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W. H. Auden confessed in 1970 that, despite a lifelong enjoyment of G.K. Chesterton’s poetry and fiction, he had persistently neglected his non-fictional prose, in part because of “his reputation as an anti-Semite” (“Foreword” 11). Auden’s qualms were far from unique, as many of Chesterton’s peers were disturbed by the recurrence of antisemitic sentiments and tropes in his oeuvre. As Ann Farmer observes, these concerns have shadowed Chesterton’s posthumous standing as well, creating a “moral imperative” to resolve this issue (2). Although meticulous and sincere, Farmer, like most Chesterton scholars, is too ready to excuse and exonerate Chesterton’s views on Jews. Such exculpation retards a forthright evaluation of his work, while risking the alienation from it of sensitive readers like Auden. Rather, scholars must admit frankly that Chesterton did possess antisemitic attitudes and explain their forms to assess fully their impact on his thought. Analyzing Chesterton’s writing about Jews and contemporary and critical responses to it will reveal that his prejudice was rooted in personal, political, and social, not religious or racial, beliefs; that his peers recognized this bias consistently; and that these stereotypes helped mold the articulation, if not always the substance, of some aspects of his social criticism.

Farmer’s absolution of Chesterton is grounded in untenably stark definitions of antisemitism, particularly her reservation of this designation to those who “unequivocally demonstrate that their primary driving force was hatred for all Jews” (5). A more subtle understanding of how Chesterton framed the “Jewish problem” is necessary to comprehend his outlook’s inspirations and components, before evaluating its importance for his thought. Although Chesterton’s Christian faith and social criticism dovetailed frequently, his
antisemitism was devoid of religious motivation. He wrote nothing endeavoring to convert Jews to Christianity, and he even praised them for discovering monotheism (*The Speaker*, 2 March 1901). Moreover, as Farmer notes, he rejected the racialist theories embraced by some contemporaneous antisemites as deterministic, pseudo-scientific surrogate faiths. Judaism was more a social and economic than a religious or racial phenomenon to him, and this political conception of Jews guided his attitudes to and portrayals of them.

At least as early as the Boer War, Chesterton had accepted the traditional populist canard that a Jewish financial conspiracy ran the country, controlled the media, and instigated imperialistic wars (*Autobiography* 115). Yet Chesterton’s fascination with the “Marconi affair” added crucial emotional texture to this ideological antisemitism. In 1912, Godfrey Issacs, head of the Marconi Wireless Company, attempted to secure a contract providing empire-wide wireless communications by distributing financial favors to leading politicians through his brother Rufus, the Attorney General. Moreover, the official who approved Marconi’s initial tender was Postmaster-General Herbert Samuel. Chesterton’s beloved brother, Cecil, publicized this now-forgotten scandal, but his journalistic exposés were so reckless that Godfrey Issacs sued him successfully for libel. G.K. Chesterton developed a permanent enmity toward the Issacs, and he deemed them and Samuel the personification of Jews who used family connections and financial power to pollute the polity for personal gain. What he had long believed intellectually now had apparent experiential validation, and the Marconi men became his archetypes for all Jews. In 1916, for instance, he declared that “international intrigues of the Marconi type” were “a Jewish tendency or tradition” (*New Statesman*, 3 June 1916). If this caricature had been present in his thought before, then, it became more deeply fixed in his mind and more prevalent in his work after Marconi. His Marconi preoccupation raised the level of Chesterton’s interest in Jews while simultaneously lowering his opinion of them.

Chesterton’s specific ideas about Jews fall under two general principles. First, he made the common accusation of dual loyalty. His readings of the Boer War, and especially the Marconi affair, led him to see Jews’ primary allegiance as to their kin or “kind” instead of to their nation of residence; in fact, he suggested that Jewish assimilation is impossible, a “futile and unworthy policy” (qtd., 79). Thus he claimed in 1911 that “the Jew is not an Englishman, because his nationality is not English. … They are allied, and rightly and justifiably, to their own people of their own race who are not English even in point of citizenship—Jews in Germany, Russia, France, everywhere” (*Jewish Chronicle*, 28 April 1911). He therefore implied, in 1920, that Jews, at a minimum, should be ineligible for public office because their hierarchy of loyalties makes them inherently traitorous:
With Jews the family is generally divided among the nations. ... It is in its nature intolerable, from a national standpoint, that a man admittedly powerful in one nation should be bound to a man equally powerful in another nation, by ties more private and personal even than nationality. Even when the purpose is not any sort of treachery, the very position is a sort of treason. (New Jerusalem 280)

