



It is a well known fact that both Tolkien and Lewis were devout Christians, their beliefs certainly were an influence on their fictional works. In Lewis' case the influence is far more direct and obvious, for example Aslan's sacrifice on the Stone Table is a parallel with Christ's death on the cross. For Tolkien, Christianity has a less direct and more subtle influence. Nevertheless I would argue that The Lord of the Rings is a Christian book, in that its moral standards are firmly based on Christian principles. One example which springs to mind is Sam's treatment of Gollum at the foot of Mount Doom. In spite of all that Gollum has done Sam is unable to kill him: "Deep in his heart there was something that restrained him: he could not strike this thing lying in the dust" [RotK p.222]¹. Sam is held back by the Christian principle of mercy and shows love and respect for another life. This is a standard to which the leaders of the West adhere, but which tyrants like Sauron, Saruman (and Jadis, the White Witch) disregard.

Although it is not predominant, the theme of Kingship shows many of the Christian virtues in a perfected and idealized form: "Wisdom sat upon his brow, and strength and healing were in his hands, and a light was about him" [RotK p.246]. The king, as a ruler and protector of his people, is responsible not only for their physical well-being, but also for their moral good. The king is closely identified with the State: when there is something wrong with the king, there is something wrong with the State. This can be seen in the Narnia ruled by Miraz: "Narnia was an unhappy country....Miraz was a cruel man" [Prince Caspian, ch. 5].

Therefore when a king is corrupt there is a breakdown of values and moral decay. This can be seen in Rohan, when Theoden is under the pernicious

[1] References to The Lord of the Rings are to the 3-volume 2nd. edition (hardback), 1966.

influence of Grima Wormtongue. Eomer is unjustly and arbitrarily thrown into prison, and Gandalf, with his companions, is treated somewhat less than courteously: "Maybe you look for welcome. But truth to tell your welcome is doubtful here" [II p.117]. Theoden's behaviour can be seen as a betrayal of his responsibilities as a king; the administration of justice, and offering hospitality to strangers.

It is interesting to note how ancient writers perceived the role of kingship. They too equated the prosperity of the realm with the morals of the ruler. In the Old Testament, when David disobeys God by holding a census of his subjects, God punished the people by sending a plague [II Samuel 24, vv.10-17]. The absence of the monarch also causes distress to his country, as in the case of Odysseus, who returned after twenty years to find his country disturbed by hoards of suitors. Chaos, a disruption in the State, is often mirrored in nature. In Macbeth, the blasphemous murder of Duncan is reflected in the behaviour of the beasts: "A falcon towering in her pride of place, was by a mausing owl hawked at and killed" [Act II, scene IV].

Kingship was also seen as a reflection of God's rule and authority, and as such was idealized, as this passage from Isaiah shows:

"With righteousness he shall
judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the
meek of the earth,
and he shall smite the earth
with the rod of his mouth
and with the breath of his lips
he shall slay the wicked."

In Macbeth the role of the king is idealised, and the virtuous King Edward the Confessor is able to heal at a touch: "At his touch such sanctity hath heaven given his hand, they presently amend" [Act IV, scene III].

Healing is a divine attribute, and the concept that a true king is able to cure those whom he touches is an ancient one; this is continued in The Lord of the Rings: "The hands of the king are the hands of a healer, and so shall the rightful king be known" [RotK p.136]. The gift given to Lucy is a phial containing a cordial which will heal any hurt. Aslan not only heals bodily ills but restores the spirit: "he breathed on me and took away the trembling from my limbs" [The Last Battle]. For the Christian, Christ restores and renews through the Holy Spirit. The power to cure, to make anew, then, is one of the characteristics of true kingship.

It is necessary to look at other qualities of kingship. Courage is another attribute of the true king, and it is a virtue strongly emphasised in the Christian Church, especially in its warlike imagery, such as "Take the sword of the spirit" [Ephesians 6, v.17]. The sword is a symbol used both in Middle-earth and Narnia. When Peter uses his sword, for the first time, to kill Maugrim he shows that he has achieved maturity. Courage also has the quality to inspire hope and greater strength. Eomer is an example of this in the Battle of the Pelennor Fields, when he rallies his people around him: "Once more the lust of battle was on him, and he was still unscathed, and he was young and he was king" [RotK p.122].

