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Ricke and Chus' "The faithful imagination: Papers from the 2018 Frances White Ewbank colloquium on C. S. Lewis & friends" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Ricke, J. & Chu, A. (Eds.). (2019). *The faithful imagination: Papers from the 2018 Frances White Ewbank colloquium on C. S. Lewis & friends*. Winged Lion Press: Hamden, CT. 440 pp ISBN 781935688303

The Frances White Ewbank Colloquium is a biennial conference sponsored by Taylor University. It is named in honor of Professor Ewbank for her emphasis on Lewis studies and scholarship while teaching at Taylor University (1964–1984). She died at age 96 in 2013. A sense of exuberance is rarely found in conference papers. Here, however, we are not surprised by joy, especially at a Lewis conference. The collection abounds with a real presence of friendship, laughter, conference characters, events, and ideas. Chrystal Hurd notes in the Foreword that the goal was to blend the “spiritual, academic, and the imaginative,” which, not so oddly enough, parallels Lewis subtitle of *The Pilgrim’s Regress*: “An Allegorical Apology for Christianity, Reason, and Romanticism.”

The book is organized into six sections on various themes: Section one, entitled “Essays on C S Lewis,” contains various topics ranging from faith, to walking tours, to evolution and more. One essay by Devin Brown creatively tackles “When Lewis Suggests More Than He States” – thus addressing what isn’t said, but doing it very effectively. This is a critical method Chesterton would certainly have enjoyed. Section two is entitled “Lewis...and” which compares him to expected authors like MacDonald, Joy Davidman, Sayers – as well as unusual comparisons to authors like the homey and loveable M. L. Montgomery, author of *Anne of Green Gables*. More startling is an essay by John Stanifer contrasting Lewis with the horrid themes and stylistics of H. P. Lovecraft. Be assured, when Aslan meets Cthulhu, the Lion wins. Section Three contains essays on the Inklings and Lewisian related writers; Section Four, Essays on the Faithful Imagination – the central theme of the conference.

Section Five, represents an encouraging direction for conferences of this sort. It features Creative Work Inspired by C S Lewis and Friends. Participants produce poems and short stories in the imaginative Lewisian tradition. This allows conference attendees to actually build a living culture of Christian joy and creativity.

Finally, Section Six, Magic Moments, offers reflections on the Colloquium itself, which continues to add to the festive nature of the volume. One finds in these conference papers the Lewisian sense of playfulness, lively conversation, and

comradeship. We join the lecturers as a laughing people; delighted with an almost childish and adolescent excitement over finding a great writer, a great tradition, and friends to share the experience. As Lewis noted with his friend Arthur Greeves concerning Norse mythology: What, you like this stuff too! We concur.

The next volume of this colloquium will feature the presentations of the 2020 gathering. The theme of that coming event, bouncing off the Dorothy Sayers essay on Christian feminism, will be “Are *WomEn* Human (Yet?)” – note the cryptic italicized letters “*W and E=We*” As far as I can tell by my limited sub-scientific research, the answer to that question is in the affirmative. This is a welcome addition to the ever-growing study and enjoyment of the literary world of C S Lewis.

Reviewer

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