Ironically, a variant of this charge had been lodged against English Catholics historically, but Chesterton did not judge the two cases equivalent, arguing that Roman Catholicism encourages love for the local patria, whereas Judaism is wholly rootless. Hence, “the Catholic internationalism, which bids men respect their national governments is considerably less dangerous than the financial internationalism which may make a man betray his government or the revolutionary internationalism which may make him destroy it” (Well and Shallows 466). Indeed, Chesterton detected Jews in the vanguard of each of those destructive cosmopolitan movements. Regarding both capitalism and communism as universalist ideologies that form loyalties based on transnational considerations, he thought them perfectly suited for Jews: as these two theories are so alike in “ethical essence,” it would be “strange if they did not take their leaders from the same ethnological elements” (or, as a preceding version stated, “it would not be surprising if their same leaders did have the same kind of nose”) (Autobiography 76).

If Jews could not be patriotic members of particular polities due to their loyalty to cosmopolitan creeds, what should states do with their Jewish populations? Chesterton offered short and long term remedies to this sensed dilemma. Immediately, regimes and Jews must realize that Jews cannot be assimilated. He contended that “nice Jews” agree with this assessment, but “nasty Jews” try to conceal their identities: “the nice Jew is called Moses Solomon and the nasty Jew is called Thornton Percy” (Ball and Cross 50). Nice Jews grant the allegation of dual loyalty, whereas nasty ones seek to evade it by betraying their heritage and striving to fit into societies that they are inherently unable to join fully. Beyond the aforementioned electoral consequences, Chesterton drew further disquieting conclusions from these premises. He asserted that attempts at assimilation tended to stoke antisemitism. For their own protection, then, Jews should accept their lot as permanent outsiders:

A number of points upon which the unfortunate alien is blamed would be improved if he were, not less of an alien, but rather more of an alien. They arise from his being too like us, and too little like himself ... let all literal and legal civic equality stand. ... But let there be one single-clause bill; one simple and sweeping law about
Jews ... every Jew must be dressed like an Arab ... we should
know where we are; and he would know where he is, which is in
a foreign land (New Jerusalem 270-72).

Even allowing for intended hyperbole, this 1920 proposal not only chills
through its evocation of yellow stars, but also trivializes the tensions between
Arabs and Jews. It is nonetheless an essentially accurate rendition of Chesterton’s outlook: if Jews acknowledge their alien (and secondary) status, the
cause of much antisemitism will be removed, and they will be unmolested.
This is a supreme instance of political naiveté.

In the long term, Chesterton felt, the best way for Jews to live out their
separate lives was in a separate land. Zionism was therefore the second
major principle of his approach to Jews, because it promised to overcome
the difficulties engendered by his first. He thought Zionism would give Jews
a locality to be patriotic toward, a particular polity based on their cosmopol-
itan connections, thus resolving the problem of dual loyalty. Additionally,
the kind of Zionism he envisioned would “regularize” Jews’ “abnormal”
position through the same “natural” means he prescribed for Britain:

They are traders rather than producers because they have no land
of their own from which to produce, and they are cosmopolitans
rather than patriots because they have no country of their own
for which to be patriotic ... both could be cured by the return to a
national soil as promised in Zionism. ... If he asks for the soil he
must till the soil; that is he must belong to the soil and not merely
make the soil belong to him. He must have the simplicity, and
what many would call the stupidity, of the peasant. ... He must
be washed in mud, that he may be made clean (New Jerusalem 296,
282-83, 288, 293-95).2

In short, Chesterton’s Zionism was distributism for the Jews.

