The Tears of Digory: A Study on C. S. Lewis’s Uses of Suffering in *The Chronicles of Narnia*∗

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[Summary] C. S. Lewis was one of the most prominent Christian apologists in the 20th century and also a best-selling fantasy novelist. If you see his life from a standpoint of his relationship with Christianity, he had some turning points. It is true that he had a different writing attitude in each period divided by those turning points, but there is also a common problem seen through them. That is, what you call, the problem of pain.

He experienced some bereavement during his youth and the problem of suffering got bigger and bigger as a life-long matter. In fact, he dealt with this problem in some of his Christian apologetic works. After he began to write novels, he was successful in deepening the works by setting scenes of suffering and sad tears in important phases in the stories. Especially in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, how the main characters develop their relationships with Aslan through their serious trials occupies a very important place in the story and draws many readers’ compassion whether they are Christians or not. Lewis’s deep insight acquired in his own experiences of bereavement must be working in the background. However, it is only through the bitter trial of his wife’s death in his later years that the insight was tested in the end.

In this thesis, I examine how the problem of pain had impact on Lewis’s life and influenced the texture of his writing chiefly by looking into his three works; *The Problem of Pain* written in his Christian apologetic period, his most famous fantasy *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and *A Grief Observed* written after his wife’s death. There we can find how Lewis shifted from experience to theory, from theory to enlightenment, and from enlightenment to grace.

[Key Words] pain, suffering, fantasy, children’s literature, Christianity

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Introduction

C. S. Lewis, known as “a distinguished academic, influential Christian apologist, and best-selling author of children’s literature” (The Cambridge Companion to C. S. Lewis, hereafter CCL, i), changed literary genres at several turning points in his life. I believe we can divide his life into three periods: his early period (1911-1931) when he was only nominally a Christian or not a Christian at all, the period of Christian apologetics (1931-1948) after his conversion to Christianity, and literary period from The Chronicles of Narnia (hereafter CN) (1950-56) to his death (1963). In this thesis, however, I would especially like to consider his handling of the problem of pain\(^1\) in Narnia as an extension of religious concerns which I think had continued to be significant for him all through the three periods.

We can find a lot of references to the problem in his works; in some books the problem of pain is a central theme, in other books the problem is partly treated, and in most of them the problem is variously handled.

Taking a general view of his life, it was a life characterized by many sad experiences and situations including some bereavement. In such a life, the problem of pain loomed large and how he should face it and come to terms with it increased in importance, especially after the conversion. The influence of such experiences on his writing will be also argued later.

The way he handled the problem is a theme some literary experts and religious critics have already partially researched. For example, Michael Ward\(^2\) contributed an essay “On Suffering” to CCL (203-19), and compared the attitudes of Lewis’s apologetic writing with those of his literary period. Ward has provided a suggestive survey on Lewis’s idea about the problem of pain, and, in this thesis, I wish to build on it by considering in detail all of Lewis’s insights into the problem scattered throughout CN. I have also relied upon “the doctrine of privacy” which Paul F. Ford comes up with in Companion to Narnia (15, 333; hereafter CTN) in relation to what I call the Principle of Sovereign Love (hereafter PSL)\(^3\) which will be formulated in the process of writing this thesis. Later, when we argue about the subtlety of the suffering problem, “the doctrine of privacy” and PSL will both figure largely in my argument.

This thesis also inquires into how Lewis’s insights into the problem are reflected in his very late work A Grief Observed (1961) (hereafter GO). With reference to

\(^1\) Lewis says the problem of pain is why we have pain and suffering if God were good and almighty. (The Problem of Pain [hereafter PP], 16)

\(^2\) Ward is famous for writing Planet Narnia which he insists revealed a secret hidden in CN and created a great sensation among Narnian researchers and fans.

\(^3\) A brief definition of PSL is that God gives us answers of the problem of pain only through our private fellowship with Him who is the only embodiment of divine love.
Ward’s opinion, I would like to show how the severe trial of losing his wife Joy helps confirm this structure.

Chapter 1 The Background of Lewis’s Choice of Children’s Literature as a vehicle for what he wanted to say
1) The reasons why Lewis chose Children’s literature

Lewis stated his ideas about children’s literature in his essays and letters after he finished writing CN. For example, in the essay, “On Three Ways of Writing for Children” in Of Other Worlds (1966) (hereafter OOW), he says “a children’s story is the best art-form for something you have [Lewis has] to say”. (OOW, 32) and also in another essay, “Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What’s to Be Said” (OOW, 35), he repeats the same idea as the title itself shows. Whether Lewis’s idea is universally true or not, it is no doubt interesting enough to examine carefully, because such an examination might help us to surmise why he changed direction in his literary activities, moving from mainly writing essays and theses to writing children’s literature.

First, there is a question about whether he chose children’s literature to make his Christian apologetics known to a wider mass of people and better understood by them. For that purpose, children’s literature may be the best form because of its simplicity. This policy is not limited to Christianity. It is also used as a form of missionary work by many religious groups. The way missionaries use novels, fairy tales, or even comics and films to propagate their doctrines has been a common practice recently. Lewis, however, insists on this matter:

Some people seem to think that I began by asking myself how I could say something about Christianity to children; then fixed on the fairy tale as an instrument; then collected the information about child-psychology and decided what age group I’d write for; then drew up a list of basic Christian truths and hammered out ‘allegories’ to embody them. This is all pure moonshine. I couldn’t write in that way at all. Everything began with images; a faun carrying an umbrella, a queen on a sledge, a magnificent lion. At first there wasn’t even anything Christian about them; that element pushed itself in of its own accord. It was part of the bubbling. (OOW, 36)

He wants to say CN is not an allegory or a tool of Christian propagation. All the parts of CN bubbled up as images from inside once his imagination caught fire. Then he says he believes the fairy tale is the best form to bind those images and give them a unity. The reason lies in “its brevity, its severe restraints on description, its flexible traditionalism, its inflexible hostility to all analysis, digression, reflections...” (OOW, 36). In other words, without any tedious explanations and
analyses, which would have been the kiss of death for children, he wanted to convey directly to readers the same pleasure that he had when the images bubbled up in his mind. He also says:

Let the pictures tell you their own moral. For the moral inherent in them will rise from whatever spiritual roots you have succeeded in striking during the whole course of your life. But if they don’t show you any moral, don’t put one in. It is impertinent to offer the children that. For we have been told on high authority that in the moral sphere they are probably at least as wise as we. Anyone who can write a children’s story without a moral, had better do so: that is, if he is going to write children’s stories at all. The only moral that is of any value is that which arises inevitably from the whole cast of the author’s mind. (OOW, 33)

According to this explanation, all the moralizing and Christianizing introduced by later Christian readers is not of primary importance. What is the most important is whether we can enjoy Lewis’s tales the same way Lewis enjoyed them when the images bubbled up.

2) What Lewis wanted to say in children’s literature

In this way he argued about why “a children’s story is the best art-form” in detail in essays and letters. On the other hand, he deliberately did not say anything about what “something you have to say” is or “what’s to be said” is. Let us survey and try some surmises.

He is known as having developed an aggressive Christian apologetics after his conversion around the age of 30. His most famous works of apologetics, The Screwtape Letters (1942) and Mere Christianity (1952) were written in the course of those years. If you put his life and his works in parallel, many interesting correlations emerge between them.

He had some very traumatic experiences of bereavement in his life. At the age of five he lost his beloved dog Jacksie in a traffic accident. He announced that he wanted to be called Jacksie from then on and that nickname was shortened to Jack afterward. This suggests that his shock was great at that time. The first story he wrote at the age of seven, Animal Land⁴, may possibly be a product of this bereavement. His connection with animals did not stop with childhood, and led him to write a rather unexpected chapter on “Animal Pain” in The Problem of Pain (1940), and then to create Narnia, the land of talking animals. Though we

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⁴ Lewis’s Animal Land and his brother Warnie’s story about India were mixed into a story called Boxen.
cannot tell exactly how much influence the loss of Jacksie had on Lewis, it obviously had a lifelong impact.

Then, at the age of nine, he lost his mother Florence to cancer. Her protracted pain and suffering and his bereavement seem to have influenced his life even more deeply and persistently. He is said to have been in a purgatorial “Shadowlands” — locked in a defensive shell, shy and unable to express his emotions freely — after he lost his mother. This experience might have produced Digory, the main character of The Magician’s Nephew (hereafter MN), who is troubled with his mother’s fatal disease.

At the age of twenty he lost a close friend and fellow soldier, Paddy Moore, in the trenches of World War I. This must have been another extremely painful and traumatic experience for him. At the same time, he saw a large number of his comrades dying and mutilated at the war front. He himself was seriously wounded and had to leave the battlefield to get treated. Lewis’s atheism seems to have been the result of all these experiences of traumatic pain, especially the war experience. Moreover, the loss of his friend brought half a lifetime of difficulties. He had exchanged a promise with Paddy that either would take care of the mother if the other were killed in battle. After Paddy’s death, Lewis kept the promise and took on Paddy’s mother, Jane, who would continue to be his house partner for 30 years from then on. Some critics say that they had a sexual relationship at one time, though this is not certain. Jane, however, was said to be quite meddlesome in Lewis’s life and Lewis is known to have referred to her as “Mother” in derogatory terms when he was in his 40s and she was in her 60s, and so she must have been like leg-irons for him. Michael White says: “Almost from the beginning Jack called Janie ‘Mother’ and he clearly had a few qualms or misgivings about the foundations of his love for her.” (C. S. Lewis: A Life, 61)

Possibly this situation might have produced the Witch who persistently continues to have evil effects in Narnia.

