



Newsletter

C.S. Lewis Society of Central Massachusetts

Exploring Mere Christianity in Science, the Arts, and Culture

Fall 2009 (Volume 1, Issue 1)

We are delighted to share with you the inaugural Newsletter of the C.S. Lewis Society of Central Massachusetts. The Society is dedicated to promoting the exploration of ideas and themes from science, the arts, culture, and everyday life as they intersect with what C.S. Lewis called "mere Christianity." It is our hope that we can 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. We will also soon be on Facebook.

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I. Book and Film Discussion Club: Fall Schedule

This fall, the Society's Book and Film Discussion Club will meet at the Auburn Public Library at 369 Southbridge Street at the dates and times listed below. **All are welcome to attend.**

1. Saturday, Sept. 19, 9:00-10:30 AM, Welcome and Introductions, reading of selected letters from C.S. Lewis, "Letters to an American Lady"
1. Saturday, Sept. 26, 9:00-10:30 AM, "Letters to an American Lady"
2. Saturday, Oct. 10, 9:00-10:30 AM, C.S. Lewis, "Reflections on the Psalms," chs. 1-6
2. Saturday, Oct. 24, 9:00-10:30 AM, "Reflections on the Psalms," chs. 7-12
3. Saturday, Nov. 14, 9:00-10:30 AM, Lewis or related book to be determined by attendees
3. Saturday, Nov. 21, 9:00-10:30 AM, Lewis or related book to be determined by attendees

If you're in the vicinity of the Auburn Public Library during September, stop in and check out the Society's artistic display in the glass case (created by Linda Bourie and Roxane Anderton).

The second Society Newsletter will be emailed in early January 2010; it will provide information for a late January special event and continuation of the Book and Film Club during February-April.

II. News (Narnia, Lewis, etc.)

[Interview with Storyboard Artist Mike Young](#) (NarniaFans, 7/20/09)

["Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader" Begins Filming](#) (Business Wire, 7/27/09)

[Roy Billing Cast as Chief Dufflepud in Narnia–Dawn Treader](#) (Screenrave.com, 8/14/09)

[C.S. Lewis Gets a New Look from HarperOne](#) (Publisher's Weekly, 3/30/09)

[TxSt professor discovers unpublished C.S. Lewis manuscript](#) (San Marcos Daily Record, 7/28/09)

[Taproot Theatre's 2010 Season Opens with Lewis' The Great Divorce](#) (BWW News Desk, 7/31/09)

[Lewis's "The Great Divorce" May Become Major Motion Picture](#) (Aslanscountry.com, 7/27/09)

[Barrington Stage Company's Freud/Lewis Play is a Hit](#) (Playbill.com, 7/30/09)

[National Tour Dates Announced For THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS](#) (Broadway World, 8/3/09)

[Explore Other Planets With C.S. Lewis's Imagination](#) (Examiner.com, 8/19/09)

[C.S. Lewis Retreat Featuring Diana Pavlac Glyer, Oct 30 – Nov 2](#) (Narniafans.com, 7/23/09)

[Narnia Exhibition at the Houston Museum of Natural Science, Oct 3 – Jan 18](#) (Narniaweb.com, 8/21/09)

III. Books of Interest

In this section of the Newsletter, 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.**

There Is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind (S)

Antony Flew, HarperOne, 2007

"In one of the biggest religion news stories of the new millennium, the Associated Press announced that Professor Antony Flew, the world's leading atheist, now believes in God. Flew is a pioneer for modern atheism. His famous paper, *Theology and Falsification*, was first presented at a meeting of the Oxford Socratic Club chaired by C. S. Lewis and went on to become the most widely reprinted philosophical publication of the last five decades. Flew earned his fame by arguing that one should presuppose atheism until evidence of a God surfaces. He now believes that such evidence exists, and *There Is a God* chronicles his journey from staunch atheism to believer. For the first time, this book will present a detailed and fascinating account of Flew's ... decision to revoke his previous beliefs and argue for the existence of God.... This is a story of a brilliant mind and reasoned thinker, and where his lifelong intellectual pursuit eventually led him: belief in God as designer."

Signature in the Cell: DNA and the Evidence for Intelligent Design (S)

Stephen Meyer, HarperOne, 2009

"*Signature in the Cell* is the first book to make a comprehensive case for intelligent design based upon DNA. Meyer embarks on an odyssey of discovery as he investigates current evolutionary theories and the evidence that ultimately led him to affirm intelligent design. Clearly defining what ID is and is not, Meyer shows that the argument for intelligent design is not based on ignorance or "giving up on science," but instead upon our growing scientific knowledge of the information stored in the cell."

