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Review of Deeper Magic: The Theology Behind the Writings of C. S. Lewis

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For ease of reference, it would have been extremely helpful for the various prose sketches and alternate passages to be listed in the Table of Contents; these must be found again by simply thumbing through the book to find the opening sections since no running heads are provided at the top of the book's pages. The list of names in the back, however, is brief and unobtrusive, and helpful for reference. This book as a whole is definitely one of the best of the more recent releases and a welcome trove of Tolkien treasures.

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Donald T. Williams, *Deeper Magic: The Theology Behind the Writings of C. S. Lewis* (Baltimore, Maryland: Square Halo Books, 2016). 287 pages. \$16.99. ISBN 9781941106051.

According to Donald Williams, a deficiency in *Mere Theology*¹ by Will Vaus is its lack of sustained critique of Lewis's theology. Williams intends to fill this void with *Deeper Magic*. His design is to look "at Lewis's presentation of Christian doctrine as a unified whole and critically asks what are its strengths and weaknesses as a guide to biblical faith from a conservative Evangelical perspective" (13-4).

To accomplish this goal, Williams must first spend time summarizing what Lewis has written in order to elucidate and illuminate his theological underpinnings. It is a daunting task not only because of the breath of genres in which Lewis wrote, but also because of the persistent public commitment by Lewis to promote "mere Christianity" rather than lifting up any sectarian Christian doctrine. Thankfully, Lewis could be more forthcoming in his private correspondence and Williams acknowledges here his indebtedness to Walter Hooper's pioneering work, *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis*.

Structurally, Williams's book is well organized according to various formal categories of systematic theology: Anthropology, Christology,

¹ Will Vaus, *Mere Theology: A Guide to the Thought of C. S. Lewis* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 2004).

Soteriology, and the like. Under each topic, he summarizes what Lewis wrote and analyses to what extent Lewis either aligns with or departs from a Reformed and Evangelical perspective. Williams gives particular attention Lewis's particular statements which have long-troubled Evangelicals: his musings about biblical inerrancy, the Atonement, and his apparent misreading of "Calvinism" and Total Depravity. Williams is charitable but realistic. In several places, Williams acknowledges some weakness in Lewis's theology because Lewis was, by his own admission, not a "trained" theologian.

One helpful feature of the book is its "excursus" on the Trilemma issue, Lewis's contention that Christ cannot simply be a great moral teacher. If not Lord, he was either a liar or a lunatic. Williams brings the reader abreast on the debate about the Trilemma argument, noting the strengths and weaknesses of various objections. He deals at length with writers such as John Beversluis, Frances Young, and Daniel Howard-Snyder while also mentioning N. T. Wright and Alistair McGrath. Williams closes this chapter with his own formal response, a clever turn on what Lewis and others have written about this apologetic argument:

Liar, Lunatic, or Lord? Lacking, Ludicrous, or Logical? Plunk for Liar or Lunatic if you must. But let's not come with any patronizing nonsense about how Lewis gave us a fallacious argument. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. (147)

Deeper Magic is a significant work which clarifies Lewis's theological perspective within the Christian faith. It is also a good general introduction to Reformed Evangelicalism for readers of C. S. Lewis or anyone interested in that subject.

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Kyoko Yuasa, *C. S. Lewis and Christian Postmodernism: Word, Image, and Beyond* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Press, 2016). xi + 197 pages. \$26.00. ISBN 9781498219389.