Speaking of the Witch, there is another less likely biographical possibility for her appearance in Narnia. Lewis had a long debate with the philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe about his just published book, Miracles (1947). He had already become famous as an excellent debater. At that time, however, he was completely defeated and forced to revise the book. Allan Jacobs presents the following ironical opinion of other researchers:

5 The word was used as the title of a movie by Richard Attenborough which depicted how Lewis overcome his trauma through fellowship with Joy Gresham and his agony after her death.
6 See 2nd paragraph of p.7.
7 She was one of the disciples of Ludwig Wittgenstein who had the huge impact on 20th century philosophy.
Humphrey Carpenter and A. N. Wilson believe that Lewis was so devastated by Anscombe’s paper that he abandoned Christian apologetics altogether; indeed, Wilson goes so far as to assert that Lewis used the story he began writing to transform Anscombe into a terrifying and monstrous Witch. (“The Chronicles of Narnia”, 266-67)

Jacobs is skeptic about this view saying:

There is nothing that could be called evidence for these speculations – especially considering that Lewis continued to have perfectly cordial relations with Anscombe, whose mind he openly admired and who was moreover his fellow Christian.... (“The Chronicles of Narnia”, 267)

It is, however, no doubt an interesting view if you consider the loss of debate to have had some unconscious effect on Lewis’s hitherto logic-oriented way of writing and his subsequent turning away towards fantasy writing. The debate with the philosopher was sort of a logic vs. logic fight in which Lewis tried hard to argue back against her criticism from every angle possible. But all of his efforts turned out to be futile. Michael White gives us an explanation of this event from a philosophical viewpoint:

Using linguistic analysis pioneered by Wittgenstein, Elizabeth Anscombe showed that Lewis’s premise was based entirely on the interpretation of the words used in his argument and that a belief in supernaturalism simply because naturalism appeared to be self-destroying was nonsense. Philosophical understanding, she showed, could no longer be based on the Hegelian system followed by Lewis, namely that religious ideas such as faith were unverifiable and only understood by calling on supernaturalism. Furthermore, Wittgenstein and others had made it clear that in order to speak and think rationally about philosophy there must be an agreed set of terms so that those engaged in discourse can understand one another. (C. S. Lewis: A Life, 174)

In this way, Lewis was overwhelmed and defeated by a higher logical intelligence. It is no wonder that he became less enthusiastic about the use of a logical way of writing which he had developed in Christian apologetics, and began to shift toward more artistic forms like fantasy.

On the other hand, we find there are some important works he wrote about pains and griefs. You can list up The Problem of Pain and A Grief Observed as typical ones, but Surprised by Joy (1955), which is his semi-autobiography,
extensively describes his bitter experiences in youth as well even though the title 
would suggest otherwise. Even in Mere Christianity (see, for example, Part II - 
Chapter 4 “The perfect penitent”), he explains the deep meaning of ‘life trials’ 
and, through all its parts the book records how you can cope with the problem 
of pain with the help of Christ Jesus. It is also true of The Screwtape Letters 
because the book introduces, often in humorous detail, the many ways demons 
can use pain and suffering to make humans stray from the right path.

Thus, when Lewis says, “a children’s story is the best art-form for something 
you have to say”, it is possible to regard his lifelong problem of pain as 
something he wants to examine in CN. We can surmise that in the course of 
facing griefs repeatedly, he came to sense the deeper meaning of pain and to look 
for the fruit of such trials possibly being born —surprisingly—not in Christian 
apologetics but in children’s literature, which he looked upon as the best form for 
helping young minds find a way to handle the traumas of life.

What I would like to say most here in this chapter is that I believe Lewis’s 
sufferings were so great that rational apologetics was inadequate to ‘solve’ the 
problem of pain, with which his own traumatic experiences force him to live, and 
so he turned to children’s literature as “exactly what I must write—or burst” 
(OOW, 28). What is meant by children’s literature is of course CN, but, before he 
wrote children’s literature, Lewis tried his hand at science fiction, writing Out of 
the Silent Planet (1938), Perelandra (1943) and That Hideous Strength (1945), 
which are called The Space Trilogy. If you take into account the balance between 
sentimental and rational factors, you would find emphasis on intellectual or 
logical persuasion in The Space Trilogy, which shows more overtly Lewis’s face of 
a Christian apologist. By comparison, CN has a more powerful effect because of 
the emotional identification the genre encourages. As a result, he probably felt 
that his insights into the problem of pain could best be conveyed as practical 
messages of self-help, such as we find in CN. Such immediacy of vicarious 
adventure cannot be had from dry essays of Christian apologetics.

Furthermore, the subject of trial and growth is always one of the most 
fascinating factors in children’s literature. There are of course many fascinating 
factors in children’s literature, but the subject of trial and growth is by far the 
biggest factor that attracts many readers into the story. In fact, as it is 
mentioned later in detail, there are a lot of scenes in which the main characters 
face trials and get over them in CN. Lewis did very well to weave his ideas about 
the problem of pain into those scenes. As a result those scenes are not only 
thrillingly attractive, but also helpfully curative of the sorts of pain we all face.

There is an interesting passage in the preface to The Problem of Pain concern-
ing this matter as follows:
If any real theologian reads these pages he will very easily see that they are the work of a layman and an amateur.... I have believed myself to be restating ancient and orthodox doctrines. \textit{(PP, vii)}

From the very fact Lewis puts this passage in the preface to \textit{The Problem of Pain}, we can surmise that he needed to convey how modest his insights into the subject matter (how we should come to terms with Christian orthodox doctrines about the problem of pain) were in this domain. He was not, after all, a theologian but a professor of literature. So we may well regard this as one of the main reasons why he chose children’s literature later—because he must have felt freer in developing his own ideas as a professional in children’s literature than in essays and theses which introduce readers to theological argumentation.

Chapter 2 Sufferings in Narnia

I would like to show how the problem of pain is dealt with in \textit{CN} in detail, but it is impossible to put every detail into this thesis, so I will concentrate on main characters. Almost all main characters, except for Aslan, have experiences of pain or suffering in various scenes as is mentioned later. In this chapter, I will argue about the cases of four characters: Digory in \textit{The Magician’s Nephew} (hereafter \textit{MN}), Edmund in \textit{The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe} (hereafter \textit{LWW}), Eustace in \textit{The Voyage of the Dawn Treader} (hereafter \textit{VDT}), and Aravis in \textit{The Horse and His Boy} (hereafter \textit{HHB}). The four cases all include interesting—and sometimes unique—experiences of painful trials.

1) Digory’s Case: The Problem of Grief
A. Digory’s unfortunate circumstances

The sixth book of \textit{CN}, \textit{The Magician’s Nephew} begins with the main characters (Digory and Polly) meeting together. Digory is introduced into the story in the following way:

\begin{quote}
The face of the strange boy was very grubby. It could hardly have been grubbier if he had first rubbed his hands in the earth, and then had a good cry, and then dried his face with his hands. As a matter of fact, this was very nearly what he had been doing. \textit{(MN, 11)}
\end{quote}

As this passage brilliantly suggests, Digory actually has serious difficulties. His face is smeared with dirt, and at once this image rouses our curiosity. What had made him weep? It is not usual for a boy of this age to shed tears when thinking about his own unhappy situation—but not like this. Has he been fighting? Lewis then explains what his sorrow is on the next page:
“All right, I have [been crying] then,” said Digory in a much louder voice, like a boy who was so miserable that he didn’t care who knew he had been crying. “And so would you,” he went on, “if you’d lived all your life in the country and had a pony, and a river at the bottom of the garden, and then been brought to live in a beastly Hole like this.”...

“And if your father was away in India — and you had to come and live with an Aunt and an Uncle who’s mad (who would like that?!) — and if the reason was that they were looking after your Mother — and if your Mother was ill and was going to — going to — die.” Then his face went the wrong sort of shape as it does if you’re trying to keep back your tears. (MN, 12)

Here, the contents of Digory’s sorrow are told in detail through his own mouth. First, from his remark, “if you’d lived all your life in the country and had a pony, and a river at the bottom of the garden, and then been brought to live in a beastly Hole like this”, we know he moved from the countryside where there is plenty of nature to the dirty city, where he is obliged to live. As a matter of fact, one of the remarkable features in MN is the contrast between the big, noisy and dirty city of London and the quiet, pastoral peace of Narnia. That is to say, the contrast between the life in the city and life in the countryside is well expressed in the story. So too is Lewis’s warning against environmental destruction. In the story, Digory first moves from the countryside to London, and then from London to Narnia. After having experienced exciting and thrilling adventure in the pristine nature of new world Narnia, at last he comes back to the dirty city of London, but probably he would keep Aslan’s indescribably beautiful songs in his mind forever. Moreover, judging from the conversation between the main characters, Digory and Polly, readers may feel the weakness of human relationships in the urban life. Even if they live in the same long row of houses, Polly was not aware that a boy at a similar age had moved next door until he happened to scramble up and put his face over the garden wall. The residents of the row of houses also seem estranged from each other. He could not have experienced such coldness in rural life.

Going back to the main stream of my argument, another of Digory’s remarks, “And if your father was away in India...,” suggests Digory lives apart from his father. He and his father probably had often played with a pony and enjoyed outdoor life by the rivers and in the mountains when they had lived in the

8 T. Dickerson and David O’Hara show how Lewis’s positive environmental views were fed by the Bible in their book Narnia and the Fields of Arbol.
9 There is a scene in which Aslan created the world of Narnia with a beautiful tune in MN, Chapter 9.
countryside. Along with such pleasures, he would have got a valuable personal education which only fathers can provide. However, it seems that now he cannot even hope for such a life if you read the next passage, “you had to come and live with an Aunt and an Uncle who’s mad (who would like that?).” How self-centered and proud this uncle is will be revealed little by little in the story. There is little explanation about the aunt, but we can guess, from such a sentence as “Aunt Letty says I must never go up there (Uncle Andrew’s study)” (MN, 12), that at least she cannot compensate for the negative influence of Uncle Andrew. Digory is obliged to live in a stifling environment with those people and, what is worse, cannot but entrust the care of his dearest sick mother to them.

The deepest grief comes out here—and we should notice how Lewis builds up to it at the very end of this passage. It is by far the most important revelation of sorrow. His mother is very sick in bed. It sounds like a critically serious illness as the phrase says, “if your Mother was ill and was going to—going to—die.” This stark fact seems to occupy his whole mind and heart and make everything dark, for here he breaks down and his face “goes the wrong sort of shape”. Probably his tears are mainly caused by the information about his mother’s disease, maybe told by the mean uncle.

However, what I would like to pay attention to is the similar experience of Lewis. He lost his mother at about the same age. Though Digory’s mother will later be saved and recover her health with Aslan’s help, it is highly possible that Lewis subconsciously overlapped his own experience with Digory’s. When Lewis was nine years old—the same age as Digory in the story—his mother died of cancer. He must have been very depressed seeing his mother struggling against the disease. After her death, he virtually lost any meaningful relationship with his father, who fell into a mentally unstable, alcoholic condition. After some years of academic life in Oxford as an atheist, he returned to the faith in Christ and at last turned out to be one of the strongest Christian apologists in the 20th century. Even through such an eventful philosophical journey, he may well have kept the sad memory of losing his mother and awkward relationship with his father in his mind. How large and lengthy an influence his mother’s death had on him can be seen in A Grief Observed, one of his latest works: “A lee shore, more likely, a black night, a deafening gale, breakers ahead — and any lights shown from the land probably being waved by wreckers. Such was H.’s [H is Joy] landfall. Such was my mother’s. I say their landfalls; not their arrivals.” (33-34) In this way, Lewis mentions his mother’s death to express how deep the grief of losing his dear wife Joy was. This proves that the impact of his mother’s death was just as sharp and persistent as the loss of Joy. And from the fact that Digory’s father is away in India and the Pevensies’ father is off on duty in the army, we can surmise that, probably because CN is children’s literature, Lewis decided to
displace his own father’s mental problem onto Uncle Andrew.

