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## Review of The Completion of C. S. Lewis: From War to Joy

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“transitional space” (118). Chapter nine, entitled “Something Has Gone Crack,” takes a sobering look at how war trauma compounded Tolkien’s early experiences of loss and how Tolkien expressed this loss in multiple places throughout the *Legendarium*. Chapter nine explores the mysterious Tom Bombadil as a transitional character unaffected by the One Ring which is “a fetish symbol” (118). Chapter eleven reflects on Tolkien’s “Late Life Loss of Transitionality” (164). In the Epilogue, Rosegrant writes that, “On one level his *Legendarium*, with its pervasive theme of loss, may be understood as Tolkien’s creative attempt to work through the tragedies of his life and stay in touch with hope and meaning. . . . But more importantly, the personal issues that Tolkien was dealing with were issues that everyone deals with” (174).

Brilliantly written, grounded in a profound knowledge of the source material, and teeming with fresh insights into Tolkien’s beloved *Legendarium*, John Rosegrant’s *Tolkien, Enchantment, and Loss* is a highly recommended read for anyone interested in delving deeper into the works of J.R.R. Tolkien.

JESSICA F. LEE

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Harry Lee Poe, *The Completion of C. S. Lewis: From War to Joy (1945-1963)*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 352 pages plus notes and index, \$34.99, ISBN 9781433571022.

**I**n the third and final installment of his biographical journey of C. S. Lewis, Harry Lee Poe returns to the whimsical and accessible sojourn through the final years of Lewis’s life. Poe continues to delight readers with his thorough investigation of all aspects of Lewis’s life. This final volume focuses on Lewis’s rise in popularity and fame, his legions of fan mail, his developing friendships with various individuals, including poet Ruth Pitter, Lewis’s eventual migration to a Chair at Cambridge, his brother’s ongoing struggle with alcohol, his two marriages to Joy Davidman, and his eventual retirement, decline, and death.

While many would argue that there are *enough* Lewis biographies on

the market, Poe continues to distinguish his work from other biographies through his consistent use of detailed research. Poe takes an extra step, illustrating to his audience the context of Lewis's actions and writings. This additional information adds a new layer to previous research that has been presented, perhaps ad nauseam, in other books over the last few decades. One example is Poe's erudite discussion of the "Zernov Group," an involvement that developed after Lewis's association in the Oxford Socratic Club. Lewis and Austin Farrer, along with several other Inklings, attended a meeting on Saturday evening hosted by Nicholas Zernov, an Orthodox theologian who wished to reconcile the relations between the Church of England and Orthodoxy. The club came to be known as the Fellowship of Saint Alban and Saint Sergius.<sup>1</sup> Most books gloss over this interesting involvement or ignore it altogether. While it may seem a footnote in Lewis's overall biography, it proves Lewis's consistent commitment to bring those of different backgrounds and faiths together—as *mere Christians*.

One aspect of Poe's work that continues in this volume is Poe's unflinching sense of humor. Poe recalls the two women who claimed to be Lewis's wife. He also discusses lukewarm responses that many of Lewis's friends had to Joy Davidman, as well as the fact that "Jack should have married Ruth Pitter." Virgil was a fine guide for Dante, and Poe is an astute and forthcoming escort through the experiences and proclivities of Lewis's life.

Poe also has a keen sense of Lewis's developing and evolving perspectives on a variety of topics, illustrating how early works, such as *The Allegory of Love*, contributed to later books such as *Spencer's Images of Life*. This is one of the great strengths of Poe's narrative: the three books together illustrate the ebb and flow of ideas and how Lewis navigated and artistically responded to these alterations. This includes the now-infamous Socratic Club exchange with Elizabeth Anscombe. Poe addresses how this interaction has been misinterpreted in other biographies—namely those authored by A. N. Wilson and Alister McGrath—yet, as Poe highlights, Anscombe did not disagree with Lewis on the idea, but rather his *expression* of the idea that naturalism is self-refuting. Poe also briefly comments on Michael Ward's thesis in *Planet Narnia* and digs deeper into Lewis's refusal to embrace Catholicism. Poe does not shrink from controversial topics but

<sup>1</sup> Alban was the first Christian martyr, and Sergius was a "venerated Russian Orthodox monk" (117).

sees all aspects composing the sum of Lewis's journey.

Once again, Poe delivers a satisfactory reading experience with *The Completion of C. S. Lewis*. Poe's clear insight, unwavering devotion to quality research, and innovative narration make these books a library staple for any Lewis fan or scholar. Poe remains an entertaining and informative guide into many aspects of Lewis's life that others ignore or dismiss. His final section, which outlines what Lewis teaches us through his life and works, is the perfect conclusion to Poe's trio of biographies. Poe's literary approach is fair and balanced, weighed and reasoned, much like Lewis himself.

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James Prothero. *Sunbeams and Bottles: The Theology, Thought, and Reading of C. S. Lewis*. (Hamden, CT: Winged Lion Press, 2022). 442 pages. \$22.99. ISBN 9781935688327.

James Prothero has been teaching, contemplating, and otherwise living with C. S. Lewis for a very long time. In his new book on Lewis, this dedication shows. *Sunbeams and Bottles* reads like a collection of thoughts gathered in notebooks over decades, waiting for the moment they would be gathered together into a comprehensive study of a single author whom the writer of this book has rightly obsessed over for a lifetime.

The contents of the book alternate between numbered chapters on a variety of topics and "Key Idea" chapters enumerated by the Greek alphabet. It took a few chapters to realize that the numbered and "Key Idea" chapters are not directly correlated, at which point I realized that the alternating approach allows the reader time to digest what is being covered. This means, though, that readers must choose how they want to use this book: a text to read cover to cover or one to use as a reference for specific topics. The numbered chapters include content on Lewis defying the categories of thought of those who try to appropriate him to their causes, placing Lewis in his philosophical and theological historical context, ideas central to Lewis's theology, people central to Lewis's life and thinking, the