

Chapter Five

Lewis and the Historical Notion of Kingship

Once a King or Queen in Narnia,
always a King or Queen in Narnia.

C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), pp.189-90.

An Inkling

C.S. Lewis (1898-1963), was a scholar, and, if sometimes thought to exhibit chauvinist traits, also a gentleman. He was born in Belfast of Welsh and Irish extraction.¹ After his conversion in 1931 he was, like Charles Williams, an Anglican. Belfast was, and still is, a city of grave divisions, between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism; and between Irish Nationalism and Unionism, which might engender exposition of those things that Christians held in common, beliefs Lewis expressed in *Mere Christianity* (1952).

Lewis's early life was very different from that of Charles Williams. Lewis was born in Belfast in 1898 at "a time of economic expansion". His father was "a police court solicitor", his mother "the daughter of the Rector of St. Mark, Dundela . . . The combination of good Christian parents and a loving elder brother ensured Clive [Jack, as he called himself] a very happy childhood". The family moved from a semi-detached house in an inner suburb of Belfast into a larger house on the outskirts, which Albert had specially built for them, a sure sign of prosperity. Jack and his brother Warren were both sent to England to be educated in Public Schools. Jack was subsequently educated privately with a retired headmaster, W.T. Kirkpatrick, in Surrey. He won a scholarship to Oxford, and began to read Classics in 1917.²

Lewis's Protestant-Unionist Ulster middle-class and professional home background, with its political conservatism and monarchist sympathies, though not exactly rich was, indeed, more than merely 'comfortable'. It was, indeed, natural for Lewis to be a staunch royalist, and even with a caveat concerning excessive royal power, to uphold the ideal of a Constitutional Monarchy – "the consecration of secular life".³ Lewis, a royalist, and like Williams, believed in Christ the King, Christus Rex who "reigned from the tree"⁴ (though he rarely sympathises with Williams's dialectic stance over the idea of a Republic).

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Lewis finds His self-sacrificial love demonstrated in the sacrifice of the Cross, part of the myth that Lewis said “really happened”.⁵ There is some similarity between Williams and Lewis’s view of the Atonement. Lewis manifests an Anselmian idea of salvation through Substitution. This can be seen most obviously in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), Aslan, who allegorically represents Christ (and whose name actually means Lion), is ‘substituted’ for the traitor, Edmund, to save him from perdition. Lewis says that Williams’s idea of Atonement is “summed up” in three propositions. Firstly, there is ‘Substitution’. Secondly, we can “‘Bear one another’s burdens’” Thirdly, Williams speaks of “exchanges”. He devoted a whole chapter in *He Came Down from Heaven* (1938) to ‘The Practice of Substituted Love’.⁶

Williams saw the Incarnation as an act of renunciation, a sacrifice in itself, whereas Lewis regards it more in the light of a miracle, an “invasion by a Power . . . the God of Nature”.⁷ Reflecting Williams’s idea of ‘Exchange’ (as a means of salvation of others) Lewis’s hero Ransom, in *Perelandra* (1943), is sent to enact Christ. Ransom experienced a ‘Presence in the Darkness’, who told him that Maleldil (whose Presence it was), allegorically representing Christ, would “save Perelandra not through Himself but through Himself in Ransom”.⁸

Therefore Ransom is the miracle sent to Perelandra to preserve its innocence. Ransom’s actions demonstrate his obedience to his vocation, and are an instance of democratised kingship, of which the French Jesuit, Jean-Pierre de Caussade, said that people can “all surrender themselves to his action . . . and in the end all be participators in his majesty and privileges . . . Every soul can aspire to a crown”.⁹ Ransom becomes the Fisher-King, the wounded king, like King Pelles, and King Bran in the *Mabinogion*. In the *Arthuriad*, Williams shows how the kingdom of Logres is reconciled to God as Arthur, and Pelles wounded by the ‘Blow’, come into a relationship of co-inherence and exchange. Williams’s earthly and heavenly Kings manifest royal glory. Lewis, indirectly evincing glory, speaks of God as the source of his joy, the joy that, in fact, drew him to God. He tells of His awe-inspiring absolute beauty. In *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938), Lewis rejoices in the sight that Ransom saw from his spacecraft. He saw “planets of unbelievable majesty”, and “celestial sapphires, rubies, emeralds and pin-pricks of burning gold”,¹⁰ description that suggests both the ‘Glory’ of the created order and the splendour of royalty. Lewis talks about his discovery of a “cool morning innocence”, and a new quality – “holiness”.¹¹ He told his friend Arthur Greeves that holiness shines through William Morris’s romanticism.¹² Lewis actually refers once to the “glories and dangers and responsibilities” attaching to monarchy in *Letters to an American Lady* (1967).¹³ Although Lewis rarely uses the word ‘glory’ directly in this context, he implies both meanings of the ancient Hebrew words for ‘glory’ – the shining light and the quality that inspires awe.