Lastly, let us formally analyze the excellent description of Digory’s emotion mentioned above. Though it takes probably just ten seconds or so to read those lines on page 13, Lewis increases the graveness from easy-to-reveal things to embarrassing things. It seems as though Digory’s voice is becoming louder and the vibration of his voice can almost be felt. If you listen to the CDs recorded by excellent voice actors, you can get a real feeling of Digory’s rising emotion, but even without such an auditory aid, this passage is superb enough for us to feel and be touched in a moment by the tears of Digory. It must also depend largely on Lewis’s elaborate technique of using quite a few dashes (five times) and coordinate conjunctions, “and” (three times) in only five lines. They disrupt the stream of the lines very much, which, all the more, suggest how emotionally confused Digory is, and how hard he is gulping back his tears. Then finally we readers cannot help feeling a rush of deep sympathy, catching sight of the word “die”. The reason why Lewis said, “a children’s story is the best art-form for something you have to say”, or “Sometimes fairy stories may best say what’s to be said”, (OOO, 35), can be seen here. His rational thoughts about human pains or difficulties can be transmitted to readers in essays like The Problem of Pain, but they may remain dryly theoretical or at best merely moral. However, if the same idea is expressed and described, through feeling, in a more imaginary and experiential form, it can draw in readers to identify with it imaginatively and emotionally, as any good literary story does. Especially here, Lewis’s goal is to describe how heavy and realistic Digory’s burden is and thus help his readers to sympathize with Digory. In this, he is successful.

B. The “megaphone” working on Digory

There is always a thick dark cloud covering the heart of Digory when he thinks of his mother who is seriously ill in bed. He may sometimes dream of her miraculous recovery no matter how small its possibility is. The dream, however, begins to take on reality in his mind after meeting Aslan, and at last he pleads with Aslan to cure his mother:

“Please — Mr Lion — Sir,” said Digory, “could you — may I — please, will you give me some magic fruit of this country to make Mother well?”

He had been desperately hoping that the Lion would say “Yes” ; he had been horribly afraid it might say “No”. (M/N, 79)

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10 CN are recorded in 31 CDs by 7 voice actors including one actress, published in 2004, which you can enjoy with the tremendous vividness of the story.
11 Lewis uses the word “megaphone” in PP (91) to explain how God makes us aware of our sins and wrong.
Here again, using four dashes in only one line, Lewis skilfully describes Digory’s deep anxiety for his mother’s recuperation with a clumsily shrinking heart before the solemn Aslan. The phrases like “desperately hoping” and “horribly afraid” in the following sentence reinforce this impression.

Despite Digory’s so painful desire, though, Aslan responds as if he did not care about it at all:

But he [Digory] was taken aback when it [Aslan] did neither.

“This is the Boy,” said Aslan, looking, not at Digory, but at his councillors. “This is the Boy who did it.”

“Oh dear,” thought Digory, “what have I done now?” (MN, 79)

In fact, going beyond a simple neglect, Aslan suddenly starts to reveal Digory’s sin in the presence of a big audience. Digory seems to be confused due to its abruptness. Readers, of course, know the meaning of the phrase “This is the Boy who did it.” Though it means he has brought Jadis the Witch to Narnia, its content is not necessarily simple. Let us examine the conversation between Aslan and Digory.

“Son of Adam,” said the Lion. “There is an evil Witch abroad in my new land of Narnia. Tell these good Beasts how she came here.”

A dozen different things that he might say flashed through Digory’s mind, but he had the sense to say nothing except the exact truth.

“I brought her, Aslan,” he answered in a low voice.

“For what purpose?”

“I wanted to get her out of my own world back into her own. I thought I was taking her back to her own place.”

“How came she to be in your world, Son of Adam?”

“By — by Magic.”

The Lion said nothing and Digory knew that he had not told enough.

“It was my Uncle, Aslan,” he said. “He sent us out of our own world by magic rings, at least I had to go because he sent Polly first, and then we met the Witch in a place called Charn and she just held on to us when —”

“You met the Witch?” said Aslan in a low voice which had the threat of a growl in it.

“She woke up,” said Digory wretchedly. And then, turning very white, “I mean, I woke her. Because I wanted to know what would happen if I struck a bell. Polly didn’t want to. It wasn’t her fault. I — I fought her. I know I shouldn’t have. I think I was a bit enchanted by the writing under the bell.”
“Do you?” asked Aslan; still speaking very low and deep.
“No,” said Digory. “I see now I wasn’t. I was only pretending.”

There was a long pause. And Digory was thinking all the time, “I’ve spoiled everything. There’s no chance of getting anything for Mother now.”

(MN, 79-80)

This extended conversation very well expresses how Aslan is leading Digory from his generalized unconscious sense of sin to clear, conscious focus, little by little. To answer Aslan’s question, “For what purpose?”, Digory says that he brought Jadis by accident in his attempt to take her back where she had been. He is making a false justification as if he tried to do a right thing in vain and as a result something bad took place. Such deceit does not work well in front of Aslan and neither do other imputations like “By — by Magic,” “It was my Uncle, Aslan,” and “...I think I was a bit enchanted by the writing under the bell.” At last, he is led to the point where he cannot but admit his own original sin, saying, “I see now I wasn’t. I was only pretending.” After this, Aslan announces how Digory’s sin affected Narnia and foretells how the problem will be solved in the future. For those who know the Bible, this passage will probably be associated with the well-known description of the first sin committed by Adam and Eve in Genesis. Lewis’s depiction of Digory’s original sin, however, has a much more elaborate background and succeeds in giving us more realistic images, even if Narnia is an unreal fantastic land, in comparison with the plain and simple expressions in the Bible. The passage is powerful and vivid enough to make us suspect that we might also commit such a sin and desperately try to cover it up, if we were in Digory’s place. So many readers may empathize or identify with him and, when the story says, “Digory kept his mouth very tight shut. He had been growing more and more uncomfortable.” (MN, 33), they too may feel uncomfortable, as if they were in his shoes themselves.

One more problem concerning this section is important. Here “God’s megaphone” seems to be working rather moderately. Lewis indicates, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” (PP, 91) This idea is seen here and there in The Magician’s Nephew. Here in Digory’s case, that idea begins to create echoes throughout the passage: “This is the Boy,” ... “This is the Boy who did it.” “Oh dear,” thought Digory, “what have I done now?” (MN, 79) Though this sounds like a natural response to Aslan’s abrupt remark, it may well represent Digory’s dull sense of sin symbolically if you take into consideration the fact that

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12 This story is told in Genesis 3:1-19 in the Old Testament.
13 Other than the four cases in this thesis, there are many scenes describing pain working on main characters, such as Shasta in HHB and Jill in The Silver Chair.
he manages to admit his original sin after brief prompting questions from Aslan. As you may associate from the chapter title, “Digory and his Uncle are Both in Trouble” (77), Digory is made to be aware of his own sinful condition through the megaphone called “Trouble”. Also, regarding Uncle Andrew, not until God’s megaphone works on him — through bitter experiences caused by his own wrong deeds — does he learn a very important lesson, which is shown at the end of this volume: “Uncle Andrew never tried any magic again as long as he lived. He had learned his lesson, and in his old age he became a nicer and less selfish old man than he had ever been before.” (MN, 106)

The importance of God’s megaphone for Digory comes out as early as chapter 13 of this volume, in the scene in which he goes all the way to a tree far beyond the mountains and fetches an apple at the order of Aslan. When he reaches the tree, he finds a note of warning at the gates of the garden where the tree is planted. It says:

Come in by the gold gates or not at all,
Take of my fruit for others or forbear,
For those who steal or those who climb my wall
Shall find their heart’s desire and find despair. (MN, 92)

In short, this note says he must just pick one apple off a branch and bring it to Aslan, without eating any for himself. So he does well until picking one and putting it into his pocket. It, however, looks very delicious and the smell is so good that “A terrible thirst and hunger came over him and a longing to taste that fruit.” (92) He is captured by an impulse to eat it. Although the thoughts rationalizing his desire to eat come to his mind one after another, at last he notices a huge bird guarding the tree and stops short of eating it.

He, however, gets out of one trouble only to fall into another. Jadis the Witch comes out again. He exposes himself to her cunning attacks of temptation. This is the scene which reminds us of the biblical description of the Fall even more strongly than the scene in which Aslan helps Digory to be conscious of his original sin. Lewis, here again, develops a more detailed and vivid narrative than the Bible. He makes Jadis give a more meticulous, cunning, and persistent performance than that of the Snake in the Bible; that is, Jadis is successfully depicted as more evil creature than the Snake. Let us see some lines of her temptation:

14 See note 12 above.
15 Digory committed his first sin of letting waken Jadis by striking the Bell. The story is told in Chapter 4 in MN.
“If you do not stop and listen to me now, you will miss some knowledge that would have made you happy all your life.” ... “you are going to carry it back, untasted, to the Lion; for him to eat, for him to use.” ... “But what about this Mother of yours whom you pretend to love so?” (MN, 93)

In this way, she tries to make Digory fall into sin by shaking his trust in Aslan and playing on his unselfish love of his sick mother, tempting him to bring the fruit back to his mother instead of taking it to Aslan. This clearly illustrates Lewis’s greater subtlety than the Bible, in which Eve is more selfish. How seriously he is puzzled and annoyed by the temptation about his mother is well expressed in the sentence: ‘“Oh!” gasped Digory as if he had been hurt, and put his hand to his head.’ (94) However, his eyes get opened by Jadis’s careless and too selfish words: “You needn’t take the little girl [Polly] back with you, you know.” (94) So he manages to defeat those temptations and bring the fruit back to Aslan. This extended conversation between Digory and Jadis across many pages is really nail-biting and has strong dramatic impact. You cannot find such vividly sensuous images in any theological or devotional books; they merely explain the nature and behavior of evil minds. CN can be regarded as a series of books tremendously successful in making strong images out of religious concepts.