Chesterton defended this scheme against critics who considered it
antisemitic. He asseverated that “Jews should be represented by Jews,
should live in a society of Jews, should be judged by Jews and ruled by Jews.
I am an anti-Semite if that is anti-Semitism. It would seem more rational
to call it Semitism” (New Jerusalem 264-65).3 But the irrational principle of
dual loyalty undergirded the entire project, as he admitted with unironic
bluntness: “the advantage of the ideal to the Jews is to gain the promised
land, the advantage to the Gentiles is to get rid of the Jewish problem. ...
I would leave as few Jews as possible in other established nations” (New Jeru-
salem 299). His inability to grasp that the problem lay with his suppositions
and not the Jews also colored other rebuttals to this charge. For example, he
argues in his autobiography that Jews typify two of his chief ideals, grati-
tude and respect for the family. Not two sentences later, though, he asserts that it is precisely these familial ties that weaken those of patriotism. Dual loyalty was so intertwined with Chesterton’s perception of the Jews that he could not even attempt to compliment them without invoking it. His refusal to renounce such notions or to concede that they might be antisemitic was so dogged that he was warning against efforts by the “Jewish financial power” to “dominate England” unto his last book (Autobiography 230).

Nor is this indictment just the verdict of a post-Holocaust world. From 1911-1933, the Anglo-Jewish press ran eighty-seven articles about Chesterton and his newspapers that rebutted his depictions of Jews or allegations made against them; the Jewish World went so far as to suggest in 1918 that he be prosecuted under the Defence of the Realm Act for slandering Jews (Rapp). And not only Jewish contemporaries saw this facet of his worldview. In 1913, for instance, Rebecca West accused him of being partially responsible for “the revival of this insane cowardice” (West 220). In 1920, the Daily Telegraph refused to publish some of his commentary on Zionism, and the Daily News averred that same year that he “is generally regarded as an Anti-Semite” (qtd., Coren 207). Even as late as 1930, Chesterton devoted an Illustrated London News column to responding to a News-Chronicle reviewer who had dubbed him “a professed Anti-Semite” (20 September 1930).

His peers’ record is better than most Chesterton scholars’, including Farmer’s. Like many of her predecessors, Farmer engages in two sorts of blame-shifting. The first makes Hilaire Belloc and/or Cecil Chesterton culpable for G.K. Chesterton’s view of Jews (99, 325, 342, 460), while the second claims that antisemitism was “ubiquitous” in Britain before the Shoah (462), and that Chesterton was no worse, and much better, than his fellows in this respect (227). But these efforts to downplay or deny Chesterton’s antisemitism are anti-Chestertonian, for they seek to minimize his agency. This defender of free will and responsibility cannot have his bigotry excused on the grounds of social determinism. He may have been influenced by Belloc, Cecil, and others who cultivated this cultural atmosphere, but a man Wilfrid Sheed called “a thinker of visibly painful independence” (qtd., 270) never hesitated to rebel against other prevalent conventions; G.K. Chesterton’s acceptance of this norm hence indicates a free choice of it, making him accountable for the stance he took continually. Furthermore, not everybody did it. The coetaneous work of Catholic authors such as Christopher Dawson and J.R.R. Tolkien, for example, is untainted by, and openly opposed to, antisemitism. Rather than continuing to debate whether Chesterton held antisemitic beliefs or, if he did, who led him astray, scholars should admit this failing from the outset, and focus instead on appraising its importance to his thought’s overall significance.

Chesterton bears some responsibility for helping to create a climate of opinion that was insensitive at best and hostile at worst to Jewish concerns;
in Malcolm Muggeridge’s phrase, he “gave anti-semitism literary credentials” (Chronicles 240). Chesterton was not alone in this sanctioning, nor was he as noxious an influence as others; but his writings’ widespread popularity did reinforce stereotypes that eventually contributed to the hardening of British hearts against Hitler’s victims, as even a sympathetic critic like Sheridan Gilley acknowledges. Chesterton’s own animus toward Nazism was rooted mainly in anti-Prussian prejudices and a desire to defend Christian civilization against discerned heathen barbarism. While he condemned Hitler’s “purely racial persecution of the Jews” (qtd., 236) as having “absolutely no reason or logic behind” it, he nevertheless warned to “never underestimate” the “real problem” of “the international position of the Jews” (qtd., 79), concluding that “I still think there is a Jewish problem” (qtd., Coren 211). Although Chesterton’s hopes for Zionism and his religious faith would have made the Final Solution abhorrent to him, his inability to see that there was no “Jewish problem” to be settled by rational, logical, or any other means to begin with prevented him from apprehending the unique horror of Hitlerism.

