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Mythopoeia: The Unified Worldview of J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, G. K. Chesterton, and George MacDonald

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MYTHOPOEIA: THE UNIFIED WORLDVIEW OF J. R. R. TOLKIEN, C. S. LEWIS, G. K.
CHESTERTON, AND GEORGE MACDONALD

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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We hereby approve the dissertation of

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Title: Mythopoeia: The Unified Worldview of J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, G. K. Chesterton, and George MacDonald

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Analyses of the self-dubbed literary group, “The Inklings,” which C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien attended, tend to decry a unified worldview of its authors. Although true of the entire Inklings group, few scholars have sought to recognize the shared *Weltanschauungen* of select Inklings and their predecessors. The purpose of my research is to overturn the misapplication of a divided worldview among two Inklings, Tolkien and Lewis, and their forerunners, G. K. Chesterton and George MacDonald. Analyzing their literary, scholarly, and interpersonal texts, I clarify the unities of their thinking through five general categories: literature and language, humanism, philosophy of the personal journey, philosophy of history and civilization, and their Christian mythopoeia. The Introduction responds to arguments about diversified worldviews in vogue among scholars, explains some of the literary and interpersonal exchanges among the authors to demonstrate their relationships, and presents my thesis that these authors shared a unified worldview. The first chapter, “Language and Literature,” utilizes the authors’ primary works to clarify their literary and linguistic theoretical orientations. The second chapter, “All that is Human,” analyzes the Renaissance-esque Christian humanism of these authors, their belief that humans should care for animals and nature, and their assertion of fallen humanity. Third, “Paths and Roads” examines the literary motifs of pathways in their texts, roads used to demonstrate their perceptions of free will, fate, and the accompanying discipleship of

companions along the way. “Civilization and Origination,” the fourth chapter, articulates their observations that civilization and barbarism are different from one another in appearance but not in intelligence; accordingly, myth, the barbaric approach to understanding the world, and science, the civilized approach to understanding the world, are two approaches to discover some of the same mysteries, both containing elements of truth. Finally, “The Overarching Hypothesis” recontextualizes the four preceding chapters in lieu of MacDonald, Chesterton, Lewis, and Tolkien’s Christian theology and mythopoeia, concluding that a unified worldview was inevitable due to their shared theological views and cultural environments. The Conclusion explains this text’s structure and highlights how these authors’ worldview has extended through and beyond the twentieth century.