Imagination and Narratives in Preaching

C. S. Lewis and the rhetorical function of homiletical illustrations in imaginative apologetic sermons

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Contents

1 Introduction

In the present thesis, I will explore the role of *imagination* and *narratives* in *preaching*. The character of this examination is to be understood in the following manner.

First, the British scholar, apologist and writer *C. S. Lewis* will be central to the examination. The reason is that he is an interesting case to examine. Imagination and narratives played an important role in C. S. Lewis' life story, in his thinking, in his writings and in his approach to apologetics. In what has been termed *imaginative apologetics* C. S. Lewis' thinking and practice plays a key role (cf. Davison 2011b). Imaginative apologetics is an apologetics that focuses not only on the communication of the truth of Christianity, but also on the Christian faith as attractive. Beauty and goodness as well as truth are seen as important, and reason is not reduced to logic, but is seen as also involving history and story, imagination and desire (Davison 2011a, 16). In connection with imaginative apologetics, Michael Ward writes about C. S. Lewis in the following manner:

> Our examination will show that Lewis's apologetics were successful not simply because the Christianity he presented was reasonable (although reasonable it certainly was, or at any rate intended to be), but first and foremost because it was presented with imaginative skill and imaginative intent. Lewis had a profound respect for the imagination, and his thinking about and practice of imaginative apologetics constitute one of the main reasons why he is still a relevant, indeed a most timely, voice in the field. (Ward 2011, 60).

Alister E. McGrath in his book on narrative apologetics likewise finds Lewis helpful. McGrath says:

> C. S. Lewis managed to combine an appeal to both *logos* and *mythos*, using an apologetic approach that could be described as an "enhanced" approach to rationality. Lewis was drawn to Christianity on account of its intellectual capaciousness, its narrative structure, and its imaginative appeal. It told a story that made sense of things, without being limited to what could be understood or grasped by human reason. It allowed people to see themselves and their worlds in a new way, as if a sun had dawned on an otherwise shadowy and misty landscape. C. S. Lewis summarizes the intellectual virtues of Christianity succinctly and elegantly: "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen–not only because I see it, but because by it, I see everything else." (McGrath 2019, 24).

C. S Lewis' understanding of apologetics and communication of the Christian faith, as suggested, focuses on *logos* as well as *mythos*, on reason as well as narratives and imagination, and it is showing Christianity as true and meaningful in a comprehensive way. In focusing on the thinking and practice of C. S. Lewis, the thesis gets a distinctive character.

Second, in the thesis, the role of imagination and narratives in preaching is examined in the light of rhetorical theory as well as within a theological framework. Focus is on the *rhetorical function* of imagination and narratives in preaching, and the thesis can be seen as a study in

rhetoric and rhetorical criticism (cf. Foss 2018) within the discipline of homiletics. In the examination, I will explore C. S. Lewis' thinking and practice to get a deeper understanding of why and how imagination and narratives in his view are important for the communication of the Christian faith. In relation to this, I will seek to describe how imagination and narratives in C. S. Lewis' thinking and practice function rhetorically. What rhetorical functions do imagination and narratives fulfil, and how? In order to answer this question, I will especially draw upon insights from narrative rhetoric and the study of rhetorical discourses that "use narrative elements as means to their argumentative, convincing or otherwise motivational ends." (Iversen 2014, 1). In the thesis, I will moreover seek to describe the type and the purpose of C. S. Lewis' rhetoric as implied by his thinking and practice in relation to imagination and narratives. What are the characteristic features of this rhetoric? Furthermore, I will analyse two of C. S. Lewis' sermons, "Transposition" and "The Weight of Glory", as examples of how imagination and narratives might work in preaching.

Third, the role of imagination and narratives in preaching will be explored in relation to what is called *homiletical illustrations*. A traditional understanding of homiletical illustrations can best be defined with reference to the main function of illustrations. A typical traditional understanding of homiletical illustrations is found in John A. Broadus (1871, 213) who says that "[t]o illustrate, according to the etymology, is to throw light (or lustre) upon a subject". That is, an illustration makes something clear. Al Fasol (1985, 28) says that "the chief value of sermon illustration is to add appeal to the sermon; to '... paint pictures to help the congregation *see* the truth . . .;' to help the sermon 'come alive.'" Homiletical illustrations make us see something, that otherwise is obscure. Fasol explains:

> The illustration serves to make the less familiar cognizant to the congregation by the use of some analogy that is part of their lives or more familiar to them. Simply, any information that may not be easily understood by the congregation may be illuminated by an illustration that is easily understood by the congregation. (Fasol 1985, 31).

In addition to this understanding, illustrations are in the homiletical literature also seen as persuasive, as ornamentation, as a means for awakening interest and attention, as an aid for the memory and as a means for arousing emotions (op.cit., 28). Nevertheless, traditionally the number-one purpose of illustrations has been to create understanding. Illustrations, it is said, are "windows on the word" (Long 2016, 227-228). This understanding of homiletical illustrations, however, is too narrow. Thomas G. Long says:

> [S]tories, images, and examples contain more communicative power and energy than the terms "illustration" or "windows on the word" would allow. [...] Illustrations can be windows on the word, to be sure, but they can also be arenas for encountering, discerning, discovering, and experiencing the word as well. (op.cit., 229).

Illustrations, thus, are not only used for creating didactic understanding. Illustrations can instead be important experiences in themselves. Fred B. Craddock has a similar point, when he says:

> Actually, in good preaching what is referred to as illustrations are, in fact, stories or anecdotes which do not illustrate the point; rather they *are* the point. In other words, a story may carry in its bosom the whole message rather than the illumination of a message which had already been related in another but less clear way. (Craddock 2010, 204).

As we can see, contemporary homileticians have challenged the traditional understanding of homiletical illustrations. This thesis is a contribution to that discussion. In addition to discussing how homiletical illustrations function in themselves, I will focus on the significance it has, whether the homiletical illustrations work inductively or deductively in a sermon.

With the afore-mentioned in mind, the questions I want to examine in the thesis are:

1. What are C. S. Lewis' views on imagination and narratives, and how does his thinking and practice contribute to the understanding of the role of imagination and narratives in communication of the Christian faith?
2. What is the rhetorical function of the homiletical illustrations in two sermons of C. S. Lewis, "Transposition" and "The Weight of Glory", and how can the analysis of these sermons contribute to rhetorical and homiletical theory of illustrations?

In the examination, I will first present three theoretical perspectives. These theoretical perspectives will function as a background of understanding for the following discussion and as spotlights that focus the attention on important insights. Then I will examine the role of imagination and narratives in preaching, with C. S. Lewis as case. In the case study (cf. Andersen 2013), I will explore C. S. Lewis' thinking and practice in the light of theory with the aim of generating new understanding and insight. C. S. Lewis' thinking and practice is explored through biographical and historical observations and through a systematic discussion of Lewis' literary, philosophical and theological views on imagination and narratives. The aim of this examination is to provide a "thick description" and an interpretation of C. S. Lewis' thinking and practice, which can give a comprehensive understanding of his views on the role of imagination and narratives in communication of the Christian faith. In the analysis,

then, of C. S. Lewis' sermons, "Transposition" and "The Weight of Glory", the sermons are seen as examples of how imagination and narratives might work in preaching. In the analysis, I will interpret the sermons on the basis of the foregoing examination of C. S. Lewis and in light of theory. I will focus on how imagination and narratives function in the sermons in communicating the Christian faith, and on how the homiletical illustrations function, in themselves and in the flow of the sermon.

The purpose of this practical-theological thesis (cf. Swinton and Mowat 2006, 3-27), is to understand, complexify and interpret the phenomenon of imagination and narratives in preaching, in order to contribute to the understanding of the role of imagination and narratives in communication of the Christian faith. This includes contributing to rhetorical and homiletical theory of illustrations. Moreover, the goal of the thesis is to inform, qualify and inspire preachers and their practice.

2 Theory

In this thesis, I will approach an answer to the questions mentioned above using three distinct but related theoretical perspectives. The first perspective focuses on imagination, preaching and imaginative apologetics; the second on rhetoric and poetics; and the third on rhetoric and homiletical illustrations.

2.1 Imagination, preaching and imaginative apologetics

Imagination is a central perspective in contemporary biblical theology, systematic theology and practical theology (cf. Mæland 2010). According to Bård Mæland (2010, 57) imagination can be defined as the creative ability to see new possibilities. Mæland points to an illuminating description of imagination by Elizabeth Liebert, who says:

> The author who sees the end of the story before it is written, the composer who hears the melody and chords in his head, the gardener who uses the winter months to create the plan of next year's garden, the athlete who spends the few minutes before the match mentally reviewing every move she will make, the dancer who warms up so his muscles will be able to execute long-practiced moves, the Scripture scholar who painstakingly re-creates the social location of the particular biblical text prior to working out her interpretation, a parent who tries understand why her infant is crying, a person who tries to grasp his friend's pain–all these people are employing imagination to create a bridge from what is to what might be […]. (Liebert 2008, 97-98).

Following this description, imagination is about building bridges to something new, it is about crossing the border to the unknown and about seeing the unseen. The imagination opens up new possibilities in life.

David Hein and Edward Henderson (2011) highlight imaginations capacity to show us the truth of faith. Imagination has the power to make us see and comprehend the Christian faith in a fresh and invigorating way. With reference to David Brown it is said "that although facts 'sometimes attract our attention,' it is the imagination that brings out their significance for us: 'It is through appealing to our imagination that they are enabled to become "truths for us", as it were.'" (Hein and Henderson 2011, 3). As an example, C. S. Lewis is mentioned as "a master of the art of using vivid imagery to connect old truths with contemporary life." (ibid.). Furthermore, images and imagination exert an influence on our understanding and our actions. Hein and Henderson write with reference to David Harned:

> Our perceptions shape our decisions, for good or ill; and how we see is 'a function of our character, of the history and habits of the self, and ultimately of the stories that we have heard and with which we identify ourselves.' The ways in which we see, Harned notes, are 'determined by the constellation of images… that resides within the household of the self'. (Hein and Henderson 2011, 4).

In other words, what we see and understand through imagination affect our identity, how we perceive life, and how we act. Richard L. Eslinger (1995, 141) has a similar point, when he

says that "images become decisive as hermeneutic lenses through which self and world are envisioned." This in turn is crucial in relation to preaching, because through imagination and narratives preaching plays a role in the shaping of our lives. Eslingers (1995) homiletical book *Narrative & Imagination* pointedly is subtitled *Preaching the Worlds That Shape Us*. The homiletician David Buttrick (1987, 7) likewise points to the power of language when he says that "[b]y *naming*, we *think* the world we live." From this insight follows that preaching is a Christian way of naming and thinking the world in which we live. Buttrick (op.cit., 11) says: "Preaching can rename the world 'God's world' with metaphorical power, and can change identity by incorporating all our stories into 'God's story.' Preaching constructs in consciousness a 'faith-world' related to God." And: "What preaching may do is to build in consciousness a new 'faith-world' in which we may live and love!" (Buttrick 1987, 17). Buttricks view is that preaching is not just inspiration or persuasion that certain views of an aspect or reality are correct. The formation of Christian consciousness in an individual or a congregation is instead essentially transformative (Edwards 2004, 808).

Thomas H. Troeger calls preaching "a way of 'capturing the imagination' for God" (Troeger 1999, 141 cf. Green 1998, 6). Troeger says that "to capture people's imagination" is "to gain entrance into the way they organize the world." (Troeger 1999, 141). The preacher therefore is to connect with the landscape of people's hearts, and at the same time the preacher is to expand and enlighten this landscape with new meanings coming from the faith (op.cit., 140-144). The case is that Christianity involves a new way of thinking and seeing. As Andrew Davison says:

> To present the Christian faith is to present a new way to understand life and the world in which we live. Put another way, Christian faith is a new way to understand what is *real*. Clashes of worldview crystallize around this question. What each of us counts as real or unreal sets a very strong filter on how we understand what we see and, more generally, experience. (Davison 2011a, 15).

Moreover, the communication of the Christian faith where the world is interpreted in a Christian way can be apologetic. The term apologetics derives from the Greek word *apologia*, and it basically means a defence or a reasoned case that focuses on the demonstration of the correctness of an argument or belief (McGrath 2016, 15). However, as Davison notes: "Apologetics is as much an invitation as an argument: an invitation to 'taste and see' what it is like to live and think differently." (Davison 2011a, 15). Apologetics, understood this way, can be called imaginative apologetics (cf. Davison 2011b). In my understanding this kind of apologetics also comprises what Alister E. McGrath (2019, 7) calls "narrative apologetics", which is "an approach to affirming, defending, and explaining the Christian faith by telling

stories." McGrath (op.cit., 7-8) explains that narratives have a power "to capture the imagination, and thus to render the mind receptive to the truths that they enfold and express." Furthermore, apologetics, in McGraths understanding, is more than persuading people of the truth and trustworthiness of the Christian faith. Apologetics is "about depicting its world of beauty, goodness, and truth faithfully and vividly, so that people will be drawn by the richness and depth of its vision of things." (McGrath 2019, 18). Another concept that is strongly linked to imaginative apologetics is Paul M. Gould's notion of cultural apologetics, in which imagination, reason and conscience are seen as pointers to the Christian faith. Gould's thesis is that in a disenchanted world, in which the truth about God is suppressed, the missionary goal of apologetics, where we see a return to God and to reality, can be understood as a reenchantment of reality (Gould 2019).

2.2   Rhetoric and poetics

Rhetoric can be defined as "the human use of symbols to communicate" (Foss 2018, 3). This is, however, a rather broad definition, and in the classical tradition, rhetoric is primarily understood as an art of persuasive public speaking in civic life (Kennedy 1999, 1-3). Christian preaching, though distinct from secular rhetoric, can be seen as an integral part of the rhetorical tradition (Kennedy 1999).

Aristotle, in his *Rhetoric* (i. 2. 1), defines rhetoric as "the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever." Fundamental to classical rhetoric is also the insight that there are three kinds of proofs. These are *ethos*, which derives from the moral character of the speaker, *pathos*, which is appealing to the emotions, and *logos*, logical arguments (Arist., *Rh*., i. 2. 3-7). Another important distinction is between three types of rhetoric. Deliberative rhetoric exhorts or dissuades and focuses on whether proposed actions are expedient or harmful. Forensic rhetoric accuses or defends and focuses on the just and unjust. Epideictic rhetoric praises or blames and it focuses on what is noble or disgraceful (op.cit., i. 3-15). In ancient Greece and Rome, deliberative rhetoric was used in political assemblies and forensic rhetoric in law courts and in both cases focus was on debate, persuasion and decision-making. On the other hand, epideictic rhetoric does not directly focus on persuasion. The epideictic rhetoric, found for instance in the *encomium*, the speech of praise, nevertheless had a culture-shaping role. The rhetorician Jeffrey Walker (2000, 9) says that epideictic rhetoric played a fundamental role in the shaping and cultivating of the ideologies, imageries and basic codes of value and belief of individuals, society and culture.

