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Vicariousness and Forgiveness in *The Chronicles of Narnia*

Zastępstwo i przebaczenie
w *Opowieściach z Narnii*

ABSTRACT

Children's contemporary literature often presents an ambiguous and even immoral world of values, not to speak of Christian virtues, which are neither emphatically mentioned nor even faintly evoked. Theological virtues enhance human capacities and elevate every person to their highest being, to the supernatural order they are created for. Directly related to the Scriptures, for they are revealed, the theological virtues suggest an unavoidable and clear connection to God. In C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* we find a useful counterexample to teaching morals through literature: these seven fantasy novels provide multiple examples of how to be faithful, hopeful and even how to practice the virtue of charity. Considering that through a fictional evocation of certain concepts these might be apprehended more significantly, in this paper we aim to explore new readings of the saga that go beyond a general approach in order to transcend its allegorical mechanisms and respond to criteria such as the virtue of charity and its two main features: vicariousness and forgiveness.

KEY WORDS

The Chronicles of Narnia, C.S. Lewis, acquisition of virtues, vicariousness, forgiveness, charity, moral virtues, children's literature

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

Opowieści z Narnii, C.S. Lewis, zdobywanie cnot, zastępstwo, przebaczenie, miłość, cnoty moralne, literatura dziecięca

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ABSTRAKT

Współczesna literatura dziecięca często przedstawia niejednoznaczny, a nawet niemoralny świat wartości, nie mówiąc już o cnotach chrześcijańskich, na które nie tylko nie kładzie ona nacisku, ale o których nie wspomina nawet mimochodem. Cnoty teologiczne doskonałą ludzką sprawność i podnoszą człowieka do najwyższego poziomu jego bytu, do porządku nadprzyrodzonego, dla którego został stworzony. Cnoty teologiczne, bezpośrednio zakorzenione w Piśmie Świętym i należące do materii Objawienia, w nieunikniony sposób wyraźnie odsyłają do Boga. Wbrew rozpowszechnionemu trendowi, *Opowieści z Narnii* C.S. Lewisa stanowią użyteczny przykład nauczania moralności poprzez literaturę: te siedem powieści fantasy daje wiele przykładów, jak być wiernym, pełnym nadziei, a nawet jak praktykować cnotę miłości. Biorąc pod uwagę fakt, że pewne pojęcia można uchwycić znacznie lepiej poprzez ich fikcyjną ewokację, w niniejszym artykule zamierzamy dokonać nowego odczytania sagi, odbiegającego od jej standardowego ujęcia, aby wyjść poza jej alegoryczne mechanizmy i rozpoznać cnotę miłości oraz jej dwojaki charakter: zastępczy i przebaczący.

“It’s good that you exist;
it’s good that you are in this world.”

Josef Pieper

Introduction: A walk through virtue

Literature is fundamental in the literary education of our students. The narrative genre appears to us, nowadays, as the most appropriate genre not only to develop literacy and literary competences but also to acquire tools to comprehend current social structures. Accordingly, in the present paper we aim to explore the potential of literature as a tool to build the notion of oneself, an exploration that will lead us through knowledge and the improvement of virtues. For this reason, after presenting the notion of virtue and how C.S. Lewis understands it, in the second part of the paper we will present some literary images concerning the virtue of charity in Lewis’s fictional work *The Chronicles of Narnia*. These examples selected from *The Chronicles* aim to demonstrate that charity is mainly displayed through the notions

of vicariousness and forgiveness, over and above other kinds of “minor virtues” such as generosity, kindness, etc.

Concerning the definition of virtue, *virtus* in Latin, Josef Pieper¹ announces that “virtue² means that man is true, both in the natural and in the supernatural sense”³, which leads us to consider two propositions. First, that virtue is addressed to human beings; and, second, that man’s reality is divided into these two senses: the natural and the supernatural. If we take a look at the Aristotelian theory, virtue is a predisposition to perform good actions, and it results from habit. The difference between habit and virtue lies in a matter of disposition, that is, will. In order to be virtuous, reason is used to discern appropriately the correct way of performing an action. Then, when the action has been performed, according to Aristotle’s statement, it has been already converted into a habit. Therefore, virtue is the middle point between two opposites, and from this point on, we can say that man is really virtuous, the worthy possessor of *areté*, the Greek term for excellence.