Chesterton’s antisemitism thus distorted his judgment and sustained ideas that had tragic consequences. Its presence in, and its deleterious effect on, his work should be conceded. But it should not become a reason for ignoring his social criticism. Although this prejudice shaped Chesterton’s descriptions of what was wrong with the world, his prescriptions, in the main, do not rely on it. His proposals for decentralization, widely distributed property, defense of the family, little Englandism, and the like are not intrinsically antisemitic. Even if his views on the Jews were elements in Chesterton’s specific formulation of some of these policies, each also has a logic independent of that passion and can (and should) be evaluated accordingly. Trying to similarly bracket his antisemitism when assessing Chesterton’s belief that post-capitalist society required a Roman Catholic ethos is more vexing. In his own mind, tensions between Christians and Jews in Christian nations would be eliminated by establishing a complementary Jewish state, plus autonomous Jewish enclaves in Christian ones (New Jerusalem 297-301). Furthermore, he stressed that a distributist state would welcome non-Catholics if they affirmed distributist principles, something his interpretation of Zionism shows he felt Jews could do. Yet both of these convictions appear to exclude Jews from ever being able to attain equal status in Chesterton’s Christian commonwealth. Even though his antisemitism was not fostered by his faith, then, the synergy that developed between his religion and his social remedies creates special challenges for Jews that should be noted.

Chesterton’s antisemitism arose from stereotypes common in his era that he accepted freely and that were hardened by the perceived validation of personal experience. His populist contempt for financiers and xenophobic definition of patriotism spurred him to regard Jews as corrupt and untrust-
worthy, impressions that seemed confirmed by the Marconi men’s behavior. He consequently saw Jews as a necessarily alien presence in any polity except for one consisting primarily of themselves, and he thus deemed Zionism the only enduring answer to the “Jewish problem.” Yet his Jewish and non-Jewish contemporaries recognized that the real problem was Chesterton’s adoption of and persistence in an unfounded pattern of prejudice, and they held him accountable for his words. Chesterton scholars should do likewise. His corpus contains trenchant insights about society, culture, and politics that are not dependent on his antisemitic expression of them, but these cannot be discussed profitably until that distressing dimension of his thought is admitted and understood. As Auden concluded upon finally reading the prose he had long avoided, Chesterton’s antisemitism “remains a regrettable blemish upon the writings of a man who was ... an extraordinarily ‘decent’ human being” (“Foreword” 11-12). But such sober judgments will be rare until this considerable chaff of bigotry is harvested along with the even richer grains of wheat to be found in the field of Chesterton studies. No honest scholar can live by bread alone.

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Notes

1 The earlier version is in Chesterton Archives, The British Library. Following the Russian Revolution, he repeated often the antisemitic bromide linking Jews to Bolshevism. See, e.g., America, 74, 102, 141, 219; Illustrated London News, 13 September 1924.

2 Chesterton eventually qualified his support for certain pragmatic aspects of Zionism as it was practiced in the mid-1920s and 1930s, if not for his understanding of the theory behind it (see, e.g., G.K.’s Weekly, 18 July 1925, 399; G.K.’s Weekly, 4 May 1933, 135). Indeed, as most early Zionists were secular, liberal Jews, Chesterton may have felt the distributist model was essential inoculation against such modernist influences.

3 Owen Dudley Edwards consequently characterizes Chesterton’s standpoint correctly as “anti-Semitic Zionism” (37).

4 Dawson, for instance, chided fascists for making Jews avatars and scapegoats of “mechanical, cosmopolitan, urban mass civilization” (Beyond Politics 82). Tolkien replied sardonically to a Nazi-era publisher’s inquiry about whether he had Jewish origins that “I regret that I appear to have no ancestors of that gifted people” (Letters 37).

5 “For all Chesterton’s friendships with Jews, and his loathing of Hitler and Nazism, he did much to provide a high moral justification for the anti-Jewishness which was to bear bitter fruit after his death ... .” (Gilley 41).

