



**Newsletter
C.S. Lewis Society of Central
Massachusetts**

**Exploring Mere Christianity in Science,
the Arts, Culture, and Everyday Life**

Fall 2014 (Volume 6, Issue 1)



Dear Reader,

We are pleased to share with you the fall 2014 Newsletter of the C.S. Lewis Society of Central Massachusetts. We have many interesting book discussions, movies, and events planned for the upcoming year (Sept.-Aug.), so 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. All are welcome. 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 infolewisma@gmail.com.

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Newsletter Contents:

- I. Book Club to Resume in September
- II. Special Event at Holy Cross College
- III. Movie Night(s)
- IV. News (Narnia, Lewis, Events, etc.)
- V. Books of Interest

I. Book Club to Resume in September

During the fall term, the Book Club will meet at the Auburn Public Library at 369 Southbridge Street. We believe we will be able to hold most or all of our meetings at the Auburn library, but there are some renovations that may take place. If we end up using an alternative location, we'll let you know.

Saturday, September 13, 9:00-10:20 AM, "Miracles" by C.S. Lewis (facilitated by Steven Barrett)

Saturday, September 27, 9:00-10:20 AM, "Miracles" by C.S. Lewis

Do you need a copy of "Miracles"? We have several used copies available at \$5 each (our cost). If you might attend the book club in September and you'd like us to mail you a copy, just email your address to infolewisma@gmail.com. We'll mail you the book and settle up later for the \$5. Also, some libraries in the area may have the book and used copies are available at amazon.com and abebooks.com.

Saturday, October 11, 9:00-10:20 AM, "In His Hands: My Seven-Year Detour through Cancer" by Monica Nelson (facilitated by Laurie Schlatter)

Saturday, October 25, 9:00-10:20 AM, "In His Hands: My Seven-Year Detour through Cancer"

Note1: October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Note2: We have several copies of "In His Hands" available at \$6 each

Saturday, November 8, 9:00-10:20 AM, "And God Came In: The Extraordinary Story of Joy Davidman" by Lyle Dorsett

Saturday, November 22, 9:00-10:20 AM, "And God Came In: The Extraordinary Story of Joy Davidman"

II. Special Event at Holy Cross College, Saturday, December 6, 10:30 AM

Fr. John Gavin, S.J., assistant professor in the religious studies department at the College of the Holy Cross, is teaching a Lewis-related course this fall entitled "Narnia, Space & Beyond." As part of the course, Professor Gavin's students will give their final oral presentations to people affiliated with the C.S. Lewis Society of Central Massachusetts. The presentations will begin at 10:30 am on Saturday, December 6th (location at Holy Cross to be determined). The presentations will be followed by a lunch banquet generously provided by the religious studies department and Holy Cross College. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn from the insights of the students, enjoy fellowship over a meal (Holy Cross brownies are topped with chocolate frosting), and encourage young people in what might become for them a lifetime of interaction with the works of C.S. Lewis. We hope you can come.

III. Movie Night(s)

Under the facilitation of Steven Barrett, we enjoyed viewing and then discussing the movie "Boyhood" this summer. The experience was enriching, so we hope to have one or several movie nights during the fall and/or during our book club break period (December – January). Stay tuned for details.

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

[Tolkien and Lewis Film in the Works](#)

["Chronicles of Narnia: The Silver Chair" Film Moves Forward](#)

[C.S. Lewis' The Great Divorce on Stage](#)

[C.S. Lewis' The Screwtape Letters on Stage](#)

[The C.S. Lewis News Website](#)

V. 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.

Is God Unnecessary?: Why Stephen Hawking Is Wrong According to the Laws of Physics (S,C)

Walter Alan Ray, iUniverse, 2012

When Stephen Hawking, the most famous scientist living in the twenty-first century, published *The Grand Design*, he provoked a lively response in the media. Hawking wrote that the laws of physics make God unnecessary when explaining the origin of the universe and everything in it. In *Is God Unnecessary?* Ray presents nine reasons why Hawking's thesis is mistaken. Ray does not use philosophical or theological arguments, but presents the same laws of physics that Hawking says demonstrate his position. Ray examines Hawking's "Apparent Miracle" assumption that Charles Darwin explained the origin of human life; the question "Can something come out of nothing?"; the cosmological constant in Einstein's equations, the factor that Hawking considers the most impressive coincidence; Hawking's solution to the "completely incomprehensible" value of the cosmological constant; and how physics and mathematics join in showing that in the current state of our knowledge, physics and mathematics do have something to say about the origin of the universe.