Lewis asserts that Man's first duty to God and, by extension to the earthly king, is willing obedience. He looks back to the ancient Hebrews, who accepted Yahweh as King, and to His revelation to Moses. Lewis's two reasons for obedience to the divine King are because of God's declaration, 'I AM'. The first refers to His 'absolute being' and 'absolute beauty'. The second centres on God's activity and claim to sovereignty. A direct reference to Yahweh as King is seen in relation to "Yahweh's activity as creator" and the Israelite myth about His conquest of the primordial Dragon. Yahweh is addressed in Psalm 74: 12: "God is my King from of old, achieving victories in the midst of the earth".¹⁴

During a period of Atheism, Lewis found it difficult either to believe in God or to see Him as King, and thus saw no reason to obey him. After his conversion, Lewis again believed in God, initially as a Theist. Two years later, he accepted Christ as the Son of God, and believed again in the Holy Trinity. His faith restored, Lewis thought it reasonable to obey God, agreeing with Joseph Addison (1672-1719) that obedience to God makes a man happy and disobedience makes him miserable. Lewis's non-coercive idea of obedience with free will, he regards as 'loving response' to God's reciprocal love between the persons of the Trinity. Lewis's belief in obedience to the king, divine and earthly, possibly has connections with Williams's idea of co-inherence and the Pauline interchanging love of 'living-in-and-for each other'.

Williams does not, in fact, actually refer directly to obedience *per se*. Belief in obedience to God as King reflects what Lewis sees in the Psalms, especially those of enthronement, where he finds a beautiful sense of order. His notion of the obligation of obedience to the sovereign is somewhat reminiscent of the same expectation in the medieval era. For example: Richard II was jealously protective of his royal prerogative, and so governed with a strong emphasis on obedience to the monarch. Lewis, aware of the dangers of excessive use of royal power, asserted that since the Fall of Man, with Man's inherent temptation to egotism, royal power should be limited. A democracy would defend the rights of the people against evil tyranny. Like Williams (and the ancient Romans) Lewis abhorred the idea of tyranny and despotism.

Lewis had to teach some Anglo-Saxon at Oxford, notably the heroic poem *Beowulf* (c.900). In Anglo-Saxon England there was a limitation on the king's power. The "coronation ceremony . . . put limits and conditions on the king" at the same time as rallying "loyalty to his person and to the office".¹⁵ Before the end of the seventh century, 'reciprocity' was found between the "overlord and each of his dependent kings". Even in this emergent interdependence "there existed the personal relationship of lord and man".¹⁶ By contrast, Tolkien believed in the absolute authority of the king in Council, his 'men' being asked for advice to which he would listen.

Perhaps paradoxically, then, Lewis believed that through obedience, people find contentment. We note that Lewis, rather more than Williams,

emphasised the idea that belief in God and obedience to His will are found to be reasonable. In this stress on 'reason', Lewis displayed something of the Anselmian trait of defending the faith by intellectual reasoning, rather than by debate based on the Scriptures. While still an idealist, Lewis said that he believed in 'the Absolute' (that is, God though not named as God), Berkley's God, before he saw any way of entering into a relationship with it, and that once he realised that 'the Absolute' was God, he saw Him as perfect in Himself, as did the Old Testament Hebrew people. Williams, not so ready to couch his thought in formal philosophical terms saw, as Dante and Beatrice, a theophany of the Absolute in his beloved, the Regent from God's throne.

