From Innocence to Bravery: Moral Transformation in *The Chronicles of Narnia*

ABSTRACT

|  |
| --- |
| **Aims:** This article explores the Pevensie brothers' and other important characters' path from ignorance to self-confidence in C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The primary focus of the investigation is examining how Lewis uses Christian symbols and ideas to portray Narnia as a place for moral and spiritual growth.**Methodology:** This piece goes into a lot of depth about the Narnian series. It uses literary and psychology theory to look at the books. Cases of making moral choices, giving in to temptation, and forgiving others are used to look at character growth in light of Christian principles. This study applies symbolic occurrences, character arcs, and Aslan's function as a personification of Christ to demonstrate how individuals become stronger in the face of internal and external obstacles.**Results:** All significant individuals, despite their flaws and confusion, begin their lives as innocent newborns, according to the results. The bravery and dignity that they exhibit in the face of hardship is a significant factor that contributes to the formation of their connection with Aslan. Lucy is always morally upright, but Edmund progresses from being dishonest to heroic throughout the course of the story. Peter and Susan develop become mature leaders throughout the course of time. Following the will of God and having a feeling of religious and moral duty are the foundations upon which this shift is built.**Conclusion:** When scholars discuss courage in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, they imply being ready to face your fears and do the right thing, not having faith in oneself. By weaving together Christian principles with stories of famous heroes, Lewis gives young readers a relatable and illuminating example of bravery. Going from being scared to being brave represents growing spiritually and establishing one's ideals in a corrupt environment. |

*Keywords: Bravery, Moral Development, Theological Virtue, Repentance, Redemption, C.S. Lewis, Children's Literature, Virtue Ethics*

1. INTRODUCTION

*The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis is a classic work of children's fiction writing. It has amazing stories and big experiences. There is a deep moral structure based on Christian theology and the principles of classical virtue ethics that lies beneath the exciting layers of magical beings, talking animals, and great quests. Lewis writes a lot about the moral and spiritual trip from innocence to boldness in his seven-book series. It is a big and theologically complicated topic. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, bravery is more than just showing how strong someone is physically. It shows up when a character faces fear, temptation, and moral problems.

The process of change begins with youth, not perfect morality, but naïveté or lack of experience. It then moves on to obstacles that reveal each person's moral core. Along with later characters like Eustace Scrubb and Jill Pole, the Pevensie twins are the main characters who have to make morally difficult choices. Lewis says that bravery is the outward sign of an inner change that is caused by sadness, humility, a strong commitment to the truth, and a positive outlook. During hard times, healing, and compassion, Aslan, the Christ-like figure of Narnia, acts as a moral guide and a divine presence in these stories, helping the heroes become who they really are.

This article analyses the evolution of bravery in *The Chronicles of Narnia* by exploring the moral growth of key characters and highlighting Lewis's perspective on courage as a trait shaped by ethical challenges and spiritual encounters. Analyzing the transformations experienced by Peter, Edmund, Lucy, Eustace, and others reveals that Lewis portrays bravery not as an inherent trait but as a result of confronting commitment and divine guidance—a crucial virtue for the cultivation of the soul and the protection of the universally good.

2. THE THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF COURAGE

In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, C.S. Lewis presents courage as a permanent attribute rather than a defining feature or temporary display of strength. Bravery is shown as a philosophical virtue attained via devotion, effort, and supernatural inspiration. Lewis, well-versed in Christian tradition, associate’s courage with faith, repentance, and an aspiration for virtue, especially when these pursuits involve self-sacrifice. In Narnia, bravery is not intrinsic; instead, it is a reaction to a broader moral framework, often conveyed via Aslan, the central figure.

Lewis once wrote in *The Screwtape Letters* that:

“Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point, which means at the point of highest reality”. (Letter 29)

This understanding forms the foundation of the entire Narnian principles. Characters are persistently questioned at moments where anxiety and ambiguity coincide with ethical responsibility. The decisions made in these instances demonstrate the sincerity of their character.

A key example of this theological framing appears when Aslan speaks to Jill Pole in *The Silver Chair:*

“You would not have called to me unless I had been calling to you”.

(Lewis*,* 1953, p.19)

In this line, Lewis skillfully supports the concept of prevenient grace, suggesting that the inclination to act virtuously or courageously stems not from one's own will, but from a divine source. Actual bravery is, therefore, a reaction to an invokes that exists prior to any human endeavor. In this way, Lewis connects bravery with Christian salvation—it emphasizes self-surrender to the divine will rather than self-assertion.

The narrative arc of Narnia illustrates that true bravery develops when it is grounded in truth and grace. The transformation of each character signifies not just a transition into adulthood, but a journey towards spiritual accuracy, directed by the higher power.

