



Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C. S. Lewis

By Michael Ward

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For over half a century, scholars have laboured to show that C. S. Lewis's famed but apparently disorganised *Chronicles of Narnia* have an underlying symbolic coherence, pointing to such possible unifying themes as the seven sacraments, the seven deadly sins, and the seven books of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. None of these explanations has won general acceptance and the structure of Narnia's symbolism has remained a mystery.

Michael Ward has finally solved the enigma. In *Planet Narnia* he demonstrates that medieval cosmology, a subject which fascinated Lewis throughout his life, provides the imaginative key to the seven novels. Drawing on the whole range of Lewis's writings (including previously unpublished drafts of the *Chronicles*), Ward reveals how the Narnia stories were designed to express the characteristics of the seven medieval planets -- Jupiter, Mars, Sol, Luna, Mercury, Venus, and Saturn -- planets which Lewis described as "spiritual symbols of permanent value" and "especially worthwhile in our own generation". Using these seven symbols, Lewis secretly constructed the *Chronicles* so that in each book the plot-line, the ornamental details, and, most important, the portrayal of the Christ-figure of Aslan, all serve to communicate the governing planetary personality. The cosmological theme of each Chronicle is what Lewis called 'the kappa element in romance', the atmospheric essence of a story, everywhere present but nowhere explicit. The reader inhabits this atmosphere and thus imaginatively gains *connaître* knowledge of the spiritual character which the tale was created to embody.

Planet Narnia is a ground-breaking study that will provoke a major revaluation not only of the *Chronicles*, but of Lewis's whole literary and theological outlook. Ward uncovers a much subtler writer and thinker than has previously been recognized, whose central interests were hiddenness, immanence, and knowledge by acquaintance.

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Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C. S. Lewis By Michael Ward Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #107934 in Books
- Brand: Oxford University Press, USA
- Model: FBA-287545
- Published on: 2010-05-12
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 6.10" h x 1.10" w x 9.20" l, 1.05 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 348 pages



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Editorial Review

Review

"I cannot contain my admiration. No other book on Lewis has ever shown such comprehensive knowledge of his works and such depth of insight. This will make Michael Ward's name." --Walter Hooper, Literary Adviser to the Estate of C.S. Lewis

"Noting Michael Ward's claim that he has discovered "the secret imaginative key" to the Narnia books, the sensible reader responds by erecting a castle of scepticism. My own castle was gradually but utterly demolished as I read this thoughtful, scholarly, and vividly-written book. If Ward is wrong, his wrongness is cogent: it illuminates and delights. But I don't think he is wrong. And in revealing the role of the planets in the Chronicles, Ward also gives us the fullest understanding yet of just how deeply Lewis in his own fiction drew upon those medieval and renaissance writers he so loved." --Alan Jacobs, Professor of English, Wheaton College and author of *The Narnian: The Life and Imagination of C.S. Lewis*

"Michael Ward presents an absorbing, learned analysis of C.S. Lewis's bestselling and beloved series, *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Readily accessible to the average reader, Ward's book reads so much like a detective story that it's difficult to put down." --Armand M. Nicholi, Jr. M.D., Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School and author of *The Question of God: C.S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud*

"All who have enjoyed the *Chronicles of Narnia* and indeed are interested in any aspect of Lewis's imaginative work should read Michael Ward's book. He argues convincingly for a hitherto unrecognized inner structure of the Chronicles, and gives excellent reasons for understanding why Lewis should have worked in such a mysterious way, his wonders to perform. Ward has an encyclopedic knowledge of Lewis's writings and uses it to support his theory that each of the seven volumes of the *Chronicles of Narnia* is based on the classical, medieval and renaissance mythography of one of the then seven planets. Even those critics who dislike the Narnia books in principle because of their implicit Christianity must consider their planetary structure and its significance. Michael Ward has made an outstanding contribution to Lewis studies." --Derek Brewer, Emeritus Professor of English, University of Cambridge

"*Planet Narnia* is not simply one for the fans. Lewis had, and has, many enemies. This brilliant study may not persuade them that he was right, but it should convince them of his extraordinary subtlety." --*The Independent*

"Michael Ward's stunning work of scholarship has shone a celestial light on the *Chronicles of Narnia*, and it will undoubtedly send many old friends of Narnia back through the wardrobe to explore the land again with

new eyes."--*Church of England Newspaper*

"An argument which is at once subtle and sensible, a combination not often found in modern academic writing. . . . This is an outstanding guide not only to Narnia, but also to Lewis's thinking as a whole, and to the 'genial' medieval world-view which he so much loved and wished to restore, not in fact but through fantasy."--*Books & Culture*