In modern rhetorical criticism, the method of generic criticism focuses on other possible genres or types of rhetoric than those mentioned by Aristotle (Foss 2018, 179-236). One type of rhetoric, I will highlight, is constitutive rhetoric (Charland 1987). Constitutive rhetoric takes its cue from Kenneth Burkes stress on identification as the key to understanding rhetoric. According to Burke (1966, 301), there are "ways in which we *spontaneously*, *intuitively*, even *unconsciously* persuade ourselves. In forming ideas of our personal identity, we spontaneously identify ourselves with family, nation, political or cultural cause, church, and so on." Constitutive rhetoric then is focusing on the insight that we identify with and live within specific narratives or conceptions of the world. Maurice Charland (1987, 138) calls this "the ontological function of narratives." The point is that the narratives and the conceptions we live within define and shape our experience of reality. Charland (op.cit., 140) says that to be in a narrative is a "constraint upon the subject's possibilities of being. To be constituted as a subject in a narrative is to be constituted with a history, motives, and a *telos*." Furthermore, Charland points out that the process of identification works in a more subtle way than persuasion. He says that the process "is akin more to one of conversion" in that it "results in an act of recognition of the 'rightness' of a discourse and of one's identity with its reconfigured subject position." (Charland 1987, 142). Constitutive rhetoric, thus, is an understanding of the fundamental ways in which language forms identity and experiences.

Rhetoric is distinct from and at the same time closely related to poetics. The two books, *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* by Aristotle, established an influential division between two kinds of aesthetic consideration. According to this division, fully invented narratives belong to poetics, while narratives only play a minor role as examples or statements of facts in rhetorical discourse (Iversen 2014, 9). Walter R. Fisher's narrative paradigm, which is central and much discussed in the study of narratives in rhetorical discourses, has challenged this understanding (Iversen 2014). In the narrative paradigm, Fisher (1987) calls man *homo narrans*. That is, humans are essentially storytellers that understand the world through stories and not only through logic. For Fisher it is important that we recognize both *logos*, reason and logic, as well as *mythos*, imagination and narratives. Narration, however, is not merely an element in rhetorical discourse or a specific literary genre (Fisher 1987, 59). Instead, Fisher argues for what he calls a "narrative rationality". He explains: "This notion implies that all instances of human communication are imbued with logos and mythos, are constitutive of truth and knowledge, and are rational." (Fisher 1987, 20). Another place Fisher (1987, 98) states that

"the narrative paradigm insists, that arguers tell stories and storytellers argue." *Logos* and *mythos*, in other words, are intertwined in all human communication. Another thing that is important to narrative rationality is how humans make decisions based on "good reasons". Good reasons, or rationality, Fisher understands in the light of the terms narrative probability and narrative fidelity. He says:

> Rationality is determined by the nature of persons as narrative beings–their inherent awareness of *narrative probability*, what constitutes a coherent story, and their constant habit of testing *narrative fidelity*, whether or not the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives. (Fisher 1987, 64).

From the human awareness of narrative probability, if a story is coherent, and from the testing of narrative fidelity, if a story rings true with what we already know, it follows that some stories are more compelling than other stories. Therefore: "The world as we know it is a set of stories that must be chosen among in order for us to live life in a process of continual re-creation." (op.cit., 65). Seen from a Christian point of view the question is whether Christianity can offer a better and more convincing story than other conceptions of life and the world (McGrath 2019, 7).

If we look at rhetorical narratives, we can see that they fulfil several functions. Robert Rowland (2009, 121-123) says that narrative acts as a lens and as a way to understand the world. This is the epistemic function of narratives. Another function, according to Rowland, is the persuasive function, and persuasion happens in four ways. First, a credible narrative is a compelling means to get and keep the attention of an audience. Rowland in this relation highlights the perceived credibility of the story, not the truth, as the key in terms of persuasiveness. Second, narratives can create identification between the audience and the narrator or characters in the narrative. Through identification, there can be understanding. Third, narratives can break down barriers to understanding by transporting us to another place or another time. Narratives can rip us out of our own time and culture and place us in another culture, so that we can understand it better. Fourth, narratives can create a strong emotional reaction in a way that a statistical study, for instance, cannot. Another function of narratives is what William G. Kirkwood (1992) calls the rhetoric of possibility. According to Kirkwood, narratives have a special ability to open the mind to new possibilities hitherto unknown. The reason for this is found in the distinction between "telling" and "showing" (cf. Booth 1991). "Telling" is when things need to be explained, for instance if a rhetor needs to tell what a story means. "Showing" on the other hand is when a story can speak for itself. This happens when a story shows that something is possible, and how it is possible. "Showing" depicts and

demonstrates in a way, so that things become conceivable. "Showing" therefore, according to Kirkwood, is the most effective means for the opening of the mind to new and hitherto unsuspected possibilities.

2.3   Rhetoric and homiletical illustrations

In what I will call the traditional literature on homiletical illustrations, different rhetorical functions of illustrations are mentioned. Broadus (1871, 213) notes that "illustrations are used to explain, to prove, to adorn, and to render impressive." According to Charles H. Spurgeon (1894, 57-102) illustrations can secure the attention of the hearers, they can make preaching lifelike and vivid, they can explain doctrines and make hearers comprehend what is being said, they can make things clear, they can make a sermon remembered and they can arouse feelings. William E. Sangster (1978, 18-22) notes some of the same points, but in addition he says that illustrations can ease the congregation, they can make the truth impressive, they can help to persuade people and they can make repetition possible without weariness. These different rhetorical functions of illustrations are in the homiletical literature seen as reasons for using illustrations. Moreover, and most fundamentally, illustrations are understood in visual terms – they bring light and they help us see. Spurgeon says that illustrations can be likened with windows in a house. He explains:

> The chief reason for the construction of windows in a house is, as Fuller says, *to let in light*. Parables, similes, and metaphors have that effect; and hence we use them to *illustrate* our subject, or, in other words, to "*brighten it with light,*" for that is Dr. Johnson's literal rendering of the word *illustrate*. Often when didactic speech fails to enlighten our hearers we may make them see our meaning by opening a window and letting in the pleasant light of analogy. (Spurgeon 1894, 7-8).

Sangster also highlights the power of illustrations, as a remedy for seeing. Sangster (1978, 19) says: "People are convinced more by what they *see* than by what they *hear*. Illustrations help them to s*ee*." Another place he elaborates on the persuasive power of seeing. He says:

> A vivid picture that clarifies thought, or a feelingful story that touches emotion, both (in their different ways) thrust at the resisting will. A man may evade the point of an argument by half refusing to follow it and almost seize with eagerness on any obscurity in the exposition in order to sidestep the thrust which he shrewdly suspects is coming, but a picture placarded before his eyes is not so easily avoided. He *sees* the point. He cannot escape seeing it. His very struggle against the truth grows feeble. The illustration slips under his guard and wins the victory " he knows not how." (Sangster 1978, 21).

Thomas G. Long (2016, 227) says that the understanding of homiletical illustrations, where illustrations are used primarily "to bring light", so that the preacher can "make the truth of the gospel lucid and understandable", has been basic in homiletical textbooks of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Moreover, there has been a tendency to see the sermon illustration as a single, unified category, as an all-purpose device (Long 2016, 224-230). In response to this,

Long (2016, 230-247) advocates for more specialized illustrative tools. Long in this regard focuses on three different kinds of speech figures: the simile (analogies), the synecdoche (examples), and the metaphor, which he sees as characteristic for how most homiletical illustrations function. The homiletical illustrations, however, can be divided into a wider array of types. According to Al Fasol (1985, 29-30) the categories of homiletical illustrations include anecdotes, personal experience and thirteen different kinds of figures of speech.

Important to an understanding of how homiletical illustrations function, is also whether a sermons movement is inductive or deductive. Aristotle's understanding in the *Rhetoric* (ii. 20-24) is that examples can be used inductively to build a case and create conviction. In this case, it is necessary to have more than one example to make them persuasive. However, deduction is normally better, according to Aristotle. Here the rhetor begins with a maxim, a general statement or premise, and draw conclusions from there. Such arguments, called *enthymemes*, are a kind of syllogisms. Examples can here be used as a kind of supporting epilogue that functions as a kind of evidence for the *enthymeme*.

The deductive method, where there is a movement from general truth to the particular application or experience, has been basic in traditional preaching (Craddock 2001, 45). Fred Craddock says: "Homiletically, deduction means stating the thesis, breaking it down into points or subtheses, explaining and illustrating these points, and applying them to the particular situations of the hearers." (ibid.). In this scheme, homiletical illustrations have a subordinate function in that they are needed to clarify and illumine the points already stated and explained. The subordinate role of illustrations Spurgeon explains this way:

> Our house should be built up with the substantial masonry of doctrine, upon the deep foundation of inspiration; its pillars should be of solid scriptural argument, and every stone of truth should be carefully laid in its place; and then the windows should be ranged in due order, "three rows" if we will: "light against light," like the house of the forest of Lebanon. But a house is not erected for the sake of the windows, nor may a sermon be arranged with the view of fitting in a favorite apologue. A window is merely a convenience subordinate to the entire design, and so is the best illustration. We shall be foolish indeed if we compose a discourse to display a metaphor; as foolish as if an architect should build a cathedral with the view of exhibiting a stained-glass window. (Spurgeon 1894, 16-17).

Spurgeon here points out the supporting role of illustrations in sermons. Another place he says that illustrations are "not so much to be seen as to be seen through" (Spurgeon 1894, 21). Nevertheless, as Long (2016, 229) has said, often "congregations were more engaged by the illustrative material than by the conceptual parts of sermons". Sangster (1978, 114), I think, has given a forceful description of the formidable communicative power of illustrations. Sangster says that when a sermon has stated a problem and you get a sense of "how do we get

out of this?", then it is time for the preacher to begin an answer, and then, when things begin to dawn a bit but you don't quite understand yet, the preacher needs an illustration:

> While the perplexity is still deep but some glimmering apprehension of God's answer is beginning to appear, he reaches for the analogy he needs and the light shoots out like a single searchlight suddenly switched on in a pitch-black night. *This* is the position for the illustration. Here! Just here! Any light shines brighter "amid th' encircling gloom." The ugly facts have been faced – and outfaced! Gleaming in that analogy is the answer. Preacher and congregation move forward together. When the moment has come for the illustration, *give it*. To parley then is to lose pace. To give notice that you are going to illustrate is foolish. Turn the light on! (Sangster 1978, 114).

Illustrations, as described here, are as far as I can see, not just to be seen through. Instead, they are in themselves vehicles for meaning and an arena for encountering, discerning, discovering, and experiencing the Christian faith (cf. Craddock 2010, 204; Long 2016, 229).

While the deductive method begins with the general truths and from there moves to apply these truths to life, the inductive movement works the other way around. Aristotle, as noted above, saw the inductive method as inferior to the deductive method, and in classical rhetoric and traditional preaching focus has been on the deductive method. The inductive method, however, has been given new attention by Fred B. Craddock. Craddock (2001, 47) says: "In induction, thought moves from the particulars of experience that have a familiar ring in the listener's ear to a general truth or conclusion." The inductive method thus begins with common experiences instead of authoritative statements. Craddock (op.cit., 49-50) says that this gives identification with the listener and the creative use of analogy a fundamental role. In the inductive sermon, particular and shared experiences form the basis, and establish a connection with the listeners. The sermon then moves towards the conclusion, which gives the hearers an opportunity to follow the thoughts and make the conclusion their own (Craddock 2001, 43-62). Peter Jonker also argues for an inductive use of illustrations. Jonker (2015) argues for the priority of images to explanation in sermons on the assumption that "imagination is the place where change takes place" (Jonker 2015, 13). It is in the imagination, in seeing, that change begins, and faith as well as knowledge are undergirded by the imagination (op.cit., 10-19). With reference to James K. A. Smith (2009, 53), Jonker says:

> Jamie Smith suggested that this delight-to-wisdom pattern […] describes the path that all our learning and thinking follows: "Because we are affective before we are cognitive (and even while we are cognitive), visions of the good get inscribed in us by means that are commensurate with our primarily affective, imaginative nature." And in Smith's account, the means by which these visions of the good life are inscribed are "stories, legends, myths, plays, novels and films rather than dissertations, messages and monographs." The stories and the images come first, the cognition follows. (Jonker 2015, 71).

On the grounds of this reasoning, Jonker states that "the default order for our presentation of material in sermons should be image first, explanation second." (ibid.).

3   C. S. Lewis: A rational and an imaginative writer and speaker

Clive Staples Lewis (1898-1963) was born in Belfast in a middle-class family. He was called "Jack" by family and friends. C. S. Lewis was educated at Oxford University, where he studied Greek and Latin language, ancient history, philosophy and English language and literature. C. S. Lewis taught philosophy for one year in Oxford as a young don. Afterwards, and for the rest of his life, he held academic positions in English literature first at Oxford University and later at Cambridge University. C. S. Lewis was a scholar, thinker and writer. He was a literary critic, literary theorist and intellectual historian; an influential Christian apologist; and a writer of poetry and fiction (MacSwain and Ward 2010; Sayer 1994). James Como (2015, 8) says that C. S. Lewis had a number of "spheres of influence".

As a writer, C. S. Lewis worked in a variety of genres. Lewis wrote poetry, of which some was published in his twenties and some posthumously. The main genres of his writing, however, were literary criticism and history, imaginative fiction, and apologetics. The scholarly works of literary criticism and history consist among other writings of *The Allegory of Love*, *A Preface to Paradise Lost* and *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama*. Of imaginative fiction, the *Space Trilogy*, *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *Till We Have Faces*, can be highlighted. As an apologist, Lewis has written for example *The Problem of Pain*, *Miracles* and *Mere Christianity*. This short overview shows the breadth of C. S. Lewis' writings. Lewis, however, did not only write in different genres and on different subjects. C. S. Lewis was also a gifted rhetorician, who "used every rhetorical device at his disposal to communicate his message to a diverse and demanding twentieth-century audience." (Tandy 2009, 124). In sum, C. S. Lewis was a gifted and versatile writer with varied interests.