3. PETER PEVENSIE: AUTHORITY AND BURDEN

Peter Pevensie, the eldest of the Pevensie brothers, is a great example of how leadership should be based on moral duty as well as practical gain. *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis shows how he thought about authority through character development: real leadership is based on service, duty, and humility, not on power or pride. Through fear, choices, and altruistic actions, Peter slowly accepts profound spiritual and ethical responsibilities as he evolves from a naive older sibling to the High King of Narnia.

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Peter encounters his initial significant challenge as he strives to rescue Susan by confronting the wolf Maugrim. His fear is palpable, but Lewis presents bravery as acting rightly despite fear, not in the absence of it:

“Peter did not feel very brave; indeed, he felt he was going to be sick. But that made no difference to what he had to do”. (Lewis,1950, p. 123)

Peter moves into a new stage of moral growth at this point. His behaviour is driven by a sense of duty rather than confidence. Lewis uses a Bible comparison to show how important it is for Christians to keep going even when things get hard. Paul calls this "perseverance producing character." (4 Romans 5:2, New International Version)

In *Prince Caspian*, temporal dislocation, ambiguity, and an unfamiliar environment risk Peter's authority, subjecting him to mounting pressure. His decision to dual Miraz is a deliberate and ethical action intended to mitigate violence rather than a capricious one.

“I am giving my life, if it must be so, to save Narnia from civil war”.

(Lewis, 1951, p.190)

Not for the sake of ego, but as a vow to serve, Peter now takes on the significant responsibilities of the kingdom. Instead of being brave because he thought he was better, Lewis uses Peter's selfless leadership to show how to be an ethical leader because it was like Christ's leadership.

4. EDMUND PEVENSIE: SINS, FORGIVENESS, AND COURAGE

The way Edmund Pevensie changes over the course of *The Chronicles of Narnia* shows that bravery is not a natural trait but something that is formed during moral breakdown and spiritual recovery. This journey reflects the Christian concepts of sin, repentance, and redemption. Edmund embarks on his journey in Narnia as a character motivated by betrayal, fueled by avarice and an ambition for dominance, standing in stark contrast to his siblings. The theological insights Lewis offers regarding the origin of sin and its corrupting effect on the soul are evident in his betrayal to the White Witch and the ensuing decline.

Edmund's wrongdoing is depicted as the result of underlying issues—pride, jealousy, and selfishness—rather than merely a singular act of ill intent. He aligns himself with the White Witch against Aslan's moral clarity, driven by his desire for Turkish Delight and a yearning for power in a realm where he perceives himself as lacking. When Edmund arrives at the Witch's palace, his treason becomes evident:

"He felt sure that the Witch was the only one who had been kind to him and was the only one who would give him what he wanted".

(Lewis, 1950,p. 91)

However, Edmund's journey is one of profound spiritual enlightenment. Aslan's sacrifice allows Edmund to experience the fullness of grace. Aslan, a Christ-like figure, bears the penalty for Edmund's betrayal, signifying the Christian doctrine of substitutionary atonement. Edmund's admission of guilt and subsequent forgiveness pave the way for his valiant actions in subsequent tales.

Edmund contributes to the defence of Narnia in the pivotal conflict of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* with newly discovered courage:

“Edmund had fought his way to her and had wounded her with his sword”.

(Lewis, 1950, p. 145)

By means of this courageous deed, Edmund not only saves himself but also becomes a beacon of hope, showing that repentance and grace cannot be separated from courage.

5. LUCY PEVENSIE: FAITH, VISION, AND MORAL CLARITY

Lucy Pevensie’s integrity in *The Chronicles of Narnia* reflects the quality of ethical simplicity, which is intimately related with her unshakeable faith and spiritual vision. In contrast to her siblings, Lucy's courage is often portrayed in Aslan as moral strength and unwavering faith, indicating a broader religious understanding of divine guidance. Lucy's actions throughout the narrative demonstrate that bravery is not just a physical trait but also a characteristic founded on faith and the ability to perceive truth in the face of doubt and ambiguity.

Lucy's foolishness from the initial chapters of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is accompanied with a spiritual vision other cannot first grasp. She is the first to encounter Aslan and to believe in his true nature, even when others dismiss her claims:

“But there is a magic that makes the world right again...a magic that will help us”. (Lewis, 1950, p. 74)

Lucy's faith in Aslan shows that she has a strong faith in God's goodness, which helps her tell the difference between fact and fiction. It's interesting that she can see Aslan when other people can't. This shows how important spiritual vision is in the world of Narnian, just like the Bible says that those with pure hearts "shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).

