



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

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

Fall 2013 (Volume 5, Issue 1)



Dear Reader,

We are pleased to share with you the fall 2013 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. 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 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. If we end up using an alternative location, we'll let you know.

Saturday, September 7, 9:00-10:30 AM, "Out of the Silent Planet" by C.S. Lewis
Saturday, September 21, 9:00-10:30 AM, "Out of the Silent Planet" by C.S. Lewis

Do you need a copy of "Out of the Silent Planet"? We have 4 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 info@lewisma.org. We'll mail you the book and settle up later for the \$5.

Saturday, October 5, 9:00-10:30 AM, book to be determined by attendees
Saturday, October 19, 9:00-10:30 AM, book to be determined by attendees

Saturday, November 2, 9:00-10:30 AM, we are planning a set of thematic readings; stay tuned for details

Saturday, November 16, 9:00-10:30 AM, Fifty Years On: Reflections on the Life and Legacy of C.S. Lewis Related to the 50th anniversary of Lewis's death, we will view and discuss the film, "The Life & Faith of C.S. Lewis: The Magic Never Ends" (narrated by Sir Ben Kingsley)

II. December/January Movie Night(s)

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

III. Special Event Related to Art Coming in January

Stay tuned for details.

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

Instead of the usual news items that we put in the Newsletter, we thought we'd highlight upcoming meteor showers in the Northeast. Is there anybody that doesn't like a meteor shower? We also include a Lewis poem about meteors. We'll catch up with the news in our Winter/Spring Newsletter.

Upcoming meteor showers:

Perseids, August 11-13

Orionids, October 21

Leonids, November 16

Geminids, December 12-13

The Meteorite by C.S. Lewis

Among the hills a meteorite
Lies huge; and moss has overgrown,
And wind and rain with touches light
Made soft, the contours of the stone.

Thus easily can Earth digest
A cinder of sidereal fire,
And make her translunary guest
The native of an English shire.

Nor is it strange these wanderers
Find in her lap their fitting place,
For every particle that's hers
Came at the first from outer space.

All that is Earth has once been sky;
Down from the sun of old she came,
Or from some star that travelled by
Too close to his entangling flame.

Hence, if belated drops yet fall
From heaven, on these her plastic power
Still works as once it worked on all
The glad rush of the golden shower.

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.

Who Is This Man? The Unpredictable Impact of the Inescapable Jesus (S,A,C,L)

John Ortberg, Zondervan, 2012

Jesus' impact on our world is highly unlikely, widely inescapable, largely unknown, and decidedly double-edged. It is unlikely in light of the severe limitations of his earthly life; it is inescapable because of the range of impact; it is unknown because history doesn't connect dots; and it is doubled-edged because his followers have wreaked so much havoc, often in his name. He is history's most familiar figure, yet he is the man no one knows. His impact on the world is immense and non-accidental. From the Dark Ages to Post-Modernity he is the Man who won't go away. And yet . . . you can miss him in historical lists for many reasons, maybe the most obvious being the way he lived his life. He did not loudly and demonstrably defend his movement in the spirit of a rising political or military leader. He did not lay out a case that history would judge his brand of belief superior in all future books. His life and teaching simply drew people to follow him. He made history by starting in a humble place, in a spirit of love and acceptance, and allowing each person space to respond. His vision of life continues to haunt and challenge humanity. His influence has swept over history bringing inspiration to what has happened in art, science, government, medicine, and education; he has taught humans about dignity, compassion, forgiveness, and hope.