Lewis, like Williams, believes in the idea of the 'divine order' of His very 'Being'. Lewis sees the ontological order in the sheer beauty of 'the absolute', as Williams saw in order a sense of divine perfection. There is some correlation between Williams's idea of Conformity, which may be unconsciously Pharisaic, and Lewis's concept of Order.

Lewis saw in order a sense of delight, which is a less legalistic position than Williams. To use an analogy, Lewis, for instance, saw beautiful order in getting the steps of a dance right, and in the pleasure of using disciplined skill. Lewis reminded us that John Milton (1608-1674) regarded the happy life as one of order, like enjoying a complicated dance. Both Williams and Lewis believed that in order there is constant interchange between the partners, taking turns in being reverential to each "other", even between God and Man.

Lewis discussed his concept of 'Obedience' in A Preface to *Paradise Lost* (1942), which he had dedicated to Williams. Willing obedience is due, Lewis believed, to a superior, never to an inferior. He disagreed with Milton, who asserted that only God should rule Men, and that no man is given dominion over another. Milton, therefore, denies the validity of the notion of kingship, in fact, advocating regicide in his *Eikonoklastes* (1649). Lewis believed that even order can be destroyed by obeying equals, failing to obey a natural superior or by failing to rule a natural inferior. Obedience is due, in descending steps, from God downwards. Lewis goes so far as to maintain that it is a tyrant who rules over his natural equals.

Lewis's idea of order is closely related to his notion of hierarchy. While Williams was keen to laud republican egalitarian values, Lewis was more inclined to see authority stemming from a unique being at the apex of a pyramid, the very pinnacle of Creation, to whom obedience is due. To Lewis, this Being – God, is one, transcendent and absolute, and is not 'one among others'. As a 'Supernaturalist', he believed that God is "the one original or self-existing thing . . . on a different level from, and more important than, all other things".¹⁷

Lewis sees a real, and historically valid, link between hierarchy and authority. For him, it was self-evident that God, who has no superior, wields

the right to rule over all. Moreover, Lewis believed that the earthly king also has the right to rule under the authority of, and with allegiance to, the divine King, as it were to the 'High King', whose vicegerent he is in Lewis's eyes. Williams regarded the earthly king as God's Vicegerent, as did the Anglo-Saxons, who saw him as "dei vicarius", Vicar of God.¹⁸ He was, like King Arthur, anointed with oil, and set apart by God for this high office, like King David.

In *Letters to an American Lady* (1967), Lewis described Queen Elizabeth II at her coronation in 1953 as "His [God's] vice-gerent and high priest on earth".¹⁹ This view was anticipated in *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938), where Lewis portrays the ruling angel, the Oyarsa, as the vicegerent of Maleldil (who represents Christ), the Sovereign with divine authority to rule and reign.

Lewis is drawn by 'Joy' to God's Kingship

Lewis showed a predilection for monarchism in his boyhood stories of *Animal Land* written when "Jack" (as he called himself) was seven in 1905. With his brother "Warnie's" *India*, they became *Boxen*, unequivocally royal histories.²⁰ However, as Lewis pointed out in *Surprised by Joy* (1955), "*Animal Land* had nothing whatever in common with *Narnia* except the anthropomorphic beasts", and excluded the "least hint of wonder". Nevertheless, somewhat akin to wonder, his sense of longing – *Sehnsucht* – which he called 'Joy', with his distinctive intellectual enquiry over a period of some twenty years, led him to submit to God's kingship, the hardest part of his conversion process.²¹ Lewis displayed profound belief in God's kingship, in the earthly monarch as His vicegerent and in the democratised kingship of the 'Everyman', that is of anyone, provided he accepts absolute responsibility for his individual role. Like Williams, Lewis believes in the self-sacrificial love of Christ, in God's immanence, sometimes emphasising His transcendence, and in the centrality of the Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection. Again like Williams, Lewis creates through his writing a greater awareness of the spiritual nature of royalty, especially that of Queen Elizabeth II, whom he saw as God's vicegerent and high priest on earth.