Furthermore, "his influence on his contemporaries was at least as much as orator as writer" as Gervase Mathew (1979, 96), a friend and colleague of Lewis, once wrote. C. S. Lewis was, especially in the 1940s, an active speaker. He was called upon in different settings as an apologist, an evangelist and a preacher. One central arena was the Oxford University Socratic Club, where Lewis was president from 1942-1954. The club, which in Lewis' time attracted many students, had as its purpose to answer intellectual challenges to the Christian faith in an open-minded way. Atheists and others were invited to debate the pros and cons of Christianity, and people were encouraged to follow the argument wherever it led them. In the process, where C. S. Lewis himself often was an active debater and apologist, Lewis hoped it

would be shown that Christianity was both rational and sensible (Mitchell 1997). Another arena where Lewis got a hearing was in a series of radio talks for BBC during World War II. Between 1941 and 1944 Lewis gave three series of weekly fifteen-minute talks. The BBC talks were a great success and were later published as the bestseller *Mere Christianity* (Ryken 1997, 61). During the war, C. S. Lewis furthermore was invited to do evangelistic talks at RAF bases and camps throughout the summer of 1942. Lewis himself considered his first talks a complete failure, and it is possible that the men have been put off by Lewis' tendency to lecture and by his cool rational approach, says George Sayer (1994, 282). Others assess Lewis' RAF talks differently. For instance, Stuart Barton Babbage (1974, 99-102), then a chaplain in the RAF, recounts how Lewis at an unforgettable meeting in a crowded Air Force Chapel in Norfolk preached powerfully, earnestly, personally and passionately. Another of Lewis' talks Babbage describes this way:

> To begin with, he consistently rooted his subject matter in the known experience of his hearers. Secondly, he deliberately adopted an idiomatic style of speaking as nearly as possible related to the conventions and patterns of ordinary conversation. He used words that are direct and simple and crystal clear. […] Thirdly, he recognised the illustrative and interpretive value of the apt metaphor and the striking image. Fourthly, he instinctively appreciated the importance of empathy and self-identification. He knew how to disarm his hearers by placing himself on the same level as those to whom he spoke. (Babbage 1974, 95-96).

Stuart Barton Babbage here portrays C. S. Lewis as an accomplished speaker and preacher, who did not only appeal to *logos* but also to *pathos* and *ethos*. According to Greg M. Anderson (2007, 78) Lewis saw the need for appeals to both the head and the heart, but Lewis' own strength was "the intellectual softening of the head". In addition to his speaking engagements in the Socratic Club, his speaking for the BBC and his talks for the RAF, C. S. Lewis was also called upon to preach sermons in churches on several occasions. Lewis' preaching received positive attention, and he was reported to be one of only two men who could fill the Oxford University Church to capacity (Tandy 2009, 28).

C. S. Lewis loved a good argument, and he liked a spirited debate. Rational and logic discussion and arguments were central and natural elements of C. S. Lewis' character (Tandy 2009, 43-47). Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper describe Lewis' love of argument and disputation in the following manner:

> If a friend made a thoughtless remark or a loose generality in conversation, Lewis would boom out, "I challenge that!" and the foils of logic would be clashing in a moment–thrust, parry and riposte, his eyes positively sparkling at the skilful play of words until one could almost hear the click and slide of pliant steel upon steel–and indeed the final thrust, given or very occasionally received, would often be accompanied by a joyous "Touché!" (Green and Hooper 1974, 147 in Tandy 2009, 44).

The argumentative stance of C. S. Lewis is also found in his writings. John Wain has said:

> [T]he first thing that strikes one on opening any of Lewis's books is that he is always persuading, always arguing a case. […] To him, every important issue lay in the domain of public debate. Whether it was the choice of a book to read or the choice of a God to believe in, Lewis argued the matter like a counsel. (Wain 1979, 69).

Austin Farrer (1965) likewise focuses on the importance of rational arguments for C. S. Lewis, when he describes Lewis as an apologist who argued for the truth of orthodox Christianity. In that context, Farrer says:

> For though argument does not create conviction, the lack of it destroys belief. What seems to be proved may not be embraced; but what no one shows the ability to defend is quickly abandoned. Rational argument does not create belief, but it maintains a climate in which belief may flourish. (Farrer 1965, 26).

This statement highlights the stakes for the Christian apologist, and Lewis made a forceful rational case for Christianity, says Farrer.

Arguments, however, were not Lewis' only strength. The use of fitting metaphors, analogies and apt illustrations is another key strength. Tandy (2009, 51) points out that it is Lewis' melding of reason and imagination that gives his works a unique flavour, as many critics have observed. Clyde S. Kilby (1974, 24), for example, attributes Lewis' uniqueness to "a deep and vivid imagination" and "a profoundly analytical mind". Kilby (op.cit., 24-25) says that these qualities were often seen as opposites, but in Lewis they were joined organically. Austin Farrer similarly points out that in C. S. Lewis argumentation was complemented by the creative power of imagination. Farrer says:

> Certainly he was a debater and thought it fair to make the best of his case; and there were those who were reassured by seeing that the case could be made. But his real power was not proof; it was depiction. There lived in his writings a Christian universe that could be both thought and felt, in which he was at home and in which he made his reader at home. (Farrer 1979, 243).

According to this description, the real power of C. S. Lewis was not proof but depiction. The power of depiction in Lewis' writing and speaking has also been noticed by other observers. Rachel Trickett for example, an undergraduate at Oxford University during the years 1942 to 1945, says that Lewis in the Socratic Club was brilliant and dazzling in his encounters with atheists, psychical researchers and people of different denominations. She recalls that Lewis always seemed to have just the right analogy for every situation, often leaving his opponents stunned (Mitchell 1997, 340). George Bailey (1974, 112) points to Lewis' use of analogies as an integral part of Lewis' teaching and writing. He says that "Lewis would always use analogy–the metaphor in syllogistic harness–to solve all problems. He did this sort of thing instinctively; it was his method of 'picture thinking' which he used so extensively in his books." Michael Ward (2011, 71) says that C. S. Lewis' book *Mere Christianity* in comparison with other broad introductory apologetic works stands out for the wealth of

imagery it employs. Ward says that Lewis "constantly resorts to analogy, simile and metaphor in a way and to an extent" that is unique. Chad Walsh (1979, 205 in Tandy 2009, 52) claims that Lewis' use of analogy accounts for the "seductive power" of *Mere Christianity*. These analogies, or little poems as Walsh calls them, "helps the reader imagine things that might just possibly be true". A related feature of Lewis' rhetoric is what Jerry L. Daniel (1969, 117 in Tandy 2009, 59) calls "the appeal of description," in which Lewis "describes some fact of Christian doctrine in such a way as to make it alluring, and the description itself becomes an appeal for acceptance". Furthermore, as Tandy (2009, 48-54) remarks, C. S. Lewis in his nonfiction prose used illustrations and examples inductively as a way of arguing in addition to a more deductive approach. Tandy describes the inductive method as one of the characteristic traits of Lewis' rhetoric. Tandy (op.cit., 82) says that C. S. Lewis "built upon the principles of inductive argument to create his own method of argument by analogy and illustration, giving these techniques a much more prominent place than do most religious apologists."

Another aspect to have in view is that while C. S. Lewis especially in the 1940s had relied much on rational apologetics, in the 1950s he became more comfortable and confident in his use of the imagination and at the same time less argumentative and assertive than earlier. Peter J. Schakel (2011, 28-30) points out that the earlier fictional writings of C. S. Lewis, *The Pilgrim's Regress* published 1933, and the three books in his space-travel trilogy, *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra* and *That Hideous Strength* published between 1938 and 1945, though imaginative, they all also rely on reason and conceptual material to a high degree. With the seven *Chronicles of Narnia*, published between 1950 and 1956, and *Till We Have Faces* from 1956, Lewis' fiction became more imaginative and mythical. But, how could it be that Lewis in this way turned from rigorous theological argument to children's fantasy and other imaginative literature? It has been suggested that Lewis, after a debate in 1948 in the Socratic Club with the Christian philosopher G. E. M. Anscombe, was shaken in his confidence as an apologist because of her criticism of his argument for the existence of God in the book *Miracles*. Though the importance of this event can be overstated, the meeting with Miss Anscombe was a turning point in Lewis' career as an apologist. Although Lewis did not retreat entirely from rational apologetics, *Miracles* for instance came out in a second and revised edition in 1960, C. S. Lewis in the following years came to rely less exclusively on the well-reasoned argument (Mitchell 1997, 341-346). Instead, Michael Ward (2008, 219-222) contends, Lewis wrote *The Chronicles of Narnia* as in a way a continuation of his

apologetics, though in a more imaginative form. Whereas Lewis in his rational apologetic works had been arguing for the Christian faith, the aim in his works of fiction was to show imaginatively what Christianity is like, and to give through story an experience of the Christian faith. The case is that, although necessary and powerful, rational apologetics has serious disadvantages. In the 1960-essay "The Language of Religion" Lewis says that religious experience can be communicated in two ways. The one way is theological and the other poetic. Lewis explains theological language in the following manner:

> In it we are attempting, so far as is possible, to state religious matter in a form more like that we use for scientific matter. This is often necessary, for purposes of instruction, clarification, controversy and the like. But it is not the language religion naturally speaks. We are applying precise, and therefore abstract, terms to what for us is the supreme example of the concrete. (Lewis 2000h, 261).

Lewis further elaborates that this entails a great disadvantage for the Christian apologist. For in using abstract theological language the apologist tries "to prove *that* God is in circumstances where we are denied every means of conveying *who* God is." (ibid.). To describe who God is, Lewis states, we need poetical language. The Christian doctrines are also a kind of poetical statements. It follows that the Christian faith cannot adequately be described in precise scientific theological language. Lewis (2000h, 265) says: "The very essence of our life as conscious beings, all day and every day, consists of something which cannot be communicated except by hints, similes, metaphors, and the use of those emotions (themselves not very important) which are pointers to it." Another statement in the essay explains the effect of poetic language as a pointer to something outside the human experience. It is explained this way:

> This is the most remarkable of the powers of Poetic language: to convey to us the quality of experiences which we have not had, or perhaps can never have, to use factors within our experience so that they become pointers to something outside our experience – as two or more roads on a map show us where a town that is off the map must lie. (Lewis 2000h, 259).

Christianity, thus, according to C. S. Lewis, is in some ways best comprehended indirectly using poetic or metaphoric language, in other words by using the imagination and narratives. This gives imagination and narratives a prominent role along the more rational and argumentative mode in the communication of the Christian faith.

The presentation of C. S. Lewis given here has shown Lewis as a gifted and prolific writer and speaker. In his writing and speaking, reason as well as imagination figured prominently, and for C. S. Lewis both faculties were seen as important, necessary and powerful means of communication.

4   C. S. Lewis on imagination and narratives

I will now explore C. S. Lewis' thinking on imagination and narratives in detail, in order to get a deeper understanding of why and how imagination and narratives in his view are important for the communication of the Christian faith. The case is that imagination and narratives played an important role both in Lewis' life story, in his thinking and in his writings. Personally, C. S. Lewis experienced a conversion from atheism and a return to Christianity through the aid of narratives and imagination as well as through reason (Schakel 2011, 15-24). The case is that Lewis had to see or experience the meaning of Christianity before he could accept the truth of Christianity with his reason, and his personal experiences are important in order to understand better his theoretical views on imagination and narratives (Ward 2011, 60-66).

4.1   Before something can be either true or false, it must mean

C. S. Lewis writes in his autobiography *Surprised by Joy*, published in 1955, that imagination in different ways played an important role in his life (Lewis 2012). A usual definition of imagination is "forming mental images of things not actually present" (Schakel 2011, 15-16 cf. Tolkien 1988, 44). Lewis does not mention this definition, however, and although he mentions imagination as daydreaming and wish-fulfilling fantasy and imagination as invention, the power to create, this is not what he focuses on (Lewis 2012, 15). Instead, his focus is on imagination in another sense, which he calls "the highest sense of all" (op.cit., 16). When Lewis talks about imagination in this sense, we can make a distinction between two uses or two kinds of imagination, the poetic imagination and the romantic imagination, according to Peter J. Schakel (2011, 16-17). The poetic imagination is the "organic and intuitive power needed to write poetry (and myth) […]. It relies on 'inspiration' and 'genius'. It is the mental, but not intellectual, faculty that puts things into surprising and meaningful relationships to form unified wholes." (Schakel 2011, 16). Schakel furthermore writes: "Poetry uses metaphor or myth to lift a work […] beyond events or ideas, to make it 'profound and suggestive', to enable it to evoke extraordinary affective power and impact." (ibid.). Related to poetic imagination, then, is the romantic imagination, which is a kind of longing or desire that is often aroused by literature or music or experiences of bliss and beauty (Schakel 2011, 17). This longing, or *Sehnsucht*, Lewis (2012, 18) calls Joy, and he describes it as "an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction."

In *Surprised by Joy* Lewis describes several instances of his meeting with Joy. One such instance happened when he as a boy in a periodical magazine for the first time read about Wagner's story *Siegfried and The Twilight of the Gods* and at the same time saw the accompanying illustrations by Arthur Rackham. Lewis in that moment came to feel a strong desire. He says that there arose "almost like a heartbreak, the memory of Joy itself, the knowledge that I had once had what I now lacked for years, that I was returning at last from exile and desert lands to my own country" (op.cit., 83). This almost rapturous experience soon vanished, but Lewis knew "that to 'have it again' was the supreme and only object of desire." (op.cit. 84).

The second instance I shall mention is when Lewis came to read the book *Phantastes* by George MacDonald. Lewis describes how his world in a sense changed while he was reading the book. While other experiences of Joy had reminded him of another world and left the common world momentarily a desert, he now saw "a bright shadow coming out of the book into the real world and resting there, transforming all common things and yet itself unchanged." (op.cit., 209). It sounds like Lewis had a kind of mystic experience that made him see the world in a new light. This experience was related to Christianity. For, as he proceeds: "That night my imagination was, in a certain sense, baptized; the rest of me, not unnaturally, took longer." (ibid.). When C. S. Lewis says that his imagination in a certain sense had been baptized, by the reading of MacDonald's *Phantastes*, I think the point is that it had prepared his mind and imagination to accept Christianity as meaningful and true later in life.