C. The tears of Digory and Aslan

There is another passage describing Digory’s feeling on his way back to Aslan after breaking free of Jadis’s temptation:

He was very sad and he wasn’t even sure all the time that he had done the right thing; but whenever he remembered the shining tears in Aslan’s eyes he became sure. (MN, 95)

Fighting against a regret that he could have seen his mother’s glad face if he had brought back the fruit as the Witch told him to, he has found something true and sincere in the tears Aslan shed. Let us think a little more of Aslan’s tears. First, there is a scene in which Digory voices his anxiety for his mother in tears:

“Yes,” said Digory. He had had for a second some wild idea of saying, “I’ll try to help you if you’ll promise to help my Mother,” but he realized in time that the Lion was not at all the sort of person one could try to make bargain with. But when he had said “Yes”, he thought of his Mother, and he thought of the great hopes he had had, and how they were all dying away, and a lump came in his throat and tears in his eyes, and he blurted out:
“But please, please — won’t you — can’t you give me something that will cure Mother?” ... (MN, 83)

Digory reveals his desire for his mother’s miraculous recovery here again. This time, however, the quality is a little different from that of his last entreaty. Whereas he entreated last time in an all-or-nothing bid after he believed in Aslan’s supernatural power, in this scene we feel his deeper relationship with Aslan which he has gained through some previous experiences of repentance conducted by Aslan. (MN, 79) He even seems to understand that Aslan has important attributes such as greatness, integrity and even love. In short, by deepening the relationship with Aslan, he comes to depend not only on his power but also on the other-power of Aslan. So, his imploration this time comes naturally out of a heart filled with trust and love. For instance, in a parent-child relationship, love has priority over bargaining. In the same way, between Aslan and Digory, that sort of relationship starts to control their communication. Lewis succeeds in inserting such a subtle, changing process (which is hard to describe in an essay) into this child’s story.

Farther into the process, Lewis makes Aslan respond to the tears of Digory with His own tears:

Up till then he had been looking at the Lion’s great feet and the huge claws on them; now, in his despair, he looked up at its face. What he saw surprised him as much as anything in his whole life. For the tawny face was bent down near his own and (wonder of wonders) great shining tears stood in the Lion’s eyes. They were such big, bright tears compared with Digory’s own that for a moment he felt as if the Lion must really be sorrier about his Mother than he was himself. (MN, 83)

Digory, who was looking down with a conviction of his own evil, looks up at Aslan’s face. We can see him gaining a relationship of trust and love with Aslan in spite of the expression “in his despair”. The most tremendous thing, however, is the tears which stand in Aslan’s eyes. Touching the tears, Digory recognizes something which can be obtained only in Aslan. It is a Love surpassing even the love we have for close family. We often hear it said that there are three kinds of love mentioned in the Bible; Eros or romantic love, Philco or friendship, and Agape or unconditional Devine love. Digory possibly finds the last one, Agape, in Aslan’s tears. Lewis also refers to Agape in his book, The Four Loves. Regarding Agape as the highest form of love, he says there, “The first hint that anyone is offering us the highest love of all is a terrible shock” (The Four Loves, 181). Digory’s “terrible shock” at the sight of Aslan’s tears is well described in the phrase,
“For the tawny face was bent down near his own and (wonder of wonders) great shining tears stood in the Lion’s eyes.” Accordingly, it is natural that we story-readers can feel in our inner depths what it is difficult for us to rationalize in essays. Exactly for this reason, the sentence, “whenever he remembered the shining tears in Aslan’s eyes he became sure” (MN, 95) will no doubt increase its weight and impact in Digory’s later life. In fact, the beginning part of VDT mentions a bit about Digory’s later life: “...he had somehow become poor since the old days and was living in a small cottage with only one bedroom to spare.” (VDT, 426) His poor life makes us guess that he has had to suffer further trials. In such times, he would certainly recall Aslan’s tears of compassion, which must encourage him very much. Since Lewis himself had had the painful experience of losing his mother in his youth, we need not doubt that this scene reflects his thoughts about the problem of pain. He might also have remembered the tears of Christ, Aslan’s representation, and developed a way to come to terms with griefs or sufferings. Maybe, he associated with this scene the Bible verses: “He[God] will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain,...” (Rev. 21:4) (NIV)

Let us consider also Aslan’s words following the passage above: “My son, my son,” said Aslan. “I know. Grief is great. Only you and I in this land know that yet. Let us be good to one another”. (MN, 83) The core of the argument Lewis develops in his books such as The Problem of Pain and A Grief Observed seems to be reflected in this passage, that is, how significant it is to know grief is important. From the sentence: “Only you and I in this land know that yet”, we realize Digory can be put in charge of the responsible position of watching over Narnia on the very ground that he knows grief. Moreover, from the sentence: “Let us be good to one another”, we realize we can build a relationship based on trust and love with one another on the very ground that we know grief. The problems of pain and grief have been one of the most important themes that religious leaders, philosophers, men of letters and artists of all ages and regions have contemplated and recorded in their books, scrolls and canvases. In The New Testament, Christ says: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Matt. 5:4) (NIV) and his words are still read by many people. Aristotle says one’s heart can be purified by seeing a tragedy (Katharsis) to explain the benefit of grief.16 If such things were written in essays and theses, however, we would just understand them only by reason and it would be quite doubtful whether they could have an emotional influence on our life or not. If they are woven into stories like CN, though, they can soak deep inside us and

16 Katharsis is a Greek word which means ‘cleansing’. Aristotle used this term in its medical sense that grief can purify our heart. (see Poetics, introduction)
keep having effects on our life in the form of emotions, impressions or inspirations which are hard to explain logically. There is a famous biblical phrase about “a man of sorrow” in Isaiah which is difficult to understand: “He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering” (Isa. 53:3) (NIV). However, once it is overlapped with the life of Jesus, many people are given such a vivid image and impression that they find it hard to stop bursting into sympathetic tears. It is not limited to Christian circles but is a common concern of most religions and ideologies. It can be proved by the fact that the teachings and doctrines of many religions are woven into novels and even comics in an effort to propagate them amongst men, women and children of all ages and at all levels of education. What CN does so successfully in every volume is send the messages Lewis wants to convey quite naturally without taking the form of propaganda—in spite of the allegorical impression it can give some people.

2) Edmund’s Case: The Problem of Sin
   A. One of the nastiest things in CN

   If we read CN in the chronological order, the story begins with the tears of Digory, as mentioned in the previous section. If we read them in the publishing order, it starts, however, with the sin of Edmund. He is one of the Pevensies who enter Narnia through the wardrobe which was made of wood cut from the paradisal tree mentioned in MN. From the very beginning in LWW, the negative qualities of Edmund’s character are described one after the other. For instance, even just in the communication among the Pevensie kids, he is described as “bad-tempered” (111). When Lucy tells the others about her first mysterious trip to Narnia, he makes fun of her with cold and cruel words: “Batty!” said Edmund, tapping his head. “Quite batty.” (120) Moreover, he sticks to a mean attitude toward Lucy, even when he finds she is depressed because the others do not believe her story: “...Edmund could be spiteful, and on this occasion he was spiteful. He 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...” (121) Later, he enters Narnia unexpectedly through the wardrobe, meets the White Witch, falls an easy victim to her tricks and, like Digory, makes terrible mistake which cannot be undone. The biggest sin that he commits is, however, the lie he tells his brother and sisters and the betrayal of them to the White Witch, as Lewis says in the narration:

17 Lewis himself suggested in a letter that we should read in the chronological order, which can damage the pleasure of reading to discover the novels’ mysteries as Alan Jacobs says in “The Chronicles of Narnia” (270-71). So for fun we should read in the publishing order, but for research we should read in the chronological order.
And now we come to one of the nastiest things in this story. Up to that moment Edmund had been feeling sick, and sulky, and annoyed with Lucy for being right, but he hadn’t made up his mind what to do. When Peter suddenly asked him the question, he decided all at once to do the meanest and most spiteful thing he could think of. He decided to let Lucy down. (*LWW*, 129)

Edmund is made to promise that he should bring his siblings into Narnia and after that he meets Lucy there. That, of course, leads her into raptures, but after they come back to their world she is made to fall into the abyss of grief by his cruel treatment.

In this way, he tells a lie that everything is a fiction made up by Lucy and he just followed the fiction. He is in such a compromised condition that he does not tell them about the promise he made the Witch to bring them all to Narnia. That is a crucial breach of trust to his (dear) siblings. Regarding this matter, Diana Peterfreund is says:

...when Edmund lies to his siblings about visiting Narnia, Lewis describes it as “one of the nastiest things in this story.” The death and dismemberment and turning of folks into stone? All pretty bad, but Edmund lying to his family and casting his lot with the Witch is the true betrayal here. When they speak of Edmund being a traitor, this is what they are talking about. He didn’t turn against the Narnians, who were not—yet—his countrymen; he sold out his brother and sisters to the White Witch. (“King Edmund the Cute”, 28)

The author emphasizes the gloom inside Edmund little by little and leads us readers to contemplate his darker side, repeating the morally descriptive adjective "nastier" to emphasize how serious the situation is:

Edmund, who was becoming a nastier person every minute, thought that he had scored a great success, and went on at once to say, “There she goes again. What’s the matter with her? That’s the worst of young kids, they always— (*LWW*, 129)

Lewis, thus, does not relax his efforts describing Edmund’s moral inner darkness. What is, however, the necessity for Lewis to emphasize his ugliness in such a

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18 She is one of the 16 fiction writers who contributed articles about *CN* to *Through the Wardrobe*, which is meaningful in the sense that professional writers mention *CN* from different angles.
manner? Let us think over two possible reasons.

First, to make a story deeper and fuller-bodied, it is necessary that the author should get to the bottom of the characters’ dispositions and penetrate them. Every literature form does this. Children’s literature is not an exception. Darkness and light, plummet and rise, bondage and freedom ... if you successfully give a vivid portrait of characters through these inner changes, you never fail to fascinate and draw readers into the story. As to *LWW*, Edmund’s later recovery will stand out supremely by contrast to this tenacious depiction of his temptations to lie and deceive. Lewis depicts skillfully the dark side of human beings in these opening chapters of *LWW*.

The other reason is closely related to the first one and at the same time has something to do with what is argued about in the next section. The reason is that Lewis wants to make clear how deep the problem of sin is, and how difficult it is to solve it; that is to say, he wants to emphasize how grace is needed for us to be freed from the problem. Lewis not only argues about it in essays and academic papers but he wants to convey such matters more vividly in the form of children’s literature. For that purpose, Edmund’s story reveals how desperately hard it is to struggle being freed from our miserable sinful condition. If we use the term “sinful”, we associate the moral problem with Christianity. Nevertheless, moral problems of this sort are commonly emphasized in most of the other major religions of the world. In fact, Lewis does not use Christian terms at all in *CN* and — perhaps because of it — powerfully succeeds in evoking young readers’ empathy. He succeeds, as all good writers do, by ‘showing’ rather than ‘telling’. This is the very reason why *CN* is circulated widely as a superb children’s literature instead of being regarded as merely a Christian allegory.