Lewis equates the spiritual nature of kingship in *That Hideous Strength* (1945), contrasting the spiritual and secular kingdoms of Britain, and the image of the mythical kingdom of Logres with its chief leader, the Pendragon, successor to the Christian King Arthur. The difficulty in *That Hideous Strength* is having an actual spiritual king in Ransom the Pendragon if the same spirituality underlies the monarchies George VI and Elizabeth II. In upholding the ideal of sacral kingship, with its overall authority rooted in God, both Lewis and Williams were writing against the philosophical drift of the times. In Europe, kings and emperors were less respected in the aftermath of the Great War. Lewis's friend Owen Barfield said the prevailing

atmosphere of their undergraduate days at Oxford (the early 1920s) was very much one of “secular humanism”,²² though it could be said to apply to the twentieth century as a whole. In the development of Lewis’s ideas from childhood, his “stance”,²³ to use Barfield’s term, was not always, in spite of Lewis’s upbringing, ‘Christian’.

In *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis spoke of “an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction”.²⁴ He had not yet become aware of the source of his “desire”, his sense of longing – *Sehnsucht* – the sudden appearances of which he had referred to as ‘glimpses’ or ‘stabs’ of joy, that led him to his conversion, and to accept the kingship of God. Lewis said, “I call it Joy, which is here a technical term and must be sharply distinguished both from Happiness and from Pleasure.”²⁵ Lewis became aware of the myth of the ‘dying god’, of “Pagan Christs” like Balder and Osiris. Nicolson referred, in connection with Osiris, to what he called the “legend of death and resurrection”.²⁶ The ‘dying god’ myth was to become very significant with regard to Lewis’s return in 1931, to a Christian “stance”, through the meaning of the sacrifice of the Cross.

Lewis saw the idea of Christ as one among many ‘dying gods’ in Sir James George Frazer’s *Golden Bough*, which was “being published when he [Lewis] was with W.T. Kirkpatrick in 1914-1917”.²⁷ Lewis’s ‘stance’ changed during his schooldays. Having lost his Christian faith for the time being, he did not now obey God. This was, perhaps, due to a reluctance to conform unquestioningly to a seemingly paternalistic God. This might have been because of partially repressed memories of a “mercurial”²⁸ father, as Lewis himself puts it, coupled with those of the tyrannical and brutal headmaster, “Oldie”, of the preparatory school, Wynyard School, which was dubbed “Belsen”, named after the concentration camp.²⁹ Lewis’s army experience, which he reflected as part of Ransom’s experience in the story of *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938), where “you are never alone for a moment and can never choose where you’re going or even what part of the road you’re walking on”.³⁰ This demonstrates an existence without Free Will.

Before his conversion, Lewis saw the idea of having a God to obey as illusory. In a letter to Arthur Greeves of 12 October 1916, he had said, “All religions, that is, all mythologies to give them their proper name are merely man’s own invention”.³¹ In *Surprised by Joy* he says that “all teachers and editors took it for granted . . . that . . . religious ideas were sheer illusion”. He said later that when he was “demobbed” and returned to Oxford in 1919, he told himself there were to be “no romantic delusions”.³² He was still following the sceptical, if not cynical, views implanted at school, and also following the current trend.

In *The Abolition of Man* (1943), he argued that “you cannot go on ‘explaining away’ for ever . . . You cannot go on ‘seeing through’ things for ever. The whole point of seeing through something is to see something through it”.³³ Lewis was still dealing with escaping from illusions when in

1922, he and Barfield had discussed in Wadham gardens “‘the Christina Dream’, as we called it” (after Christina Pontifex in Butler’s novel”,³⁴ *The Way of All Flesh*, 1903). The dreams that Christina “had dreamed in sleep were sober realities in comparison with those she indulged in while awake”.³⁵ Lewis had experienced romantic longing that is the very reverse of wishful thinking. He had, around 1926, come to a state of “angry revolt” against the spell of “Christina Dreams . . . the very type of the illusions” from which he was trying to escape. His hero, Dymer, was “a man escaping from illusion”. Lewis was at this time, he says, “an idealist”.³⁶ By the time he wrote *Dymer*, he said he had rejected atheism and naturalism, in favour of idealism.³⁷