"*Planet Narnia* is one of the most creative works of scholarship I have read. . . . Ward has made a brilliant discovery. . . . [B]y thinking seriously about Lewis's life-long interest in the medieval imagination, Ward has uncovered a symbolic structure in the seven books that deepens both their literary and theological significance. He also reveals Lewis to be a better writer than we knew. . . . [A]n important work of scholarship . . . absorbing . . . serious . . . rich . . . a brilliant work to be savoured, read often and kept at hand when re-reading Lewis's novels."--*The Catholic Register*

"Brilliantly conceived. Intellectually provocative. Rhetorically convincing. A panegyric is not the usual way to begin a book review, but Michael Ward's *Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C.S. Lewis* is worthy of such praise. I do not mean to suggest it is a perfect book, yet what Ward attempts - the first rigorously comprehensive reading of C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* - is magisterial . . . stimulating and engaging . . . important . . . thoughtful, informed, perceptive. . . . [E]very serious student of Lewis should buy *Planet Narnia*. In effect, it is the starting point from now forward for all serious scholarly discussions of the *Chronicles of Narnia*."--*Christianity and Literature*

"This feat of scholarly detective work will absorb your attention from start to finish. Michael Ward proposes a heretofore unnoticed structure that unifies the *Chronicles of Narnia*, based on Lewis's lifelong engagement with medieval astrology. . . . The result is both surprising and persuasive."--*Christianity Today*

"Ward builds up a painstaking case based on Lewis's other writings, particularly his works on the medieval world-view and his "planetary" trilogy. And a compelling case it is, too, built on exhaustive evidence of the way in which Lewis the Christian convert still found the imaginative universe of paganism and medieval astrology rich and allusive. . . . Ward's painstaking scholarship should help dispel two critical stereotypes: Lewis the unsubtle Christian propagandist, and Lewis the literary Reliant Robin parked next to the Rolls-Royce that is J.R.R. Tolkien."--*Church Times*

"Ward's contention, simply stated, is breathtakingly elegant." --*The Journal of Religion*

"One comes away from this study convinced that Ward's theory is believable, particularly given Lewis's knowledge of medieval scholarship and Christianity. Summing Up: Recommended. All readers, all

levels."--*Choice*

"All Narnia specialists should read this book . . . the lengthy footnotes and interesting illustrations paralleling Pauline Baynes's artistry with classical pictures of the gods are further evidence of meticulous research. . . . Ward's discovery is crucial to our appreciation of Narnia."--*Christian Librarian: The Journal of the Librarians' Christian Fellowship*

"An intriguing analysis."--*Sacramento News & Reviews*

"The work that can be considered the most groundbreaking is Michael Ward's *Planet Narnia*. This text offers an entirely new way of understanding and reading both Lewis's science fiction *Space Trilogy* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*...Far from spoiling or seeming to devalue the message and rich beauty of Lewis' works, Ward's revelations serve to deepen one's appreciation for and understanding of them. Ward is a thorough and careful guide who provides an in-depth textual study of how Lewis's fascination with the medieval understanding of the cosmos is found throughout the texts."--*Anglican and Episcopal History*

About the Author

Michael Ward is Senior Research Fellow at Blackfriars Hall, University of Oxford, and Professor of Apologetics at Houston Baptist University, Texas. His website is michaelward.net

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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Do you have favorite book? For those who have, what is your favorite's book? Guide is very important thing for us to know everything in the world. Each book has different aim or even goal; it means that publication has different type. Some people really feel enjoy to spend their time to read a book. They can be reading whatever they consider because their hobby is usually reading a book. How about the person who don't like reading a book? Sometime, particular person feel need book whenever they found difficult problem or maybe exercise. Well, probably you should have this *Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C. S. Lewis*.

Anna Brooks:

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Playing with family in a park, coming to see the coastal world or hanging out with pals is thing that usually you might have done when you have spare time, after that why you don't try matter that really opposite from that. 1 activity that make you not feeling tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you are ride on and with addition of information. Even you love Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C. S. Lewis, it is possible to enjoy both. It is good combination right, you still desire to miss it? What kind of hang type is it? Oh seriously its mind hangout people. What? Still don't buy it, oh come on its referred to as reading friends.

Tyler Cote:

Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C. S. Lewis can be one of your beginning books that are good idea. Most of us recommend that straight away because this reserve has good vocabulary which could increase your knowledge in terminology, easy to understand, bit entertaining however delivering the information. The article author giving his/her effort to put every word into pleasure arrangement in writing Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C. S. Lewis however doesn't forget the main point, giving the reader the hottest and also based confirm resource facts that maybe you can be certainly one of it. This great information can easily drawn you into brand new stage of crucial contemplating.

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