



Newsletter C.S. Lewis Society of Central Massachusetts

Exploring Mere Christianity in Science, the
Arts, and Culture

Fall 2011 (Volume 3, Issue 1)



Dear Reader,

We are pleased to share with you the Fall 2011 Newsletter of the C.S. Lewis Society of Central Massachusetts. We have numerous activities planned for the coming year and we hope you have a chance to connect with us from time-to-time. The Society promotes the exploration of ideas from science, the arts, culture, and everyday life as they intersect with what C.S. Lewis called "mere Christianity." Our objective is to facilitate engaging discussion and reflection of topics of enduring value for Christians and non-Christians alike. To learn more, we invite you to visit our web site at www.lewisma.org. If you have any questions or comments, please email us at info@lewisma.org.

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I. Book Discussion Club to Resume

This fall, the Book Discussion Club will meet at the Auburn Public Library at 369 Southbridge Street. The dates and times are listed below. If you are in the Auburn area in September, you might want to check out our display in the entryway of the Library. Later in the year, we may try out an alternative location for one or more of the book clubs. We'll keep you posted.

Saturday, September 10, 9:00-10:30 AM, "The Chronicles of Narnia: The Silver Chair"
Saturday, September 24, 9:00-10:30 AM, "The Chronicles of Narnia: The Silver Chair"

Do you need a copy of "The Silver Chair"? We have used copies available at \$3. If you might attend the book club in September and you'd like us to mail you a copy of the book, just email your address to info@lewisma.org. We'll send you the book in the mail and settle up later for the \$3.

Saturday, October 1, 9:00-10:30 AM, book or readings to be determined by attendees
Saturday, October 22, 9:00-10:30 AM, book or readings to be determined by attendees

Saturday, November 12, 9:00-10:30 AM, book or readings to be determined by attendees
Saturday, November 19, 9:00-10:30 AM, book or readings to be determined by attendees

II. News (Narnia, Lewis, Events, etc.)

[Calvin Seminary web site helps "churches engage the wonders of science in the life of the church"](#)

[Off Broadway Play about Freud and Lewis extends run and wins 2011 Off Broadway Alliance Award](#)

[Documentary film "Through A Lens Darkly: Grief, Loss and C.S. Lewis" to be released in September](#)

III. Special Event: "The Narnia Code" Tentatively Scheduled for January 2012

We're planning to view and discuss the documentary film, "The Narnia Code," in January 2012. Stay tuned for information about date, time, and location.

[Stan Bohall writes review of "The Narnia Code" \(posted to Lewis Society web Page\)](#)

IV. Books of Interest

Here we summarize a variety of books at the intersection of mere Christianity and science (S), arts (A), culture (C), and everyday life (L). We also include recent books on the life and work of C.S. Lewis (designated "Lewis") and books for kids (K). Unless otherwise indicated, summaries are from amazon.com or the publisher's web site. Please note that some of the books delve into controversial issues. While the books in the Newsletter are not officially endorsed by the Society, they can be good starting points for further discussion and reflection.

Testing Scripture: A Scientist Explores the Bible (S)

John Polkinghorne, Brazos, 2011

Scientist and theologian John Polkinghorne is one of the world's leading authorities on issues of science and faith. In this compelling work, he provides a fresh, honest look at key themes of the Bible from an analytical and rational perspective, offering a series of insights that have helped him in his own engagement with the Bible. Polkinghorne tackles the questions a modern Western thinker might bring to the Bible, including issues of Scripture and authority, contradiction and ambiguity, and the creation and fall. He also addresses theological challenges of the Old Testament, the Gospels, and the writings of Paul. "I have written this little book in the hope that it will be helpful to those who are seeking a careful and thoughtful engagement with the Bible in their quest for a truthful understanding of the ways of God and the nature of spiritual reality," writes Polkinghorne. His nuanced approach will be appreciated by any reader with an open and inquiring mind who is interested in the intersection between science and Scripture.