Let us come back to the story. When Edmund enters Narnia again, this time it is with his brother and sisters. Then he puts into practice his calculated betrayal, knowing he is already responsible for a victim. While his siblings are absorbed in talking about Aslan with the beavers who are helping them, Edmund sneaks out of their home to meet the Witch. On the way to the Witch’s mansion, there are some impressive descriptions of emotion and surroundings. First, let us see an emotional description:

> He [Edmund] did want Turkish Delight and to be a Prince (and later a King) and to pay Peter back for calling him a beast. As for what the Witch would do with the others, he didn’t want her to be particularly nice to them—certainly not to put them on the same level as himself; but he

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19 Edmund has told the Witch that Lucy had already met a faun; due to Edmund’s information, the faun, Mr. Tumnus, was arrested and turned to stone.
managed to believe, or to pretend he believed, that she wouldn’t do anything very bad to them, “Because,” he said to himself, “all these people who say nasty things about her are her enemies and probably half of it isn’t true. She was jolly nice to me, anyway, much nicer than they are. I expect she is the rightful Queen really. Anyway, she’ll be better than that awful Aslan!” At least, that was the excuse he made in his own mind for what he was doing. It wasn’t a very good excuse, however, for deep down inside him he really knew that the White Witch was bad and cruel. (*LWW*, 151-52)

How his heart is captured and drawn deeper and deeper into darkness on his way to the Witch is well pictured here. What we need to pay attention to in this passage is that he has not entirely lost touch with his ability to distinguish right and wrong, judging from the phrase: “deep down inside him he really knew that the White Witch was bad and cruel”. But, we may also infer, from the fact he comes up with excuses for what he is doing, that he is still not really aware of his pitiful condition. The best modern way to describe the subtleness of Lewis’s description of Edmund’s inner fickle condition is to call it psychological depiction.

A remark by Lewis in *PP* helps shed light on Edmund’s inner condition: “...error and sin both have this property, that the deeper they are the less their victim suspects their existence; they are masked evil” (*PP*, 90). I wonder how impenetrable a mask his evil wears. It is very subtle. You can perhaps look upon it as thicker than Digory’s mentioned in the previous section, but thinner than Eustace’s in the following section. Anyway, Lewis best pictures the subtleness by the very method of his storytelling.

Next, let us check a landscape depiction. This is the scene on his way to the Witch’s mansion:

It was pretty bad when he reached the far side. It was growing darker every minute and what with that and the snowflakes swirling all round him he could hardly see three feet ahead. And then too there was no road. He kept slipping into deep drifts of snow, and skidding on frozen puddles, and tripping over fallen tree-trunks, and sliding down steep banks, and barking his shins against rocks, till he was wet and cold and bruised all over. The silence and the loneliness were dreadful. (*LWW*, 152)

While reading this passage, you may be aware that it is not only a depiction of Edmund’s surroundings but also his inner state. Phrases like “growing darker every minute”, “hardly see”, “no road”, “deep drifts of snow”, “frozen paddles”, “fallen tree trunks” and “wet and cold” all describe his journey into darkness on
both a physical/emotional and a moral level. If we remember that Lewis uses the symbolism of the ancient seasonal myth of rebirth to identify the White Witch with winter and Aslan with the summer sun, then the last sentence, “The silence and the loneliness were dreadful”, can be regarded as showing that the journey toward the Witch’s mansion symbolically suggests his active embrace of evil. On the other hand, it is true that the discomfort and pain that such qualities as misery, silence, and loneliness give him are essential in encouraging a change in direction. The very qualities of this state can bring us back to ourselves, just as the prodigal son in the parable told by Jesus\(^\text{20}\) came to his senses in such extreme misery and solitude. Even more miserable experiences are waiting for Edmund when he reaches the Witch’s mansion. In the next section I shall show how Lewis describes the confession he makes in such a disappointing situation.

B. The way Edmund’s repentance is made

As mentioned in the previous section, the darkness of Edmund’s heart is becoming deeper and deeper, but at the same time his resurfacing to light is being prepared. After he arrives at the Witch’s mansion and reaches the deepest point of the darkness by giving her top-secret information about his siblings and Aslan, he hears her “terrible voice” (*LWW*, 155) for the first time and sees her “cruel smile” (155). Though he cannot see through her secret intention, unlike Digory\(^\text{21}\), the impression of the “bad and cruel” (152) White Witch which was received “deep down inside him” (152) is going to be confirmed.

Edmund now has only one value, as a hostage, once the Witch has gotten the crucial information she needs. From this point on, the treatment he receives is really miserable, as the narration makes clear: “Edmund meanwhile had been having a most disappointing time.... All the things he [Edmund] had said to make himself believe that she [the Witch] was good and kind and that her side was really the right side sounded to him silly now. He would have given anything to meet the others at this moment — even Peter!” (161-62) Though his desire to put Peter to shame was a primary motive when he was heading for darkness, now even seeing Peter would help to heal the helpless misery and solitude he is experiencing. This must be the moment when his resurfacing begins.

Then at last the time comes when he definitely turns on his heels from darkness to light:

Edmund saw the Witch bite her lips so that a drop of blood appeared on her white cheek. Then she raised her wand.

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20 The parable is recorded in *Luke* Chapter 15 in *the New Testament.*
21 When the Witch tries cunningly to lure Digory into her evil way, he finally sees her wicked plan after some perplexity in *MN* Chapter 13.
“Oh, don’t, don’t, please don’t,” shouted Edmund, but even while he was shouting she had waved her wand and instantly where the merry party had been there were only statues of creatures...” (*LWW*, 163)

This is the scene where Edmund tries to stop the furious Witch from turning the foxes and squirrels, who are celebrating the advent of Aslan and spring, into stones. Edmund’s sudden action is an impulsive action but also a brave deed, full of love for others in spite of the danger. In fact he gets “a stunning blow on the face” right after this action. The narration, however, shows that, “...Edmund, for the first time in this story, felt sorry for someone besides himself.” (163) This is the very minute when “one of the nastiest things in this story” turns into one of the most admirable things in this story. Now Lewis’s landscape descriptions steer the moral vector from darkness, cold and constricting fear to their opposites: warmth, light, and freedom,

At the same time he noticed that he was feeling much less cold. It was also becoming foggy. In fact every minute it grew foggier and warmer....It was the noise of running water. All round them though out of sight, there were streams, chattering, murmuring, bubbling, splashing and even (in the distance) roaring. And his heart gave a great leap (though he hardly knew why) when he realized that the frost was over. (164)

On the surface, the paragraph simply depicts the coming of spring to free locked-in-winter Narnia; what is more, the frequent use of present progressive verbs — “feeling much less cold”, “becoming foggy”, “running water”, “chattering”, “murmuring”, “bubbling”, “splashing”, “roaring” — is very effective in symbolically indicating how dynamic and irreversible the change is. His progression toward darkness looked irreversible while he was lured by the Witch’s temptation and was heading for her mansion. However, having experienced the bottom of misery and pain, he was able to change the moral direction in which he was heading by a selfless act of compassion for others.

After that moment of ’release’ the story rapidly unfolds. Edmund, the hostage, is delivered by the rescue party and finally rewarded by meeting Aslan face to face.

...and there they [the other children] saw Aslan and Edmund walking together in the dewy grass, apart from the rest of the court. There is no need to tell you (and no one ever heard) what Aslan was saying, but it was a conversation which Edmund never forgot. (174)
When Peter, Susan and Lucy find Edmund, who was rescued the previous night, walking on the grass with Aslan, it comes as a relief to know Edmund is safe, because it was their biggest concern. The two, however, look so serious that this offsets their relief, and so the three kids are probably watching them while holding their breath. Judging from phrases like “apart from the rest of the court”, “There is no need to tell you (and no one ever heard) what Aslan was saying” and “it was a conversation which Edmund never forgot,” we can infer that the three kids must have noticed that Edmund was involved in the solemn reality of private confession to Aslan, and should not be disturbed. The consequences of Edmund’s and Peter’s squabbling have not fully unravelled, though they have been mitigated by Peter’s earlier confession to Aslan:

“But where is the fourth?” asked Aslan.

“He has tried to betray them and joined the White Witch, O Aslan,” said Mr Beaver. And then something made Peter say,

“That was partly my fault, Aslan. I was angry with him and I think that helped him to go wrong.”

And Aslan said nothing either to excuse Peter or to blame him but merely stood looking at him with his great unchanging eyes. And it seemed to all of them that there was nothing to be said. (169)

This is the scene in which the three meet Aslan and are asked by Him where Edmund is. Peter, who is trying to excuse Edmund’s transgression, sounds really repentant. What we must pay more attention to is Aslan’s response to Peter’s excuse: “And Aslan said nothing either to excuse Peter or to blame him but merely stood looking at him with his great unchanging eyes.” There may be a lot of people who, if they have read MN first in the publishing order, are reminded, by contrast, of the tears which stood in Aslan’s eyes in response to Digory’s desperate plea for his mother’s recovery. At that time the narration says Digory got the impression that Aslan was much more concerned about his mother than himself. Here Aslan does not show his tears because this is rather a scene of justice than of compassion. However, the sentence: “And it seemed to all of them that there was nothing to be said” gives us a hint that the three kids must all have experienced Aslan’s justice and the hidden love behind His justice, not with their minds but with their hearts. Going back to the scene of Edmund’s meeting Aslan, the three kids surely realize that Edmund is now trying courageously to face up to his mistakes in a personal, confessional consultation with Aslan. This theme of confession is repeated every time a character meets Aslan personally throughout CN. Sins and transgressions can only be brought to a resolution through private communication with Aslan, the supreme ruler and the sole
executor of Agape in Narnia. That theme appears not only in the cases of Digory and Edmund but also later in Eustace’s and Aravis’s. Lewis’s central focus, in all these story presentations of the problem of pain, is God’s love (Agape) working even in the midst of tribulations, and therefore he wants to say we cannot think of justice as separated from love at least with regard to God. So I would like to call this doctrine, that permeates throughout CN, ‘The Principle of Sovereign Love’ (PSL). I will discuss it further in the following chapter.

