

from *Companion to Narnia* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1994)  
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**CREDAL ELEMENTS** To speak of credal elements in the Chronicles is to try to discern whether there are any lists or formulas that contain the basic elements of what Narnians believe about Aslan and his ways of working with them.<sup>1</sup> And though Puddleglum and Mr. Beaver\* speak snatches of such formulas, the clearest example is in Edmund's answer to Eustace's questions in VDT: Who is Aslan? and Do you know him? Edmund gives a sixfold reply:

*"Well, he knows me."* This indicates that the important thing is to be known by Aslan and also that a comprehensive knowledge of him and his ways is impossible to achieve.

*"He is the great Lion, the son of the Emperor-over-the-Sea."* This indicates his basic attributes: his greatness and his relationship to his mysterious Father.

*". . . who saved me and saved Narnia."* This is the first use of the term "saved" in the Chronicles, and the cornerstone of the great supposal that underlies Lewis's intention in writing these books; Aslan fulfilled the demands of the Deep Magic\* with respect to Edmund's treachery, and the Lion also delivered Narnia from the Hundred Years of Winter\* brought on by the tyrannic magic\* of the White Witch.<sup>2</sup>

*"We've all seen him."* This indicates what Edmund's faith is based on: his actual experience and the experience of his brother and sisters and fellow Narnians.<sup>3</sup>

*"Lucy sees him most often."* This indicates Lucy's privileged place in the economy, the plan, of Aslan's intervention in Narnian history.\*<sup>4</sup>

*"And it may be Aslan's country we're sailing to."* This not only indicates the goal of their

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<sup>1</sup> Similar lists or formulas may exist within the Bible itself, around which the later beliefs of Jews and Christians are organized. The basic Old Testament credal formula is found in the Book of Deuteronomy, 26:5–10; and the basic New Testament formula is found in St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, 15:3–8.

<sup>2</sup> At this point Lewis has successfully restrained the moral educator/ allegorist in himself, but in LB he abandons this caution in Tirian's\* first impassioned speech before the Narnians gathered at the Stable.\* Tirian "meant to go on and ask how the terrible god Tash\* who fed on the blood of his people could possibly be the same as the good Lion by whose blood all Narnia was saved." Of course only Edmund was saved by the blood of Aslan, and Caspian was rejuvenated by a drop of that blood. But Tirian's statement discloses Lewis's nearly allegorical intention in LB. See CSLTTC, pp. 92–93.

<sup>3</sup> This recalls for Christian readers the many New Testament references in which the closest followers of Jesus of Nazareth, the apostles, give witness that they lived with this special man in the most important time of his life. See the Acts of the Apostles 1:21–22, St. Peter's Second Epistle 1: 16–18, and St. John's First Epistle, 1: 1–4.

<sup>4</sup> This suggests not only the special place St. John, the "beloved disciple," had among the apostles, and the special place that St. Peter and St. James shared with him in Jesus' first circle of friends, but also the position of the four most important women in Jesus' life: the two sisters, Mary and Martha of Bethany, Mary of Magdala, and Mary the Mother of Jesus.

voyage but also the focus of their hearts' desires: to live with Aslan.<sup>5</sup>

Many readers see in the *Chronicles* Lewis's largely successful attempt to remythologize, that is, to give new stories that provide meaning for the Christian Creed. One must remember, however, Lewis's claim that the stories came first.<sup>6</sup> He has not attempted to systematically "storify" the two most ancient Christian formulas or lists,\* the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. But in his story about Aslan he has given new meaning to what Christian theologians call Christology, the systematic study of the nature and activities of Jesus of Nazareth whom Christians believe to be the only begotten Son of God. Lewis therefore has what some traditions call a "high Christology," a clear and prominent picture of Christ, as underlying the supposal<sup>7</sup> of the *Chronicles*.

On the other hand, Lewis has several low-profile doctrines: the Holy Spirit\* (or pneumatology); membership in the Church (ecclesiology); and worship and sacraments (liturgiology and sacramentology). With respect to the last, Lewis gives a moving picture of the meaning of baptism in the dragon\* Eustace's encounter with Aslan, a scene which might be considered the high point of Lewis's sacramentology in the *Chronicles*, but concerning the other great sacrament esteemed by almost all of the Christian churches, the Lord's Supper, Lewis's pictures of Aslan's Table and of the breakfast of the Lamb provide a less focused although very lovely representations<sup>8</sup> With these qualifications in mind, consider the following reformulation of the basic Christian Creed in Narnian terms:

I "believe" in the Emperor-beyond-the-Sea who has put within time the Deep Magic, and, before all time, the Deeper Magic.

I "believe" in his Son Aslan who sang into being all the worlds and all that they contain: Talking Beasts and humans, dumb animals and shining spirits. And I "believe" that Aslan was a true beast, the king of beasts, a Lion; that for Edmund, a traitor because of his desire for Turkish Delight, he gave himself into the power of the White Witch, who satisfied the requirements of the Deep Magic by killing him most horribly. At the dawn following that darkest, coldest night, he was restored to full life by the Deeper Magic, cracking the Stone Table and, from that moment, setting death to work backwards. He exulted in his new life and went off to rescue all those who had been turned into stone by the Witch's wand and to deliver the whole land from everlasting winter. He will be behind all the stories of our lives; and, when it is time, he will appear again in our world to wind it up, calling all of his creatures whose hearts' desire it is to live "farther in and farther up" in his country which contains all real countries.

I "believe" that upon us all falls the breath of Aslan and that ours are the sweet waters of the

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<sup>5</sup> This dimension is a resounding echo of both the Messianic longing\* of the Jewish religion and also the eager expectation of Christians for the return of Jesus in glory. The study of this dimension is called eschatology.\*

<sup>6</sup> See *Introduction*, p. xxviii, and *OOW*, pp. 22–38, esp. p. 32 and 36.

<sup>7</sup> See *Introduction*, note 2, pp. xxv–xxvi.

<sup>8</sup> And though there is forgiveness and reconciliation and healing throughout the *Chronicles*, those in the Anglican, Roman, and Orthodox Christian churches perhaps wish that Lewis had been more explicit. But to be explicit was not Lewis's intention with respect to the creative impulse that produced the *Chronicles*, nor with respect to Lewis's entire apologetic effort. He wanted to remain the spokesman for "mere Christianity," as he called it, the heart of the entire Christian tradition. See *Introduction*, p. xxvii, and *TCA*, p. 153.

Last Sea which enable us to look steadily at the sun. I “believe” that all who have thrilled or will thrill at the sound of Aslan’s name are now our fellow voyagers and our fellow kings and queens; that all of us can be for ever free of our dragonish thoughts and actions; and that one day we will pass through the door of death into “Chapter One of the Great Story, which no one on earth has read; which goes on for ever; in which every chapter is better than the one before.”<sup>9</sup>

(VDT 101–102, 117–118.)

[Greatness of God.]

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<sup>9</sup> This citation is from LB, p. 211, 228.