

“Through a Glass Darkly”



“For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.” 1 Corinthians 13:12

When the Apostle Paul wrote these words he was perhaps trying to describe what storytellers have tried to express ever since the beginnings of the human race: the idea that the world we inhabit has another dimension - a spiritual dimension that remains elusive. At times these two worlds, the physical world and the spiritual world, come close together - what ancient Christians used to call ‘thin places’ - and a glimpse might be caught of the something beyond. To live with an

awareness of this something beyond is the key to religious life.

The Anglican deacon Charles Dodgson, under his pen name of Lewis Carroll, wrote the children’s stories of “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland”, and its sequel “Through the Looking Glass”. In doing so he inspired generations of children to open their minds to the possibility of this other dimension. When Alice climbs through the looking glass in her drawing room she finds herself in a world far more interesting and alive than the one she has been inhabiting - a world where pictures are alive, and chess pieces move by themselves and the clock has a grinning face of a little old man.

The Victorian novelist George MacDonald was responsible for ‘baptising’ the imagination of the writer C.S.Lewis. In his celebrated book “Phantastes”, the hero Anodos encounters a fantastical realm, and during his adventures wrestles with the truth of this other reality which he experiences. C.S. Lewis, perhaps the most famous of Christian authors in children’s literature, goes on to use puddles and wardrobes as gateways to this other reality in his world famous Narnia stories.

What is that the Apostle Paul, and Carroll, MacDonald and Lewis are trying to describe in their words?

I think it is something to do with these thin places. Thin places that are all around us in our everyday lives. Times when we might look sideways and see a glimpse of something beyond the ordinary. Times when we might look into the reflection in a mirror and consider the world that lies beyond. Times when we might study an everyday object and see in it something transcendent that speaks to the heart of who we are.