The four cardinal virtues contain all the other ones, and their duty is to order and organize our acts and passions, as well as to guide our behaviour through reason. The cardinal virtues are: prudence, fortitude, temperance and justice. Thomas Aquinas⁴ defines them as major and cardinal because they imply righteousness of appetite. For their part, theological virtues are faith, hope and charity, and their object is God. They perfect humanity’s nature in a supernatural way.⁵ However, there is an element that both cardinal and theological virtues share: we need both, one presupposes the other. As Julia Annas explains:

Another important indication of the nature of virtue comes from the point that we can’t teach the virtues in isolation, one by one, since they can’t

¹ J. Pieper, *Las virtudes fundamentales*, Madrid 2007, p. 15.

² For reference purposes, please see the Catechism of the Catholic Church: “Virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do good. It allows the person not only to perform good deeds but also to give the best of himself. With all his inner sensible and spiritual forces, the virtuous person tends towards the good, he searches for it and chooses it by the means of concrete actions” (CCC, no. 1803).

³ All the quotations, except for justified exceptions, are translated from the Spanish by the author.

⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I–II, q. 61.

⁵ *Ibidem*, I–II, q. 62.



be learned that way. Generosity gives us a good example here. A child doesn't learn to be generous by just giving her things away, or sharing things whether they belong to her or not. Generosity involves considerations of fairness and justice. For, as Aristotle points out, generosity requires taking from the right sources as well as giving to the right people in the right way. And "giving in the right way" involves a great deal. Giving a gift which is indifferent to what the recipient wants is not generous. Generosity requires intelligence about what people both need and want, and also about appropriate ways, times, and manners of giving, avoiding obtrusiveness and condescension. Generosity thus requires, at the least, benevolence, a real interest in other people, their needs, and their wants.⁶

It is not possible to teach, for example, how to practice the virtue of justice, and then not to be generous with one that deserves it. The same happens with the theological virtues; faith, hope and charity are sustained one by other:

The object of hope as a theological virtue is communion with God. Hope expects and waits for what faith affirms. Faith concerns the intellect because it informs us of the truth about God. But hope is a virtue of desire since it concerns the "difficult good". Hope is not only for the next life but applies to this one as well. Charity means that we want to be together with God in the beatific vision / we hope for communion with God in the beatific vision.⁷

Theological virtues justify their emergence thanks to the religious⁸ dimension of human beings.⁹ Since the soul is, in some way, all things¹⁰, from it arises the need of the absolute, of transcendence. Obviously, a finite being could not be thirsty of infinity; "the nature

⁶ J. Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, Oxford 2011, p. 84. This quotation is taken from the original English version.

⁷ K. Timpe, C.A. Boyd (eds.), *Virtues and Their Vices*, Oxford 2014, p. 28. This quotation is taken from the original English version.

⁸ See the Latin etymology of "religion": *religare*, which means establishing links, getting oneself attached to God.

⁹ Luigi Giussani maintains that in order to be able to know something that concerns the human nature, we have to observe human experience: "The religious factor represents the nature of ourselves as it is expressed in certain questions: "What is the ultimate meaning of existence?", "Why do pain and death exist?", "Why is life worthy to be lived?" (L. Giussani, *Curso Básico de Cristianismo*, Madrid 2011, p. 76).

¹⁰ "Anima est quodammodo omnia." Thomas Aquinas, *De anima*, 790.

of man is relation with infinity.”¹¹ Once we have seen this dimension we understand the reason why the cardinal virtues are deeply rooted in the theological ones, which also vivify those moral virtues man uses in his daily life.

C.S. Lewis, the apologist

Lewis’s fantastic literary productions are definitely defined by his pedagogical purposes. If his apologetic essays are articulated in the creation and defence of a “mere Christianity”, his fantasy follows this same line but in a more literary way. After a hard process of conversion, and after he was convinced that myths were real, C.S. Lewis turned into an excellent Christian apologist.¹² As he had passed through a similar experience to his readers—recent converts and willing to learn about Christianity—he knew very well how to approach agnosticism philosophically and rationally and then consider Christianity as something more plausible than any other alternative systems that have collapsed and continue to collapse. Lewis himself stated that he “mainly wrote and spoke about the topics that kept him away from Christianity before he converted.”¹³ In other words: “his books have an authority that is born from the act of having experienced the same struggles of those who want to be able to believe.”¹⁴

It took time, though, until the literary world listened to his particularly conservative voice concerning religion issues. That is why Pearce¹⁵ likes to call our author the voice of one crying in the wilderness. His religious standpoint was at first determined by his impatience:

even before a year had passed by after he was converted into Christianity, Lewis felt he was able to tell other people his experience, even to make

¹¹ L. Giussani, *Curso Básico de Cristianismo*, op. cit., p. 27.