Covering the whole period of his conversion process, Lewis began writing *The Allegory of Love* in 1928, to be published in 1936. In it he said that a way, other than that of allegory, of seeing the “archetype in the copy” is through “symbolism or sacramentalism”. He finds “the more real”³⁸ experience in his symbol of joy. Lewis made a more successful attempt to explain it in *The Pilgrim’s Regress* (1933), which he wrote “during his fortnight at Bernagh”, on a holiday with Arthur Greeves in 1932.³⁹

In the second edition of *Regress* Lewis had used the word romanticism, which in the third edition he calls “intense longing”, thus equating it with his feeling and definition of joy. By this time he found that a “cause of obscurity was the (unintentionally) ‘private’ meaning [he] then gave to the word Romanticism”. He describes it there as “a particular recurrent experience which dominated my childhood and adolescence and which I hastily called Romantic because inanimate nature and marvellous literature were among the things that evoked it”. He added tellingly, “I still believe that the experience is common, commonly misunderstood, and of immense importance”.⁴⁰ Lewis demonstrates in *Regress* both his idea of the experience of joy, and also of the idea of having to obey God, represented in *Regress* by the Landlord, who proves, in fact, to be the source of his ‘Joy’.

Lewis said, “God was to be obeyed simply because He was God . . . because of what He is in Himself. If you ask why we should obey God, in the last resort the answer is, I Am. To know God is to know that our obedience is due to Him”. Lewis says he had been, like Jill and Eustace in the Narnia story, *The Silver Chair*, “taken out of [him]self”. One morning, two years after his conversion to theism in 1929, arriving at Whipsnade after a conversation with Dyson and Tolkien, Lewis said he believed “that Jesus Christ is the Son of God”.⁴¹

Lewis said in the preface to the 1950 reprint of the narrative poem *Dymer* (first edn. 1926), that he had had a ‘romantic longing’ for the ‘Hesperian or Western Garden system’ of imagery, and that, by the time he wrote *Dymer*, he had come under the common obsession about ‘Christina Dreams’. He says he should have repented his “idolatry”. He ceased to regard the Christina Dreams as “illusions”, and it seemed to him by 1929,

the year of his conversion, to be reasonable and right for him willingly to obey God. It would be rash to say categorically that during this time Lewis actually became a Republican, *per se*, insofar as he seems to have equated royalism with Christianity.

Lewis told Greeves in a letter of 2 December 1918, "I have just finished a short narrative, which is a verse version of our old friend Dymor, greatly reduced and altered to my new ideas".⁴² In 1927, Lewis was working on another narrative poem *The King of Drum*, hoping it would "clear things up". The re-written version, *The Queen of Drum* (published 1969), contains Christian symbolism. In 1938, Lewis asked John Masefield for his opinion.⁴³ Masefield said he could "feel an extraordinary beauty in the main theme – the escape of the Queen into Fairyland". *The Queen of Drum* tells us that "a King's house contains the weal of us all",⁴⁴ evincing Lewis's present enthusiasm for both Christianity and royalty.

The Queen of Drum had been written between 1918 and 1938, thus over a period elapsing Lewis's both Atheist and Christian years.⁴⁵ Lewis saw the direct connection between belief in God and obedience to Him, only after his conversion to theism in 1929. He said that even as "the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England", as he called himself in *Surprised by Joy*, he unreservedly acknowledged that "God was God". He was converted "only to Theism, pure and simple".⁴⁶ Lewis said that he "was permitted for several months, perhaps for a year, to know God and to attempt obedience without even raising that question", that is, the question of a future life. He "had been brought up to believe that goodness was goodness only if it were disinterested, and that any hope of reward, or fear of punishment, contaminated the will". As far as his conscious memory of it went, Lewis said, he was "least informed" over his "transition from mere Theism to Christianity".⁴⁷