6 See, e.g., Chesterton’s foreword to Germany’s National Religion, Friends of Europe #13 (Westminster: undated, but after Hitler’s rise).
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Books on C.S. Lewis often suffer from the immensity of their subject. This is unsurprising, really. An analysis of the ideas of the twentieth-century’s most acclaimed apologist, fantasy novelist, literary critic, essayist, poet, and amateur theologian can be hard to manage in a single monograph. Thus, any author whose intent is to “try to go deeper than other books on Lewis’s theology have gone” attempts an arduous undertaking (13). Yet with *Deeper Magic: The Theology Behind the Writings of C.S. Lewis*, Donald Williams, Lewis scholar and Professor of English at Toccoa Falls College, has offered as deft a treatment of Lewis’s contributions to Christian theology as has been written.

Devoting chapters to theological prolegomena and categories like the study of scripture, Christology, soteriology, and eschatology, Williams sets out to situate Lewis’s theological writing among the concerns of theologians. Now, it would be hard to recommend a book that sought to so position Lewis by a theologian’s criteria alone. As Williams rightly points out, Lewis was quick to remove himself from the company of professional theologians. One need look no farther than the preface of a book like *The Problem of Pain* to find Lewis remind his readers that he is theological layman and amateur. But Williams wisely takes Lewis on his own terms, expanding the dogmatic categories of systematic theology to consider areas in which Lewis has a thing or two to teach the professionals. Often overlooked in works of systematic theology, the fields of theological aesthetics, poimenics (evangelism and apologetics), and theological articulations particular to Lewis, like his Christological trilemma—Jesus was either liar, lunatic, or Lord—remind readers of just how ingenious Lewis’s theology is and how important it has been to Evangelical theology.
Perhaps the greatest strength, and there are many, of Williams’ *Deeper Magic* is how equitably it measures Lewis as a theologian with something meaningful to say to evangelical Christianity. Williams sees the need in Lewis studies for such an assessment and goes about taking it: “We do not yet have a book that looks 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). Here *Deeper Magic* finds itself as a required read for any modern Christian who wants to understand how a thinker from yesterday like Lewis might speak to today’s church. In collecting Lewis’s theological themes, Williams brings in over thirty works from Lewis ranging from his children’s fiction to his apologetic material. The result is a remarkably thorough, balanced handling of Lewis’s broad body of work.

Such finesse is needed when approaching the intersection of Lewis and doctrinal issues like soteriology, a vital ventricle of evangelical theology. For example, his chapter on soteriology brings the brunt of Lewis’s atonement theology to bear. Careful and concise, Williams moves through historically important theories of the atonement to sensitively position Lewis who held such theories to be mere images best used to suggest the reality of Christ’s work. To Lewis, no one theory could capture the complexity of that reality. “Lewis was often better at portraying the atonement than explaining it,” Williams writes (157). Readers find in Lewis a theological artisan, a writer whose theology employs reason, imagination, and myth along with scripture. It is this Lewis, Williams argues, who is not only fit for the task of a theologian but who is uniquely able to elevate the entire field of Evangelical theology.

The contributions *Deeper Magic* makes to Lewis studies extend in two directions. On the one hand, the work hits its mark as a more concentrated exploration of Lewis’s theology than has yet been produced. Williams has bridged critical conversations about Lewis to those being had in and about Evangelical theology. Beyond that, *Deeper Magic* achieves something best described as a right sizing of Lewis. Measured against prominent Evangelical theologians, Lewis is, in some areas, lacking. It is safe to say that even Lewis himself wouldn’t disagree. In the area of dogmatics, one will not find in Lewis the wealth of material one finds with, say, Wayne Grudem. But in other doctrinal matters of interest to Evangelical theology, Lewis pioneers. Who has influenced Evangelical apologetics more than C.S. Lewis? What argument has directed man’s existential longing to God more powerfully than Lewis’s apologetic from desire? Who has given the church a clearer picture of what it looks like to communicate the truths of Christianity through memorable, beautiful language more so than Lewis has? Williams reminds readers of just how large Lewis should still loom over Evangelicalism. In effectively arguing for Lewis’s place in Evangelical theology, Williams
beckons us to enchant the theological with the imaginative, to consider the mythical alongside the scriptural, and to look for the deeper magic beneath the systematic.

