



Newsletter C.S. Lewis Society of Central Massachusetts

Exploring Mere Christianity in Science, the Arts, and
Culture

Winter 2011 (Volume 2, Issue 2)



Dear Reader,

Happy New Year! We are pleased to share with you the Winter 2011 Newsletter of the C.S. Lewis Society of Central Massachusetts. 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. Special Event, Auburn Public Library, Saturday, January 22, 9-11 AM: Reflections by Ellie Kraner on C.S. Lewis Summer Seminar

This past summer, Ellie Kraner, Pastor of Brookfield Congregational Church, participated in a week-long C.S. Lewis Summer Seminar in Residence. The seminar was sponsored by the C.S. Lewis Foundation and held at Lewis' home, the Kilns, in Oxford, England. Ellie will share her experiences from the seminar about the sights, life, and works of C.S. Lewis. As the author of "The Birthday Gift," Ellie is a wonderful storyteller. Come and enjoy her images and stories.

The event will be held on Saturday, January 22, 9-11 AM at the Auburn Public Library at 369 Southbridge Street. For directions click [here](#).

II. Book Discussion Club to Resume on February 5

In the winter term, the Book Discussion Club will continue to meet at the Auburn Public Library at 369 Southbridge Street at the dates and times listed below (for directions click [here](#)). All are welcome to attend and you do not need to own the books to participate.

1. Saturday, February 5, 9:00-10:30 AM, Kenneth Grahame "The Wind in the Willows"
1. Saturday, February 19, 9:00-10:30 AM, Kenneth Grahame "The Wind in the Willows"

2. Saturday, March 5, 9:00-10:30 AM, C.S. Lewis "Mere Christianity"
2. Saturday, March 19, 9:00-10:30 AM, C.S. Lewis "Mere Christianity"

3. Saturday, April 2, 9:00-10:30 AM, book to be determined by attendees
3. Saturday, April 16, 9:00-10:30 AM, book to be determined by attendees

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

[The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader Movie Review](#) (TV.com)

[Freud and Lewis in Philosophical Duel](#) (South Florida Theater Review)

[Humane Society of the United States Honors Lewis' Portrayal of Animals](#) (Oregon Faith Report)

[Interview about Upcoming Film Version of The Screwtape Letters](#) (video.christianpost.com)

[C.S. Lewis: The Movie Scheduled for Summer 2012](#)

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.

Theology in the Context of Science (S,C)

John Polkinghorne, Yale University Press, 2010

Countering recent assertions by "new atheists" that religious belief is irrational and even dangerous, Polkinghorne explores ways that theology can be open to and informed by science. He describes recent scientific discourse on such subjects as epistemology, objectivity, uncertainty, and rationality and considers the religious importance of the evolution in these areas of scientific thought. Then, evaluating such topics as relativity, space and time, and evolutionary theory, he uses a scientific style of inquiry as a foundation on which to build a model of Christian belief structure. Science and theology share in the great human quest for truth and understanding, says Polkinghorne, and he illustrates how their interaction can be fruitful for both.

The Shape of Inner Space: String Theory and the Geometry of the Universe's Hidden Dimensions (S)

Shing-Tung Yau and Steve Nadis, Basic Books, 2010

String theory says we live in a ten-dimensional universe, but that only four are accessible to our everyday senses. According to theorists, the missing six are curled up in bizarre structures known as Calabi-Yau manifolds. In *The Shape of Inner Space*, Shing-Tung Yau, the man who mathematically proved that these manifolds exist, argues that not only is geometry fundamental to string theory, it is also fundamental to the very nature of our universe.

"*The Shape of Inner Space* provides a vibrant tour through the strange and wondrous possibility that the three spatial dimensions we see may not be the only ones that exist. Told by one of the masters of the subject, the book gives an in-depth account of one of the most exciting and controversial developments in modern theoretical physics." Brian Greene, Columbia University; author of *The Elegant Universe*

Science vs. Religion: What Scientists Really Think (S,C)

Elaine Howard Ecklund, Oxford University Press, 2010

In *Science vs. Religion*, Elaine Howard Ecklund investigates this unexamined assumption in the first systematic study of what scientists actually think and feel about religion. In the course of her research, Ecklund surveyed nearly 1,700 scientists and interviewed 275 of them. She finds that most of what we believe about the faith lives of elite scientists is wrong. Nearly 50 percent of them are religious. Many others are what she calls "spiritual entrepreneurs," seeking creative ways to work with the tensions between science and faith outside the constraints of traditional religion. The book centers around vivid portraits of 10 representative men and women working in the natural and social sciences at top American research universities. Ecklund's respondents run the gamut from Margaret, a chemist who teaches a Sunday-school class, to Arik, a physicist who chose not to believe in God well before he decided to

become a scientist. Only a small minority are actively hostile to religion. Ecklund reveals how scientists--believers and skeptics alike--are struggling to engage the increasing number of religious students in their classrooms and argues that many scientists are searching for "boundary pioneers" to cross the picket lines separating science and religion.