In the preface to *George MacDonald. An Anthology* C. S. Lewis describes the experience of reading MacDonald's works of fiction in this way: "The quality which had enchanted me in his imaginative works turned out to be the quality of the real universe, the divine, magical, terrifying and ecstatic reality in which we all live." (Lewis 1946, 21). What had happened was that the fantasy of MacDonald somehow had led Lewis to a deeper and more real view of reality. In Lewis' view, this is because MacDonald was a master in the mythopoeic art, the art of myth-making. Lewis (1946, 16) says that this art may be "one of the greatest arts". He describes it in the following manner:

> It goes beyond the expression of things we have already felt. It arouses in us sensations we have never had before, never anticipated having, as though we had broken out of our normal mode of consciousness and "possessed joys not promised to our birth". It gets under our skin, hits us at a level deeper than our thoughts or even our passions, troubles oldest certainties till all questions are re-opened, and in general shocks us more fully awake than we are for most of our lives. (Lewis 1946, 16-17).

That MacDonald's *Phantastes* can "shock us more fully awake than we are for most of our lives" may be no coincidence. For, as Alison Milbank writes, George MacDonald was influenced by the German romantic writer Novalis. Milbank explains: "The Romantic project of Novalis and those influenced by him, like the novelist George MacDonald, is to awaken in the reader this feeling of homesickness for the truth. And this, in my view, is the beginning of the apologetic task." (Milbank 2011, 33). From this follows, that the central feature of fantasy, as here understood, is to lead, in an indirect way, into reality and into the ultimate truth – the truth beyond what can be seen on the surface. Alison Milbank writes: "We need estranging techniques if we are to shock people into engagement with reality, so that they may appreciate the religious sense and we can begin to explain the Christian faith at all." (op.cit., 38). In the experience of C. S. Lewis, it was such shocks at different points in his life, which stirred his desire for Joy, and finally led him to see, that God was the ultimate object of his longings (Lewis 2012).

In C. S. Lewis' journey towards faith not only imagination, however, but also reason was important. In modernity, reason and imagination have often been seen to be in conflict (cf. Green 1998, 9-27). This conflict is also found in the early years of C. S. Lewis' life. As a young man, Lewis was torn between imagination and reason. He writes:

> The two hemispheres of my mind were in the sharpest contrast. On the one side a many-islanded sea of poetry and myth; on the other a glib and shallow 'rationalism'. Nearly all that I loved I believed to be imaginary; nearly all that I believed to be real I thought grim and meaningless. (Lewis 2012, 197).

We see here, that at this point in Lewis' life, imagination and reason both played an important role, but there was no connection between them. This, however, changed, and in the process where Lewis returned to Christianity, reason and imagination acted in a complementary fashion (Schakel 2011, 21-23).

In 1929 C. S. Lewis had come to believe that "God was God" (Lewis 2012, 266). At this point, however, he was only theist in abstract, impersonal and idealist terms (MacSwain 2010, 6). It was not until September 1931 after a long conversation with J. R. R. Tolkien and Hugo Dyson, on 19-20 September late at night, about metaphor and myth, that C. S. Lewis accepted Christianity (Lewis 1931a, 970; Lewis 1931b, 974). In a letter from 18 October, Lewis (1931c, 976) explained his friend Arthur Greeves, that he had had difficulties understanding the meaning of the doctrine of Redemption: "What has been holding me back (at any rate for the last year or so) has not been so much a difficulty in believing as a difficulty in knowing what the doctrine *meant*". Lewis could not grasp "in what sense the life

and death of Christ 'saved' or 'opened salvation to' the world." (ibid.). However, this changed. Lewis writes:

> Now what Dyson and Tolkien showed me was this: that if I met the idea of sacrifice in a Pagan story I didn't mind it at all: again, that if I met the idea of a god sacrificing himself to himself […] I liked it very much and was mysteriously moved by it […]. The reason was that in Pagan stories I was prepared to feel the myth as profound and suggestive of meanings beyond my grasp even tho' I could not say in cold prose 'what it meant'.
> Now the story of Christ is simply a true myth: a myth working on us in the same way as others, but with this tremendous difference that *it really happened*: and one must be content to accept it in the same way, remembering that it is God's myth where the others are men's myths: i.e. the Pagan stories are God expressing Himself through the minds of poets, using such images as He found there, while Christianity is God expressing Himself through what we call 'real things'. Therefore it is *true*, not in the sense of being a 'description' of God (that no finite mind could take in) but in the sense of being the way in which God chooses to (or can) appear to our faculties. (Lewis 1931c, 976-977).

What is crucial here is that Lewis had to understand the meaning of the Christian faith before he could accept Christianity as true. Another thing to notice is that Lewis came to understand the meaning of Christianity because he saw it related to other stories and insights that were meaningful to him.

In the essay "Bluspels and Flalansferes: A Semantic Nightmare", first published in 1939, C. S. Lewis says: "For me, reason is the natural organ of truth; but imagination is the organ of meaning. Imagination, producing new metaphors or revivifying old, is not the cause of truth, but its condition." (Lewis 1969, 265). Both reason and imagination thus are seen as distinct as well as necessary and complementary. The role of imagination is to give insight and new understanding through metaphorical language. As Lewis (1969, 254) writes: "For all of us there are things which we cannot fully understand at all, but of which we can get a faint inkling by means of metaphor." And through metaphor, the imagination creates meaning, which is the "antecedent condition both of truth and falsehood" (Lewis 1969, 265). Charlie W. Starr (2007, 177) explains that for C. S. Lewis the imagination, as the organ of meaning, gives reason "something to reason about". However, "[w]hether or not a meaning corresponds to reality (whether or not it is true) is something that must be determined by reason." (ibid.). Michael Ward (2011, 62) summarizes Lewis' understanding in the following manner: "[R]eason is 'the natural organ of truth'; imagination is 'the organ of meaning' and meaning itself is 'the antecedent condition of both truth and falsehood'. Imagination is therefore, for Lewis, 'the prius of truth': before something can be either true or false, it must mean." Seen in relation to C. S. Lewis' conversion to the Christian faith, Ward (2011, 63-64) notes, that "at the decisive moment, it was his imagination that first had to be addressed; it was through his imagination that his reason and, ultimately, his will were transformed."

4.2 The first, faint whisper of the wind from beyond the world

As described above, C. S. Lewis experienced a conversion to the Christian faith where the imagination played a central role. This journey to faith, W. E. Knickerbocker (1991) calls a spiritual pilgrimage from fairy tales to fairy tale. With this Knickerbocker means, that the many fairy tales had led C. S. Lewis to the greatest fairy tale of all, to the story of Jesus Christ. This does not mean, though, that Christianity for Lewis was *only* a fairy tale. As we can see in the 1945-essay "Is Theology Poetry?" C. S. Lewis rejects that theology is *merely* poetry. In the essay Lewis asks: "Does Christian Theology owe its attraction to its power of arousing and satisfying our imagination?" (Lewis 2000c, 11). In his answer, Lewis contends that Christianity, if it is only a mythology, is not the best of mythologies: "I like Greek mythology much better: Irish better still: Norse best of all." (ibid.). And, when he considers the grand story of the Scientific Outlook, he asks if it is "not one of the finest myths which human imagination has yet produced?" (Lewis 2000c, 13). Lewis on these grounds thinks it implausible, that Christians believe in Christianity "because they find it, antecedently to belief, the most poetically attractive of all world pictures" (ibid.). Lewis also says that he did not leave atheism "at the call of poetry but because I thought it could not keep afloat." (Lewis 2000c, 20). Lewis' argument in the essay is that according to a naturalistic worldview minds are only biochemistry, a "meaningless flux of the atoms", and because of this, the thoughts of human minds cannot have "any more significance than the sound of the wind in the trees." (op.cit, 21). Naturalism, therefore, cannot explain why we should trust the thoughts of our minds. On the other hand, if there is a God the situation is different. Lewis explains: "Granted that Reason is prior to matter and that the light of that primal Reason illuminates finite minds, I can understand how men should come, by observation and inference, to know a lot about the universe they live in." (op.cit., 20-21). The conclusion therefore is that Christianity can explain science, but science cannot explain itself. Lewis in this way highlights reason as the arbiter of truth, and he points out that imagination and narratives, however attractive, are not in themselves enough to settle a case.

Fairy tales, fantasy and myth, nevertheless, are important for C. S. Lewis as ways to insight and knowledge. They do have an epistemic function. In the essay "Myth Became Fact", first published 1944, Lewis looks at the function of myths. Lewis first distinguishes between abstract thinking and experiencing the concrete. He states:

> This is our dilemma – either to taste and not to know or to know and not to taste – or, more strictly, to lack one kind of knowledge because we are in an experience or to lack another kind because we are outside it. As thinkers we are cut off from what we think about; as tasting, touching, willing, loving, hating, we do not clearly understand. The more lucidly we think, the more we are cut off: the more deeply we enter into reality, the less we can think. You cannot *study* Pleasure in the moment of the nuptial embrace, nor repentance while repenting, nor analyse the nature of humour while roaring with laughter. But when else can you really know these things? (Lewis 2000f, 140).

Lewis then says that myth is the partial solution to this tragic dilemma. For: "In the enjoyment of a great myth we come nearest to experiencing as a concrete what can otherwise be understood only as an abstraction." (ibid.). In the myth, "what was merely a principle becomes imaginable." (Lewis 2000f, 141). Furthermore: "What flows into you from the myth is not truth but reality (truth is always *about* something, but reality is that *about which* truth is)*"* (ibid.). This, Lewis says, could also be described in another way. You could say that "myth is the isthmus which connects the peninsular world of thought with that vast continent we really belong to. It is not, like truth, abstract; nor is it, like direct experience, bound to the particular." (ibid.). Thus, in myth we can experience and know reality in a way, which otherwise is not possible. Starr (2007, 176) explains Lewis' point of view in the following manner: "The myth is a real object of thought, a sub-created, concrete reality, intended not to represent reality outside itself […], but to be simply what it is, a pattern of the reality *behind* (not a pattern *about* that reality but an actual taste of the reality itself)." It follows that, for Lewis, myths are not only stories, but instead a means through which we can taste reality itself. In addition, in *An Experiment in Criticism* Lewis describes myths as an encounter with the holy. He writes that a myth conveys an experience, which "is not only grave but awe-inspiring. We feel it to be numinous. It is as if something of great moment had been communicated to us." (Lewis 1961, 44).

In Christianity, then, in the incarnation, myth becomes an even greater reality. In the essay "Myth Became Fact" C. S. Lewis says:

> The heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact. The old myth of the dying God, *without ceasing to be myth*, comes down from the heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history. It *happens* – at a particular date, in a particular place, followed by definable historical consequences. We pass from a Balder or an Osiris, dying nobody knows when or where, to a historical Person crucified (it is all in order) *under Pontius Pilate*. (Lewis 2000f, 141).

Christianity is a myth, which is also a fact. In this way, the reality that otherwise could only be known through myths, is now history. "The essential meaning of all things came down from the 'heaven' of myth to the 'earth' of history.", as Lewis (2000c, 16) says. But, how is this to be understood? For one of C. S. Lewis' contemporaries, the German theologian Rudolf Bultmann, the mythical worldview of the New Testament is unbelievable for modern men. In

"Neues Testament und Mythologie" from 1941, Bultmann (1960, 16) says that "[s]ofern es nun mythologische Rede ist, ist es *für den Menschen von heute unglaubhaft,* weil für ihn das mythische Weltbild vergangen ist." Bultmann (1960) therefore wanted to demythologize the New Testament, and this involved an existential interpretation of the Christian faith. For Bultmann (1960, 23) "[d]er eigentliche Sinn des Mythos ist nicht der, ein objektives Weltbild zu geben; vielmehr spricht sich in ihm aus, wie sich der Mensch selbst in seiner Welt versteht". For Lewis (2000f, 141), on the other hand, the myth "*without ceasing to be myth* […] *happens* – at a particular date, in a particular place". In "Fern-seed and Elephants", a 1959-essay where Lewis discusses the theology and biblical criticism of Rudolf Bultmann and others, Lewis defends the historicity of the gospels (Lewis 2000b). And, in the essay "Christian Apologetics" from 1945, Lewis states that the apologist should defend "the faith preached by the Apostles, attested by the Martyrs, embodied in the Creeds, expounded by the Fathers." (Lewis 2000a, 148). Furthermore, Lewis sees the supernatural as an indispensable part of Christianity. He says:

> Do not attempt to water Christianity down. There must be no pretence that you can have it with the Supernatural left out. So far as I can see Christianity is precisely the one religion from which the miraculous cannot be separated. You must frankly argue for supernaturalism from the very outset. (Lewis 2000a, 156).

This does not mean that Lewis reads every statement in the Bible literally in the historical sense (Vanhoozer 2010, 76-78). But, it does mean that Lewis affirms both the historical and the supernatural character of the Christian faith. In other words, in Christianity, the historical and the mythological are intertwined, inseparable, real and true.

Christianity, furthermore, is unique, and it is to be distinguished from other religions and myths, although non-Christian myths at the same time can be seen as pointers to Christianity. C. S. Lewis says: "We must not be nervous about 'parallels' and 'Pagan Christs': they *ought* to be there – it would be a stumbling block if they weren't." (Lewis 2000f, 142). For if, as Lewis says, the "Divine light […] 'lighteneth every man'." Then, we should "expect to find in the imagination of great Pagan teachers and myth-makers some glimpse of that theme which we believe to be the very plot of the whole cosmic story – the theme of incarnation, death and rebirth." (Lewis 2000c, 16). The difference between the pagan stories and Christianity is therefore not between falsehood and truth. Instead, it "is the difference between a real event on the one hand and dim dreams or premonitions of that same event on the other." (ibid.).