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For those who love the Inklings the proverb can certainly be said, “Of the books on the Inklings there are too few”, and so this same audience will be most grateful to have in their hands the second book by Diana Pavlac Gyler on this Oxford writing group, Bandersnatch: C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and the Creative Collaboration of the Inklings. Gyler—whose first book, The Company They Keep, earned rave reviews—here reworks much of that material for a wider audience. However, it is not just a popularization of The Company They Keep. Rather, with a sharpened focus, as noted in the title, it is an exploration in “creative collaboration.” Therefore in many ways Bandersnatch is a hybrid work, containing both new and old, with all the challenges that go with such an endeavor.

The inspiration for her work is a desire to learn of the creative relationship between the various members of the Inklings and the effect this made on their literary productions. She writes: “What did these writers talk about when they met to discuss their works in progress? And what difference did these conversations make to the books they were writing”(3)? Her work is intended not only for Inkling enthusiasts but all the more so for those writers who seek to find creative practices for further inspiration. How does one create the conditions for creative literary expression? As a test case she puts
before the reader the creative work of Bandersnatch itself which contains new illustrations by fantasy illustrator James A. Owen of Mythworld fame, stating, “This is a book about collaboration, and from start to finish, it was created collaboratively” (Xvii). It seems for Gyler, the evidence for her claim regarding collaboration and creativity, is in the pudding itself; the very creation of Bandersnatch.

The title of her book takes its inspiration from an offhand comment C.S. Lewis made when asked about his creative relationship with Tolkien. He famously replied: “No one ever influenced Tolkien—you might as well try to influence a Bandersnatch.” An opaque reference to some, a Bandersnatch is a reference to a temperamental mythic character found in the writings of Lewis Carroll. Adding greater description within the poem “The Hunting of the Snark”, Carroll writes, “[the Bandersnatch] merely extended its neck and grabbed … again and again … without rest or pause—while those frumious jaws went savagely snapping around.” With Lewis’ description made plain, Tolkien is seen to be given the additional representation of someone who actively and ferociously seeks solitude in creative matters; and whose snapping jaws seek to achieve it! Glyer also might aim to extend this creature’s description to solitary writers who are listening in and who’s insecurity keeps those who might collaborate with them at bay.

For those familiar with the stories of the famous Oxford writing group the Inklings there will be warm reunions found here. Many beloved stories are recounted within these pages for the delight of the reader such as the wager made between Lewis and Tolkien which eventually birthed Out of the Silent Planet and The Hobbit, as well as descriptions of the playful and irenic spirit of Charles Williams and his own influence within the group. Humorous stories of Tolkien’s obsessive compulsive nature, Lewis’ penchant for frank “banter” and “war” with Owen Barfield, and Williams’ dense and “impenetrable” writing style are all given great description. Lesser known Inklings also come into focus such as Christopher Tolkien’s immense contribution of translating his father’s legendarium and intentions, Dr. Robert E. Harvard’s significant input on The Problem of Pain, and the heavy accusation levied at Hugo Dyson as the instigator for the disintegration of the group by his trenchant criticism of Tolkien’s The Lord of the Rings: “There is a difference between conflict and contempt. Dyson delivered an ax blow to the root of the tree” (70). For an Inklings audience, a strong indictment indeed, and for those who think severe criticism is helpful to collaboration, a warning.

However, the lore of the Inklings is simply the means to a greater end: to discern through this particular creative group gleanings of aid for those who seek to become more creative in their own writing. To this purpose Glyer ends each chapter with a pulling together of such nuggets entitled “Doing What They Did.” Pithy advice from “creativity itself is a messy business” (9) to “the rhythm of routine creates a safe place to discuss daring possibilities”
(27) could be helpful or negligible to an aspiring writer. Also added is the final chapter, “Doing what the Inklings Did” which seeks to give specific advice (such as Start Small, Meet Often, Embrace Difference, etc.) to those who seek a plan of action. In the main, her insights are insightful, simple, and generous in spirit, and they invoke a spirit of encouragement to those who seek to follow them.

