

The Parable of CS Lewis
By John Van Sloten
Dec. 4, 2005

This week talking with CBC TV news producer about doing a film review on LWW... **[Retiscent Reaction]**
“Yeah, I guess it’s one of those films people either *have to see, or will never, ever, ever go and see!*”

PAUSE... “Maybe we could get you to do King Kong or something...” **PAUSE...** Strangely knew exactly where he coming from... **[Xn Propaganda view of Narnia]**

The comment would have made C.S. Lewis shudder... shudder b/c that was not his intent at all... **PAUSE**

“Some people seem to think that I began by asking myself how I could say something about Christianity to children; then fixed on the fairy tale as an instrument; then... drew up a list of basic Christian truths and hammered out ‘allegories’ to embody them. This is all **pure moonshine**. I couldn’t write in that way at all.”
Lewis in Letters of C.S. Lewis, p63 Ryken

“Everything began with images, a faun carrying an umbrella, a queen on a sledge, a magnificent lion. At first there wasn’t even anything Christian about them, that element **pushed itself in of its own accord.**” Lewis, *Sometimes Fairy Stories may say it best...*” p46

Lewis had faun image **16 & 18 a confirmed atheist!** wrote the LWW w/**40ish... after coming to Xn faith...**
PAUSE... what happened over those first 40 years was hugely formative bringing Lewis to ‘LWW place’
PAUSE... The **parable of his life** profound insights

An excerpt from Bowen’s (to be published) book on Narnia... **READING #1** (with 4 images)

C.S. Lewis was an avowed atheist... one who would **never want to push religion on anyone...** it had **no imagination...** just a **heavy burden...**

So Lewis let his imagination fly in other realms... A.Rackhams illustrations... **Norse Mythology...** desperately loved!... **[they brought deep meaning and joy to his soul]**

A ‘meaning and joy’ which, in retrospect, he realized had no connection at all to Christian faith... **PAUSE...**

No connection until JRR Tolkien helped him connect the dots... **PAUSE... (Again from Bowen)...**

“As they walked in Addison’s Walk, behind Magdalen College, they discussed myth. For Lewis, up to this point, the stories of Jesus, the God who dies and rises again, was simply another form of a timeless myth, and not to be taken seriously. **Tolkien argued that in Jesus myth actually breaks into history, and so it is hardly surprising that mythologies in many cultures should prefigure the actual event. For Jack(Lewis), this was a crucial connection.** How to put together the life of the intellect and the passion of the imagination had been a lifelong puzzle, and now, to his surprise, the key appeared to be in the very Christian faith he had once rejected. As he wrote shortly afterwards: The story of Christ is simply a true myth: a myth working on us in the same way as the others, but with this tremendous difference, that it really happened . . . [I]t is God’s myth where the others are men’s myths.” **LONG PAUSE...**

“the end of all our exploring/Will be to arrive where we started/ And know the place for the first time.” T.S.Eliot

And there Lewis encountered Joy... true Joy (Cap “J”) **PAUSE...** & it led him, in 40’s write, of all things, a children’s book! (Literary giant book for kids!)

A children's book (in his retrospect) would help young souls never, ever lose their imaginations comes to understanding Xn faith... **help them not get bogged down 'religion' of it all... rules/regs... all too scary legalisms of the faith...**

Preserve truth, beauty and power of this Myth come reality... "Supposing by casting all these things (Christian truths) into an imaginary world, stripping them of their stained glass and Sunday-school associations, one could make them appear in their real potency? Could one not thus steal past those watchful dragons... that paralyze so much religion?" Lewis, *Sometimes Fairy Stories may say it best...*

LONG PAUSE... One has to wonder if Jesus wasn't trying to do the same thing with the stories he told... he spoke in parables... all the time... **PAUSE... stories** with deep faith messages... profound God truths... **contemporary tales... using everyday images (seeds, trees, birds... "look at the birds of the air... [Winter hedges]... God knows every sparrow...")** to speak of the '**Great Tale**'(God's Kingdom story)... of **unimaginable realities!**

Jesus' Parables were religious paradigm busters! (No more law based Religiosity... we're gonna steal past those watchful dragons... tell a new KOG story!)