Humility is another, if paradoxical, attribute of a king. It is important to distinguish between humility and abasement, true self-knowledge and pride. The rash pride of Eärnur is not to be admired. "Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up" [I Corinthians 13, v.4]. Aragorn shows true humility at his crowning [from which moment he could have become unbearably arrogant]: "By the labour and valour of many I have come into my inheritance. In token of this I would have the Ring-bearer bring the crown to me, and let Mithrandir set it upon my head" [RotK p.246].

When Aslan reveals himself as a lamb, a symbol of Christ and of sacrifice, he also shows his meekness and humility. This is in contrast to the false splendour and luxury of the palace of the Tisroc, whose court is corrupt, and who stoops to the murder of his own son. Patience and endurance, seen in Aragorn's seemingly endless labours, are also offshoots of humility.



The administration of justice is one of the most important functions of a monarch, and because it is such a personal thing, it is in justice that the first symptoms of corruption can be discerned. As judgement is the prerogative of the king alone, it is essential that his judgement should be unbiased and fair. The king Aragorn tempers justice with mercy: "Beregond, perceiving the mercy and justice of the King, was glad" [RotK p.247]. The fairness of the rulers of Narnia is shown in their treatment of Rabadash: "Justice shall be mixed with mercy."

Kingship is seen as a reflection of God's authority on earth. Although it is a temporal power, it is not without spiritual links and parallels. One Christian theme consistently stressed by both Tolkien and Lewis is responsibility. A king has obligations to his country, and these are stated at various times: "the



new age is begun; and it is your task to order its beginning and to preserve what may be preserved" (RotK p.249) and also in The Magician's Nephew : "You shall rule and name all these creatures, and do justice among them, and protect them from their enemies when enemies arise" (ch. 11).

Aragorn has inherited his responsibilities, as he admits in the council of Elrond: "it seemed fit that Isildur's heir should labour to repair Isildur's fault" (FotR p.264). The Pevensie children accept their responsibilities as monarchs, and govern Narnia well: "they made good laws and kept the peace" (The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, ch. 17). Aragorn's duties do not only lie towards his fellow Men, he is to be ruler of all the races of Middle-earth. As king he must bind the different peoples together, to work in harmony. For example, he shows his ability to bind elf and dwarf in companionship: "We will make such a chase as shall be accounted a marvel among the Three Kindreds: Elves, Dwarves and Men" (IT p.22). Eomer, too realizes the obligations which are now laid upon him: "I must depart for a while to my own realm, where there is much to heal and set in order" (RotK p. 277).

Lewis stresses that responsibilities are not always easy to accept. Caspian tries to escape his duties, when he wishes to travel to the World's End. He cannot do this because "You are the King of Narnia. You break faith with your subjects". Caspian understands a king cannot rule by whim, but is constrained by his own laws. As King Lune says: "The king's under the law, for it's the law makes him a king". In Middle-earth Aragorn also rules by law, and he "binds himself by the law that he has made".

Responsibility is an important Christian theme. The Christian has certain responsibilities, and these must be accepted, just as kingship cannot be accepted without fulfilling certain duties. Kingship therefore is given in trust on the understanding that he will rule well and wisely. In Middle-earth kingship is conferred in two ways; by hereditary right, and by popular acclaim of the charismatic leader. Aragorn is acceptable on both these counts: "'Shall he be king and enter into the City and dwell there?' And all the host and all the people cried 'yea' with one voice" (RotK p.245). It is only a tyrant like Sauron who tries to force his authority on others.

In Narnia, the crown is bestowed by Aslan, and the will of the people. By creating Aslan, a Christ figure, Lewis differs quite considerably from Tolkien, who does not allow any one figure to

shape events to such an extent. Indeed, Tolkien gives only vague hints and references about the Valar and Eru (who is not even mentioned in The Lord of the Rings). In Lewis, Aslan is "the great Lion son of the Emperor over the Sea", who allows himself to be sacrificed as a willing victim in place of Edmund. This is slightly different from the Biblical concept, as Christ died for all mankind. Since Aslan has committed no treachery the Stone Table cracks, and death begins to work backwards. This is a summary of the New Testament message: "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6 v.23). Aslan "highest of kings" is therefore a messiah, a saviour.

Kingship has frequently been linked with the idea of a saviour. A king can be a political saviour, or a spiritual saviour. In some ways the Pevensie children are both:

"When Adam's flesh and Adam's bone
Sits at Cair Paravel in throne,
The evil time will be over and done."
(LWW ch. 8). This is not only a political revolution, a change of government: the children not only save Narnia from tyranny, but it is a new way of life, and a true freedom.