The book *Prince Caspian* tests Lucy's faith because she has to keep believing that Aslan is still alive even though her brothers don't believe her:

“I do hope I’m doing the right thing,” thought Lucy. “But I suppose even a grown-up would not turn back now”. (Lewis, 1951, p*.* 132)

Lucy's courage at this time is not judged by one deed but rather by her continual unwillingness to forsake reality. Her bravery comes from a strong, profound conviction in the goodness of Aslan's direction and the philosophical a sense it offers, not from her physical power.

6. EUSTACE AND JILL: LEARNING TO BE BRAVE

Eustace Scrubb and Jill Pole, later protagonists in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, present a fascinating depiction of bravery as a virtue that is developed through challenges, personal growth, and moral enlightenment. In contrast to Peter, Lucy, and Edmund, who are influenced by their inherent qualities and family connections, Eustace and Jill experience profound changes, growing from selfish, fearful children into individuals who embody courage, responsibility, and selflessness. Instead of being a natural trait, these events show that bravery can be formed by acknowledging one's flaws, finding one's life's purpose, and seeking spiritual knowledge.

In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Eustace's change into a dragon is the first step in his becoming a sign of his selfishness and greed. He reacts to his new shape at first with annoyance and self-pity, but it is only when he repents and is saved by Aslan that he starts to see what genuine courage is:

"I can't. I'm not brave enough. I'm just a miserable little coward."

(Lewis, 1952, p. 163)

When Aslan helps Eustace lose his dragon skin, he goes through a deep change that goes along with his physical change. Eustace thought that real bravery was owning his flaws and trying to make things right, not killing a dragon. His renewed courage comes from being humble and able to change.

This is similar to how Jill Pole's story in *The Silver Chair* shows how confidence grows over time through trust and commitment. She starts to understand what is right and wrong by following Aslan's advice, especially when she is in danger. For a while, Jill is paralyzed with fear and uncertainty whenever she has to find Prince Rilian:

"I’m not afraid, said Jill, but I don’t want to be a coward."

(Lewis, 1953, p. 57)

Belief in a higher ethical standard, pushing herself beyond her comfort zone, and acting despite her worries all contribute to Jill's courage.

7. SHASTA/COR: DISCOVERING IDENTITY AND VOCATION

Shasta, who is now known as Cor, goes through a big change in *The Horse and His Boy* as she comes into her own and finds her purpose in life. As he grows from a shy, harmless child to a brave, sure of himself prince, his journey is a fascinating look at character, purpose, and divine calling. Shasta's path is one of gradual realization of his own self and purpose, in contrast to the other Narnian heroes who are either forced into leadership or bravery by external events. As he begins to accept himself and the destiny he confronts, his boldness grows.

Shasta's journey begins with a conflict over her identity. He was raised as a fisherman's child and, because of the harsh treatment he received from his adoptive father, views himself as a mere servant and outcast. His journey to Narnia with the horse Bree was motivated by his desire to escape a life of oppression rather than by any unique sense of courage or destiny. But when he accepts that he is the long-lost prince of Arche land, he discovers that his life's goal is more complicated than he had previously anticipated. When Shasta and Aslan meet, the huge lion instructs and advises her:

"What is that?' said Shasta. ‘It’s only a lion, said the voice. But I am not a lion."

(Lewis, 1954, p. 125)

Shasta discovers from these encounters that his natural calling to a greater purpose, one that fits with moral bravery and royal duty, not only defines his personality but also the circumstances of his birth or upbringing. His most recent fight with the Calormen army, in which he leads his warriors to victory, demonstrates how much bravery he has grown by reflecting on himself and comprehending his sacred responsibility.

Shasta's development is comparable to how Christians see vocation: as a natural calling that helps individuals discover their life's deeper purpose by overcoming obstacles and doubts.

8. ASLAN: THE SOURCE AND GOAL OF BRAVERY

Aslan, the pivotal character in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, embodies not just supernatural sovereignty and power but also illustrates the highest ideal of bravery within the Narnian realm. As a figure embodying moral excellence, Aslan exemplifies the ideal of courage—rooted not in personal ambition or power, but in self-sacrifice, justice, and a profound dedication to ethical principles. His role as a source of bravery is shown by the fact that characters seek him out for advice and comfort during difficult and terrible situations. Beyond his physical power, Aslan has a reckless love that drives him to do altruistic actions even in the face of death.

To atone for Edmund's betrayal, Aslan does his first brave act in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by voluntarily surrendering himself to the White Witch. This humanitarian gesture indicates a deep regard for boldness, as shown by boundless affection. One of the most important examples of what courage is when Aslan decides to give his life for Edmund and, by extension, for the whole world of Narnia. Aslan himself clarifies:

"Though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know. Her knowledge only goes back to the dawn of time. But if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read there a different incantation".