The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief (S)

Francis Collins, Free Press, 2007

"Dr. Francis Collins, [former] head of the Human Genome Project, is one of the world's leading scientists. He works at the cutting edge of the study of DNA, the code of life. Yet he is also a man of unshakable faith in God and scripture. Dr. Collins believes that faith in God and faith in science can coexist within a person and be harmonious. In *The Language of God* he makes his case for God and for science. He has

heard every argument against faith from scientists, and he can refute them. He has also heard the needless rejection of scientific truths by some people of faith, and he can counter that, too. He explains his own journey from atheism to faith, and then takes readers for a stunning tour of modern science to show that physics, chemistry, and biology can all fit together with belief in God and the Bible" [Editor's Note: In his journey to faith, Collins was significantly influenced by C.S. Lewis's "Mere Christianity."]

[Editor's Note: As of the morning of July 6, 2009, "Signature in the Cell" and "The Language of God" were ranked first and third in sales, respectively, in Amazon's Kindle store in the science and religion category. Marvin Olasky, editor of World Magazine, has requested that Meyer and Collins discuss their differing viewpoints of intelligent design and evolution in a public forum. Click [here](#) for Olasky's article. To date no forum is scheduled, but stay tuned.]

Nature's Witness: How Evolution Can Inspire Faith (S)

Daniel Harrell, Abingdon Press, 2008

"With his peerless ability to turn the familiar inside out and upside down, and to make even the most unfamiliar ideas from both science and theology accessible, Daniel Harrell has given us a gift of a book. It will make you laugh, think, and pray and it is very possible that when you finish it you will believe more deeply in both evolution and creation than ever before." Andy Crouch, author of Culture Making, and editorial director, The Christian Vision Project.

The Evolution Controversy: A Survey of Competing Theories (S)

Thomas B. Fowler and Daniel Kuebler, Baker, 2007

"The authors leave aside the profound philosophical and religious issues involved in the controversy in favor of a balanced and critical examination of the four major schools of thought involved: Neo-Darwinism, Creationism, Intelligent Design, and Meta-Darwinism. The focus is on an objective evaluation of the scientific merits of each school, as well as an examination of areas of agreement and disagreement among the schools."

Quantum Physics and Theology: An Unexpected Kinship (S)

John Polkinghorne, Yale University Press, 2008

"From his unique perspective as both theoretical physicist and Anglican priest, Polkinghorne considers aspects of quantum physics and theology and demonstrates that the two truth-seeking enterprises are engaged in analogous rational techniques of inquiry.... Among the many parallels he identifies are patterns of historical development in quantum physics and in Christology; wrestling with perplexities such as quantum interpretation and the problem of evil; and the drive for an overarching view in the Grand Unified Theories of physics and in Trinitarian theology. Both theology and science are propelled by a desire to understand the world through experienced reality, and Polkinghorne explains that their viewpoints are by no means mutually exclusive."

Ironies of Faith: The Laughter at the Heart of Christian Literature (A)

Anthony Esolen, Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2007

"Celebrated Dante scholar and translator Anthony Esolen provides a profound meditation upon the use and place of irony in Christian art and in the Christian life. Beginning with an extended analysis of irony as an essentially dramatic device, Esolen explores those manifestations of irony that appear prominently in Christian thinking and art: ironies of time (for Christians believe in divine Providence, but live in a world whose moments pass away); ironies of power (for Christians believe in an almighty God who took on human flesh, and whose "weakness" is stronger than our greatest enemy, death); ironies of love (for man seldom knows whom to love, or how, or even whom it is that in the depths of his heart he loves best); and the figure of the Child (for Christians ever hear the warning voice of their Savior, who says that unless we become like unto one of these little ones, we shall not enter the Kingdom of God)."

God in the Gallery: A Christian Embrace of Modern Art (A)

Daniel A. Siedell, Baker, 2008

"God in the Gallery is a seminal work of interpretation, a guide for skeptics and faithful alike, in which Siedell offers a most profound, encouraging survey of contemporary art. An Emmaus Road encounter for those traveling on the path of contemporary art, Siedell's careful and loving attention paid to known and unknown artists will surely open our eyes. A must read for all of us laboring in the art world and in the arts academia." Makoto Fujimura, artist; founder/creative director, International Arts Movement.