Aragorn also saves a world from cruel dominion. The translation of his name, 'lord of the tree', has led some to equate him with Christ. I do not believe this idea to be true. Tolkien's own views on the subject of allegory lead me to think this ("I cordially dislike allegory" FotR foreword, p.7). The qualities he has, of courage, justice, mercy, humility, the power of healing, imply kingship but do not, however, make him a Christ figure.

However, there are similarities. Like Aslan and Christ, Aragorn inspires love and devotion: "All those who come to know him come to love him". He is also associated with light, as are Aslan and Christ ("I am the light of the world" John 8 v.12). When Eustace first sees Aslan, he sees him glowing with light: "There was moonlight where the lion was" (The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, ch. 7) In our last glimpse of Aragorn the light association is very strong: "the white mantle of Aragorn was turned to a flame. Then Aragorn took the green stone and held it up, and there came a green fire from his hand" (RotK p.260). Finally, he is also a bringer of hope, and was named 'Estel' ['hope'] as a child. In The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, Aslan in the shape of an albatross, gives Lucy hope and inspiration: "courage, dear heart".

Obedience is another Christian theme stressed by Tolkien and Lewis. "We love God and obey his commandments" (I John 5 v.2), is the message from the Christian church. Obedience is important

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the north of Europe. That is the region we must look at first; there seems no need to look to the mysterious Orient.

Orcs are more shadowy figures. The descriptions concentrate more on their physical appearance rather than their equipment. Some wore ring-mail, and weapons were varied. It isn't clear what an 'orc-scimitar' was. It may merely have been a sabre. What is very clear is that they were, on the whole, nearer in size to halflings than to men. Sam and Frodo would never have considered disguising themselves in orc-gear if the average Orc was more man-like. The size is a disadvantage in battle, and partly explains the Battle of Greenfields. It would also explain why no mention is ever made of the Shire rabbits being unusually large.

Others have suggested that the Variags of Khand were similar to the Varangian Guard of the Byzantine Empire. Any guesses based on similarities in names and nothing more are no more than that. The Easterlings bore axes. Of the others even less is known.

To sum up, the Captains of the West were lucky - what if Aragorn were late - and repeatedly surprised, in the military sense, the enemy. There is evidence that they were better armed and armoured. Quite apart from descriptions the simple fact that, of six thousand Rohirrim, four thousand survived the battle able to fight despite the high numerical odds suggests they had better protection. Also, Men are usually bigger, stronger and heavier than Orcs. All of this would work against the numerical superiority the hosts of Mordor had. The Orcs had been raiding Rohan and Gondor for several years. It is quite possible that only a few of the Orcs at the Pelennor had actual combat experience, though it was less than a year since Osgiliath was taken. The men of Rohan and Gondor could have gained more from the raiding.

There is one other difference between the two armies that would have an effect on their fighting qualities. The Orcs were driven to battle. The armies of the West were led. Throughout military history well-led armies have prevailed, from Arbela to Port Stanley.



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in Middle-earth: to obey the king is to accept his authority. However, obedience is not forced upon the peoples of Middle-earth and Narnia, except by tyrants. Kings are obeyed because of the love their subjects bear them.

So far I have only discussed the positive aspect of kingship, and have only given examples of where the king has fulfilled his role. However, in both Middle-earth and Narnia it is also possible to witness the betrayal of the ideals of kingship. Edmund's description of a tyrant sums up most of the qualities of despotism: "Proud, bloody, luxurious, cruel and self-pleasing". The White Witch, Sauron and Saruman betray the ideals of kingship. They wish to dominate in their worlds, not to guide them. In The Silmarillion, Melkor desires "to subdue to his will both Elves and Men ... he wished himself to have subjects and servants, and to be called master, and to be a master over other wills". A refusal to accept the responsibilities of kingship indicates that he is unworthy to rule. Edmund views the crown as a means by which he can gratify all his desires: "that get him off thinking about being a king and all the other things he would do" [LWW ch.9]. Another symptom of the abuse of power is the rejection of justice: "The world will be ruled by tyrants who care no more for joy and justice and mercy" [The Magician's Nephew].

Thus can one see how some of the Christian ideologies of both Tolkien and Lewis are reflected in their fictional works, particularly in the theme of kingship.