College: What it Was, Is, and Should Be (S,A,C,L)

Andrew Delbanco, Princeton University Press, 2012

As the commercialization of American higher education accelerates, more and more students are coming to college with the narrow aim of obtaining a pre-professional credential. The traditional four-year college experience--an exploratory time for students to discover their passions and test ideas and values with the help of teachers and peers--is in danger of becoming a thing of the past. In *College*, prominent cultural critic Andrew Delbanco offers a trenchant defense of such an education, and warns that it is becoming a privilege reserved for the relatively rich. In arguing for what a true college education should be, he demonstrates why making it available to as many young people as possible remains central to America's democratic promise. In a brisk and vivid historical narrative, Delbanco explains how the idea of college arose in the colonial period from the Puritan idea of the gathered church, how it struggled to survive in the nineteenth century in the shadow of the new research universities, and how, in the twentieth century, it slowly opened its doors to women, minorities, and students from low-income families. He describes the unique strengths of America's colleges in our era of globalization and, while recognizing the growing centrality of science, technology, and vocational subjects in the curriculum, he mounts a vigorous defense of a broadly humanistic education for all. Acknowledging the serious financial, intellectual, and ethical challenges that all colleges face today, Delbanco considers what is at stake in the urgent effort to protect these venerable institutions for future generations.

Mankind Beyond Earth: The History, Science, and Future of Human Space Exploration (S)

Claude A. Piantadosi, Columbia University Press, 2013

Piantadosi explains why space exploration, a captivating story of ambition, invention, and discovery, is also increasingly difficult and why space experts always seem to disagree. He argues that the future of the space program requires merging the practicalities of exploration with the constraints of human biology. Space science deals with the unknown, and the margin (and budget) for error is small. Lethal near-vacuum conditions, deadly cosmic radiation, microgravity, vast distances, and highly scattered resources remain immense physical problems. To forge ahead, America needs to develop affordable space transportation and flexible exploration strategies based in sound science. Piantadosi closes with suggestions for accomplishing these goals, combining his healthy skepticism as a scientist with an unshakable belief in space's untapped - and wholly worthwhile - potential.

Spam: A Shadow History of the Internet (S,C,L)

Finn Brunton, MIT Press, 2013

"This book is a gem. The goings-on of the twisted personages who populate cyberpunk lit have nothing on the ingenious scheming of the spammers and the scientists dedicated to shutting them down. Read here and in days to come about this fascinatingly bizarre subterranean cyberworld." (Scientific American)

The Sacredness of Human Life: Why an Ancient Biblical Vision Is Key to the World's Future (S,C,L)

David P. Gushee, Eerdmans, 2013

"No one, to my knowledge, has come up with a deeper or more sustained account of what it means to say that human life is sacred than David Gushee in this magisterial work. The analysis is overwhelming -- in a good sense. . . . The title might suggest a preoccupation with abortion, but there is so much more than that in this book. Gushee applies his analysis to issues like the death penalty, environmental degradation, racism, nuclear weapons, and biotechnology. And even on abortion, those who disagree with his position will not want to miss the cornucopia of insight he provides and -- most strikingly -- the sensitivity and openness of his discussion." (Jeremy Waldron)

Popcultured: Thinking Christianly About Style, Media and Entertainment (A,C,L)

Steve Turner, Intervarsity Press, 2013

There's no avoiding popular culture -- we've been enculturated into it. What does it mean to be faithful Christians in a pop culture world? How do we think Christianly about celebrity and leisure? Some Christians try to abstain from "worldly" pursuits, while others consume culture indiscriminately, assuming it has little effect on them. But if Christ is Lord of all of life, then there ought to be Christian ways to engage with and appreciate popular culture. Steve Turner has spent his career chronicling and interviewing people from the worlds of music, film, television, fashion, art and literature. Now he provides an insider's guide to a wide range of entertainment pursuits, with biblical frameworks for understanding pop culture genres and artifacts. Turner explores how movies use redemptive narratives and parables, ways journalistic headlines convey worldview assumptions, differences between famous people in the past and celebrities today, what ideas are communicated through clothing and fashion design, how technology changes our sense of what is real, and much more. God entrusts culture to us and gives us the ability to critique it, enjoy it and create it. This book will help you become a better cultural critic, consumer and creator.