The Source of Lewis's Joy: The Divine King

Reminding us of Ransom's journey in the spaceship in *Out of the Silent Planet*, during which he had been subjected to "the tyranny of heat and light",⁴⁸ Lewis recalled in *Surprised by Joy* "certain blazing moonlit nights in that curtainless dormitory at Wynyard", always with recollections of boyhood fears. By contrast, Lewis had always thought of his early years in Ireland as a virtually idyllic "childhood", and his years of misery in public and other private schools as his "boyhood".⁴⁹

The obstacle overcome, Lewis refers to the time that favoured royalism, as he discovers that the source of his 'Joy' is God. In the Bodleian manuscript he writes, "In this book I propose to describe the process by which I came back, like so many of my generation, from materialism to a belief in God". Lewis, "an empirical Theist", says that his "method" differs "from that of many contemporaries", being "out of harmony with the association lately established among us between classicism in art, royalism in politics and catholicism in religion".⁵⁰

This remark was a paraphrase, if not virtually a quotation, from T.S. Eliot. In *For Lancelot Andrewes: Essays on Style and Order* (1928) Eliot had described himself as “classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion”.⁵¹ Eliot’s essay describes the attitudes parodied in Lewis’s ‘three pale men’ in *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, Book Six, Chapter Two: Classicist, Neo-Angular, and Humanist (substituted for Royalist). Eliot’s self-description, in turn, was a variation of a dictum of the French avant-garde journalist and critic, Charles Maurras, (1868-1952), whom Eliot likens to the Humanist Irving Babbitt.⁵² For Maurras and others, monarchism was an act of political defiance in republican France. The French tradition is that of an absolute monarch, while the English ideal is normally that of constitutional monarchy, Nicolson’s “parliamentary kingship”.⁵³ However, in early seventeenth century England the ideal was, like the French, absolutist. Eliot asserts that although Thomas Hobbes and Bishop Bramhall (a critic of Hobbes) had “no sympathy whatever . . .” with Absolutism, “superficially their theories of kingship bear some resemblance to each other. Both men were violently hostile to democracy in any form or degree. They both believed that the monarch should have absolute power”.⁵⁴ Lewis, on the other hand, said that because of the Fall of Man, “no man can be trusted with unchecked power over his fellows”,⁵⁵ and for this reason he believed it necessary to have such a system of government as Constitutional Monarchy, without going as far as Milton, who for the same reason rejected hierarchical governance. Lewis’s conversion to Christianity was complete by 1931, having made his “dive”, an idea redolent of both self-surrender and baptism. There is, perhaps, a semi-conscious connection here with Beowulf’s self-surrender in his underwater struggles with the monsters. Lewis had found Him whom he had desired. He had desired ‘Joy’, but came to realise that, as he tells us in *Surprised by Joy*, his desire was actually for “the naked Other, imageless (though our imagination salutes it with a hundred images), unknown, undefined, undesired”.⁵⁶

Lewis was led to Christianity by his love of myth and he used myth to express his own beliefs. In a letter he said, “Any amount of theology can now be smuggled into people’s minds under the cover of romance without their knowing it”. This ‘smuggling’ is what Lewis does in the space trilogy, in particular in *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938), while the theology is more directly presented in *Perelandra* (1943), which he claimed he had written for his “co-religionists”, his fellow Christians. Lewis feared that Evolution theories were taking root in the popular imagination.⁵⁷ This can be seen in W. Olaf Stapledon’s *Last and First Men* (1930) and J.B.S. Haldane’s *Possible Worlds* (1927). There had been, indeed, projected further evolution of Man in H.G. Wells’s *Time Machine* (1895). Wells, much influenced by T.H. Huxley, envisioned the degradation of Man, divided eventually into two degenerate groups, the subterranean workers, the Morlocks, and the decadent Eloi. Lewis liked the prospect of using the inter-planetary idea to counter this situation and to create a mythology based on it with which to present the Christian point of view.