The connection between pagan myths and the Christian gospel, as C. S. Lewis sees it, can give us an understanding of why myths, fantasy and fairy tales can in a way lead to the Christian faith. The case is that they are in a sense true. In the essay "On Three Ways of Writing for Children", from 1952, Lewis writes that a fairy tale arouses in the reader "a longing for he knows not what. It stirs and troubles him (to his life-long enrichment) with the dim sense of something beyond his reach and, far from dulling or emptying the actual world, gives it a new dimension of depth." (Lewis 2017c, 57). It follows that the fairy tale is enticing, and it beckons the reader to go forward according to his longing. Although it is unclear what it leads to, the fairy tale, as Lewis understands it, induces in the reader a call for higher things. In a letter to Arthur Greeves, Lewis says that the pagan stories and the romance are a kind of beginnings. They are "the first, faint whisper of the wind from beyond the world – while Christianity is the thing itself" (Lewis 1931d, 12-13). Another way to describe this is found in J. R. R. Tolkien's essay "On Fairy-Stories" from 1947, an essay C. S. Lewis valued highly (Lewis 2017c, 52). In the essay, Tolkien writes that the eucatastrophe, the unexpected and sudden joyous turn, the happy ending, is the mark of a good fairy-story (Tolkien 1988, 62). Furthermore, the eucatastrophe points beyond itself, as "a far-off gleam or echo of *evangelium* in the real world." (op.cit., 64). That the fairy-tales in a way can point to the Christian gospel Tolkien elaborates on in the following manner. He says:

> The Gospels contain a fairy-story, or a story of a larger kind which embraces all the essence of fairy-stories. They contain many marvels – peculiarly artistic, beautiful, and moving: 'mythical' in their perfect, self-contained significance; and among the marvels is the greatest and most complete conceivable eucatastrophe. […] The Birth of Christ is the eucatastrophe of Man's history. The Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the story of the Incarnation. […] But this story is supreme; and it is true. Art has been verified. God is the Lord, of angels, and of men – and of elves. Legend and History have met and fused. (Tolkien 1988, 65-66).

C. S. Lewis in a similar vein says, in a letter to Sister Penelope, on the grounds of his own experiences, that "the better elements in mythology can be real *praeparatio evangelica* for peoples who do not yet know whither they are being led." (Lewis 1940, 453).

The *praeparatio evangelica*, the work of pre-evangelism, is how Lewis saw much of his own work (Heck 1997). For instance, Lewis mentions that through literature, a writer can under cover smuggle theology into people's minds without their knowing it (Lewis 1939, 262). A similar understanding was behind, when C. S. Lewis wrote *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Lewis' idea was, as he once explained his friend George Sayer, "to make it easier for children to accept Christianity when they met it later in life. He hoped that 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.'" (Sayer 1994, 318). In the 1956-essay "Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's to Be Said" Lewis explains:

> I thought I saw how stories of this kind could steal past a certain inhibition which had paralysed much of my own religion in childhood. […] [S]upposing that by casting all these things 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? I thought one could. (Lewis 2017d, 70).

A little later he proceeds: "The inhibitions which I hoped my stories would overcome in a child's mind may exist in a grown-up's mind too, and may perhaps be overcome by the same means." (op.cit., 71-72). For some, but of course not for all, this has indeed been the case. Let me mention two examples. One example is Holly Ordway, a former atheist who is now English professor at Houston Baptist University, who credits C. S. Lewis and other Christian imaginative writers for playing a major role in her conversion to Christianity (Ordway 2017, 9-11). Another example is Natasha Giardina, an Australian academic, who acknowledges that although she was "never particularly religious" (Giardina 2005, 41) the Narnia story taught her "what experiencing the divine was all about" despite the fact that "this aspect *never* registered while I was reading the story" (op.cit., 39).

4.3   Exploring, experiencing and seeing reality and the Christian faith

As we have seen above, C. S. Lewis thought of myths, fantasy and fairy-tales as a way to insight and knowledge and as a means to overcome inhibitions towards the Christian faith. He also said that the mythopoeic art through stories "shocks us more fully awake than we are for most of our lives." (Lewis 1946, 17). We will now consider how these effects can be achieved, according to C. S. Lewis.

First, Lewis writes in his essay "On Science Fiction" from 1955 that science fiction and fantasy can give "sensations we never had before, and enlarge our conception of the range of possible experience." (Lewis 2017a, 99). Following this statement, Gregory Bassham (2008, 246-247) explains that fantasy has an imagination-expanding function superior to more realist literature. Fantasy broadens our perspective and enlarges our sense of what is possible. Such expanding of the imagination and the consciousness often works through what Colin Manlove (1991) calls dislocations to other places or realities. The purpose of such dislocations are "to stir the characters out of old assumptions into a wider awareness of reality." (Manlove 1991, 263). Manlove (1991, 265) furthermore explains: "The journey out of self is of value both in itself and as a means of realizing or meeting the 'other,' the true nature of reality." Joshua D.

Hill (2017) likewise points out that Lewis in *The Chronicles of Narnia* invites his readers to explore, experience and see a greater world.

Second, stories can affect the way we see life and our world. In "On Stories", first published 1947, C. S. Lewis (2017b) writes that stories appeal because of suspense and excitement. However, the quality of the experience is more important. Though some stories may only be about excitement, for Lewis it is the feeling, the sense and the atmosphere in a story that really matters. He says:

> To be stories at all they must be series of events: but it must be understood that this series–the *plot*, as we call it–is only really a net whereby to catch something else. The real theme may be, and perhaps usually is, something that has no sequence in it, something other than a process and much more like a state or quality. (Lewis 2017b, 25).

Stories are a net to catch something else, Lewis says, and this "something else" is more like a "state or quality" than "series of events". According to Michael Ward (2008), we can say that Lewis focuses on a story's atmosphere, the flavour, the smell, the taste or the mood of a story as a kind of indirect method of communication. Important in this connection is that the atmosphere in a story is something to be enjoyed and not primarily contemplated. A story's atmosphere is a way of seeing. To understand what this means we can see what Lewis wrote in the 1945-essay "Meditation in a Toolshed":

> I was standing today in the dark toolshed. The sun was shining outside and through the crack at the top of the door there came a sunbeam. From where I stood that beam of light, with the specks of dust floating in it, was the most striking thing in the place. Everything else was almost pitch-black. I was seeing the beam, not seeing things by it.
> Then I moved, so that the beam fell on my eyes. Instantly the whole previous picture vanished. I saw no toolshed, and (above all) no beam. Instead I saw, framed in the irregular cranny at the top of the door, green leaves moving on the branches of a tree outside and beyond that, ninety-odd million miles away, the sun. Looking along the beam, and looking at the beam are very different experiences. (Lewis 2000d, 607).

Ward (2008, 17) explains that "looking along the beam" is enjoyment (personal and inhabited knowledge) while "looking at the beam" is contemplation (abstract, detached and uninvolved knowledge). Ward (2008, 17-19) then contends that the atmosphere of Lewis' stories is a sort of inner meaning, which we are looking along instead of looking at. It follows that stories for Lewis are to be enjoyed as a way of seeing. Furthermore, for Lewis, coming to know God is not like "learning a subject" but like "breathing a new atmosphere" (Ward 2008, 227). When Lewis tells the Narnian stories he therefore tries to give us a taste and an experience of what belief and Christian faith is. As Schakel (2002, 61) says: "Becoming absorbed in the atmosphere of the Narnian world […]–being enabled to live imaginatively in that world for as long as the book lasts, is one of the powerful appeals of Lewis's stories."

Another way to describe the function of C. S. Lewis' stories is to say that they enable us to get on the inside of faith. Gilbert Meilaender (1991, 155) says that Lewis in his stories "offers not abstract propositions for belief but the quality, the feel, of living in the world narrated by the biblical story." One aspect of this could be to get a vision of the true, the good and the beautiful. According to a classical view of the development of moral character, which C. S. Lewis defended, one needs three things: Instruction in basic moral principles; role models to provide support, inspiration and guidance; and the development of good habits or virtues (Davis 2005, 109-110). Here stories play an important role. Bassham writes:

> According to Plato and other defenders of the classical model of moral education, s*tories* play a crucial role in moral development. Stories engage our moral imagination, provide vivid moral exemplars and activate our affections in ways that instruction or reasoned discourse (especially when directed at children) often does not. (Bassham 2008, 250).

Lewis (2017c, 63) in a similar vein writes: "Let the pictures tell you their own moral." The point is that the moral of a story must be embodied in the pictures. The meaning is conveyed through the story so we can see it.

Third, "If one looks at the rhetorical strategies informing Lewis's apologetics, one almost always finds that he begins, in the very first paragraph, by immersing the reader in a meaningful situation" (Ward 2011, 72). This means that Lewis in his writings often begins with an imaginative description before beginning to argue. Related to this I will point to Donald E. Glover (1981, 131-187), who remarks that Lewis in *The Chronicles of Narnia* uses description in order to create meaning. Glover contends that Lewis' descriptions carry the burden of convincing us of the reality of the adventures in Narnia. Furthermore, Lewis' descriptive technique "is the heart of Lewis's technique for touching our deeper imagination." (Glover 1981, 136). By way of descriptions, Lewis creates meaning. Lewis appeals to the reader's feelings through descriptions and thus seeks to move and affect the reader. He makes us see, feel and experience. One example is from *The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader"* when Prince Caspian and his crew come to the far eastern end of the world with its paradisiacal atmosphere. Lewis' description is an almost beatific vision of what heaven is like. It is an experience of wellbeing, harmony, bliss, awe and wonder:

> After that, for many days, without wind in her shrouds or foam at her bows, across a waveless sea, the *Dawn Treader* glided smoothly east. Every day and every hour the light became more brilliant and still they could bear it. No one ate or slept and no one wanted to, but they drew buckets of dazzling water from the sea, stronger than wine and somehow wetter, more liquid, than ordinary water, and pledged one another silently in deep draughts of it. And one or two of the sailors who had been oldish men when the voyage began now grew younger every day. Everyone on board was filled with joy and excitement, but not an excitement that made one talk. The further they sailed the less they spoke, and then almost in a whisper. The stillness of that last sea laid hold on them. (Lewis 2000g, 366).

This example from Lewis' fictional writing gives a little taste of the way C. S. Lewis' descriptions and stories work. They give us new sensations, and enlarge our conception of the range of possible experience. They let us explore, experience and see a greater world. In doing so, they may lead us to true reality and to Christian faith. As the Christlike Aslan says, at the end of *The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader"*, to the children Lucy, Edmund and Eustace, before they return to the real world: "This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there." (op.cit., 370).

4.4 An eductive rhetoric of the world beyond

We have now explored C. S. Lewis' views on imagination and narratives in detail and we have got a deeper understanding of why and how imagination and narratives in his view are important for the communication of the Christian faith. But how can we understand Lewis' thinking and practice in light of rhetorical theory?

First, how do imagination and narratives in C. S. Lewis' thinking and practice function rhetorically? In answering this question, I understand imagination and narratives as distinct but related categories. The imagination is the ability to see new possibilities (Mæland 2010, 57) and narrative is a fundamental form of human understanding through which the imagination can be expressed. Through stories we understand the world, as Fisher (1987) has said. In other words, narratives function epistemically as a lens for understanding (Rowland 2009, 121-122), and the narratives and the conceptions we live within constitute our experience of reality (Charland 1987). This corresponds to the fact that stories for C. S. Lewis are to be enjoyed as a way of seeing. Moreover, Lewis' stories can be seen as giving a taste and an experience of what belief and Christian faith is like. His stories enable the reader to live imaginatively in a world, and this, in an indirect way, is intended to give the reader the quality and feel of what it is like to live biblically in the world. Imagination and narratives thus form and shape our experience and understanding. C. S. Lewis also depicts and describes in order to create meaning. He makes us see, feel and experience. In other words, C. S. Lewis is "showing" us things so they become conceivable, and in doing so he opens the mind to new possible meanings and understandings (cf. Kirkwood 1992). Seen from the point of view of imaginative apologetics C. S. Lewis invites us to taste and see what Christianity is like and to assess the Christian narrative. As McGrath writes:

> Lewis's apologetic strategy is to invite his readers to step into the Christian way of seeing things, imagine how things look and feel from this perspective, and assess the quality of the Christian narrative. Does this

story seem to ring true to life and experience? Does it weave things together in a more coherent and satisfying way? Would those hearing this story like to enter and inhabit such a world? (McGrath 2019, 55)

Though McGrath does not mention Fisher here, his account resembles very much Fishers (1987, 64-65) notions of narrative fidelity, whether a story rings true with what we already know, and narrative probability, whether a story is coherent. For Fisher, these concepts are the good reasons of a narrative rationality on the grounds of which we must choose between the stories we meet in the world. For McGrath the point is that C. S. Lewis' aim in telling stories is apologetic. In McGraths (2019, 98) view such an apologetics "will aim to show that Christianity tells a better story than its rivals; that it presents a deeper account of reality, enfolding whatever truths are communicated by other stories; and that it enables rival narratives of reality to be challenged and critiqued." Here it should be noted that although fairy tales, fantasy and myth for C. S. Lewis have an epistemic function, as they are important ways to insight and knowledge, they are not in themselves enough to settle a case. "Imagination […] is not the cause of truth, but its condition." (Lewis 1969, 265). Instead, "reason is the natural organ of truth" (ibid.). This means that in Lewis' view imagination and narratives can show us possible meanings and understandings, and we are completely dependent on the "inklings" and insights that metaphors, myths and so on can give us, but reason is still the arbiter of truth. Both *logos*, reason and logic, as well as *mythos*, imagination and narratives, are therefore important and necessary for the communication of the Christian faith.

Second, how can we describe the type and the purpose of C. S. Lewis' rhetoric as implied by his thinking and practice in relation to imagination and narratives? I think we can describe this rhetoric in two interrelated ways.

One thing is that the role of imagination and narratives in communication of the Christian faith, according to C. S. Lewis, can be understood as *praeparatio evangelica*. Lewis saw his imaginative stories as a sort of pre-evangelism. Fantasy, fairy-tales and myths can be "the first, faint whisper of the wind from beyond the world – while Christianity is the thing itself" (Lewis 1931d, 12-13). Lewis also talks about a pre-baptism of the imagination, which is a preparation of the mind and the imagination to accept Christianity as meaningful and true. The preparation of the mind and the imagination for the vision of Christianity, I think, is about the way different stories and thoughts establish meaningful patterns in relation to the Christian faith. Relevant here is also C. S. Lewis' understanding of the imagination as the

"organ of meaning" and meaning as the "antecedent condition both of truth and falsehood" (Lewis 1969, 265). For, before something can be either true or false, it must mean (Ward 2011, 62), and therefore it is the imagination that first has to be addressed in the *praeparatio evangelica*.