In His Hands: My Seven-Year Detour Through Cancer Paperback (A,C,L)

Monica Leigh Nelson, CreateSpace, 2014

A collection of essays dealing with every stage of the cancer journey from diagnosis to picking up the pieces and finding the new normal, but always returning to the central message that God is in control. This book reminds readers that even though there is pain in this world, there is also hope. You come away saying, "Hey, I could do that. No matter what happens tomorrow, God's got my back."

The Spiritual Practice of Remembering (A,C,L)

Margaret Bendroth, Eerdman's, 2013

We often dismiss history as dull or irrelevant, but our modern disengagement from the past puts us fundamentally out of step with the long witness of the Christian tradition. Yet, says Margaret Bendroth, the past tense is essential to our language of faith, and without it our conversation is limited and thin. This accessible, beautifully written book presents a new argument for honoring the past. The Christian tradition gives us the powerful image of a vast communion of saints, all of God's people, both living and dead, in vital conversation with each other. She argues that remembering must become a regular spiritual practice, part of the rhythm of our daily lives as we recognize our world to be, in many ways, a gift from others who have gone before.

Arts Ministry: Nurturing the Creative Life of God's People (A,C,L)

Michael J. Bauer, Eerdman's, 2013

First United Methodist Church in Augusta, Georgia, gives concerts to raise money for local service organizations. Trinity Lutheran Church in Mission, Kansas, has been sponsoring a religious art show for more than twenty-five years. Fellowship Lutheran Church runs a Christian arts camp for young people every summer. These are just three of the eighteen case studies of practicing arts ministries in this book, in which Michael Bauer encourages the nurture and support of all the creative gifts of God's people.

The Oracles Fell Silent (C,L)

Lee Oser, Wiseblood Books, 2014

When the legendary Sir Ted Pop hires young Richard Bellman as his secretary, Bellman's work on the great man's memoir transforms his young life into a divine comedy—or is it a devilish farce? In a New York beach house in Southampton, Bellman treads the forbidden ground of Ted's final hour with Johnny Donovan, his partner in fame, who "fell" from a London rooftop in 1969. Sir Ted battles false prophets and mad messiahs for control over his own story, but what rock's biggest mystery reveals to Bellman is the unthinkable hand of God.

How the West Really Lost God: A New Theory of Secularization (C,L)

Mary Eberstadt, Templeton Press, 2013

[L]eading cultural critic Mary Eberstadt delivers a powerful new theory about the decline of religion in the Western world. The conventional wisdom is that the West first experienced religious decline, followed by the decline of the family. Eberstadt turns this standard account on its head. Marshalling an impressive array of research, from fascinating historical data on family decline in pre-Revolutionary France to contemporary popular culture both in the United States and Europe, Eberstadt shows that the reverse has also been true: the undermining of the family has further undermined Christianity itself. Drawing on sociology, history, demography, theology, literature, and many other sources, Eberstadt shows that family decline and religious decline have gone hand in hand in the Western world in a way that has not been understood before—that they are, as she puts it in a striking new image summarizing the book's thesis, "the double helix of society, each dependent on the strength of the other for successful reproduction." In sobering final chapters, Eberstadt then lays out the enormous ramifications of the mutual demise of family and faith in the West.

Is Reality Secular? Testing the Assumptions of Four Global Worldviews (C,L)

Mary Poplin, IVP Books, 2014

What is the nature of reality? At the root of our society's deepest political and cultural divisions are the

conflicting principles of four global worldviews. While each of us holds to some version of one of these worldviews, we are often unconscious of their differences as well as their underlying assumptions. Mary Poplin argues that the ultimate test of a worldview, philosophy or ideology is whether it corresponds with reality. Since different perspectives conflict with each other, how do we make sense of the differences? And if a worldview system accurately reflects reality, what implications does that have for our thinking and living? In this wide-ranging and perceptive study, Poplin examines four major worldviews: naturalism, humanism, pantheism and Judeo-Christian theism. She explores the fundamental assumptions of each, pressing for limitations. Ultimately she puts each perspective to the test, asking, what if this worldview is true?