¹² J. Pearce, *Escritores conversos. La inspiración espiritual de una época de incredulidad*, Madrid 2006, p. 80.

¹³ P. de Felipe, *C.S. Lewis. El autor de Las Crónicas de Narnia*, Barcelona 2006, p. 54.

¹⁴ J. Moreno Berrocal, *50 años de la muerte de C.S. Lewis: el legado de Las Crónicas de Narnia*, Barcelona 2014, p. 24.

¹⁵ J. Pearce, *Escritores conversos*, op.cit., p. 166.



an “apology” and defend Christianity with arguments. He was neither willing to be a novice nor to wait until his knowledge was more mature. He must start immediately.¹⁶

We could assume that there are considerable advantages as well as considerable disadvantages in sacrificing a mature exposition arising from deep religious conviction, and we will stress here particularly that “Lewis appeared to be a unique figure able to put together a traditional orthodoxy without renouncing a sophisticated culture.”¹⁷ He was also known as the author who most contributed to spreading Christianity during the World War II, as he had the ability to introduce undetectable theological questions in science-fiction works as well as in fairy tales for children. This last consideration is our starting point: C.S. Lewis was a great source of inspiration not only for believers but also for non-believers, for adults, children, young people and teachers, among others. We will focus on *The Chronicles of Narnia* because it was originally conceived for children. The first book was published in 1950, and the other six ones that followed it, each year thereafter. To sum up, Aslan the Lion is the main character, considered to be a fictional representation of Jesus Christ, and the other literary images that can be found inside its pages may very well serve as literary dramatizations of certain theological concepts which could be for their part understood as a Christological propaedeutic. Furthermore, there is a double perspective in this phenomenon. Apart from the first possibility already mentioned, it is also possible to apprehend significantly complex notions related to ethics and the acquisition of virtues. Without the examples displayed and shown in the *Chronicles*, the acquisition of virtues would probably be overshadowed by an abstract disquisition on ethics.

Charity in *The Chronicles of Narnia*

Why choose charity rather than faith or hope? Because “the exercise of all virtues is encouraged and inspired by charity”¹⁸ from where we deduce that charity holds a higher place in the hierarchy

¹⁶ H. Carpenter, *Los Inklings: C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams y sus amigos*, Madrid 2007, p. 89.

¹⁷ P. de Felipe, *C.S. Lewis*, op. cit., p. 55.

¹⁸ CCC, no. 1827.

of virtues¹⁹: without love we have nothing²⁰, everything fades away, everything loses its meaning. Hereafter all the given definitions of love will support our main thesis. As said, our interest is to highlight the way charity is reflected in *The Chronicles of Narnia* so that we can read it as an example of that theological virtue.

Aristotle²¹ mentioned that love means wanting for the other what is considered as good. This attitude of “giving oneself is a seeking for God but also a seeking for other persons (a friend, a lover, a son...).”²² Thus, this is why we understand Thomas Aquinas when he claims that “charity is certain friendship between man and God based on the communication of eternal bliss.”²³ Obviously, the tendency towards good is not enough: we must put into practice those good things we desire.

The quality common to all forms of love is approval, beyond all kind of controversies concerning the different meanings of the word love. In fact, as Pieper states, the English term for love is too poor to encompass the real meaning of charity. Existence is not enough either: human beings need their existence to be confirmed. And the way one is confirmed in his own existence is by love: by being loved by others, by recognizing the love that is given to oneself. “What we need, apart from existing, is to be loved by another person.”²⁴ Love is what makes oneself be²⁵, comments Pieper²⁶ on Maurice Blondel’s statements. These ideas presuppose, in addition, the approval of something/someone which is, indeed, true and real.

Oblative love, also known as sacrificial love, self-giving love, aims at achieving a moral excellence for the sinner but also for the saint: the Greek *arête* is at stake.²⁷ Even when the person we embrace may

¹⁹ Ibidem, no. 1826.

²⁰ Cf. 1 Cor 13:13.

²¹ Aristóteles, *Ética a Nicómaco*, Madrid 2012, II, 1380b.

²² J. Pieper, *Las virtudes fundamentales*, op. cit., p. 435.