3) Eustace’s Case: The Problem of Self-Centeredness

A. One of the most memorable characters

Eustace appears in The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, The Silver Chair and The Last Battle. In VDT, he mainly appears in the first half of the story and is less significant in the second half. In The Silver Chair, though he keeps one of the main roles from beginning to end, he is rather a supporting character for Jill, who appears in The Silver Chair for the first time, than a protagonist. In The Last Battle, he is just one of many others. Nevertheless, I hold the same opinion as Ford, who thinks Eustace is “...one of the most memorable characters created by C. S. Lewis” (Companion to Narnia, 172). This is because the difficulty he experiences is the easiest to form an image of and create the most vivid impression. The main protagonist through the whole Chronicles is, of course, Aslan. He plays the central and crucial role in every volume and he is the only character on whom all the plot lines converge. However, we cannot necessarily see him as the most memorable— the most imposing, perhaps, but not always the most attractive since he is superhuman. In MN, Digory, who gets over his trials despite his weaknesses and failures, gains more attention than Aslan. Also in LWW, it is natural that Edmund, who experiences the hardest trial, wins a larger share of attention than Aslan and even Lucy, who both play major roles in that volume. It is also true of Shasta and Aravis in HIB, Caspian in Prince Caspian and Tirian in The Last Battle. Even Emeth in The Last Battle, whose percentage of appearances is rather low, may make a stronger impression because of his particularly difficult situation. Each one of them faces difficult personal trials, finally overcomes difficult situations, and learns from those painful experiences. They are so attractive to us because the pains and trials they face are essentially the same ones we human beings experience and therefore their fates most deeply concern us. We are attracted unconsciously to the story when a character like us faces a severe problem with which we can empathize. Eustace in VDT plays such a vivid role most strikingly.

B. Eustace’s character and the circumstances under which he grows up

First, let us see how he is described in VDT. He goes to a special school, but we
understand he does not have any friends from the sentence: “I can’t tell you how his friends spoke to him for he had none.” (425) The reason seems to be that he is brought up in a family that has quite different values from others. “They were very up-to-date and advanced people. They were vegetarians, non-smokers and teetotallers, and wore a special kind of underclothes.” (425) Lewis’s satire goes even further: “Eustace Clarence liked animals, especially beetles, if they were dead and pinned on card. He liked books if they were books of information and had pictures of grain elevators or of fat foreign children doing exercises in model schools.” (425) We are even told that:

...deep inside him he liked bossing and bullying; and, though he was a puny little person who couldn’t have stood up even to Lucy, let alone Edmund, in a fight, he knew that there are dozens of ways to give people a bad time if you are in your own home and they are only visitors. (VDT, 425)

According to this passage, he is a very timid but spiteful boy given to composing hurtful limericks, of this sort: “Some kids who played games about Narnia / Got gradually balmier and balmier—” (427). When he is drawn into Narnia by a magic power, he displays his timidity thus: “Stop it,” came Eustace’s voice, squeaky with fright and bad temper. “It’s some silly trick you two are playing. Stop it. I’ll tell Albert [his father] — Ow!” (428) Right after he gets taken on board the Dawn Treader, he tearfully exposes his helpless cowardice: “Let me go. Let me go back. I don’t like it.” (429) Those passages are all humorous descriptions, as if Lewis were speaking from the point of view of the Pevensies, who do not like him, but at the same time they are helpful in making his later troubles stand out. Just like Edmund’s, they are the sort of problems which any child, however ‘special’, has to overcome in his or her process of growth. Eustace, however, takes a little longer to grow up, hampered as he is by his unique family values. As Ford puts it,

He is a victim of his parents’ untraditional ways of child raising and his schooling at Experimental House22, ...A precocious and obnoxious nine-year-old, Eustace’s imagination and sense of adventure have been stunted by his upbringing. (CTN, 172)

According to Lewis—in spite of the possibility of private school-educated Lewis’s

22 C. S. Lewis seems to have had a prejudice against experimental schools, narrating, “Owing to the curious methods of teaching at Experimental House, one did not learn much French or Maths or Latin or ...” (The Silver Chair, 552). This opinion reflects on several scenes in CN.
prejudice—the education he received is very much responsible for his childish self-centeredness, but, in terms of PSL, it is ultimately his own problem and must be solved through a growing relationship with Aslan, who is the very embodiment of Agape (Divine Love).

C. Eustace’s tears of loneliness

Here again trials are depicted as essential factors for growth. However, Eustace’s are delineated in much more detail and in a subtler way than those of other characters. He is not changed simply through just one big trial. His many trials seem to show how pains and sufferings work in our real life. It may often occur in our life that small trials gradually accumulate to produce a very big one that awakens and changes us in one stroke. Here again Lewis shows skill and delicacy in the way he presents a host of details that build up the vivid flow of a series of climatic, life-changing adventures.

Let us pick up some passages in the story. First, even getting into Narnia itself seems to be a trial for Eustace. Right after he enters Narnia through the picture on the wall of his house, the narration says: “...Eustace was crying much harder than any boy of his age has a right to cry when nothing worse than a wetting has happened to him...” (429) Also we can find his state of mind expressed in his diary entry written on August 7, the day after he got on board the Dawn Treader:

“Have now been twenty-four hours on this ghastly boat if it isn’t a dream. All the time a frightful storm has been raging ... Huge waves keep coming in over the front and I have seen the boat nearly go under any number of times.... The food is frightful too.” (VDT, 437-38)

However, the fact is that it was not a storm but fair weather. He is just sea-sick. From then on, he continues to write complaints and smug criticisms. In the diary entry for Sep. 6th, he writes: “I always try to consider others whether they are nice to me or not” (457) and on the same page he also records his failure in an attempt to steal the restricted water along with his selfish justification for it. Thinking of his self-centered behavior, we may well wonder how much hardship is needed before he learns to consider others. His solitude must be deep, being in a strange world he knows nothing about and being made to do things he is not good at, one after another. Nevertheless, he is not moving toward any introspection—but then, why should he? Unlike Digory or the Pevensies, he did not enter this world willingly. We might initially dismiss him as a rather odd character, but we could be mistaken. Jacobs explains Eustace’s psychological situation on the Dawn Treader this way: “...on this voyage Eustace’s situation is the most
significant one. He finds himself on this ship, knowing no one, comprehending nothing, and staying with the others only because he has no other option....” (The Narnian, 209) and in another place he even overlaps Eustace’s experience of this with Lewis’s conversion to Christianity:

The Lewis of these last years of unbelief and first years of belief receives his proper fictional description in the character of Eustace Scrubb—at least, the Eustace of The Voyage of the “Dawn Treader.” Eustace does not choose to enter Narnia, and when he gets there he constantly complains about its difficulties, about all the ways it differs from his own world—a world in which, he manages to forget, he was never happy. (The Narnian, 133-34)

Jacobs argues here that we may suppose that Eustace’s experiences are similar to those of Lewis’s before and after he entered the Christian world, only a little of which he knew about, and that it must have been a natural process for Lewis to have difficult days before repentance was made. However, overlapping Eustace’s experience of entering Narnia with Lewis’s conversion to Christianity is a little too abrupt. I think there is not a correlation but just a similarity between the experiences of the two.

Now a critical time comes for Eustace who is not aware of his evil condition and does not show any signs of repentance. In Chapter 6, “The Adventures of Eustace”, he is made to be aware of his own serious problem and in Chapter 7 “How the Adventure Ended”, the solution to the problem is prepared by Aslan. He experiences a trial in which he is forced to recognize that he has become a dragon. After they land on an island, Eustace leaves the party without reporting where he is going and gets deeply lost in the forest. There he finds “crowns..., coins, rings, bracelets, ingots, cups, plates and gems”. (VDT, 464) He greedily wears one of the bracelets on his left arm and tries to bring back as much treasure as possible. Soon it begins to rain and while he is sheltering himself from the rain in a cave, he falls asleep. To our surprise he wakes up to find himself a dragon. The pain caused by the bracelet tightening on his arm wakes him up, but,

In spite of the pain, his first feeling was one of relief. There was nothing to be afraid of any more. He was a terror himself and nothing in the world but a knight (and not all of those) would dare to attack him. He could get even with Caspian and Edmund now— (466)

This makes us think how deep his self-centeredness is. However, another thought occurs to his mind right after that which helps remind us that self-centeredness
is often a fearful response to isolation:

But the moment he thought this he realized that he didn’t want to. He wanted to be friends. He wanted to get back among humans and talk and laugh and share things. He realized that he was a monster cut off from the whole human race. An appalling loneliness came over him. He began to see that the others had not really been fiends at all. He began to wonder if he himself had been such a nice person as he had always supposed. He longed for their voices. He would have been grateful for a kind word even from Reepicheep. (466)

From this passage, we realize a sort of introspection or regret is beginning to occupy his mind. The sentence: “He would have been grateful for a kind word even from Reepicheep” reminds us of a similar sentence implying Edmund’s reflection: “He would have given anything to meet the others at this moment — even Peter!” In terms of seriousness, Edmund’s mistakes have much more serious consequences if you consider Aslan’s sacrifice and other victims turned to stone by the White Witch. Eustace’s is, however, no less worthy of attention in the sense that it examines our tenacious human selfishness more delicately and thoroughly. If you focus on the sentences, “He wanted to be friends. He wanted to get back among humans and talk and laugh and share things. He realized that he was a monster cut off from the whole human race”, you will surely know that what directs him towards a change of heart is not so much the physical pain from the bracelet as the pain of loneliness caused by separation from others. Moreover, the scene in which Eustace sheds tears (470) can move us even to tears, since his problem is one we can all identify with. Probably the tears of Eustace must be for a loneliness which he has never known before in his own world.

D. God’s megaphone applied to Eustace’s case

Let us move on to the next process in which his loneliness is healed. First, he gets some help from his companions. Their first responses to the dragon Eustace are all different, but after some communication they start to take pity on him. Among them, Lucy, who was sympathetic from the beginning, is the first to show deep compassion for him as the narration says: “Lucy tried hard to console him and even screwed up her courage to kiss the scaly face,...” (470) The others gradually get to think positively of him when it becomes “clear to everyone that Eustace’s character had been rather improved by becoming a dragon.” (471) What is the most touching is the fellowship that grows between Eustace and Reepicheep, dragon and mouse. Perhaps this is inevitable since these two ‘beasts’ both suffer a certain amount of condescension, if not outright discrimination, from the
human children. The following passage shows us how heartwarming the scene is:

On such occasion, greatly to his surprise, Reepicheep was his most constant comforter. The noble Mouse would creep away from the merry circle at the camp fire and sit down by the dragon’s head, well to the windward to be out of the way of his smoky breath. \((VDT, 472)\)

Reepicheep tells Eustace as many stories as he can. He is given the most necessary things, fellowship and friendship, by the most repugnant and disgusting being (for Eustace), Reepicheep the mouse. This is a very beautiful scene describing, so to speak, a brotherly love \((Philetaerus or friendship)\) which can be well depicted only when hardships are involved in the story. This is very much like “A friend in need is a friend indeed”.