Darwin's Pious Idea: Why the Ultra-Darwinists and Creationists Both Get it Wrong (S,C)

Conor Cunningham, Eerdmans, 2010

"Conor Cunningham pulls no punches in his full-frontal assault on the ultra-Darwinism of Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett. But this is no anti-evolution diatribe. Cunningham is equally merciless in his critique of latter-day 'creationism,' which he rightly portrays as a deviation from classical Christian orthodoxy. This is a work of intellectual depth, informed by a study of the latest genetics as well as by theological erudition. Also drawing on the work of historians who have demythologized the popular stereotypes of 'science' and 'religion,' Cunningham's book will delight the discerning who observe with dismay the puerility of much that passes for authoritative judgment." John Hedley Brooke

The Language of Science and Faith: Straight Answers to Genuine Questions (S,C)

Karl W. Giberson and Francis S. Collins, IVP Books, 2011

Christians affirm that everything exists because of God--from subatomic quarks to black holes. Science often claims to explain nature without including God at all. And thinking Christians often feel forced to choose between the two. But the good news is that we don't have to make a choice. Science does not overthrow the Bible. Faith does not require rejecting science. World-renowned scientist Francis Collins, author of *The Language of God*, along with fellow scientist Karl Giberson show how we can embrace both. Their fascinating treatment explains how God cares for and interacts with his creation while science offers a reliable way to understand the world he made. Together they clearly answer dozens of the most common questions people ask about Darwin, evolution, the age of the earth, the Bible, the existence of God and our finely tuned universe.

The Passionate Intellect: Christian Faith and the Discipleship of the Mind (S,A,C,L)

Alister McGrath, IVP Books, 2010

"In *The Passionate Intellect*, Alister McGrath provides engaging, accessible, energetic help for Christians who are skeptical about the existential relevance of Christian theology, or who have come to doubt its credibility in the face of the attacks of new atheists and those wedded to a shallow scientism. This series of essays not only provides important support for believers seeking their footing in the current cultural morass, but can also stimulate a new curiosity about the intellectual and spiritual fruitfulness and integrity of the theological enterprise as a whole." Marguerite Shuster.

Breath for the Bones: Art, Imagination and Spirit: A Reflection on Creativity and Faith (A)

Luci Shaw, Thomas Nelson, 2009

In this rich collection of thoughts on creativity and faith, Luci Shaw explores the intersection of the life of faith with the life of art. By helping the reader understand spiritual principles from looking at God's own creative life throughout Scripture and by providing the necessary tools for thinking Christianly about the arts, she challenges the artist in us all to ask how faith informs art, and how art can animate faith. Here is a fresh breath of encouragement to the imaginative mind...a clear guide to understanding both the theological framework of creativity and the call to be active participants in God's own creative life.

The Art of Faith: A Guide to Understanding Christian Art and Architecture (A)

Judith Couchman, Paraclete Press, 2011

What does this mean? It's a question asked by many who look at Christian art but don't understand its content or meaning. *The Art of Faith* answers this question in a quick reference guide to Christian art and architecture. Practical and easy to read, this book unfolds the world of Christian images for anyone interested in art: believers who want to enrich their faith, college students studying art history, travelers to ancient sites, seekers who want to explore Christianity. With this book in hand, readers can visit

churches or museums and recognize the art's style or meaning or even explore the signs and symbols of their local church.

Thrift: Rebirth of a Forgotten Virtue (C,L)

Theodore Malloch, Encounter Books, 2009

Despite the calls for massive spending and "stimulus," if the current financial crisis has taught us anything, it is to save, not just spend. In fact, over the years "thrift" has become America's lost or forgotten virtue, rarely mentioned and never celebrated, despite its historical significance.... Thrift, Malloch argues, provides the resources to stimulate prosperity. Even if the government manages to shock our economy back to life, America will require discipline, accountability, and farsightedness to right its course for generations to come. In an age when corruption and greed have crowded out personal responsibility, *Thrift* is lively, topical, and immediately useful.