²³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-IIae, q.24, a.2.

²⁴ J. Pieper, *Las virtudes fundamentales*, op. cit., p. 446.

²⁵ “C’est là le fond de la joie d’amour, lorsqu’elle existe: nous sentir justifiés d’exister.” J.P. Sartre, *L’être et le néant*, Paris 1949, p. 439.

²⁶ J. Pieper, *Las virtudes fundamentales*, op. cit., p. 441.

²⁷ “The word *arête* originally expressed the concept of “excellence.” E. Redondo (ed.), *Introducción a la Historia de la Educación*, Barcelona 2010, p. 139.



be morally reprehensible, we should love him or her if we are displaying this type of love, the *agape*²⁸, the most perfect one if we compare it to romantic love or hedonist love. Pieper justifies the supremacy of this love in the acquisition of virtues and the development of the *good man*, arguing that love—“trigger and centre of existence”—is the only notion that must be ordered if we intend man to live life neatly. By love man was created, and when we read “and saw God that it was good”²⁹, we understand the importance of approval in awarding dignity and significance to man’s life.

“In the darkness something was happening at last. A voice had begun to sing.”³⁰ This is how Narnia is created. Where there was silence and obscurity before, all of a sudden, without any coherent explanation—the reasonable argument for this lies, in fact, in the love that Aslan has towards all the creatures that want to call to life—a First Voice, as they will call it some lines later, starts singing. Little by little, the rhythm of the song will stress the *tempo* of what is being gradually created. The weak contingency of human beings is obvious in real life as well as in C.S. Lewis’ world: the inhabitants of Narnia could not have been called into life. If Aslan had not started singing, they wouldn’t be there. Nothing explains better the act of creation than the fact that Jesus Christ is the Supreme Love³¹ just as Aslan is Supreme Love in the *Chronicles*. A few lines later, Aslan gives voice to the animals and other fantastic beings and asks them the following: “Narnia, Narnia, awake. Love. Think. Speak. Be walking trees. Be talking beasts. Be divine waters.”³² The first action the creatures are asked to display is concerned with love. Their answer comes out

²⁸ Read Benedictus XVI’s encyclical letter *Deus caritas est* (pp. 12–24) to learn more about *agape* as the opposite of *eros*.

²⁹ Gen 1:31.

³⁰ MN, p. 95. The quotations of *The Chronicles of Narnia* are taken from an original English version. From now on, we will abbreviate the titles of the books of the *Chronicles* this way: MN (*The Magician’s Nephew*), LWW (*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*), HB (*The Horse and his Boy*), PC (*Prince Caspian*), VDT (*The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*), SC (*The Silver Chair*) and LB (*The Last Battle*).

³¹ “God has given himself to man, He has revealed himself to him freely, thus revealing God’s charity, his nature.” L. Giussani, *¿Se puede vivir así? Un acercamiento extraño a la existencia cristiana*, Madrid 2007, p. 237.

³² MN, p. 108.

quickly and easily: “Hail, Aslan. We hear and obey. We are awake. We love. We think. We speak. We know.”³³ God *decides*, by the act of creation, to highlight all that beings can love and affirm, all they can do. The whole of creation is worthy of love because it has been loved and confirmed from the beginning by Him: “because God loves and affirms things, man and the world, and only because of it, they are also good, worthy of love and acceptance for us.”³⁴

Another feature that most defines love is that it is displayed especially when the object of love doesn’t deserve it.³⁵ C.S. Lewis suggests that what we need is that non-deserved love, because this is the kind of love we do not desire. We feel ashamed of being loved because we consider ourselves, rightly, as sinners, though being loved is a deep need of human nature. God is the unique being able to love without being loved: “in the relation with God, man is more a loved than a loving creature.”³⁶ We must understand this indigence by the light of forgiveness, which is a fundamental feature of charity. Furthermore, the condition of a mature forgiveness is the repentance of the sinner. Wishing for a love which is less than the one we are made of is laziness of heart: pride impedes sincere repentance and laziness cheats us so that we believe that sacrificial love is not meant for us and is just a utopian fantasy.

Aslan’s love for the sinners becomes clear when Emeth³⁷, a loyal Carlomene warrior follower of Tash—a pagan divinity of Narnia—meets Aslan. The warrior had always believed in Tash, and when he discovers he was wrong, he is afraid that Aslan will kill him. Nevertheless, Aslan gives Emeth his gratitude for having searched for the truth vigorously through all his life. The Lion speaks to him with tender and soft words, and the answer of the ashamed youngster is:

³³ Ibidem, p. 109.

