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Review of C. S. Lewis and Christian Postmodernism: Word, Image, and Beyond

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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.

Since “postmodernism” involves whatever supersedes modernism, Dr. Kyoko Yuasa has set herself a difficult problem: the title suggests a wide-ranging analytic study of postmodernism and C. S. Lewis’s (anachronistic) relationship to it. Since there are a diverse set of “postmodernisms,” the first task of the book should be to define the salient characteristics of postmodernism, and set it against the important characteristics of modernism. The reader of this volume will have a difficult time finding clear definitions of a number of key terms—“postmodernism” in general, “Christian postmodernism,” and “modernism.” After quoting Jean-Francois Lyotard’s criteria for postmodernism in general, “incredulity towards metanarratives” and “micronarratives” (5), Dr. Yuasa does not follow up on the implications of this definition. Instead, she highlights a distinction between “‘word’ (rational explanation) and ‘image’ (imaginative expression)” (1), which she does not completely elucidate. She attempts to connect it to “communicative styles . . . but also divided world views including literary genres, literary approaches (fact and fiction), academic disciplines, gender, and philosophy (naturalism and supernaturalism, history and myth, observation and faith” (1-2). The foregoing set of statements illustrate the main issues confronting the reader of this volume.

First, given this introduction, the reader wishes for some analysis of why one might call Lewis a Christian postmodernist. If one dates the beginning of postmodernism as 1967 (the publication date of Derrida’s *Of Grammatology*), then it is clear that Lewis predates the historical period. Given this, the discussion might proceed in terms of how Lewis’s thought anticipates objections to modernist theory brought by postmodernist thinkers. Instead, the author analyzes Lewis’s relation to aspects of postmodernism in such a way as to suggest, not her reading of actual postmodern theorists, but what other critics consider to be Lewis’s relationship to postmodernism. In doing so, she does not clearly explain either secular postmodernism, nor the salient elements of the Christian postmodernist critics that she explores.

A reader might also expect to see close readings of specific postmodernist critical texts as well as passages in Lewis’s fiction which build an argument about Lewis’s congruence with postmodern modes of thought and expression. Instead citations of authority and general statements are used to make the cases. The author simultaneously explains too much (as

in her long description of the Greek and Roman myth of Psyche and Cupid [144], or her mistaken explanations of the English Interregnum [75, 77-8] and *mappae mundi* [126]) and too little (as in her citation of Stanley Grenz's distinction between word and image quoted earlier). In several cases, the author detours from the main points at issue in chapters to discuss side issues that are interesting but not germane to the main argument (as is the excursus on the Apostle Paul's rhetoric [48-49]).

The volume also seems beset by issues of translation, both cultural and linguistic. It is possible that the mode of argumentation from authority (including the use of quotations as shorthand proofs of the author's general statements) is a cultural practice; as well, some passages with syntactically ambiguous sentences and paragraphs, incoherent in English, may be the result of a lack of copy-editing by a native English speaker, since the book is self-published.

In short, the volume needs comprehensive structural and copy-editing to enhance the coherence of its arguments. Though the author presents a welcome non-Western perspective on Lewis and postmodernism as well as some interesting insights about Lewis's fictional and nonfictional works, these are embedded in an often-incoherent structure and mode of expression.

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Philip Zaleski and Carol Zaleski, *The Fellowship: The Literary Lives of the Inklings: J.R.R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, Owen Barfield, Charles Williams* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015). 644 pages. \$17.00. ISBN 9780374536251.

Many scholars have written excellent biographies of C. S. Lewis, chief among them George Sayer's *Jack* and Devin Brown's *A Life Observed*, which makes one wonder why we need another biography. But the Zaleskis have taken us in one of the directions that most biographies must go until someone writes the last, great biography of Lewis (probably in multiple volumes), perhaps enabling us to "get to the bottom of him," as Tolkien stated. Either writers will have to produce careful studies of a brief period