The crucial word here is ‘imagination’, referring to the ideas taking place in the popular mind. Its interpretation means the ability to imagine or form mental images or concepts of objects not present to the senses. Owen Barfield suggested that the need had been felt for a way of distinguishing what were merely ‘sweet delusions’ from the “more perdurable productions” of the Romantic spirit. This Coleridge had achieved by his distinction between fancy and imagination. ‘Fancy’ is defined as the power of inventing “illustrative imagery” and ‘imagination’ as “the power of creating from within forms which themselves become a part of Nature”.⁵⁸ Lewis had experienced conflict between ‘intellect’ and ‘imagination’ until the conversation with Tolkien and Dyson, leading to his conversion, when he accepted the idea that Christianity was the myth that actually happened. His imagination, “the organ of meaning” – and his intellect, “the organ of truth” were reconciled.⁵⁹

Baptising the Imagination

Lewis hoped to “smuggle theology” into readers’ minds to baptise their imaginations. He said in *Surprised by Joy* that his own imagination, though not yet his intellect and his will, had been “baptised by reading George MacDonald’s *Phantastes* (1858), where he found a “cool morning innocence”, and a new quality – ‘holiness’.⁶⁰ Via the ‘new quality’ Lewis also ‘smuggled’ into readers’ minds a rationale that supports monarchy, thus underwriting the sacred office of kingship. Lewis does not see God as a ‘deified ruler’, but rather does he see the King as His Vicegerent. Lewis also found something of this ‘new quality’ in William Morris. Lewis says in a letter to Arthur Greeves of 1 July 1930, that in William Morris’s *Love is Enough* (1872), Morris shows that he is “aware of the real symbolical import of all the longing and even of earthly love itself . . . For the first (and last?) time the light of holiness shines through Morris’s romanticism”.⁶¹

In MacDonald’s *The Princess and Curdie* (1883), there is an instance of the saving grace of the ‘holiness’ which Lewis found. Princess Irene was the daughter of “a real king – that is one who ruled for the good of his people, and not to please himself”. The princess’s great-great grandmother gave the gift of perception of persons to the miner’s son, Curdie. He “will be able always to tell . . . when a man is growing into a beast” – in part anticipating Perelandra. She stresses that it is important that he does not use the gift for his own ends, or he will lose it. He wonders what will happen if he makes a mistake. She tells him that “so long as he is not after his own ends, he will never make a serious mistake”.⁶²

Lewis compounds his idea of the essential link between holiness and the Kingdom of God in a letter in the Bodleian Library to his friend, the American author, Sheldon Vanauken (1955) and quoted by Vanauken in *A Severe Mercy* (1977). Lewis says, initially quoting the New Testament (Matthew 6: 33):

‘Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you’. Hopeless if it were done by your own endeavours at some particular moment. But ‘God must do it’. Your part is what you are already doing: ‘Take me – no conditions’. After that, through the daily duty, through the increasing effort after holiness – well, like the seed growing secretly.⁶³

In his science-fiction and fantasy, Lewis aims to “create and maintain a metaphor that will serve to carry in fictional form the basic tenets of Christianity and present them from a non-Christian point of view, but without reference to normal Christian symbols”.⁶⁴ As in MacDonald for example, when Curdie “saw high in the air, somewhere about the top of the king’s house, a great globe of light, shining like the purest silver”.⁶⁵ Lewis uses symbolic imagery pertaining to his ideal of sacral kingship. What is ‘holy’ or ‘sacred’ is ‘set apart’, consecrated or devoted to God, has His sanction and inherent mysterious power. Sacred significance comes through the enactment of a sacred ritual, such as a coronation, which action imparts spiritual grace to the participants.

Lewis said he had been greatly influenced by G.K. Chesterton’s *The Everlasting Man* (1925), and “for the first time saw the whole Christian outline of history set out in a form that seemed to . . . make sense”.⁶⁶ Chesterton said, “The next best thing to being really inside Christendom is to be really outside. And a particular point of it is that the popular critics of Christianity are not really outside it”. Chesterton said he desires “to help the reader to see Christendom from the outside “ – telling us that he proposes “to strike wherever possible this note of what is new and strange”. He wants both Christendom and humanity to “stand out from their background like supernatural things”.⁶⁷