(3 SLIDES) "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" (disciples asked) He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. This is why I speak to them in parables:

"Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: " 'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.

For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise

they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them." MT 13:10-17

PAUSE... consider these words **religious** people... let the Spirit of God/Jesus Christ open your eyes to their truth... ears to hear... soften your heart...

PAUSE... Lewis wanted to protect kids from hard heartedness... 'imagination squelching' wounds that religion can often inflict... "His idea, as he once explained to me, was to **make it easier for children to accept Christianity when they met it later in life.** He hoped they would be vaguely reminded of the somewhat similar stories that they had read and enjoyed years before. "I am aiming at a sort of pre-baptism of the child's imagination." **[EXPLAIN – Xn world/context]**

PAUSE... People leave the faith... or stay clear of it (Never, ever attend that film)... because of us... when we as a church lose our imagination... lose the faith. **"Rarely is it Jesus turns them off... it's Xns!"** we take things of God systematize them... control them... destroy them... **PAUSE...** destroy a child's imagination... "Woe unto us if we cause a child to stumble..."... Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Mark 10:14 **To the child in you... PAUSE**

"[Lewis] believed that myths are glimmers of truth that God has sent to pagan people to aid their awareness of the transcendent realities that surround them. To Lewis, 'the resemblance between these myths and the Christian truth is no more accidental than the resemblance between the sun and the sun's reflection in a pond... Indeed, in his own life, myth helped him come to a point where he was able to acknowledge God's saving presence in the world.'" Leland Ryken, 108

PAUSE... This is what we're all about here at NHC... seeing God's truth and beauty in the world (**that book**) connected it to God's truth and beauty (**bible book**) We **want to be like Tolkein** help people like Lewis connect the dots... **PAUSE... want to see and tell**

God's stories/parables/myths in all of history, all of creation connect them greatest story/Myth ever!

Through the Son's reflections show them the Son.
(Homework this week watch film!... like a child again
lens of Edmund/Lucy... talk some more next week)

READING #1

As a young person, he found himself thoroughly disillusioned with the religion he grew up with, finding it unimaginative and impossibly demanding. He called it "the dry husks of Christianity." His earliest experience of church was that people in his community in Belfast went mainly to make a political statement: that they were not Roman Catholics.

The preaching he heard there (by his grandfather) was emotional and embarrassing, and frequently consisted of attacks on the Roman Catholic Church. Then, during his time at Wynyard School, he experienced a form of Christianity, which (though he says it did him good) stressed the reality of hell ("I feared for my soul"). At Cherbourg School, he became obsessively introspective about prayer until "the private practice of that religion [had become] a quite intolerable burden." He even comments, "Had I pursued the same road much further I think I should have gone mad."

Then at Malvern College, where chapel attendance was mandatory, chapel meant "no more than two hours of blessed inactivity in which to dream his dreams secure from interruption."

Lewis parodies this kind of religion in [a book eh wrote called the] The Pilgrim's Regress:

The Steward then took down from a peg a big card with small print all over it, and said, "Here is a list of all the things the Landlord says you must not do. You'd better look at it."

The Steward (presumably a priest or pastor) warns the main character, John (Lewis' alter ego), that if he breaks any of these rules (and John realises as he reads that he already breaks many of them every day, and "could not imagine not doing"):

"He'd take you and shut you up for ever in a black hole full of snakes and scorpions as large as lobsters—for ever and ever. And besides that, he is such a kind, good man, so very, very kind, that I am sure you would never *want* to displease him."

Not surprisingly, around the age of thirteen, Lewis was[quote] "desperately anxious to get rid of my religion" and was relieved to find he could escape. Certainly while he was with [his next teacher] Kirkpatrick the atheist, there was no expectation that he would attend church..... **PAUSE... all this after his beloved mother died when he was 10**