The Hidden Reality: Parallel Universes and the Deep Laws of the Cosmos (S)

Brian Greene, Knopf, 2011

There was a time when "universe" meant all there is. Everything. Yet, in recent years discoveries in physics and cosmology have led a number of scientists to conclude that our universe may be one among many. With crystal-clear prose and inspired use of analogy, Brian Greene shows how a range of different "multiverse" proposals emerges from theories developed to explain the most refined observations of both subatomic particles and the dark depths of space: a multiverse in which you have an infinite number of doppelgängers, each reading this sentence in a distant universe; a multiverse comprising a vast ocean of bubble universes, of which ours is but one; a multiverse that endlessly cycles through time, or one that might be hovering millimeters away yet remains invisible; another in which every possibility allowed by quantum physics is brought to life....Greene, one of our foremost physicists and science writers, takes us on a captivating exploration of these parallel worlds and reveals how much of reality's true nature may be deeply hidden within them. And, with his unrivaled ability to make the most challenging of material accessible and entertaining, Greene tackles the core question: How can fundamental science progress if great swaths of reality lie beyond our reach?

Absence of Mind: The Dispelling of Inwardness from the Modern Myth of the Self (S,C)

Marilynne Robinson, Yale University Press, 2011

In this ambitious book, acclaimed writer Marilynne Robinson applies her astute intellect to some of the most vexing topics in the history of human thought—science, religion, and consciousness. Crafted with the same care and insight as her award-winning novels, *Absence of Mind* challenges postmodern atheists who crusade against religion under the banner of science. In Robinson's view, scientific reasoning does

not denote a sense of logical infallibility, as thinkers like Richard Dawkins might suggest. Instead, in its purest form, science represents a search for answers. It engages the problem of knowledge, an aspect of the mystery of consciousness, rather than providing a simple and final model of reality.

The Mind and the Machine: What It Means to Be Human and Why It Matters (S,A,C,L)

Matthew Dickerson, Brazos, 2011

What does it mean to be human? Some naturalists believe that the human mind can be reduced to brain biology, suggesting that we are no more than complex biochemical machines. Computer scientist Matthew Dickerson critiques a physicalist/naturalist view of human persons and defends theistic accounts of human nature. He responds to the widespread assertion that human consciousness is nothing more than "software" that can one day be downloaded into supercomputers. Drawing on C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien, Dickerson gets at the heart of human nature itself, highlighting a far richer vision of personhood, creativity, and love. This thought-provoking book on a timely topic will appeal to those interested in science and religion, philosophy, and technology; readers of the materialist New Atheists; and anyone who simply cares what it means to be human.

Think: The Life of the Mind and the Love of God (S,A,C,L)

John Piper, Crossway, 2011

John Piper has written a wise and passionate book about the importance of loving God with our minds. After all, we are commanded to do so! But as Piper explains, Christians have not always been very attentive to that commandment. With clarity and directness, he reveals the obstacles that prevent us from using our minds as God intended—but also shows the delights and benefits of doing so. Especially for those who fear intellectualism, this book will be a bracing tonic, and an encouragement besides. — Alan Jacobs

Wayfaring: Essays Pleasant and Unpleasant (A,C,L)

Alan Jacobs, Eerdmans, 2010

Alan Jacobs's essays offer a rich feast of intellectual pleasure and ethical nourishment. He combines an alert, sympathetic eye for the novelties of today's technological and artistic culture with a shrewd and solid sense of their moral and psychological effects. This book is bracing, salutary, witty, and profound — and it's often all of these things on a single page. — Edward Mendelson, Columbia University

God in a Brothel: An Undercover Journey into Sex Trafficking and Rescue (C)

Daniel Walker, Intervarsity Press, 2011

This is the true story of an undercover investigator's experiences infiltrating the multi-billion dollar global sex industry. It is a story of triumph for the children and young teens released from a life of slavery and the rescuer who freed many hundreds of victims leading to the prosecution of dozens of perpetrators. And it is a story of haunting despair for those left behind in corrupt systems of law enforcement. It is the personal story of Daniel Walker, one man who followed a path of costly discipleship, agonizing failure and unlikely redemption.

Beyond Bumper Sticker Ethics: An Introduction to Theories of Right and Wrong, 2nd ed. (C,L)

Steve Wilkens, Intervarsity Press, 2011

Ideas have consequences. And sometimes those ideas can be squeezed into slogans, slapped on bumper stickers and tweeted into cyberspace. These compact messages coming at us from all directions often compress in a few words entire ethical systems. It turns out that there's a lot more to the ideas behind these slogans--ideas that need to be sorted out before we make important moral decisions as individuals or as societies.