How (Not) To Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor (C,L)

James K.A. Smith, Eerdmans, 2014

How (Not) to Be Secular is...“your hitchhiker’s guide to the present” - it is both a reading guide to Charles Taylor’s monumental work *A Secular Age* and philosophical guidance on how we might learn to live in our times. Taylor’s landmark book *A Secular Age* (2007) provides a monumental, incisive analysis of what it means to live in the post-Christian present -- a pluralist world of competing beliefs and growing unbelief. Jamie Smith’s book is a compact field guide to Taylor’s insightful study of the secular, making that very significant but daunting work accessible to a wide array of readers. Even more, though, Smith’s *How (Not) to Be Secular* is a practical philosophical guidebook, a kind of how-to manual on how to live in our secular age. It ultimately offers us an adventure in self-understanding and maps out a way to get our bearings in today’s secular culture, no matter who “we” are -- whether believers or skeptics, devout or doubting, self-assured or puzzled and confused. This is a book for any thinking person to chew on.

Something Other Than God: How I Passionately Sought Happiness and Accidentally Found It (C,L)

Jennifer Fulwiler, Ignatius Press, 2014

Jennifer Fulwiler told herself she was happy. Why wouldn’t she be? She made good money as a programmer at a hot tech start-up, had just married a guy with a stack of Ivy League degrees, and lived in a twenty-first-floor condo where she could sip sauvignon blanc while watching the sun set behind the hills of Austin. Raised in a happy, atheist home, Jennifer had the freedom to think for herself and play by her own rules. Yet a creeping darkness followed her all of her life. Finally, one winter night, it drove her to the edge of her balcony, making her ask once and for all why anything mattered. At that moment everything she knew and believed was shattered. Asking the unflinching questions about life and death, good and evil, led Jennifer to Christianity, the religion she had reviled since she was an awkward, sceptical child growing up in the Bible Belt. Mortified by this turn of events, she hid her quest from everyone except her husband, concealing religious books in opaque bags as if they were porn and locking herself in public bathroom stalls to read the Bible. Just when Jennifer had a profound epiphany that gave her the courage to convert, she was diagnosed with a life-threatening medical condition-and the only treatment was directly at odds with the doctrines of her new-found faith. *Something Other Than God* is a poignant, profound and often funny tale of one woman who set out to find the meaning of life and discovered that true happiness sometimes requires losing it all.

Belief without Borders: Inside the Minds of the Spiritual but not Religious (C)

Linda A. Mercadante, Oxford University Press, 2014

The last twenty years have seen a dramatic increase in “nones”: people who do not claim any religious affiliation. “[N]ones” now outnumber even the largest Protestant denominations in America. They are not to be confused with secularists...for many of them identify...as “spiritual but not religious” (SBNR). The response to this dramatic change in American religion has been amazingly mixed. While social scientists have been busy counting and categorizing them, the public has swung between derision and adulation. Rarely, however, have these “nones” been asked to explain their own views, beliefs, and experiences. In [this book] theologian and one-time SBNR Linda Mercadante finally gives these individuals a chance to speak for themselves. This volume is the result of extensive observation and nearly 100 in-depth interviews with SBNRs across the United States. Mercadante presents SBNRs’ stories, shows how they analyze their spiritual journeys, and explains why they reject the claims of organized religion.

Surprisingly, however, Mercadante finds these SBNRs within as well as outside the church. She reveals the unexpected, emerging latent theology within this group, including the interviewees' creative concepts of divine transcendence, life after death, human nature, and community. The conclusions she draws are startling: despite the fact that SBNRs routinely discount the creeds and doctrines of organized religion, many have devised a structured set of beliefs, often purposefully in opposition to doctrines associated with Christianity.

The Uncommon Good: How the Gospel Brings Hope To a World Divided (C)

Jim Wallis, Brazos Press, 2014

Jim Wallis thinks our life together can be better. In this timely and provocative book, he shows us how to reclaim Jesus's ancient and compelling vision of the common good--a vision that impacts and inspires not only our politics but also our personal lives, families, churches, neighborhoods, and world.

Seriously Dangerous Religion: What the Old Testament Really Says and Why It Matters (C)

Iaia Provan, Baylor University Press, 2014

The Old Testament is often maligned as an outmoded and even dangerous text. Best-selling authors like Richard Dawkins, Karen Armstrong, and Derrick Jensen are prime examples of those who find the Old Testament to be problematic to modern sensibilities. Iain Provan counters that such easy and popular readings misunderstand the Old Testament. He opposes modern misconceptions of the Old Testament by addressing ten fundamental questions that the biblical text should--and according to Provan does--answer: questions such as "Who is God?" and "Why do evil and suffering mark the world?" By focusing on Genesis and drawing on other Old Testament and extra-biblical sources, *Seriously Dangerous Religion* constructs a more plausible reading. As it turns out, Provan argues, the Old Testament is far more dangerous than modern critics even suppose. Its dangers are the bold claims it makes upon its readers.