Another thing C. S. Lewis focuses on is the expanding of the imagination. Often in Lewis' stories, we find dislocations to other places or realities, and such dislocations "stir the characters out of old assumptions into a wider awareness of reality." (Manlove 1991, 263). Lewis' narratives in this way break down barriers to understanding (cf. Rowland 2009, 122). Or, as C. S. Lewis said, when he described the mythopoeic art: "It gets under our skin, hits us at a level deeper than our thoughts or even our passions, troubles oldest certainties till all questions are re-opened, and in general shocks us more fully awake than we are for most of our lives." (Lewis 1946, 16-17). The purpose here is to awaken a feeling of homesickness for the truth (Milbank 2011, 33). Related to this is what James Como (2015, 134) says, in his interpretation of *The Chronicles of Narnia*: "This linking of worlds, and our ability to discern the next one in this, is at the heart of the Narnian drama". He also says that "escapist" or "eductive" books are "the ones which best serve our spiritual destiny – to enter the kingdom of heaven" (Como 2015, 131). The reason is that such literature lead us out of ourselves and help us break free. But, how can fantasy, fairy-tales and myths tell us about the truth? Does such stories not give a false picture of real life? In *An Experiment in Criticism* C. S. Lewis (1961, 44) says that "[m]yth is always, in one sense of that word, 'fantastic'. It deals with impossibles and preternaturals." This, however, does not mean that such stories deceive. For: "Admitted fantasy is precisely the kind of literature which never deceives at all." (Lewis 1961, 67). On the contrary, "nothing can deceive unless it bears a plausible resemblance to reality." (Lewis 1961, 56). And, "without some degree of realism in content […] no deception will occur at all. No one can deceive you unless he makes you think he is telling the truth." (Lewis 1961, 67). For this reason, the apparently true to life realistic novels are the ones that can deceive the most (op.cit., 57-68). Nevertheless, the question still is in which sense myths are true? C. S. Lewis (1961, 43) says that the myth introduces us to "a permanent object of contemplation–more like a thing than a narration–which works upon us by its peculiar flavour or quality, rather as a smell or a chord does." He also says that the pattern of the characters movements in a myth has "a profound relevance to our own life" (Lewis 1961, 44). Not in the sense that we "imaginatively transport ourselves into theirs. The story of Orpheus makes us

sad; but we are sorry for all men rather than vividly sympathetic with him" (ibid.). Furthermore, in the myth it is "as if something of great moment had been communicated to us." (ibid.). These statements, in my view, imply that in the myth we experience eternal truths. Or, as it was said earlier, myths are, for Lewis, not only stories, but instead a means through which we can taste reality itself. Stories with a mythical quality, therefore, in their imagination-expanding function, have a capacity to lead, in an indirect way, into reality and into the ultimate truth – the truth beyond what can be seen on the surface.

  C. S. Lewis' focus on *praeparatio evangelica* on the one side and the expanding of the imagination on the other side together point to the centrality of being educed, being brought out, of a conception of the world that is too small, and into the world beyond and into life with God. And this, I will say, is the purpose of C. S. Lewis' rhetoric as implied by his thinking and practice in relation to imagination and narratives. I will therefore propose that we call the type of rhetoric he uses for an eductive rhetoric of the world beyond. This type of rhetoric is fundamentally a Christian rhetoric. Erik A. Nielsen (2009, 63-64) says that the purpose of Christian rhetoric is to create humans with a double citizenship. A citizenship in this world and one in the next world. Moreover, it must persuade them that their spiritual citizenship is more important and more original than the one, which is so visible around them in the society they are born into and in which they live all their lives. The mission of Christian preaching, therefore, is to open up to and in a sense create the spiritual world with the power of language and poetry. As I see it, C. S. Lewis' eductive rhetoric of the world beyond does exactly this. Nevertheless, the eductive rhetoric of the world beyond is a sharpened version of Christian rhetoric, in which there is a special focus on imagination and narratives as means for *praeparatio evangelica* and the expanding of the imagination.

5   The homiletical illustrations in two sermons of C. S. Lewis

Having examined C. S. Lewis' views on the role of imagination and narratives in communication of the Christian truth, we will now look at Lewis as a preacher. Greg M. Anderson (2007, 75) says that "Lewis preached sermons that deserve a place in any study of great twentieth century preaching." Nevertheless, not much attention has been given to C. S. Lewis as a preacher (Anderson 2007, 76). How many sermons C. S. Lewis actually preached is unknown. Como (2015, 148) says that "Lewis delivered only a handful of sermons, but they made history in their day." Douglas Gresham on the other hand, when asked how often his stepfather gave a sermon, responded, "Lots." (Anderson 2007, 80). As noticed earlier, C. S. Lewis communicated the Christian gospel in many different arenas. My focus here is, however, on the sermons he preached in churches, and as far as I can count, we probably have nine manuscripts today from such sermons (cf. Anderson 2007; cf. Walmsley 2000). According to Anderson (2007, 79) C. S. Lewis is biblical in his theology although his preaching cannot be described as biblical exegesis. Instead, Lewis' preaching was topical and it combined the propositional and the pictorial, argumentation and imagination, in a unique way. Anderson (ibid.) says that Lewis "believed in both proposition and picture, both rhetoric and poesis, both persuasion and story. It was what made him so distinctive." In other words, both *logos* and *mythos* is found in his preaching.

All the sermons from Lewis' hand are unique. They are on different subjects and the style of the sermons differ. They are also imaginative to a greater or a lesser degree. The sermon "Miserable Offenders" (Lewis 2000e), preached at the Quarry Church near Oxford 31 March 1946 and at St. Matthew's Church in Northampton on 7 April 1946 (Anderson 2007, 80-81 and 95-96), for example, does not feature imaginative and narrative elements as prominently as the two sermons, "Transposition" and "The Weight of Glory", which I have chosen to analyse. Another thing to notice about C. S. Lewis' sermons is that most of them, according to Anderson (2007, 80), can be classified as apologetic. In my view, the two sermons I will analyse belong to this category. They are apologetic sermons, or, to be more precise, imaginative apologetic sermons. In these sermons C. S. Lewis argues for the truth of Christianity, and he seeks to show in an imaginative way the Christian faith as attractive.

I will now analyse C. S. Lewis' sermons, "Transposition" and "The Weight of Glory", as examples of how imagination and narratives might work in preaching. In the analysis of the sermons, I will focus on the rhetorical function of the homiletical illustrations found in the

two sermons, and not on the more argumentative sides of the sermons. I will ask: How do imagination and narratives function here in communicating the Christian faith? And how do the homiletical illustrations function, in themselves and in the flow of the sermon? In the course of the analysis, the sermons will be described with focus on the homiletical illustrations featuring imaginative and narrative elements. Furthermore, I will interpret the sermons on the basis of the examination of C. S. Lewis above and in light of theory. In the analysis, I will focus on what I find to be the salient features of the sermons.

5.1   «Transposition»

The first sermon I will analyse is "Transposition". This sermon was preached at Mansfield College in Oxford on the Feast of Pentecost, 28 May 1944 (Lewis 2000j; Anderson 2007, 94-95). The sermon was first published in 1949. Later, in 1962, it appeared in an extended version (Hooper 2001, 20). Walter Hooper (2001, 19) points out that C. S. Lewis probably had not been wholly satisfied with the sermon, and he therefore added "an additional portion that raises that sermon to an eminence all its own." It is the extended version of the sermon I will analyse. The reason is that in the part that was added to the original sermon, we find a fable that exhibits the imaginative and mythic quality of Lewis' later imaginative writings.

In the sermon "Transposition" C. S. Lewis (2000j) begins with a discussion of the phenomenon of speaking with tongues or *glossolalia*. Lewis finds the phenomenon of speaking with tongues embarrassing, because it in his opinion often is a result of hysteria. However, as Christians, he says, we cannot deny that on Pentecost the speaking with tongues was a miraculous event. This leads to the problem that spiritual reality expresses itself through experiences, which in other circumstances only can be understood as purely natural events. Furthermore, this problem is not only found in the relation between spiritual and natural but also between higher and lower levels of the natural life. Lewis explains that the cynic *prima facie* has a good case. Love and lust "when all is said and done [...] usually end in what is, physically the same act." Similarly, "religious language and imagery, and probably religious emotion too, contains nothing that has not been borrowed from Nature." (Lewis 2000j, 269). So does the higher or the more spiritual really exist, we can ask? Lewis now mentions an example from *Pepys's Diary* from 1688, in which Pepys describes an experience of pleasure when seeing a performance of *The Virgin Martyr*. In his diary, Pepys wrote:

> But that which did please me beyond anything in the whole world was the wind musick when the angel comes down, which is so sweet that it ravished me and, indeed, in a word, did wrap up my soul so that it made me really sick, just as I have formerly been when in love with my wife. (ibid.).

Lewis uses this example to point out that in this case "the internal sensation accompanying intense aesthetic delight was indistinguishable from the sensation accompanying two other experiences, that of being in love and that of being, say, in a rough channel crossing." (ibid.). Lewis' point is that the same sensation can accompany opposite emotions, and therefore there can be no one-for one correspondence between the two. He elaborates this point further when he says that "there never could be correspondence of that sort where the one system was really richer than the other. If the richer system is to be represented in the poorer at all, this can only be by giving each element in the poorer system more than one meaning." (Lewis 2000j, 270-271). Lewis then introduces the concept of transposition, using the method of "piling up" several examples all illustrating the same point, which is a method typical of Lewis (cf. Tandy 2009, 53). Lewis says:

> If you are to translate from a language which has a large vocabulary into a language that has a small vocabulary, then you must be allowed to use several words in more than one sense. If you are to write a language with twenty-two vowel sounds in an alphabet with only five vowel characters then you must be allowed to give each of those five characters more than one value. If you are making a piano version of a piece originally scored for an orchestra, then the same piano notes which represent flutes in one passage must also represent violins in another.
>   As the examples show we are all quite familiar with this kind of transposition or adaptation from a richer to a poorer medium. The most familiar example of all is the art of drawing. The problem here is to represent a three-dimensional shape. Thus in a drawing of a cube we use an acute angle to represent what is a right angle in the real world. But elsewhere an acute angle on the paper may represent what was already an acute angle in the real world: for example, the point of a spear or the gable of a house. The very same shape which you must draw to give the illusion of a straight road receding from the spectator is also the shape you draw for a dunce's cap. As with the lines, so with the shading. Your brightest light in the picture is, in literal fact, only plain white paper: and this must do for the sun, or a lake in evening light, or snow, or human flesh. (op.cit., 271).

According to Lewis, these examples of transposition shows that "what is happening in the lower medium can be understood only if we know the higher medium." (ibid.). Lewis explains:

> The piano version means one thing to the musician who knows the original orchestral score and another thing to the man who hears it simply as a piano piece. But the second man would be at an even greater disadvantage if he had never heard any instrument but a piano and even doubted the existence of other instruments. Even more, we understand pictures only because we know and inhabit the three-dimensional world. If we can imagine a creature who perceived only two dimensions and yet could somehow be aware of the lines as he crawled over them on the paper, we shall easily see how impossible it would be for him to understand. At first he might be prepared to accept on authority our assurance that there was a world in three dimensions. But when we pointed to the lines on the paper and tried to explain, say, that 'This is a road', would he not reply that the shape which we were asking him to accept as a revelation of our mysterious other world was the very same shape which, on our own showing, elsewhere meant nothing but a triangle. And soon, I think, he would say, 'You keep on telling me of this other world and its unimaginable shapes which you call solid. But isn't it very suspicious that all the shapes which you offer me as images or reflections of the solid ones turn out on inspection to be simply the old two-dimensional

shapes of my own world as I have always known it? Is it not obvious that your vaunted other world, so far from being the archetype, is a dream which borrows all its elements from this one? (Lewis 2000j, 271-272).

The concept of transposition and its implications Lewis then uses as an analogy for the relation between Spirit and Nature and between God and Man. Lewis expands his point this way:

> Our problem was that in what claims to be our spiritual life all the elements of our natural life recur: and, what is worse, it looks at first glance as if no other elements were present. We now see that if the spiritual is richer than the natural (as no one who believes in its existence would deny) then this is exactly what we should expect. And the sceptic's conclusion that the so-called spiritual is really derived from the natural, that it is a mirage or projection or imaginary extension of the natural, is also exactly what we should expect; for, as we have seen, this is the mistake which an observer who knew only the lower medium would be bound to make in every case of transposition. The brutal man never can by analysis find anything but lust in love; the Flatlander never can find anything but flat shapes in a picture; physiology never can find anything in thought except twitchings of the grey matter. [...].
> Everything is different when you approach the Transposition from above, as we all do in the case of emotion and sensation or of the three-dimensional world and pictures, and as the spiritual man does in the case we are considering. (op.cit., 273).

The concept of transposition as it appears in the examples and the analogy above plays a crucial role in C. S. Lewis' sermon. The examples and the analogy help us *see* what otherwise might be difficult to grasp in more abstract terms. C. S. Lewis' homiletical illustrations here "make the less familiar cognizant to the congregation by the use of some analogy that is part of their lives or more familiar to them." (cf. Fasol 1985, 31). Aristotle (*Rhetoric*, i. 2. 19) similarly says that the example is when two things are like each other "but one of them is better known than the other". The examples and the analogy, however, do not just explain what is otherwise obscure, they also function persuasively, as we are convinced by what we see (cf. Sangster 1978, 19 and 21). Lewis of course argues and explains in-between the illustrations, but the examples and the analogy are "showing" the concept of transposition in a conceivable manner, which opens the mind for recognizing the concept as true (cf. Kirkwood 1992). The examples can also be described as *praeparatio evangelica*, in that the concept of transposition establishes meaningful patterns that prepare the mind and the imagination to understand the relation between Spirit and Nature and between God and Man in a way analogical to the concept of transposition. Another thing to notice is that Lewis uses not just one but several examples, which according to Aristotle (*Rh.*, ii. 20. 9) is necessary to create conviction if examples are used inductively. Moreover, the sequence in the sermon of several examples followed by an analogy is an example of the inductive method typical of Lewis (cf. Tandy 2009, 82). C. S. Lewis does not begin the sermon by stating authoritatively what the truth of Pentecost and speaking in tongues is. Instead, he begins with the problem of

glossolalia and then adds up the evidence for his case using examples. He begins with particular experiences and then moves forward towards the conclusion, which gives the hearers an opportunity to follow the movement of thought and make the trip and the conclusion their own (cf. Craddock 2001, 43-62). In addition, the concept of transposition is used in the sermon as a controlling image. A controlling image, according to Jonker (2015), is an evocative picture or scene that shows up repeatedly in a sermon. A controlling image stands out in the listeners minds, communicates the sermon's theme and in this way helps accomplish the sermon's goal.