(Lewis, 1950, p. 184)

At this point, Aslan confronts death directly and overcomes it, displaying a deep bravery that redefines bravery as the willingness to give up something for something greater. The resurrection serves as a powerful representation of the triumph of courage grounded in belief and altruism.

Aslan serves as both the origin and the ultimate aspiration of courage in Narnia. The characters navigating Narnia are consistently attracted to him as an exemplar of courage—ultimately discovering that genuine bravery is intertwined with divine purpose and ethical principles.

9. conclusion

By presenting bravery as a transformative virtue rather than an intrinsic trait, C.S. Lewis deftly weaves the idea of courage into the moral and spiritual fabric of *The Chronicles of Narnia.* Among the characters who undergo significant experiences where bravery is tested, developed, and ultimately acknowledged as a reflection of selflessness, moral clarity, and divine grace are Peter, Edmund, Lucy, Eustace, Jill, Shasta, and Aslan. The transformation of these individuals from gullibility to bravery exemplifies the Christian understanding of courage as a discipline of morality and spirituality rather than just an emotional or physical response to danger.

As the character analysis demonstrates, bravery in Narnia is often a process of maturation—where acts of moral responsibility, sacrifice, and righteousness replace fear, sin, and selfishness. Faith and vision mold courage for Lucy; repentance and redemption shape it for Edmund; and responsibility and selflessness form it for Peter. The characters of Jill and Eustace show that courage is something that can be cultivated through personal growth and the grace of God. Shasta's story reinforces the notion that self-awareness and purpose are essential to fostering fearlessness.

At the center of these transformations is Aslan, who serves as both the source and the end goal of bravery. His actions throughout the series redefine bravery as an act of God's love and grace, especially his sacrificial death and resurrection. Aslan's bravery transcends a single act; it epitomizes a consistent pattern of selflessness and ethical purity that serves as an example for the other characters.

Ultimately, Lewis portrays bravery as a societal virtue intrinsically linked to divine purpose and the narrative of Narnia. *The Chronicles of Narnia* offers a deep theological and moral insight on bravery rooted in faith, repentance, and a sense of divine purpose.

disclaimer (artificial intelligence)

Author’s hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of this manuscript.

CONSENT

As per International standards or University standards, respondents’ written consent has been collected and preserved by the authors(s).

Competing interests

Authors have declared that they have no known competing financial interests or non-financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

References

Abrams, M. H. (2012). *A glossary of literary terms* (10th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Downing, D. C. (2005). *Into the wardrobe: C.S. Lewis and the Narnia chronicles*. Jossey-Bass.

Ford, P. F. (2005). *Companion to Narnia: A complete guide to the magical world of C.S. Lewis’s The Chronicles of Narnia*. HarperOne.

Hooper, W. (Ed.). (2004). *The collected letters of C.S. Lewis, Volume II: Books, broadcasts, and the war 1931–1949*. HarperSanFrancisco.

Holyer, R. (1981). The moral world of Narnia. *Christianity and Literature, 31*(1), 49–63.

Lewis, C. S. (1942). *The Screwtape letters*. Macmillan.

Lewis, C. S. (1950). *The lion, the witch and the wardrobe*. Geoffrey Bles.

Lewis, C. S. (1951). *Prince Caspian*. Geoffrey Bles.

Lewis, C. S. (1952). *The voyage of the Dawn Treader*. Geoffrey Bles.

Lewis, C. S. (1953). *The silver chair*. Geoffrey Bles.

Lewis, C. S. (1954). *The horse and his boy*. Geoffrey Bles.

Lewis, C. S. (1955). *The magician’s nephew*. Geoffrey Bles.

Lewis, C. S. (1956). *The last battle*. Geoffrey Bles.

Loconte, J. (2015). *A hobbit, a wardrobe, and a great war: How J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis rediscovered faith, friendship, and heroism in the cataclysm of 1914–1918*. Thomas Nelson.

McGrath, A. (2013). *C.S. Lewis: A life – Eccentric genius, reluctant prophet*. Tyndale House.

Meilaender, G. (2005). The virtue of courage in Narnia. *Touchstone, 18*(4), 26–30.

Nicholson, M. (2000). C.S. Lewis and the problem of evil. *Mythlore, 23*(1), 17–29.

Peters, T. C. (1997). *Simply C.S. Lewis*. Crossway Books.

Ryken, L. (2005). *A reader’s guide through the wardrobe: Exploring C.S. Lewis’s classic story*. IVP Academic.

Ward, M. (2008). *Planet Narnia: The seven heavens in the imagination of C.S. Lewis*. Oxford University Press.

Wilson, A. N. (1990). *C.S. Lewis: A biography*. HarperCollins.