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Rebirth as New Beginning or Redemption in C. S. Lewis' *The Pilgrim's Regress*: An Aesthetical and a Theological Perspective

The concept of Redemption as waved in the Old Testament history has the core idea of a payment for something or someone who had been lost or taken into captivity. It conveys both connotations of restitution and liberation but not without a mediator and the price that is required. Being introduced by the Mosaic Law as a moral code imposed to govern the human relationships and transactions, it moves into the spiritual realm through the necessity of redemption of the first-born from every family, and it is widely illustrated through the history of liberation of the Jewish people from the Egyptian slavery. In the New Testament, explicitly connected to the Exodus story, the redemption of the soul from the bondage of sin is fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In Him, who passed through death to resurrection as Jewish people had passed through the Red Sea, the promise of the mighty Redeemer is completely fulfilled. All the Old Testament elements of Redemption are satisfied in this very act: a human can be set free from the slavery of sin and brought from spiritual death to life by the Redeemer who paid the price by giving his life in the human's place. The fulfilment of this process in a human's heart is called rebirth.

In 1933, Clive Staples Lewis, after his conversion to Christianity, published his first fictional book, *The Pilgrim's Regress*, after a few unsuccessful attempts at writing poetry under pseudonyms. His initial intention was to tell his story in the manner of Virgil's Aeneid, whose hero had lost the home of his youth and was seeking a new one. However, by deciding to turn from a voyage by the sea to a journey by road, the choice turns into one shaped by John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* allegory, as clearly indicated in the title of the book. Lewis described it simply as "a Bunyan up to date" and the name of Lewis's protagonist, "John", possibly an homage to John Bunyan. However, we have new reasons to believe that the name was actually referring to J.R.R. Tolkien, given the background to their strong friendship in which Tolkien was known as the 'John' figure. This would be a new endeavor to be explored in this study. The choice of writing *The Pilgrim's Regress* as an allegory seemed to Lewis the best way embodying all the complex ideas and philosophies he had dealt with in his search for the meaning of life, having as the central point the image of redemption as rebirth.

This talk aims to explore the way redemption is aesthetically presented by Lewis in this first fictional book, and to analyze the way in which this is in accordance with the theological / religious perspective expressed by himself in other non-fictional writings.

Daniela Denise Vasiliu got a B.A. in English philology and Theology, and M.A. in Theology from the University of Bucharest. She got her PhD in Philology - English Literature, with an interdisciplinary thesis on C. S. Lewis (*C. S. Lewis at the Border Between Christian Spirituality and Fiction*), and a post-doctoral degree in Philology with research on Theories of Imagination in Literature, Philosophy and Theology, both from the Doctoral School of Philological Studies of the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, Romania. She is now a PhD student, with research on *Truth, Love and Beauty - Images of Redemption in Dorothy Sayers and I. Murdoch*, at The Theological Doctoral School of University of Bucharest. She is CEO of Agora Christi Foundation, and Founder and Chair of The C. S. Lewis & Kindred Spirits Society for Central and Eastern Europe. She is also the main organizer of several C. S. Lewis International Interdisciplinary Conferences in Romania and in The Republic of Moldova. She is a Lecturer at Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, Romania.