The Rebirth of Latin American Christianity (C)

Todd Hartch, Oxford University Press, 2014

Predominantly Catholic for centuries, Latin America is still largely Catholic today, but the religious continuity in the region masks enormous changes that have taken place in the past five decades. Religious change has not been obvious because its transformation has not been, as in Africa and Asia, the sudden and massive growth of a new religion. It has been rather a simultaneous revitalization and fragmentation that threatened, awakened, and ultimately brought to a greater maturity a dormant and parochial Christianity. The rapid growth of Protestantism, especially Pentecostalism, forced Catholics to adopt a more active and dynamic approach to their religion. Although many Catholics left their church to become Pentecostals, many others responded to the Protestant challenge by joining new Catholic movements. Today, Latin American Christianity is so energized that the region is sending missionaries to Africa, Europe, and the United States. In *The Rebirth of Latin American Christianity*, Todd Hartch examines the changes that have swept across Latin America in the last fifty years and situates them in the context of the growth of Christianity in the global South.

Christian Higher Education: A Global Reconnaissance (C)

Joel Carpenter, Perry L. Glanzer, Nicholas S. Lantinga (Eds.), Eerdmans, 2014

This book offers a fresh report and interpretation of what is happening at the intersection of two great contemporary movements: the rapid growth of higher education worldwide and the rise of world Christianity. It features on-site, evaluative studies by scholars from Africa, Asia, North America, and South America. [The book] visits some of the hotspots of Christian university development, such as South Korea, Kenya, and Nigeria, and compares what is happening there to places in Canada, the United States, and Europe, where Christian higher education has a longer history.

Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism (C)

Molly Worthen, Oxford University Press, 2013

Evangelical Christianity is a paradox. Evangelicals are radically individualist, but devoted to community and family. They believe in the transformative power of a personal relationship with God, but are wary of

religious enthusiasm. They are deeply skeptical of secular reason, but eager to find scientific proof that the Bible is true. In this groundbreaking history of modern American evangelicalism, Molly Worthen argues that these contradictions are the products of a crisis of authority that lies at the heart of the faith.... Worthen chronicles the ideological warfare, institutional conflict, and clashes between modern gurus and maverick disciples that lurk behind the more familiar narrative of the rise of the Christian Right. The result is an ambitious intellectual history that weaves together stories from all corners of the evangelical world to explain the ideas and personalities-the scholarly ambitions and anti-intellectual impulses-that have made evangelicalism a cultural and political force.

Image and Imagination: Essays and Reviews (Lewis)

C.S. Lewis, edited by Walter Hooper, Cambridge University Press, 2013

This selection from the writings of C. S. Lewis gathers together forty book reviews, never before reprinted, as well as four major essays which have been unavailable for many decades. A fifth essay, 'Image and Imagination', is published for the first time. Taken together, the collection presents some of Lewis's finest literary criticism and religious exposition. The essays and reviews substantiate his reputation as an eloquent and authoritative critic across a wide range of literature, and as a keen judge of contemporary scholarship, while his reviews of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* will be of additional interest to scholars and students of fantasy.

Other Lewis-related books include:

If I Had Lunch with C. S. Lewis: Exploring the Ideas of C. S. Lewis on the Meaning of Life

Alister McGrath, Tyndale, 2014

C. S. Lewis & Mere Christianity: The Crisis That Created a Classic

Paul McCusker, Tyndale, 2014

C.S. Lewis: A Life Inspired Paperback

Christopher Gordon and Wyatt North, Wyatt North, 2014

Seeing Beauty and Saying Beautifully: The Power of Poetic Effort in the Work of George Herbert, George Whitefield, and C. S. Lewis

John Piper, Crossway, 2014

When the Eternal Can Be Met: The Bergsonian Theology of Time in the Works of C. S. Lewis, T. S. Eliot, and W. H. Auden

Corey Latta, Pickwick Publications, 2014

C. S. Lewis and a Problem of Evil: An Investigation of a Pervasive Theme

Jerry Root, James Clarke & Co, 2014

Christian Mythmakers: C. S. Lewis, Madeline L'engle, J. R. R. Tolkien, George Macdonald, G. K. Chesterton & Others, 2nd edition

Rolland Hein, Wipf & Stock, 2014

The Romantic Rationalist: God, Life, and Imagination in the Work of C. S. Lewis

John Piper and David Mathis (Eds.), Crossway, 2014

C.S. Lewis, Poetry, and the Great War 1914-1918

John Bremer, Lexington Books, 2014

C. S. Lewis and the Crisis of a Christian

Gregory S. Cootsona, Westminster John Knox, 2014

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