New Tracks, Night Falling (A,L)

Jeanne Murray Walker, Eerdmans, 2009

"The poems in *New Tracks, Night Falling* acknowledge that we are people driven and divided by fear. They talk about racism, war, loss, greed, alienation, our disregard of the earth, and our disregard of each other. Sometimes we feel like night is falling in the bright light of day. Yet we get glimpses of hope, of what could be.... Hope continually threads its way through these poems. We hear its voice as Walker writes about choices -- both those we make and those beyond our making. And we feel hope rising like bread when Walker focuses on the gifts of potential, resolution, mercy, joy -- the new tracks that we can make in fresh snow, on old paths, along the roads more or less traveled. These are stays against the falling night. With a keen eye for both physical and emotional detail, Walker ... speaks to our deep fears and deeper joys Tempering somber notes with more joyful ones, she reminds us of the good things, great and small, that are still possible in this world."

unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity and Why It Matters (C)

David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, Baker, 2007

"Kinnaman, president of the Barna Institute, was inspired to write this book when Lyons (of the Fermi Project) commissioned him to do extensive research on what young Americans think about Christianity. Lyons had a gut-level sense that something was desperately wrong, and three years of research paints exactly that picture. *Mosaics and Busters* (the generations that include late teens to early 30-somethings) believe Christians are judgmental, antihomosexual, hypocritical, too political and sheltered. Rather than simply try to do a PR face-lift, Kinnaman looks at ways in which churches' activities actually may have been unchristian and encourages a return to a more biblical Christianity, a faith that not only focuses on holiness but also loves, accepts and works to understand the world around it."

Love is an Orientation: Elevating the Conversation with the Gay Community (C)

Andrew Marin, Intervarsity Press, 2009

"The evangelical church, with a few exceptions, has been stuck with three options when it comes to our thinking and action concerning the gay community. Some remain silent because they're fearful and aren't sure what they believe. Others engage in loud and acerbic speech-making, convinced that they must first address 'conclusive' biblical truth on this special sin before any possible conversation could even begin. Still others attempt to adopt a 'love the sinner but hate the sin' perspective that sounds good on paper but seems to play out in reality as distancing from those perceived sinners. Andrew Marin, thankfully, breaks through these three options with the 'Why haven't we been doing this all along?' approach of love and dialogue. Reading this book feels like Marin just called a time-out, and asked us all to sit in a circle and talk turkey." Mark Oestreicher, president, Youth Specialties.

No Enemy to Conquer: Forgiveness in an Unforgiving World (C,L)

Michael Henderson, Baylor University Press, 2009

"In this latest of his trail-blazing books on forgiveness, Michael Henderson does a masterful job of taking us to a new level. In so doing, he capitalizes on the thoughtful reflections of world-class scholars and on insights born of experience, including some from important political figures like the late Benazir Bhutto. Through riveting stories ranging from the heart-breaking massacres of Rwanda and Gujarat to heart-warming quests for forgiveness by the Australians for their past treatment of the Aboriginal people and by the British for their participation in the fire-bombing of Dresden, Henderson takes us on a journey that is both moving and inspiring. This book merits the attention of political leaders and policymakers alike. As the book implies, healing the wounds of history should always take priority over waging war." - Douglas M. Johnston, President and Founder of the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy.

All I Need is Jesus and a Good Pair of Jeans: The Tired Supergirl's Search for Grace (C,L)

Susanna Aughtmon, Revell, 2009

"Women everywhere feel pressured to have perfect Christian lives, perfect family lives, and to look perfect in their jeans. Instead of feeling good about themselves, most of them just feel like tired supergirls, living in the gap between who they are and who they long to be. Susanna Foth Aughtmon honestly confesses her battles with pride, worry, fatigue, beauty, jealousy, and chocolate. In every chapter she faces a nemesis--like Worry Man or Mrs. Prideful--who implies that she is not living up to her potential. She meets each enemy with the secret weapon of God's Truth. Readers will identify with her humorous examples from daily life and will gain insight from this tired supergirl on her journey of grace."

I Loved Jesus in the Night: Teresa of Calcutta - A Secret Revealed (L)

Fr. Paul Murray, Paraclete, 2008

"The world was shocked when the letters of Mother Teresa were published last year for the first time. The media focused attention at once on the unexpected phenomenon of darkness in the life of the saint, the astonishing revelation that, for decades, Mother Teresa had struggled mightily with belief in God. To some, this seemed to lend support to the arguments of the "new atheists." But what we are offered in this beautiful book is, at last, a serious grappling with the deeper meaning of her darkness, a work of sharp and unusual insight, written by someone who knew her.... This very personal yet powerful book is an attempt to come to terms with the dark night experiences endured by Mother Teresa in the light of the Gospel and the mystical teachings of St John of the Cross."

The Tears of God (L)

Fr. Benedict Groeschel, Ignatius, 2009

"Fr. Benedict Groeschel ... wrote this latest book for all those who have suffered great sorrow or catastrophe in their lives and for those close to such persons, who share their deep suffering. Sorrow comes into the life of every person, but only into the lives of some people comes catastrophe. These are disasters that occur either suddenly or with terrible effects, like the death of a child. They can be natural disasters like hurricanes, or they can be horrific accidents or tragedies caused by people's evil acts.... Christianity is the only religion which speaks of a God who suffered a terrible catastrophe -- crucifixion and death.... Christianity invites you to share the burden of your catastrophe with ... one who Himself endured great pain and sorrow, the son of God, Jesus Christ."