³⁴ J. Pieper, *Las virtudes fundamentales*, op. cit., p. 450.

³⁵ “Every human from the beginning has one fundamental question that underlies his or her whole nature. This question is: Do you love me? That question is soon transformed—by genetics, by nurture, by original sin, or by existential neurosis—into: ‘Am I worthy to be loved?’ or ‘What can I do to be worthy to be loved?’.” J.B. Russell, *A History of Heaven: The Singing Silence*, Princeton (NJ) 1997, p. 186.

³⁶ J. Pieper, *Las virtudes fundamentales*, op. cit., p. 456.

³⁷ See the Hebrew etymology of the name Emeth: *emet*, עֵמֶת, which means truth, the substantially consequent.



“I have been wandering to find him and my happiness is so great that it even weakens me like a wound. And this is the marvel of marvels, that he called me Beloved, me who am but as a dog.”³⁸ Aslan forgives everything, but not always without pain or suffering: it is said that God’s love is “much more hard and severe” than his justice. Despite being free, true love demands repentance, a kind of correctness or reparation, a purgation and a purification of oneself towards the relationship with God to return not to the original state of the being but to a new state of being. Forgiving doesn’t mean forgetting, but learning and being better than before. In the same book, it is also possible to observe other examples of forgiveness and mercy: Puzzle, a poor ingenuous donkey, is cheated by Shift, a clever monkey whose intentions are to obtain favours and money by wearing a lion skin and pretending to be Aslan. At first, Puzzle thinks that what Shift wants to do is bad—he must not usurp the identity of Aslan, the king of kings whose arrival they all await, the one who appears to save them in difficult times, but he later accepted the trick and started to be an active part of it.

When Aslan arrives in Narnia to resolve the conflict, the Pevensie brothers blame Puzzle and don’t forgive him, although Puzzle is very ashamed of his mistake. He himself even believes he doesn’t deserve any mercy, so he tries to hide himself far away from where the brothers are: “He had been keeping out of their way as much as he could; and out of Aslan’s way. For the sight of the real Lion had made him so ashamed of all that nonsense about dressing up in a lion-skin that he did not know how to look anyone in the face.”³⁹ The little girl Jill, however, will excuse Puzzle for his errors with love: “Oh, leave poor old Puzzle alone. It was all a mistake; wasn’t it, Puzzle dear?” And she kissed him on the nose.”⁴⁰ And this attitude will be the same displayed by Aslan when he arrives to meet Puzzle. We are told that they have a short talk in which Aslan has pity on Puzzle’s indigence: “and the very first person whom Aslan called to him was Puzzle the donkey. You never saw a donkey look feebler and sillier than Puzzle did as he walked up to Aslan, and he looked, beside Aslan, as

³⁸ LB, pp. 202–203.

³⁹ Ibidem, p. 205.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, p. 105.

small as a kitten looks beside a St Bernard. The Lion bowed down his head and whispered something to Puzzle at which his long ears went down, but then he said something else at which the ears perked up again. The humans couldn't hear what he had said either time."⁴¹ The forgiveness takes place, albeit after Puzzle's confession of repentance: "I see now that I really have been a very bad donkey. I ought never to have listened to Shift. I never thought things like this would begin to happen."⁴²

It is important to note the short allusion to Emeth's weakness: love hurts. "Where did you hide, My Love, leaving me thus to moan?" exclaims Saint John of the Cross; those who do not love are the only ones that do not suffer. As Dostoyevsky affirms about the hard process of conversion of Rodion Raskolnikov, becoming a new man is not easy.⁴³ In the *Chronicles* we find Eustace, a rude and impolite child without friends because of his attitude. One night, Eustace turns into a dragon. We are not told why, but the book describes in detail Eustace's feelings and thoughts, which change progressively from pride and arrogance to being repentant of his old behaviour. At last he is conscious of how bad he was and he feels, not surprisingly, ashamed, just like Puzzle and Emeth: "he was almost afraid to be alone with himself and yet he was ashamed to be with the others."⁴⁴ Another ordinary night, after Eustace has started changing his mind about his manners—now he is happy because as he is a good dragon, he has friend—Aslan appears. Aslan wants to turn Eustace into a human again. Nevertheless, Eustace, at first, still believes he can manage the conversion himself, on his own, and tries to peel off his dragon-skin. But he finds, to his concern, that this is a never-ending activity: "oh dear, how ever many skins have I got to take off?"⁴⁵ At last he understands that "being freed from our sins and evilness is not something we are in charge of, we need someone to come from the

⁴¹ Ibidem, p. 223.