The New Frugality: How to Consume Less, Save More, and Live Better (C,L)

Chris Farrell, Bloombury Press, 2010

The New Frugality lays out how Americans have overspent--and offers a way out through consuming less and saving more--showing that living simply is not just living "cheaply." What is required is a paradigm shift. We need to learn to live more modestly by cutting back on spending, actually attempting to live within our means and increasing savings. Farrell outlines creative new ways of thinking that can help us to accomplish this, not just by reverting to earlier financial models, but by innovating new solutions that are appropriate to the times we live in.

The Land Between: Finding God in Difficult Transitions (C,L)

Jeff Manion, Zondervan, 2010

The Land Between provides fresh biblical insight for people traveling through undesired transitions--foreclosure, unemployment, parents in declining health, post-graduate uncertainty, business failure--who are looking for hope, guidance, and encouragement. What if life's transitions are there to remind us that God is present before, during, and after these periods?

Clouds of Witnesses: Christian Voices from Africa and Asia (C,L)

Mark Noll and Carolyn Nystrom, IVP Books, 2011

As Africa and Asia take their place as the new Christian heartlands, a new and robust company of saints is coming into view. In seventeen inspiring narratives Mark Noll and Carolyn Nystrom introduce pivotal Christian leaders in Africa and Asia who had tenacious faith in the midst of deprivation, suffering and conflict. Spanning a century, from the 1880s to the 1980s, their stories demonstrate the vitality of the Christian faith in a diversity of contexts. This kaleidoscopic witness to the power of the gospel will both inspire and educate.

The End of Sexual Identity: Why Sex Is Too Important to Define Who We Are (C,L)

Jenell Williams Paris, IVP Books, 2011

Concepts like "gay" or "straight" are relatively recent developments in human history. We let ourselves be defined by socially constructed notions of sexual identity and sexual orientation, even though these are not distinctly biblical or Christian ways of thinking about sex. Anthropologist Jenell Williams Paris offers a Christian framework for sexuality that accounts for complex postmodern realities. She unpacks how sexual identities are socially constructed in our cultural context, and assesses problems with common cultural and Christian understandings of heterosexuality and homosexuality. Ultimately, linking sexual feelings to human identity leads us to a dead end. Avoiding simplistic moral exhortation about sexual behavior, Paris argues that the Christian tradition holds a distinct vision for sexuality without sexual identity categories. *The End of Sexual Identity* moves beyond culture war impasses to open up new space and vocabulary for conversations with people in diverse communities both inside and outside the church.

Faith Without Illusions: Following Jesus as a Cynic-Saint (C,L)

Andrew Byers, IVP Books, 2011

Cynicism has become almost a cliché. It pervades the culture and defines the age--and threatens to derail faith. Andrew Byers identifies the primary factors in the church that inspire disillusionment rather than faith, but he goes beyond that to help struggling cynics channel their frustrations into the redemptive vocations found in the Bible: the prophet, the sage, the tragic poet. These all find their fulfillment in Jesus, and he in turn inspires cynics from the apostle Paul to you and me to embrace our saintly calling--hopeful realism.

Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope that Matters (C,L)

Timothy Keller, Dutton Adult, 2009

Success, true love, and the life you've always wanted. Many of us placed our faith in these things, believing they held the key to happiness, but with a sneaking suspicion they might not deliver. The recent economic meltdown has cast a harsh new light on these pursuits. In a matter of months, fortunes, marriages, careers, and a secure retirement have disappeared for millions of people. No wonder so many of us feel lost, alone, disenchanted, and resentful. But the truth is that we made lesser gods of these good things--gods that can't give us what we really need. There is only one God who can wholly satisfy our cravings--and now is the perfect time to meet him again, or for the first time. The Bible tells us that the human heart is an "idol-factory," taking good things and making them into idols that drive us. In *Counterfeit Gods*, Keller applies his trademark approach to show us how a proper understanding of the Bible reveals the unvarnished truth about societal ideals and our own hearts.

How I Changed My Mind about Women in Leadership: Compelling Stories from Prominent Evangelicals (C,L)

Alan F. Johnson (ed.), Zondervan, 2010

This book features a number of autobiographical accounts as to how various persons have come to change their minds about women in leadership. Well-known Evangelical leaders--individuals and couples, males and females from a broad range of denominational affiliation and ethnic diversity--share their surprising journeys from a more or less restrictive view to an open inclusive view that recognizes a full shared partnership of leadership in the home and in the church based on gifts not gender. *How I Changed My Mind...* offers a positive vision for the future of women and men together as partners of equal worth without competitiveness in the work of equipping this and the next generation of Christian disciples for the 'work of ministry' and service in the Kingdom of God. Alan F. Johnson (PhD, Dallas Theological Seminary) is Emeritus Professor of New Testament and Christian Ethics and Emeritus Director of the Center for Applied Christian Ethics (CACE) at Wheaton College.

Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World (C,L)

Richard J. Mouw, IVP Books, Revised Edition, 2010

"Mouw convincingly argues that the need for civility is pressing. The virtue is nearly extinct. Civility is a Christian virtue whereby we enter public discussions with a strong conviction of Christian truth, a willingness to learn from those with whom we disagree, and a desire to honor the humanity of even our fiercest foe. Civility is not a passive politeness that defers to everyone and stands for nothing. Neither is it relativistic. It is a mannerly demeanor in which an inner intensity never overpowers self-restraint or rational discourse..." (Christianity Today).

The Lonely American: Drifting Apart in the Twenty-first Century (C,L)

Jacqueline Olds and Richard S. Schwartz, Beacon Press, 2010

In today's world, it is more acceptable to be depressed than to be lonely--yet loneliness appears to be the inevitable byproduct of our frenetic contemporary lifestyle. According to the 2004 General Social Survey, one out of four Americans talked to no one about something of importance to them during the last six months. Another remarkable fact emerged from the 2000 U.S. Census: more people are living alone today than at any point in the country's history--fully 25 percent of households consist of one person only. In this crucial look at one of America's few remaining taboo subjects--loneliness--Drs. Jacqueline

Olds and Richard S. Schwartz set out to understand the cultural imperatives, psychological dynamics, and physical mechanisms underlying social isolation....Loneliness doesn't apply simply to single people, either—today's busy parents "cocoon" themselves by devoting most of their non-work hours to children, leaving little time for friends, and other forms of social contact, and unhealthily relying on the marriage to fulfill all social needs. As a core population of socially isolated individuals and families continues to balloon in size, it is more important than ever to understand the effects of a culture that idealizes busyness and self-reliance.

A Year with Aslan: Daily Reflections from The Chronicles of Narnia (Lewis)

C.S. Lewis, HarperOne, 2010

For more than fifty years, the world C. S. Lewis created in Narnia has captured our hearts and imaginations. Both children and adults have discovered that rereading the books leads to entirely new experiences and insights. In the midst of these breathtaking stories of adventure, betrayal, and discovery in a magical land are profound messages about the true meaning of life. Whether it is Eustace struggling with his dragon skin, Digory debating obedience to Aslan versus saving his mother, or Edmund facing his shame after his rescue from the White Witch, the questions and dilemmas facing the characters are surprisingly relevant to us today. By pondering the world of Narnia, we better understand our own.

The Lion, The Mouse, and The Dawn Treader: Spiritual Lessons from C.S. Lewis's Narnia
(Lewis)

Carl McColman, Paraclete Press, 2010

The Lion, The Mouse and The Dawn Treader shows the reader how C. S. Lewis was guided by two "templates" in writing Dawn Treader: first, an ancient Celtic folktale known as the immram, or wondrous sea-voyage, in which great saints like Brendan the Navigator sought to reach paradise itself. But on another level, Lewis also built his adventure story around the traditional stages of the Christian life: from initial resistance to God's grace, to discovering how sin enslaves us and "turns us into dragons," to experiencing both the relief found in Christ and the cleansing waters of baptism. From this period of purgation the story turns to the illuminating adventures of resisting further temptation, to exploring silence (and learning how to deal with distractions, or "Dufflepuds"), to a final terrifying journey to the "Island of Darkness" (the dark night of the soul). The final stage of union begins with a Eucharistic feast at Aslan's Table where an ancient star and his lovely daughter sing joyfully every morning. As the Dawn Treader sails beyond where the stars sing, the travelers find a world of wonders, characterized by light, and clarity, and finally the encounter with Aslan--Christ--himself.

The C.S. Lewis Bible (Lewis)

HarperOne, 2010

This NRSV Bible provides readings comprised of selections from Lewis's celebrated spiritual classics, a collection that includes Mere Christianity, The Screwtape Letters, The Great Divorce, The Problem of Pain, Miracles, A Grief Observed, The Weight of Glory and The Abolition of Man, as well as letters, poetry, and Lewis's less-familiar works. Each reading, paired alongside relevant passages in the Bible, offers C.S. Lewis as a companion to a reader's daily meditation of scripture. As people engage in their devotional Bible reading, they will also gain insight from his writings and spiritual journey as they invite Lewis into their spiritual discipline.

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