It is difficult to separate the creative act itself from the creative geniuses whose work is an act of providential inspiration or to put it differently; to create a Lord of the Rings one might need a Tolkien more than his practices. But on the whole, this work gives helpful nourishment, and attempts what most books on the Inklings fail to do; to seek an application of their fellowship for our own creative birthing. In viewing the breathtaking descriptions of such beautiful vistas as Middle Earth, Narnia, or Malacandra, one is indeed inspired to find such enchanted places for oneself. In the end, there is a strong sense that friendship itself is the greatest catalyst for creative collaboration; that and respect. In the creation of such respectful friendships, I believe Glyer is saying, the creation of the most sublime beauty is within reach. There is hope that the Bandernacht within all of us may be tamed through the gentle and firm bonds of others. It is a beautiful insight indeed.

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Book Notes


The relationship between C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien is famous, and *The Great Tower of Elfland: The Mythopoeic Worldview of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, G.K. Chesterton, and George MacDonald* claims that it is famously misunderstood. In a growing field of Inklings studies, Zachary Rhone seeks to correct 50 years of error, first made by Humphrey Carpenter and perpetuated by all of his successors, concerning the worldview of the Inklings’ most famous members. Whereas the earliest studies of the Inklings proposed that the group shared a common Christian mysticism, this unified Inkling theory was debunked by Humphrey Carpenter in his 1978 biography of the group. Since then, few have ventured to disagree with Carpenter’s statement that they were held together by nothing but Lewis’ friendship. The pendulum swings the other way in *The Great Tower of Elfland*, in which Rhone argues that the worldview of the Inklings, specifically Lewis and Tolkien, bound the group together. Rhone, an adjunct English professor at a number of institutions, has published several articles as well as his dissertation on Lewis, Tolkien, and mythopoeia. To support his argument Rhone uses the works of George MacDonald and G.K. Chesterton, authors who were influential to both of the famous Inklings. By identifying the worldview of MacDonald and Chesterton, then drawing the same elements out of Lewis and Tolkien’s work, Rhone hopes to convince readers of the common link amongst the 20th century’s most famous writing club and reverse half a century of error.


The latest in the long list of books by Fr. James Schall, *The Satisfied Crocodile* is a selection of essays on G.K. Chesterton. These essays, by one prolific
author on another, cover a wide variety
topics, from “Chesterton on Aquinas” and
“The Theology of Christmas Presents” to
“On Knowing Too Many People” and “On
Girls, Golf-Clubs, and the Presence of Man
on Earth.” These 59 essays demonstrate
Fr. Schall’s familiarity with Chesterton, as
does the title. In the introduction, Schall
justifies his “odd” title by remembering that
“the great truth of Chesterton’s writings
is that wit is not contrary to truth.” With
anecdotes drawn from Chesterton’s life and
Schall’s own life, *The Satisfied Crocodile* is a
journey both long and wide through Schall’s
considerable Chesterton research.


Anyone who has read Tolkien’s *Father
Christmas Letters*, or perhaps *Farmer Giles of
Ham*, knows that Tolkien was no stranger to
comedy. It is easy to think that, in his most
popular myth, the serious tone of great halls
and dark times overpowers Tolkien’s love of
humor. According to *Laughter in Middle-earth,*
this is not so. The 35th book in the Cormarë
series, *Laughter in Middle-earth: Humour in and around the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien* is a
collection of essays focusing on the ‘fountain
of mirth’ in *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Hobbit,*
and even the tragic *Silmarillion*—to borrow
a phrase from Alastair Whyte’s chapter title
in the book. Contributors include Signum
university graduates, Tolkien art collectors,
and doctors of literature from around the
world. Their topics range from the different uses of laughter in *The Lord of the Rings*—
ferocious laughter in the face of death as well as Gandalf’s ‘pure
sound of mirth’—to the different sorts of humor Tolkien employed in his
legendarium—such as the etiquette based humor of *The Hobbit*—to a discussion of the many parodies of Tolkien’s works. Tolkien’s first reviewer of *The Lord of the Rings*, Rayner Unwin, overlooked the comedy in the books in favor of the struggle between good and evil; while *Laughter in Middle-earth* does not diminish that struggle, it corrects that oversight by reminding the reader of Tolkien’s love of humor and its importance in his works.

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