In the next part of the sermon, we find the portion, which was added when the sermon "Transposition" was published in an extended version in 1962 (Hooper 2001, 19). In this part of the sermon, C. S. Lewis constructs a metaphorical fable that exhibits much of the imaginative and mythic quality of his later imaginative writings. Lewis' fable has some similarities with Plato's allegory of the cave from the *Republic* (vii. 514a-517a). Both stories are about seeing a greater reality than can be seen with the naked eye. Lewis uses the fable to sum up his case in an imaginative way, although some points do follow the fable. Lewis says:

> Let us construct a fable. Let us picture a woman thrown into a dungeon. There she bears and rears a son. He grows up seeing nothing but the dungeon walls, the straw on the floor, and a little patch of the sky seen through the grating, which is too high up to show anything except sky. This unfortunate woman was an artist, and when they imprisoned her she managed to bring with her a drawing pad and a box of pencils. As she never loses the hope of deliverance she is constantly teaching her son about that outer world which he has never seen. She does it very largely by drawing him pictures. With her pencil she attempts to show him what fields, rivers, mountains, cities and waves on a beach are like. He is a dutiful boy and he does his best to believe her when she tells him that that outer world is far more interesting and glorious than anything in the dungeon. At times he succeeds. On the whole he gets on tolerably well until, one day, he says something that gives his mother pause. For a minute or two they are at cross-purposes. Finally it dawns on her that he has, all these years, lived under a misconception. 'But,' she gasps, 'you didn't think that the real world was full of lines drawn in lead pencil?' 'What?' says the boy, 'No pencil-marks there?' And instantly his whole notion of the outer world becomes a blank. For the lines, by which alone he was imagining it, have now been denied of it. He has no idea of that which will exclude and dispense with the lines, that of which the lines were merely a transposition – the waving tree-tops, the light dancing on the weir, the coloured three-dimensional realities which are not enclosed in lines but define their own shapes at every moment with a delicacy and multiplicity which no drawing could ever achieve. The child will get the idea that the real world is somehow less visible than his mother's pictures. In reality it lacks lines because it is incomparably more visible.
>
> So with us. 'We know not what we shall be': but we may be sure we shall be more, not less, than we were on earth. Our natural experiences (sensory, emotional, imaginative) are only like the drawing, like pencilled lines on flat paper. If they vanish in the risen life, they will vanish only as pencil lines vanish from the real landscape; not as a candle flame that is put out but as a candle flame which becomes invisible because someone has pulled up the blind, thrown open the shutters, and let in the blaze of the risen sun. (Lewis 2000j, 275-276).

The fable given by C. S. Lewis here is a homiletical illustration that helps us see, like the earlier illustrations in the sermon. However, while the earlier illustrations to a certain degree can be understood as windows to be seen through and not to be seen in themselves (cf.

Spurgeon 1894, 21), this fable definitely carry more weight than that. The fable is a homiletical illustration, which in itself is a vehicle for meaning and an arena for encountering, discerning, discovering, and experiencing the Christian faith (cf. Craddock 2010, 204; Long 2016, 229). The fable does not just illustrate something else. Instead, the fable is the point. This illustration therefore does not have a rhetorically subordinate role to the doctrinal and didactic material of the sermon, as illustrations should have, according to Spurgeon (1894, 16-17). The illustration here is instead essential for the creation of meaning in the sermon. Moreover, the illustration is an important part of the way the sermon is persuasive. For, as Kenneth Burke, according to Fisher (1987, 18), says: "Wherever there is persuasion, there is rhetoric and wherever there is meaning, there is persuasion." The fable can therefore also be seen as an example of what "'capturing the imagination' for God" (Troeger 1999, 141) can look like. The illustration creates meaning and makes the listener see with his imagination, that he is living in God's world and that God's world is vaster than we can think. The fable lets us see the unseen, and we get a glimpse of the world beyond. In our consciousness, the world is renamed God's world with metaphorical power, as David Buttrick (1987, 11) would say. Furthermore, the fable is a story that can function epistemically as a lens we see and understand life and the world through (cf. Fisher 1987; Rowland 2009, 121-122).

5.2   «The Weight of Glory»

The second sermon I will analyse is "The Weight of Glory", which was preached at an evensong to a large crowd at the Oxford University Church, St. Mary the Virgin, Sunday 8 June 1941 (Lewis 2000i; Anderson 2007, 84-88). Erik Routley describes his experience hearing the sermon that evening with these words:

> I think the next time he preached was in June 1941, and this one was "The Weight of Glory." This time it was a summer evening, so lighting was no problem; but the place was packed solid long before the service began. The last hymn was "Bright the Vision that Delighted." The sermon took three quarters of an hour to deliver; its stunning effect is something one can hardly communicate. Just to read it now is to be captivated by its uncanny combination of sheer beauty and severe doctrine. Here, you feel even when reading, and you felt ten times more so when listening, was a man who had been laid hold of by Christ and who enjoyed it. (Routley 1979, 34).

Greg M. Anderson (2007, 84-88) calls "The Weight of Glory" a sermonic masterpiece that blends the romantic or imaginative with reasoned argument and a relational concern.

The sermon "The Weight of Glory" (Lewis 2000i) opens with a reflection on unselfishness and love. Lewis states that unselfishness and love is not the same. Love is about securing good things for others, whereas unselfishness sees self-denial as an end in itself. From a

Christian point of view, to deny ourselves and to take up our crosses in order that we may follow Christ is not an end in itself but the way to greater rewards. Lewis then continues with an analogy in which he wants to stimulate the desire for Heaven and life with God. He says:

> Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are halfhearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased. (Lewis 2000i, 96).

After this poignant analogy, Lewis goes on to discuss whether a promise of reward makes the Christian life a mercenary affair. In doing this, he distinguishes between proper rewards and rewards that are not proper. The situation, however, Lewis says, is somewhat complicated, and Lewis uses an analogy with a schoolboy learning Greek to explain what he means:

> An enjoyment of Greek poetry is certainly a proper, and not a mercenary, reward for learning Greek; but only those who have reached the stage of enjoying Greek poetry can tell from their own experience that this is so. The schoolboy beginning Greek grammar cannot look forward to his adult enjoyment of Sophocles as a lover looks forward to marriage or a general to victory. He has to begin by working for marks, or to escape punishment, or to please his parents, or, at best, in the hope of a future good which he cannot at present imagine or desire. His position, therefore, bears a certain resemblance to that of the mercenary; the reward he is going to get will, in actual fact, be a natural or proper reward, but he will not know that till he has got it. Of course, he gets it gradually; enjoyment creeps in upon the mere drudgery, and nobody could point to a day or an hour when the one ceased and the other began. But it is just in so far as he approaches the reward that he becomes able to desire it for its own sake; indeed, the power of so desiring it is itself a preliminary reward.
> The Christian, in relation to heaven, is in much the same position as this schoolboy. Those who have attained everlasting life in the vision of God doubtless know very well that it is no mere bribe, but the very consummation of their earthly discipleship; but we who have not yet attained it cannot know this in the same way, and cannot even begin to know it at all except by continuing to obey and finding the first reward of our obedience in our increasing power to desire the ultimate reward. Just in proportion as the desire grows, our fear lest it should be a mercenary desire will die away and finally be recognised as an absurdity. But probably this will not, for most of us, happen in a day; poetry replaces grammar, gospel replaces law, longing transforms obedience, as gradually as the tide lifts a grounded ship. (Lewis 2000i, 97).

Through this analogy with a schoolboy's drudgery in learning Greek, an experience many Oxford students in 1941 probably would have known intimately, Lewis establishes a connection with lived life (cf. Hein and Henderson 2011, 3). And, through the connection with lived experience, Lewis seeks to put the longing for Heaven in its right perspective. In using the analogy, Lewis asks the listener to be patient and obedient, also when the promise of Heaven seems as a far-off and perhaps completely unimaginable dream. The situation is as with the schoolboy learning Greek, that the patience and obedience will ultimately, in the long run, pay off. Another problem, however, is that our desire can be attached to something that is not the true object. The beauty that we see or experience in this life must be in some degree fallacious. Lewis explains:

> The books or the music in which we thought the beauty was located will betray us if we trust to them; it was not *in* them, it only came *through* them, and what came through them was longing. These things – the beauty, the memory of our own past – are good images of what we really desire; but if they are mistaken for the thing itself they turn into dumb idols, breaking the hearts of their worshippers. For they are not the thing itself; they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never yet visited. Do you think I am trying to weave a spell? Perhaps I am; but remember your fairy tales. Spells are used for breaking enchantments as well as for inducing them. And you and I have need of the strongest spell that can be found to wake us from the evil enchantment of worldliness which has been laid upon us for nearly a hundred years. (Lewis 2000i, 98-99).

Here, some of Lewis' power of description is seen, in that Lewis "describes some fact of Christian doctrine in such a way as to make it alluring, and the description itself becomes an appeal for acceptance" (cf. Daniel 1969, 117 in Tandy 2009, 59). Here we also see that Lewis seeks to kindle the romantic imagination, the *Sehnsucht*, the longing for something more. In doing so, Lewis echoes Augustine who taught that we are created for God, and therefore nothing else than God can satisfy our desire (McGrath 1993, 69-70). Both the appeal to beauty and the appeal to our fundamental longing and desires are examples of Lewis' imaginative apologetics, where it is not just arguments that lead to faith, but a greater vision of what it means to be Christian (cf. Davison 2011a, 16; McGrath 2019, 18). In this paragraph of the sermon, we furthermore see Lewis talk of the need for the "strongest spell that can be found to wake us from the evil enchantment of worldliness". This is an example of what I called Lewis' eductive rhetoric of the world beyond, in which we find a need for breaking free from a conception of the world that is too small, so we can be led into the world beyond and into life with God. Here, we also find that Lewis, although using other words for it, sees the need for a reenchantment of the world (cf. Gould 2019). We are invited into a new way of thinking and seeing life and the world (cf. Davison 2011a, 15).

Lewis then continues the sermon considering another problem. For, is our desire for something that no natural happiness will satisfy real? Or, asked in another way, is there any reason to suppose that our desire can be satisfied? Does this far-off country really exist? Lewis answers this question through analogies – through the method of "picture thinking" (cf. Bailey 1974, 112). Lewis says:

> A man's physical hunger does not prove that that man will get any bread; he may die of starvation on a raft in the Atlantic. But surely a man's hunger does prove that he comes of a race which repairs its body by eating and inhabits a world where eatable substances exist. In the same way, though I do not believe (I wish I did) that my desire for Paradise proves that I shall enjoy it, I think it a pretty good indication that such a thing exists and that some men will. A man may love a woman and not win her; but it would be very odd if the phenomenon called 'falling in love' occurred in a sexless world. (Lewis 2000i, 99).

Lewis then goes on to make descriptions of heaven and of the glory that the Christian faith promises us. Central to his understanding of glory is the thought of being approved by God

and being seen by a God who delights in and loves his creatures. The glory is that we please God by the work of Christ. Lewis (2000i, 102) says: "To be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son – it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. But so it is." In the following paragraph Lewis then contrasts the experiences of spiritual longings that could be found for instance through visions, in music or in nature with the experience of being loved by God. Lewis' case is that experiences of beauty, although powerful, can leave our longings unfulfilled. It is as if "[b]eauty has smiled, but not to welcome us; her face was turned in our direction, but not to see us. We have not been accepted, welcomed, or taken into the dance." (Lewis 2000i, 103). The situation though, is another, when God sees us and approves of us: "For glory means good report with God, acceptance by God, response, acknowledgment, and welcome into the heart of things. The door on which we have been knocking all our lives will open at last." (ibid.). The metaphor of the door now becomes central in Lewis' sermon. In relation to this, it can be noticed that good metaphors are important for the understanding, because there are "things which we cannot fully understand at all, but of which we can get a faint inkling by means of metaphor." (Lewis 1969, 254). Now, the door into true reality and life with God can be opened. But, it can also be otherwise:

> We can be left utterly and absolutely *outside* – repelled, exiled, estranged, finally and unspeakably ignored. On the other hand, we can be called in, welcomed, received, acknowledged. We walk every day on the razor edge between these two incredible possibilities. Apparently, then, our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off, to be on the inside of some door which we have always seen from the outside, is no mere neurotic fancy, but the truest index of our real situation. And to be at last summoned inside would be both glory and honour beyond all our merits and also the healing of that old ache. (Lewis 2000i, 103-104).

The door as metaphor awakens in the mind and in the imagination the idea of being either on the inside or on the outside, and Lewis appeals to the listener with *pathos*. The rhetoric here can best be described as epideictic, since Lewis praises one option, to get in on the inside of the door and there be welcomed and received by God, in contrast with being on the outside of the door, repelled and ignored. In doing this, Lewis also tells a story that can constitute us "with a history, motives, and a *telos*." (cf. Charland 1987, 140). In the story he tells, and which we are called to see ourselves in, we are on a journey through life driven by deep desires and longings, longings that can lead us astray or home, for our goal is, ultimately, heaven and life with God. In this way, our images of life and our values can be shaped on a fundamental level (cf. Walker 2000, 9). The question, however, is whether this story is coherent, and whether it rings true with what we know to be true in our lives? And would we

like to enter and inhabit such a story? (cf. Fisher 1987, 64; McGrath 2019, 55). The story Lewis tells can be seen as coherent, for it has its own meaningful logic. But does it ring true to life and experience? For this to be the case, our mind must be open to a new and hitherto unknown possibility. In other words, it must be "shown" that the story told is conceivable (cf. Kirkwood 1992). In the sermon, Lewis now describes the heavenly bliss with poetical metaphors, partly from the Bible and partly from his own imagination, and thus appeals to the ability of imagination to cross the border to the unknown and see the unseen (cf. Mæland 2010, 57). This description is a culmination of the movement towards the satisfaction of our desires and it is a high point of the sermon. Lewis says:

> And this brings me to the other sense of glory – glory as brightness, splendour, luminosity. We are to shine as the sun, we are to be given the Morning Star. I think I begin to see what it means. In one way, of course, God has given us the Morning Star already: you can go and enjoy the gift on many fine mornings if you get up early enough. What more, you may ask, do we want? Ah, but we want so much more – something the books on aesthetics take little notice of. But the poets and the mythologies know all about it. We do not want merely to *see* beauty, though, God knows, even that is bounty enough. We want something else which can hardly be put into words – to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it. That is why we have peopled air and earth and water with gods and goddesses and nymphs and elves – that, though we cannot, yet these projections can, enjoy in themselves that beauty, grace, and power of which Nature is the image. That is why the poets tell us such lovely falsehoods. They talk as if the west wind could really sweep into a human soul; but it can't. They tell us that 'beauty born of murmuring sound' will pass into a human face; but it won't. Or not yet. For if we take the imagery of Scripture seriously, if we believe that God will one day *give* us the Morning Star and cause us to *put on* the splendour of the sun, then we may surmise that both the ancient myths and the modern poetry, so false as history, may be very near the truth as prophecy. At present we are on the outside of the world, the wrong side of the door. We discern the freshness and purity of morning, but they do not make us fresh and pure. We cannot mingle with the splendours we see. But all the leaves of the New Testament are rustling with the rumour that it will not always be so. Some day, God willing, we shall get *in*. (op.cit., 104).