A Vision for the Aging Church (C,L)

James M. Houston and Michael Parker, Intervarsity Press, 2011

Now is the time for the church to offer ministry to its increasing numbers of seniors and to benefit from ministry they can offer. [T]his book...issue[s] an urgent call to reconceive the place and part of the

elderly and seniors in the local church congregation. Confronting the idea that the aging are mostly a burden on the church, they boldly address the moral issues related to caring for them, provide examples of successful care-giving programs and challenge the church to restore broken connections across the generations. Co-written by a noted theologian and an expert in the fields of social work and gerontology, this interdisciplinary book assesses our current cultural context and the challenges and opportunities we face. The authors show us that seniors aren't the problem. They are the solution.

Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers (C,L)

Chap Clark, Baker Academic, 2011

Hurt provided a vivid and insightful view into the world of today's teenagers. Now leading youth ministry expert Chap Clark substantially updates and revises his groundbreaking bestseller (over 55,000 copies sold). Hurt 2.0 features a new chapter on youth at society's margins and new material on social networking and gaming. Each chapter has been thoroughly revised with new research, statistics, quotations, and documentation.

Mother Teresa: A Personal Portrait: 50 Inspiring Stories Never Before Told (C,L)

Leo Maasburg, Ignatius Press, 2011

Mother Teresa's life sounds like a legend. The Albanian girl who entered an Irish order to go to India as a missionary and became an "Angel of the Poor" for countless people. She was greatly revered by Christians as well as Muslims, Hindus and unbelievers, as she brought the message of Christian love for one's neighbor from the slums of Calcutta to the whole world. Fr. Leo Maasburg was there as her close companion for many years, traveling with her throughout the world and was witness to countless miracles and incredible little-known occurrences. In this personal portrait of the beloved nun, he presents fifty amazing stories about her that most people have never heard, wonderful and delightful stories about miracles, small and great, that he was privileged to experience at Mother Teresa's side. Stories of how, without a penny to her name, she started an orphanage in Spain, and at the same time saved a declining railroad company from ruin, and so many more. They all tell of her limitless trust in God's love, of the way the power of faith can move mountains, and of hope that can never die. These stories reveal a humorous, gifted, wise and arresting woman who has a message of real hope for our time. It's the life story of one of the most important women of the 20th century as it's never been told before.

Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor (C,L)

Ben Witherington III, Eerdmans, 2011

Ben Witherington has given the whole people of God something desperately needed to make sense of Monday to Friday — a theology of work that breaks down the heretical sacred-secular distinction....Offers a work-view and life-view that, if embraced, would revitalize the mission of God's people in the world. It's that good. — R. Paul Stevens

In Defense Of Sanity: The Best Essays of G.K. Chesterton (L,Lewis)

G.K. Chesterton, Ignatius Press, 2011

[T]hree of the world's leading authorities on Chesterton - Dale Ahlquist, Joseph Pearce, Aidan Mackey - have joined together to select the "best" Chesterton essays, a collection that will be appreciated by both the newcomer and the seasoned student of this great 20th century man of letters. The variety of topics are astounding: barbarians, architects, mystics, ghosts, fireworks, rain, juries, gargoyles and much more. Plus a look at Shakespeare, Dickens, Jane Austen, George MacDonald, T.S. Eliot, and the Bible. All in that inimitable, formidable but always quotable style of GKC. Even more astounding than the variety is the continuity of Chesterton's thought that ties everything together. A veritable feast for the mind and heart.

Looking for the King: An Inklings Novel (Lewis)

David C. Downing, Ignatius Press, 2010

It is 1940, and American Tom McCord, a 23-year-old aspiring doctoral candidate, is in England researching the historical evidence for the legendary King Arthur. There he meets perky and intuitive Laura Hartman, a fellow American staying with her aunt in Oxford, and the two of them team up for an

even more ambitious and dangerous quest. Aided by the Inklings-that illustrious circle of scholars and writers made famous by its two most prolific members, C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien-Tom and Laura begin to suspect that the fabled Spear of Destiny, the lance that pierced the side of Christ on the cross, is hidden somewhere in England. Tom discovers that Laura has been having mysterious dreams, which seem to be related to the subject of his research, and, though doubtful of her visions, he hires her as an assistant. Heeding the insights and advice of the Inklings, while becoming aware of being shadowed by powerful and secretive foes who would claim the spear as their own, Tom and Laura end up on a thrilling treasure hunt that crisscrosses the English countryside and leads beyond a search for the elusive relics of Camelot into the depths of the human heart and soul. Weaving his fast-paced narrative with conversation based on the works of the Inklings, author David Downing offers a vivid portrait of Oxford and draws a welcome glimpse into the personalities and ideas of Lewis and Tolkien, while never losing sight of his action-packed adventure story and its two very appealing main characters.

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