⁴² Ibidem, p. 105.

⁴³ "He did not know that the new life would not be given him for nothing, that he would have to pay dearly for it, that it would cost him great striving, great suffering." F.M. Dostoyevsky, *Crimen y castigo*, Barcelona 2009, p. 686.

⁴⁴ VDT, p. 90.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, p. 95.



outside to help us.”⁴⁶ So, relying on our own capacities “had been no good.”⁴⁷ Aslan confirms it: “You will have to let me undress you”⁴⁸, and then he starts peeling off Eustace’s dragon-skin, which hurts, highlighting the aforementioned fact that repentance is not always free. Aslan puts new clothes on Eustace, finally, the same ones as he had been wearing before, meaning that the new can also be old at the same time—and throws Eustace into a kind of a lake so that he is purified. Once Eustace’s *metanoia* is complete, he is changed. He has left behind all those things that were blinding him, as well as his selfish manners and vices. Even so, it is not a definitive change: “it would be nice, and fairly nearly 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.”⁴⁹ As human freedom always comes into play, we should take two factors in consideration: first, that we are born “knowing the witch”⁵⁰ and second, that *metanoia* is impossible for those who don’t want to see.

Last but not least, we should like to talk about what we consider the most important feature of charity: the vicariousness principle. This vicariousness⁵¹, or substitution, that can be understood as solidarity towards the other, that is, the salvation of everyone thanks to only one person. C.S. Lewis refers directly to the principle of vicariousness too:

the Sinless Man suffers for the sinful, and, in their degree, all good men for all bad men. And this Vicariousness—no less than Death and Re-birth or Selectiveness—is also a characteristic of Nature. (...) Everything is indebted to everything else, sacrificed to everything else, dependent on everything else.⁵²

⁴⁶ J. Moreno Berrocal, *50 años de la muerte de C.S. Lewis*, op. cit., p. 62.

⁴⁷ Ibidem, p. 95.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, p. 96.

⁴⁹ Ibidem, p. 99.

⁵⁰ J. Moreno Berrocal, *50 años de la muerte de C.S. Lewis*, op. cit., p. 58.

⁵¹ For further explanations concerning the principle of vicariousness, see: S. Pié-Ninot, *La teología fundamental: “Dar razón de la esperanza” (1 Pe 3,15)*, Salamanca 2002, p. 287.

⁵² C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*, London 2002, p. 191.

Therefore, the salvation of the whole of humanity thanks to Jesus Christ is the same as that described in the *Chronicles*: Narnia is saved due to Aslan. The sacrifice that has to be made to undo the mistakes of a sinner is sometimes too radical, like what happens with Edmund in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Edmund commits the mistake of believing in the Witch, and this leads Narnia to be badly threatened by the Witch. Edmund's little sister, Lucy, asks Aslan if "can anything be done to save Edmund?"⁵³, and Aslan, of course, answers the following: "all shall be done, but it may be harder than you think."⁵⁴ And what happens after is the main issue of the book: to prevent the killing of Edmund by the Witch—"that human creature is mine. His life is forfeit to me. His blood is my property."⁵⁵ Aslan offers himself to be sacrificed: "I have settled the matter. She [the Witch] has renounced the claim on your brother's blood."⁵⁶ The Witch renounces to the claim on Edmund's but claims Aslan's blood.

The Lion is killed by the Witch. In this case, considering that Christ-Aslan suffered only for reasons of solidarity is not enough: He suffered with us and for us.⁵⁷ Then we should consider the notion of substitution: "solidarity would have asked for the servant to come and suffer with his people; substitution asks for the servant to come and suffer for this people."⁵⁸ The fact of accepting the sentence will lead to abandon any type of power, not because he doesn't have it but because he decides to suffer the passion willingly, turning the martyrdom into a real sacrifice. Thomas Aquinas⁵⁹ asks himself the same question, whether the passion of Christ was a real sacrifice, and states that, as the flesh sacrificed was from the martyr himself, God accepted it due to the immense charity of the act.

⁵³ Ibidem, p. 120.

⁵⁴ Ibidem.