Eustace’s response to such friendship is also beautifully told as follows:

And in the evening if it turned chilly, as it sometimes did after the heavy rains, he was a comfort to everyone, for the whole party would come and sit with their backs against his hot sides and get well warmed and dried; and one puff of his fiery breath would light the most obstinate fire. Sometimes he would take a select party for a fly on his back, so that they could see wheeling below them the green slopes,... \((VDT, 471)\)

In this way, he becomes positively involved in their community, which was not seen before. Then at last he learns a very precious lesson for mental growth: “The pleasure (quite new to him) of being liked and, still more, of liking other people, was what kept Eustace from despair.” \((471)\) Ford says in regard to this passage: “And the pleasure of liking people and being liked is the most powerful antidote to the discouragement he often feels as a dragon.” \((CTN, 173)\) Here we confirm the unmeasurable value of friendship, sharing pains with companions.

In spite of such healing from solitude, Eustace, however, has not recovered fully yet as long as he remains a dragon. He is still “a monster cut off from the whole human race”, but here Aslan intervenes. It is a natural assumption that the thick skin of a dragon cannot be stripped away by any earthly effort. That is a problem which can be solved only with the help of Aslan who is the sovereign embodiment of Agape in accordance with PSL. Though Eustace can cast off his old scales as a snake casts off its skin, he just turns back into the same dragon repeatedly. Aslan, however, counsels him: “You will have to let me undress you.” \((474)\) He, fearing Aslan’s claws, “just lay flat down on my [Eustace’s] back to let him [Aslan] do it.” \((474)\) Then at last his skin is ripped off and the pain at that time is so hard that Eustace says: “The very first tear he made was so deep that
I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt." (474-75) This is the moment when, as it were, God's megaphone of pain (PP, 91) works on Eustace. Lewis's thought about spiritual pain and suffering is that "The full acting out of the self's surrender to God...demands pain" (PP, 98). It is vividly realized in the story. If we can see that Eustace's behavior of "just lay[ing] flat down on my back to let him do it" represents Lewis's "full acting out of the self's surrender to God". Aslan wants his "full...surrender" before He dispenses sovereign love. We may well think that the series of events shows the deep secret hidden behind Aslan's remarks in MN: "I give you yourselves." and "I give you myself." (71) Lewis probably unconsciously wanted to approach the Christian truth behind PSL that the self is given by God and so the problem of pain (or salvation from pain), the deepest problem of the self which needs even God's sacrifice, cannot be solved unless we devote ourselves to Him.

Thus, after he regains his own body, he changes little by little though he does not turn into a faultless person in one breath. He begins "to be a different boy":

It would be nice, and fairly true, to say that "from that time forth Eustace was a different boy". To be strictly accurate, he began to be a different boy. He had relapses. There were still many days when he could be very tiresome. But most of those I shall not notice. The cure had begun. (476)

This also expresses the reality of our life very well. Sometimes in fairy tales and legends a villain grows instantly into a faultless person. However, in our real life no matter how big his or her experience is, the character is seldom changed in one gulp. The reality is that life's direction may be changed through a big event but the 'turn' happens gradually, little by little. As the Bible says: "I am confident of this: that the One who has begun his good work in you will go on developing it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6) (The New Testament in Modern English). In other words, we can never be perfect, but must continue the struggle to try to achieve it until the day we die (meet God). One of the best indications of Eustace's real growth is seen in his words to Edmund: "I'd like to apologize. I'm afraid I've been pretty beastly." (475)

Edmund's response to this meekness is to respond with an even more humble revelation of his own: "Between ourselves, you haven't been as bad as I [Edmund] was on my first trip to Narnia. You were only an ass, but I was a traitor." (475) Edmund is also still in a gradually growing process since that incident in his first trip to Narnia. As Diana Peterfreund says, "there is nothing more appealing than a bad guy gone good." ("King Edmund the Cute", 30) I would argue that one of
the services Lewis does for children's literature is to provide useful pointers to children for real human growth. These are not made explicitly Christian (as they are in my thesis) but his Christianity does unconsciously permeate his writing in a positive way.\footnote{See “On three ways of writing for children” in OOW (28, 33)}

4) Aravis’s Case: The Problem of Arrogance
A. Lewis’s idea of retributive justice

You may want to ask why Aravis, but not Shasta, is taken up here. It is true that she is one of the main characters in *HHB* and “her transformation from arrogance and self-centeredness into an example of true Narnian nobility; that is, the exercise of humble and compassionate leadership” (*CTN*, 12) is one of the main topics in the story, but Shasta is no doubt the first main character in *HHB*. Also in terms of trials experienced, he overcomes many more hardships than Aravis: being an orphan mistreated by his stepfather, surviving a lot of falls from the horse, a lonely night in the graveyard, etc. However, when it comes to the quality of the trial, Aravis’s is unique and interesting. First, let us review the passage about the pain she receives from Aslan:

And now all three — Aravis, Hwin, and the lion — were almost on top of Shasta. Before they reached him the lion rose on its hind legs, larger than you would have believed a lion could be, and jabbed at Aravis with its right paw. Shasta could see all the terrible claws extended. Aravis screamed and reeled in the saddle. The lion was tearing her shoulders. (*HHB*, 271)

Readers, even those who suspect this lion is Aslan, may wonder why so cruel a scene is told in a children’s story. They may be forced to imagine the raw deep scars and the crimson bloodshed. This scene must deliver a far crueler impression than that of the dragon Eustice having his skin torn off because it is a nearly fatal scene. What on earth did Lewis try to convey in it? The answer is “retributive punishment” of the sort explained in *The Problem of Pain* (91). Aslan himself later explains why he savaged Aravis:

“It was I who wounded you,” said Aslan. “I am the only lion you met in all your journeying. Do you know why I tore you?”

“No, sir.”

“The scratches on your back, tear for tear, throb for throb, blood for blood, were equal to the stripes laid on the back of your stepmother’s slave because of the drugged sleep you cast upon her. You needed to know what
it felt like.” *(IHIB, 299)*

The phrases: “tear for tear, throb for throb, blood for blood” remind us of the phrase: “an eye for an eye” from the *Code of Hammurabi* (Article 196-97), which is famous for its Old Testament spirit of retribution. That spirit does not always conform to Christian orthodoxy because Christianity puts more emphasis on love than on retribution. For example, Christ says: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.” *(Matt. 5:38-39) (NIV)* In terms of this account, we wonder why Lewis inserted such retribution into his story. Let us quote also from *The Problem of Pain* in regard to this matter:

> It is no use turning up our noses at this feeling [the universal human feeling that bad men ought to suffer], as if it were wholly base. On its mildest level it appeals to everyone’s sense of justice. Once when my brother and I, as very small boys, were drawing pictures at the same table, I jerked his elbow and caused him to make an irrelevant line across the middle of his work; the matter was amicably settled by my allowing him to draw a line of equal length across mine. That is, I was ‘put in his place’, made to see my negligence from the other end. On a sterner level the same idea appears as ‘retributive punishment’, or ‘giving a man what he deserves’. Some enlightened people would like to banish all conception of retribution or desert from their theory of punishment and place its value wholly in the deterrence of others or the reform of the criminal himself. They do not see that by so doing they render all punishment unjust. What can be more immoral than to inflict suffering on me for the sake of deterring others if I do not deserve it? And if I do deserve it, you are admitting the claims of ‘retribution’. And what can be more outrageous than to catch me and submit me to a disagreeable process of moral improvement without my consent, unless (once more) I deserve it? On yet a third level we get vindictive passion—the thirst for revenge. This, of course, is evil and expressly forbidden to Christians. *(PP, 91)* [underlines are mine]

Lewis argues here about retribution on three levels; mildest level, sterner level and third level. According to his opinion here, the retribution on the first two levels is not generated from the thirst for revenge and so they are not contradictory to Christianity. He wants to say the retribution on these two levels is not harmful but rather helpful for the sake of our maturity. Therefore in Aravis’s case, Aslan tears her shoulders in order to make her aware of what others’ pain is like, as He
says. So He does it to help her grow spiritually. Anyway, Lewis’s idea about retribution is worth looking back on because recent opinions about judgment²⁴ tend to deny ‘retribution justice’ in the context of emphasizing useful love rather than painful love, whether it is in Christian circle or not. Of course, Lewis is not telling us that justice is more important than love. He wants to say that the profound love (Agape) behind Aslan’s retributive justice works to correct Aravis.

B. The Principle of Sovereign Love (PSL) in Aravis’s Case

In Aravis’s case, we must also pay attention to PSL. When Shasta and Aslan are talking about the events in Shasta’s life, that principle comes out again:

“Then it was you who wounded Aravis?” [Shasta says.]
“It was I.”
“But what for?”
“Child,” said the Voice [Aslan], “I am telling you your story, not hers. I tell no one any story but his own.”
“Who are you?” asked Shasta.
“Myself,” said the voice, very deep and low so that the earth shook: and again, “Myself”, loud and clear and gay: and then the third time “Myself”, whispered so softly you could hardly hear it, and yet it seemed to come from all round you as if the leaves rustled with it. (HHH, 281)

Here, PSL is depicted in Lewis’s description hinting at Trinitarian significance and in Aslan’s words: “I am telling you your story, not hers. I tell no one any story but his own”. It sounds quite natural for Shasta to ask about his good friend Aravis’s wound, but at that time, because Aslan is talking about Shasta’s life for the sake of his growth, He wants to avoid getting sidetracked by the problem of a pain which is not Shasta’s. Moreover Aravis’s privacy must be respected. Her wrongdoing is a matter between herself and Aslan alone. Aslan’s intention is to emphasize the importance of contemplating the problem of pain, not by questioning the need for others’ pain, but by seeking and feeling sovereign love in an individual relationship with Him. In this way, this passage suggests to us how Lewis thought we should come to terms with the problem of pain. In the next chapter, let us pick up his ideas about the problem of pain in his apologetic works, The Problem of Pain and A Grief Observed.