The Illumined Heart: Capture the Vibrant Faith of Ancient Christians (L)

Frederica Mathewes-Green, Paraclete, 2007

"Why are modern Christians so indistinguishable from everyone else? How come Christians who lived in times of bloody persecution were so heroic, while we who live in safety are not? How could the first Christians fast valiantly, but we feel deprived without dessert? How did New Testament believers pray without ceasing? How could the early Christian martyrs actually forgive their torturers? What did the Christians of the first centuries know that we don't? That's what this book is about."

A Little Daily Wisdom: Christian Women Mystics (L)

Carmen Acevedo Butcher, Paraclete, 2008

"Discover the strength, wisdom, and joyful faith of Christianity's legendary women -- the medieval mystics. Their honesty and deep love for God will encourage and empower you every day of the year. This book of daily readings will help you create quiet space for focusing on God's love in the midst of a busy life. As you spend time with these great women, you will discover an astonishing view of a God who is tender, nurturing, forgiving, and as close as breath."

Narnia and the Fields of Arbol: The Environmental Vision of C.S. Lewis (Lewis)

Matthew T. Dickerson and David L. O'Hara, University Press of Kentucky, 2008

"Dickerson and O'Hara demonstrate convincingly that environmental themes play a much larger role in Lewis's thought than has so far been recognized. And they show that Lewis's "environmental vision" --

especially as expressed in his fiction -- can contribute to our current conversation more than today's environmentalists have suspected. This is a fine addition to Lewis studies that also enriches our understanding of how to care for our world." - Alan Jacobs, author of *The Narnian: The Life and Imagination of C. S. Lewis*.

Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C. S. Lewis (Lewis)

Michael Ward, Oxford University Press, 2008

"For over half a century, scholars have laboured to show that C. S. Lewis's famed but apparently disorganised *Chronicles of Narnia* have an underlying symbolic coherence, pointing to such possible unifying themes as the seven sacraments, the seven deadly sins, and the seven books of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. None of these explanations has won general acceptance and the structure of Narnia's symbolism has remained a mystery. Michael Ward has finally solved the enigma. In *Planet Narnia* he demonstrates that medieval cosmology, a subject which fascinated Lewis throughout his life, provides the imaginative key to the seven novels.... Ward reveals how the Narnia stories were designed to express the characteristics of the seven medieval planets -- Jupiter, Mars, Sol, Luna, Mercury, Venus, and Saturn -- planets which Lewis described as "spiritual symbols of permanent value".... The cosmological theme of each Chronicle is what Lewis called 'the kappa element in romance', the atmospheric essence of a story, everywhere present but nowhere explicit Ward uncovers a much subtler writer and thinker than has previously been recognized"

The Company They Keep: C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien as Writers in Community (Lewis)

Diana Pavlac Glyer, Kent State University Press, 2008

"The creators of Narnia and Middle-earth, C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien were close friends and professional colleagues. They met frequently with a community of fellow writers at Oxford in the 1930s and 1940s, all sharing their works-in-progress. The group became known as the Inklings. This important study challenges the standard interpretation that Lewis, Tolkien, ... and the other Inklings had little influence on one another's work Diana Glyer invites readers into the heart of the group, examining diary entries and personal letters and carefully comparing the rough drafts of their manuscripts with their final, published work. Her analysis not only demonstrates the high level of mutual influence that characterized this writers group but also provides a lively and compelling picture of how writers and other creative artists challenge, correct, and encourage one another as they work together in community."

Out of My Bone: The Letters and Autobiography of Joy Davidman (Lewis)

Don W. King (ed.), Eerdmans, 2009

"Although best known as the wife of C. S. Lewis, Joy Davidman was an accomplished writer in her own right, with several published works to her credit. *Out of My Bone* tells Davidman's life story in her own words through her numerous letters -- most never published before -- and her autobiographical essay "The Longest Way Round." Moving and riveting, *Out of My Bone* reveals anew the singular woman whom Lewis deeply loved and who influenced his later writings, especially *Till We Have Faces*."

Believing in Narnia: A Kid's Guide to Unlocking the Secret Symbols of Faith in C.S. Lewis' The Chronicles of Narnia (K)

Natalie Nichols Gillespie, Thomas Nelson, 2008

"Natalie Nichols Gillespie is the mom and step-mom of seven Narnia fans and has been a student of *The Chronicles* herself since childhood."

Roar! A Christian Family Guide to the Chronicles of Narnia (K)

Heather Kopp, Multnomah Books, 2005

"*Roar!* takes your family on a one-of-a-kind adventure through every chapter in all seven books! Peek inside to find: Interactive features like "Wisdom for Narniacs," "Kid Test," "Let's Talk About It," "Grown-up Thoughts," and "Try This at Home."

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