⁵⁵ Ibidem, p. 131.

⁵⁶ Ibidem, p. 132.

⁵⁷ In one of his first speeches to the inhabitants of Narnia, Aslan makes it clear that he will apply sacrificial love to save them: "creatures, I give you yourselves. (...) I give to you forever this land of Narnia. I give you the woods, the fruits, the rivers. I give you the stars and I give you myself" (MN, p. 109).

⁵⁸ J.E. Sayés, *Señor y Cristo*, Pamplona 1995, p. 482.

⁵⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 48, a. 3.



Lucy and Susan, horrified, see how the Witch and his evil friends torture Aslan: “Lucy and Susan held their breaths waiting for Aslan’s roar and his spring upon his enemies. But it never came.”⁶⁰ They treat him badly, they laugh at him, but he neither revolts nor complains, though “had the Lion chosen, one of those paws [Aslan’s] could have been the death of them all. But he made no noise, even when the enemies, straining and tugging, pulled the cords so tight that they cut into his flesh.”⁶¹ Both sisters witness Aslan’s death but then, miraculously, after everyone is gone except for Lucy and Susan, Aslan is resurrected and we finally understand that “there is a magic deeper still which she [the Witch] did not know. (...) She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor’s stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards.”⁶² And Narnia is saved.

Conclusions

Thanks to Jesus, charity is the new and only commandment.⁶³ Charity’s fruits are “joy, peace and mercy. It requires doing good and fraternal correction; it is benevolent; it arouses reciprocity; it is always selfless and generous; it is friendship and communion.”⁶⁴ We have observed how *The Chronicles of Narnia* provide us with multiple examples of righteous behaviours, especially with regard to charity. For this reason, in these brief lines we have tried to demonstrate that through the reading of C.S. Lewis’s saga we can work or even help to form moral virtues in those who read it. Fraternal behaviour, benevolence, generosity, friendship... the fantastic world of Narnia embraces all of them.

The style of our writer is rather personal, but we believe it is the most appropriate to serve as a vehicle for the acquisition of the moral virtues we have outlined. We are talking about happiness, joy⁶⁵: joy of

⁶⁰ LWW, p. 140.

⁶¹ Ibidem, p. 141.

⁶² Ibidem, p. 150.

⁶³ John 13:34.

⁶⁴ CCC, no. 1829.

⁶⁵ The term “joy” was first used in this sense by J.R.R. Tolkien, and it can be applied to all kind of mythopoetic tales: it is an *eucatastrophe* in the sense

creation, joy of love, joy of life. In Narnia, goodness is celebrated as well as the communion among the inhabitants of the country. Aslan's apparitions are also celebrated with joy, joy which we could compare to the relationship between the Beloved and the lover shown in the Song of Songs.⁶⁶ "We will make holiday"⁶⁷, says Aslan, and a second after, "everyone was awake, everyone was laughing, flutes were playing, cymbals clashing."⁶⁸ "Laugh and fear not, creatures"⁶⁹, suggests Aslan after the creation of Narnia. We agree with Bautista Gutiérrez⁷⁰ when he says that the theological result of *The Chronicles of Narnia* is a Christian faith that affirms life instead of denying it; the emotional result is a celebration of joy.

Nowadays, it is fashionable to talk about values, and it seems that discussing the classic notion of virtues and vices is out of date. Nevertheless, a value is not the same as a virtue. Virtue challenges man, pulls him towards the good and obliges him to do good constantly, whilst values can often be ambiguous and not as demanding as virtues; a person may not feel the need to do good after receiving an education based on values. In our postmodern society, full of moral relativism, we sustain that C.S. Lewis's affirmation of life in this concrete literary context turns out to work as a support to dignify moral virtues. Only a life worthy of living is worth celebrating with the same intensity as it is embraced. And the sincerer this embrace is, the bigger our commitment to life, to our nature as human beings and to our heart, which seeks for Truth, Goodness and Beauty.

that it constitutes an aporia that is resolved unexpectedly in a positive way, in a "happy ending".

⁶⁶ Song 1:1–4.

⁶⁷ PC, p. 168.

⁶⁸ Ibidem, p. 169.

⁶⁹ MN, p. 110.

⁷⁰ B. Gutiérrez, D. Omar, "Palabra creadora y visión poética del mundo. Los comienzos de la fantasía épica en C.S. Lewis," *Ocnos* 2011, no. 7, p. 31.



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