²⁴ The number of the countries which abolish the use of capital punishment is increasing. Just a few advanced countries including Japan still have the penalty.
Chapter 3  A Grief Cultivated

1) Lewis’s final struggle with the problem of pain

As we have already seen, the difficult Christian dilemma of how to handle the problem of pain was a lifelong problem that Lewis struggled to solve. First, he tried to handle it rationally in his Christian apologetic activities, in the form of essays and theses. Later he came to have more success in putting his ideas about the problem into children’s fantasy stories to convey them more vividly and effectively. Deep compassion and trustworthiness can be seen in the tears of Digory, the priceless salvation of the soul can be experienced through the repentance of Edmund, the critical importance of love and friendship underlie the hardships of the dragonized Eustace, and the secret of God’s love for his creation is embedded in the retributive experience of Aravis. All these profoundly moving things are conveyed by Lewis vividly in the very form of children’s literature. That success was attained just because all of them were underwritten by the problem of pain and provide useful pointers on how to deal with it. There would be no problem here if we consider that Lewis’s completion of CN was his crowning literary achievement. But his lifework on the problem of pain was not over yet. Two things were waiting for him: the loss of his dear wife Joy Gresham, and his own fight against disease and subsequent death. As stated in Chapter 1, he had already had several experiences of bereavement before and known how deep the emotional impact of such bereavement could be. In fact, in A Grief Observed he puts the loss of his mother on a par with that of Joy in the following way:

A lee shore, more likely, a black night, a deafening gale, breakers ahead — and any lights shown from the land probably being waved by wreckers. Such was H.’s [Joy Gresham’s] landfall. Such was my mother’s. I say their landfalls; not their arrivals. (GO, 33-34, see also 10)

Moreover, if you compare A Grief Observed with The Problem of Pain, you may not be able to find important differences in their treatments of the same subject matter. Michael Ward compares these two books and concludes:

I draw out these parallels not in an effort to suggest that A Grief Observed was simply a re-run of sentiments previously expressed and therefore not genuinely felt in the moment. I point them out to indicate that the anguish and the questions caused by bereavement,...are not unprecedented experiences for Lewis. He has felt them before. A Grief Observed is not the sudden discovery that the ‘intellectual’ answers offered in The Problem of Pain are insufficient; it is qualitatively the same discovery as has been made on many prior occasions, both before and after
1940. (“On suffering”, 215)

It is true that *A Grief Observed* is an emotional revision of *The Problem of Pain* which was written as logically and rationally as possible. However, the point that it is “emotional” must be remarkable. Concerning Ward’s opinion above, we must pay attention to the expression ‘qualitatively the same discovery’. As a matter of fact, he adds:

However, although the *quality* may reflect previous episodes of questioning and pain, the *degree* to which Clark [Lewis’s disguised name for the first publishing] takes them is indeed unprecedented. (“On suffering”, 215)

In short, those two books are almost the same in quality, but *A Grief Observed* is unparalleled in terms of its emotional depth. There is no doubt that one of the reasons is because his happiest days were taken away all too suddenly. Joy was a very special person to him in that she delivered him from the bondage which had kept constraining him from expressing his emotions freely and which had hitherto confined him in a purely rationally objective world, a ‘Shadowlands’, ever since his mother’s death. Lewis himself says in the same book on grief:

I knew already that these things, and worse, happened daily. I would have said that I had taken them into account. I had been warned — I had warned myself — not to reckon on worldly happiness. We were even promised sufferings. They were part of the programme. We were even told, ‘Blessed are they that mourn,’ and I accepted it. I’ve got nothing that I hadn’t bargained for. Of course it is different when the thing happens to oneself, not to others, and in reality, not in imagination. (*GO*, 36-37)

He seems to say this as if his former neatly formulated rational ideas about the problem of pain are all invalid in the face of the actual experience of sudden bereavement. He continues by suggesting that his rationally-grounded faith was “an imaginary faith playing with innocuous counters labeled ‘Illness,’ ‘Pain,’ ‘Death,’ and ‘Loneliness’” (37) But what matters here is that he does not say his understanding was absolutely wrong. Rather he wants to say that his former rationalizations are inadequate, by themselves, to help him deal with such a deep grief as he experiences in Joy’s case. His idea of pain as “God’s megaphone,” (*PP*, 91) certainly worked, especially in Joy’s case, to blast him out of a comfortable, controlled, intellectual response:

Nothing less will shake a man — or at any rate a man like me — out of
his merely verbal thinking and his merely notional beliefs. He has to be knocked silly before he comes to his senses. Only torture will bring out the truth. Only under torture does he discover it himself. (GO, 38)

In this way his grief at Joy’s death worked as God’s megaphone to crush his pride as an intellectual. Though his former ideas are not wrong theoretically, they do not compare in scale with his lived-experience of grief. Lewis found the awful truth of this through his own experience, and tried to share it with readers sincerely and frankly in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and then again in *A Grief Observed*.

2) Descriptions transformed into poetic literary expressions

One of the conspicuous aspects of *A Grief Observed* is, as indicated in the former section, that it deals with the problem of pain from the standpoint of the first person (I = Lewis himself) as, so to speak, “a subjective objectivism”. Another aspect is closely related to the first one, that there are many poetic and emotional passages such as this:

> On the rebound one passes into tears and pathos. Maudlin tears. I almost prefer the moments of agony. These are at least clean and honest. But the bath of self-pity, the wallow, the loathsome sticky-sweet pleasure of indulging it — that disgusts me. (GO, 4)

This is so sad an expression of the effects of grief described so vividly, that it rivals even the descriptions of Digory’s or Eustace’s grief in *CN*. It is partly because Lewis’s grief was so big that his emotion surpassed his reason, but at the same time it is also owing to the influence from his more than ten years’ affective activities including the writing of literary works or the romance with Joy apart from his former central activity of logical Christian apologetics. As mentioned before, after *Miracles*, he stopped full-scale Christian apologetics and came to handle only literary works and devotional essays. Though the reasons are much talked about — for example the serious defeat in debate with Elizabeth Anscombe —, no matter what the reason may be, he focused his creativity on *CN* in his early 50s and on memoirs and other literary works like *Surprised by Joy* and *Till We Have Faces* (1956) in his later 50s. It is natural for us to make objective or logical thinking take priority over emotions and feelings when we write essays and treatises, that is to say, we have to write with sharpened reason and intelligence, taking as much care not to be hindered by emotions as possible. On the other hand, in writing literary works, emotional aspects should be important factors. It is a world which needs intuitive subtlety and surrender to
an artistic voyage of discovery that is ready to go beyond theory. Lewis met Joy, fell in love with her, and was bereaved of her, in less than ten years. However much he had trained himself to give objective and logical performances before, it now became quite natural for him to include emotional, poetic and artistic considerations. He was a more whole person, in tune with both his emotive and rational natures. Especially *A Grief Observed* includes a lot of excellent insights expressed in a subjective and emotional form. Those insights were originally produced in *The Problem of Pain* and then transformed and woven into *A Grief Observed* by way of *CN* and other literary activities and finally, by his bereavement of Joy. So the insights are much more moving and even more sympathetic for me.

Furthermore, there are many words like “shore” (25, 33, 68) and “journey” (23, 33) in *A Grief Observed* that reminds us of a voyage. Lewis might have regarded a life as a voyage. *CN* can also be regarded as a long journey to a redeemed Narnia. As Lindskoog says, “There is no question that C. S. Lewis put his own life and his own dreams (good and bad) into this book.” (*Journey into Narnia*, 149) Lewis possibly wrote *A Grief Observed* with an aspiration toward the world where his mother and Joy went ahead of him just as Reepicheep longed for Aslan’s land in *VDT*. In a way, that is his final attitude to the problem of pain, and, during his later struggle against his own disease and death, that attitude must have grown into a more refined understanding on how to come to terms with God, who has sovereignty over the problem of pain, though it is regrettable that we can no longer ask him what it is like.

**Conclusion**

I researched Lewis’s works by referring to critics’ works on Lewis to survey what relationship can be found between his experiences of grief and *CN*. In the study, three main subjects were handled.

One was on the fact that Lewis chose to write children’s literature. The reason why Lewis chose children’s literature and what he wanted to put in it are argued in this thesis as well as looking back on his various deeply traumatic life experiences. I argued that the problem of how to deal with pain in order to achieve personal growth must be one of the important things *CN* is about. However, as we are told in “Three ways of writing for children”, he did not consciously intend to put his Christian beliefs, into a children’s story. According to him, the images bubbled up from deep inside and took the form of children’s fantasy. So we should think the wonderful scenes full of images of pain, which are depicted so vividly and subtly in *CN*, are the outcome of his delicate imagination. The best way to enjoy *CN* is to read them not as an abstract Christian
allegory but as the inspired outpouring of a blocked and dammed life that had at last found its right channel. As he describes it, “a fairy tale addressed to children was exactly what I must write-or burst.” (“Three ways of writing for children”, 28)

My second subject was how the problem of pain underwrites much of CN. I focused on main characters such as Edmund and Eustace and surveyed how skillfully Lewis depicts their hardships and growth to make the story vivid and fascinating. ‘Hardship and growth’ is a perennial theme of children’s fantasy from Lord of the Rings to Harry Potter. And Lewis uses it plentifully and excellently. Readers can become so absorbed in the story that they empathize with the characters suffering from pain and grief, and thus develop their own insights into the true value of the problem of pain. In CN, however, we can experience not only the value of the problem, but also how gracious Aslan’s sovereign love is. He always helps each character privately to grope towards the true meaning of their pain. Readers can feel such importance. Through the subtle and delicate way Lewis develops his affective narrative, readers are led towards deeper mysteries of the human heart.

The third subject was on how his insights into the problem of pain, that he developed rationally in his Christian apologetics and then affectively in the stories of CN were applied to his own final testing, in the excruciating loss of his beloved wife Joy to cancer, as documented in A Grief Observed. Lewis had many experiences of bereavement and other sorrows through his life. After his conversion, he first struggled to find the true meaning of pain in his activities as a Christian apologist. Then he moved into children’s literature to find a freer field in which to fully express his deep emotional feelings through the exercise of his imagistic imagination. Joy opened him to Joy—whether this was Aslan or God bringing him to Joy his wife, or his wife Joy bringing him, through loss, to Agape. The distance travelled in affective spirituality can be seen by comparing the earlier PP with the later GO. Even if the ideas in both The Problem of Pain and in A Grief Observed are similar, the way of expressing them is so very different. A Grief Observed is written in a quite a literary way or even a poetic way, so the mysterious value of grief can be more vividly conveyed to our hearts. Lewis could reach that high point only at the very end of his life.

What I would like to say in conclusion is that CN are highly successful works of children’s literature that have enchanted generations of admirers. They provide powerful evidence of literature’s power to enable us to face the trials of life, and deal with our traumas, which Lewis calls ‘the problem of pain’. Moreover, Lewis, a prominent Christian apologist and a spell-binding storyteller who went through severe personal trials, can still give us precious advice through his apologetics, or lead us by the hand through the fairy land of Narnia, through pain and loss, to
a place of eternal enchantment and enchanting sovereign love.

A List of Abbreviations for C. S. Lewis’s Works


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