This powerful description is showing again Lewis' descriptive technique that "is the heart of Lewis's technique for touching our deeper imagination." (cf. Glover 1981, 136). Here, it is as if we almost can see, feel and experience what heaven is like. It is as if we are nearly there. Our world is reenchanted. Lewis' description therefore also shows how the poetic language has the power to "use factors within our experience so that they become pointers to something outside our experience" (Lewis 2000h, 259). Moreover, we can see this homiletical illustration as an example of the imagination-expanding function of Lewis' eductive rhetoric of the world beyond. The sermon opens our mind to new possibilities and draws us out of ourselves toward God.

In the sermon, Lewis proceeds his description of Heaven a bit further. But he does not end the sermon there. After his description of the heavenly bliss in the poetical metaphors, which invites for longing and stimulates our desire, Lewis brings us back to our everyday life.

He says: "Meanwhile the cross comes before the crown and tomorrow is a Monday morning. A cleft has opened in the pitiless walls of the world, and we are invited to follow our great Captain inside. The following Him is, of course, the essential point." (Lewis 2000i, 105). But, then, how do we follow Jesus in this life? We follow Jesus on our journey toward Heaven by seeing our life and other people in the right perspective, for every day we do, in some degree, help other people to the heavenly glory or the other, nightmarish, destination. Therefore, Lewis says:

> There are no *ordinary* people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations – these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit – immortal horrors or everlasting splendours. (Lewis 2000i, 106).

With this last exhortation, Lewis' sermon becomes an appeal to consider what is the right conduct of our lives. The sermon can therefore function in a deliberative way here, although the epideictic also is present.

Finally, I will point out that in the sermon "The Weight of Glory", as in "Transposition", C. S. Lewis uses the inductive method of reasoning. He begins with experience and then adds examples, analogies, arguments and descriptions to the sermon along the way. We gradually experience and learn where we are headed.

5.3   Comments on rhetorical and homiletical theory of illustrations

I have now analysed the rhetorical functions of the homiletical illustrations in two imaginative apologetic sermons of C. S. Lewis, "Transposition" and "The Weight of Glory". But how can this analysis of these sermons contribute to rhetorical and homiletical theory of illustrations? There are three ways, I think, in which the analysis of these sermons can contribute to rhetorical and homiletical theory of illustrations.

First, the traditional understanding of homiletical illustrations has been challenged by contemporary homileticians. It has been noticed that illustrations do not just illuminate a message, which had already been related in another but less clear way. Instead, illustrations are in themselves vehicles for meaning that contain more communicative power and energy. Illustrations are also arenas for encountering, discerning, discovering, and experiencing the Christian faith. In the analysis of C. S. Lewis' two sermons, it has been affirmed that illustrations are not only to be seen through and not to be seen in themselves. Illustrations do carry, or can carry, more weight than that. Illustrations, through the power of depiction, are "showing" and demonstrating us things, so that they become conceivable for us, and therefore

a possibility. Furthermore, imagination is the organ of meaning, and therefore imaginative and narrative illustrations create meaning. Illustrations therefore also become essential parts of the way a sermon is persuasive. For, wherever there is meaning, there is persuasion. Because of this, illustrations also play an important role in building in our consciousness a 'faith-world' related to God in which we may live.

Second, imaginative and narrative homiletical illustrations play an important role in imaginative apologetic sermons. It is through the illustrations that we can taste and see Christianity. It is also through them that the romantic imagination, the *Sehnsucht*, the longing for something more, can be kindled. And this is important in imaginative apologetics, where it is not just arguments that lead to faith but also an appeal to beauty, goodness and desire, so that people will be drawn to Christianity and its vision of life and the world. In addition, we understand the world through narratives, and not only through logic. The aim of using imaginative and narrative homiletical illustrations will therefore also be to show that Christianity can challenge other stories of life and the world; that it can tell a better story than its rivals; and that it presents a deeper account of reality than other stories.

Third, the inductive method of reasoning has been seen as inferior to the deductive method, and in classical rhetoric and traditional preaching focus has been on the deductive method. The inductive method, however, has been given new attention in homiletics. It has been argued that the inductive sermon, in beginning from a shared experience, establishes a connection with the listeners and gives them an opportunity to follow the thoughts and make the conclusion their own. Another argument has been that imagination is the place where change takes place, and if we are affective or imaginative before we are cognitive, this gives illustrations a logical priority to explanation. The examination of C. S. Lewis' life story, his thinking and his practice in relation to imagination and narratives strengthens these arguments. As we have seen earlier, it was the imagination that first had to be addressed in Lewis' journey towards faith. And, in Lewis' thinking, imagination is seen as the organ of meaning and meaning as the antecedent condition of both truth and falsehood. Before something can be either true or false, it must mean. Furthermore, the inductive method is one of the characteristic traits of Lewis' rhetoric, though he also used the deductive method. In the two sermons analysed above C. S. Lewis used the inductive method to establish a connection with lived life, and then he gradually built his case from common experiences and forward towards the conclusion through the use of examples, analogies, arguments and descriptions.

6 Conclusion

In this thesis, I have examined C. S. Lewis' views on imagination and narratives, and how his thinking and practice can contribute to the understanding of the role of imagination and narratives in communication of the Christian faith. What I have found is that, for Lewis, both *logos*, reason and logic, as well as *mythos*, imagination and narratives, are seen as important and necessary for the communication of the Christian faith. In C. S. Lewis' life story, in his thinking and in his writings, imagination and narratives played an important role. A crucial point in C. S. Lewis' life was that he experienced a conversion from atheism and a return to Christianity through the aid of narratives and imagination as well as through reason. Lewis had to see or experience the meaning of Christianity before he could accept the truth of Christianity with his reason. In C. S. Lewis' thinking, reason came to be seen as the organ of truth, imagination as the organ of meaning, and meaning as the antecedent condition of truth and falsehood. Imagination and narratives therefore have a primary role, though reason is the arbiter of truth. C. S. Lewis also came to see that the truth of Christianity, in some ways, can best be comprehended indirectly using poetic or metaphoric language, in other words by using imagination and narratives. Furthermore, C. S. Lewis' stories can be seen as giving a taste and an experience of what belief and Christian faith is like. Lewis is "showing" us things so they become conceivable, and in doing so, he opens the mind to new possible meanings and understandings. Seen from the point of view of imaginative apologetics C. S. Lewis invites us to taste and see what Christianity is like and to assess the Christian narrative, whether it is coherent and whether it rings true to life. C. S. Lewis' rhetoric, as implied by his thinking and practice in relation to imagination and narratives, can be called an eductive rhetoric of the world beyond. This rhetoric I see as a sharpened version of Christian rhetoric, in which there is a special focus on imagination and narratives as means for *praeparatio evangelica* and the expanding of the imagination.

The other thing I have examined in the thesis is the rhetorical function of the homiletical illustrations in two imaginative apologetic sermons of C. S. Lewis, "Transposition" and "The Weight of Glory". It has here been pointed out that C. S. Lewis' preaching in a unique way is both propositional and pictorial. Lewis used both argumentation and imagination, rhetoric and poesis, persuasion and story, *logos* and *mythos*. Furthermore, the analysis of the two sermons can contribute to rhetorical and homiletical theory of illustrations in three ways. First, it has been affirmed that illustrations are not only to be seen through and not to be seen. Illustrations

do carry, or can carry, more weight than that. Illustrations, through the power of depiction, are "showing" and demonstrating us things, so that they become conceivable for us, and therefore a possibility in life and faith. Illustrations also create meaning and they are essential parts of the way a sermon is persuasive. Second, imaginative and narrative homiletical illustrations play an important role in imaginative apologetic sermons. It is through the illustrations that we are invited to enter into a story where we can taste and see Christianity. It is also through the illustrations that the romantic imagination, the *Sehnsucht*, the longing for something more, can be kindled. All this is important if it is not just arguments that lead to faith but also an appeal to beauty, story, imagination, goodness and desire. Imagination and narratives thus play an important role if the aim is to show that Christianity can offer a better and more convincing story than other conceptions of life and the world. Third, the argument for the inductive method of reasoning in sermons has been strengthened by the examination of C. S. Lewis' life story, his thinking and practice. It was the imagination that first had to be addressed in C. S. Lewis' journey towards faith. And, central to his understanding of communication and knowledge is the insight that before something can be either true or false, it must mean. From this follows that imagination and narratives have an important role in the meaning creation process of a sermon. In the inductive method, common experiences formed by imagination and narratives, are the beginning and the basis of an argument.

The examination in this thesis has, as we have seen, given answers to some questions concerning the role of imagination and narratives in preaching. Other questions, however, can be raised on the grounds of the examination. Though the place is not here to discuss such questions thoroughly, possible answers can be suggested for further research and consideration.

One question concerns the inductive method of communication. C. S. Lewis mentions a place that a writer can under cover smuggle theology into people's minds without their knowing it (Lewis 1939, 262). Lewis also talks about his stories as a pre-baptism of the imagination (Sayer 1994, 318), which can be understood as if the stories can prepare the mind and the imagination to accept the Christian faith as true through establishing meaningful patterns in relation to the Christian faith. Another place Lewis talks of his stories as means to overcome inhibitions towards the Christian faith (Lewis 2017d, 70-72). The question that can be raised here is whether this imply that the inductive method, with a primary appeal to imagination and narratives, is a way of seducing the reader or hearer? If a story is told, when

you could have argued, does this mean that something is concealed? And is it therefore more honest to argue in a more direct and openly persuasive way? If Walter R. Fisher (1987, 98) is right that "arguers tell stories and storytellers argue", then there will always be some presuppositions implicit in any mode of communication. When we argue we are implicitly telling a story where not all premises are laid in the open. For we select certain arguments and not others and thus, consciously or unconsciously, we are influenced not only by an argument in itself. On the other hand, when we tell a story we implicitly argue because through a story we are showing something in a meaningful way. Understood this way the one way of communication is not necessarily more problematic than the other. The two modes of communication are just different.

Another question that the examination raises concerns the notion of *praeparatio evangelica*, pre-evangelism, and the understanding that meaning is the antecedent condition of truth and falsehood. The question is, whether or in which way the Christian gospel and the word of God in the Bible can build upon existing meaningful patterns in the culture? Is the proclamation of the Christian gospel "dependent" on the work of pre-evangelism? Cannot the word of God speak authoritatively and powerfully on its own? I will suggest that the problems raised by these questions can be understood in some way as parallel to the Barth-Brunner debate in 1934 about *Anknüpfungspunkt* (cf. McGrath 2001, 214-217). The question in discussion was whether there is a "point of contact" for divine revelation within human nature. Emil Brunner suggested that this is the case because human beings are created in the *imago Dei*. Karl Barth, however, saw this suggestion as implying that God needed help to become known, and that humans can cooperate with God in the act of revelation, and he firmly said "no!" to an autonomous "natural theology" that was not itself a result of divine revelation. I can here follow Barth in the assumption that any "point of contact" must be given by God, but as far as I can see the *imago Dei* in human nature is also given by God. Furthermore, I will suggest that something similar can be the case in relation to *praeparatio evangelica*. God does not need help to become known, but cannot God make himself known through the human imagination, although it only is in a preparatory, incomplete and fragmentary way? C. S. Lewis suggested something like this. He pointed out that if the "Divine light […] 'lighteneth every man'." Then, we should "expect to find in the imagination of great Pagan teachers and myth-makers some glimpse of that theme which we

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believe to be the very plot of the whole cosmic story – the theme of incarnation, death and rebirth." (Lewis 2000c, 16).

A third question that can be raised, concerns fantasy, fairy-tales and myths and their place in the sermon. How shall we assess this? I think that Lewis has made a strong case for the qualities and the function of such stories in relation to communication of the Christian faith. Nevertheless, though sometimes fictional stories may say best what's to be said, at other times it is not so. In Christian preaching, the biblical texts and the biblical stories are the most important. It is primarily through the word of God that we get to know who God is, for in and through the Bible God speaks to us. The biblical stories can in some ways function in the same way as fictional stories. Both are narratives that appeal to the imagination. The biblical stories and texts, however, have a more fundamental role in faith and preaching than any non-biblical homiletical illustrations can have. As I see it, non-biblical homiletical illustrations will always theologically have a subordinate role in preaching, although they might play an important role in the process of meaning creation. Another thing to consider is that fictional stories in a sermon can give an unworldly and unrealistic feel to the Christian faith, anyhow if they are overused. Although Lewis' imaginative stories and other myths indirectly can give a taste and an experience of what belief and Christian faith is like in a way that no other stories can, such stories also have their limitations. The Christian faith is not only about life in the next world, but also about life in this world. For C. S. Lewis, of course, one of the aims of *The Chronicles of Narnia* was to enable the reader to recognize God in this world after having been in Narnia for as long as the story lasts. The ability to estrange us so that we can see things anew in a fresh way is an important part of the imagination-expanding function of fantasy, fairy-tales and myths. We do, however, also need real-life stories in preaching, so that we can see not only poetically what Christianity is like, but also what the Christian faith can be in flesh and blood – when we are doing the dishes, watching the news, working at the factory, experiencing conflict and death or aching with a broken heart.

The examination in this thesis has contributed with an understanding and an interpretation of the phenomenon of imagination and narratives in preaching. I hope that the understanding and insight gained from this examination can be of use for others wishing to do further research. I also hope that the examination can inform and qualify preachers to reflect on their own preaching, as I hope that it can inspire preachers to explore in practice how imagination and narratives can be an important part of communicating the Christian faith.

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