table in Ramandu's country can be regarded as a sign of Aslan's love and the invitation into the covenant of baptism. Baptism, which is the sign of adherence to Aslan and his way, follows participation at the table. In baptism, people profess the desire to cling to Aslan and to walk in his steps. They know the need to be close to Aslan. That closeness draws seekers onward into the covenant of baptism.

## **VI. Pre-baptism — the purpose of writing of *The Chronicles of Narnia***

To return to the topic, I will look at the third understanding of baptism. The voyage of the children ends as they leave the boat and start to walk on foot. In the end of this story, a Lamb invites the children to have fish for breakfast. This Lamb and fish may remind readers of Christ; after his death, he is risen and appeared to his disciples in the Gospel.

When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

In Narnia, the Lamb turns into Aslan, and he says that he is known in our world by another name. Here, in addition to Baptism, Lewis describes his purpose in writing of *The Chronicles of Narnia*:

Are—are you there too, Sir?" said Edmund. "I am," said Aslan. "But there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there. (188)

Aslan opens a door in the sky and sends them back to Cambridge. To his 'another name', readers have wondered about the significance of this statement. Hilda, an eleven year old girl from the United States asked Lewis what Aslan's name is in this world. Lewis replied:

As to Aslan's other name, well I want you to guess. Has there been anyone in this world who: (1) arrived at the same time as Father Christmas; (2) said he was the son of a great emperor; (3) gave himself up for someone else's fault to be jeered and killed by wicked people; (4) came to life again; (5) is sometimes spoken of as a Lamb. Don't you really know His name in this world? Think it over and let me know your answer!<sup>3</sup>

Although many children read *The Chronicles of Narnia* without being aware of their strong Christian themes, when the readers find Aslan in the real world, they will find out that his true name is Jesus Christ. Lewis says that his purpose in writing of *The Chronicles of Narnia* was "aiming at a sort of pre-baptism of the child's imagination".<sup>4</sup> Through this process, Lewis is successful at opening a person's heart to accepting Christianity.

## VII. Conclusion

To sum up, Lewis depicts three types of baptism in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Eustace's Baptism, Anti-baptism in Deathwater Island, and Pre-baptism. All three of these are linked with the author's religion, Christianity. It is a powerfully evocative passage, full of Christian symbols and biblical allusions. Lewis writes fictional books that are appealing

to not only Christians but also non-Christians.

Baptism and the Eucharist belong essentially together. Baptism symbolises the confirming of a covenant with God. It is one kind of public declaration of inward faith. Through baptism, Narnia's protagonists can declare their faith in public and confirm the way they wish to live.

Through baptism and the Eucharist, people affirm their presence within the community and their desire to be involved in the work of the people. Paul explains the meaning of baptism like so:

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, through Baptism, people can die and gain new life, and make a pledge of a good conscience toward God. Lewis puts his own religious thought into his stories. When readers see this story, they may gain new life through the author's imagination and inspiration. It is evident that he is successful in depicting Baptism and the Eucharist in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*.

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<sup>1</sup> Colbert, David. *The Magical Worlds of Narnia*. London: Puffin Books, 2005. 143-4.

<sup>2</sup> International Bible Society, ed. *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996. John 21:9-12

<sup>3</sup> Lewis, C. S. *Letters to Children*. New York: Macmillan, 1985. 32.

<sup>4</sup> Sayer, George. *Jack: C. S. Lewis and His Times*. London: Macmillan, 1988. 192.

<sup>5</sup> International Bible Society, ed. *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996. Romans 6:4

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