The Space Between: A Christian Engagement with the Built Environment (A,C,L)

Eric O. Jacobsen, Baker Academic, 2012

"Eric Jacobsen sets himself two goals: to get us to attend to urban space--the space between the buildings in a city or village--and to explain why Christians in particular should care about the quality of urban space. He succeeds admirably on both counts. A fine contribution to an extremely important topic that has been neglected for too long by too many." - Nicholas Wolterstorff

The Global Public Square: Religious Freedom and the Making of a World Safe for Diversity (C,L)

Os Guinness, IVP Books, 2013

"This is a closely reasoned and eloquent defense of religious freedom (Guinness calls it 'soul freedom,' because it refers to the rights of secularists as well as people of faith). This is not just one right among many, but a fundamental right rooted in the dignity of every human being. But it is also a right essential to the maintenance of a public space in which people with widely diverse worldviews can live together with civility. This is a book that should be read by everyone concerned with freedom of conscience, not only in the face of murderous persecution as still exists in many places, but also with the more subtle threats by political orthodoxies in Western democracies." (Peter L. Berger)

The Sixties and Beyond: Dechristianization in North America and Western Europe, 1945-2000 (C,L)

Nancy Christie, Michael Gauvreau, and Stephen J. Heathorn (eds.), University of Toronto Press, 2013

In the decades following the Second World War, North America and Western Europe experienced widespread secularization and dechristianization; many scholars have pinpointed the 1960s as a pivotally important period in this decline. *The Sixties and Beyond* examines the scope and significance of dechristianization in the western world between 1945 and 2000. A thematically wide-ranging and interdisciplinary collection, *The Sixties and Beyond* uses a framework that compares the social and cultural experiences of North America and Western Europe during this period. The internationally based contributors examine the dynamic place of Christianity in both private lives and public discourses and practices by assessing issues such as gender relations, family life, religious education, the changing relationship of church and state, and the internal dynamics of religious organizations. *The Sixties and Beyond* is an excellent contribution to the burgeoning scholarship on the 1960s as well as to the history of Christianity in the western world.

Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places (C,L)

Eugene H. Peterson, Eerdmans, 2005

Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places reunites spirituality and theology in a cultural context where these two vital facets of Christian faith have been rent asunder. Lamenting the vacuous, often pagan nature of contemporary American spirituality, Eugene Peterson here firmly grounds spirituality once more in Trinitarian theology and offers a clear, practical statement of what it means to actually *live out* the Christian life. Writing in the conversational style that he is well known for, Peterson boldly sweeps out the misunderstandings that clutter conversations on spiritual theology and refurnishes the subject only with what is essential. As Peterson shows, spiritual theology, in order to be at once biblical and meaningful, must remain sensitive to ordinary life, present the Christian gospel, follow the narrative of Scripture, and be rooted in the "fear of the Lord" -- in short, spiritual theology must be about *God* and not about *us*.

Half the Church: Recapturing God's Global Vision for Women (C,L)

Carolyn Custis James, Zondervan, 2011

Women comprise at least half the world and usually more than half the church. But so often Christian teaching for women either fails to move beyond a discussion of roles or assumes a particular economic situation or stage of life. This shuts a lot of women out from contributing to God's kingdom as they were designed to do. Furthermore, the plight of women in the Majority World demands a Christian response, a holistic embrace of all that God calls women and men to be in his world. The strongest voices speaking into women's lives in the twenty-first century are Islam and Feminism--systems that reside at opposite ends of the spectrum. Does the church's message for women stake out the middle ground or lead the way to something much better? Is that message strong enough to withstand the worst realities women suffer in this broken world? Carolyn Custis James unpacks three transformative themes the Bible presents that invest the lives of *every* woman and girl with cosmic significance that *nothing* can destroy. These new images of what can be in Christ come with a blazing call for them to join their brothers in advancing God's gracious kingdom on earth. Carolyn offers readers a positive, kingdom approach to the changes, challenges, and opportunities facing women throughout the world today.

All That Jesus Asks: How His Questions Can Teach and Transform Us (L)

Stan Guthrie, Baker Books, 2010

More books have been written about Jesus than any other historical figure. Many of these books ask and answer questions about Jesus. *All That Jesus Asks* allows him to do the asking and shows why getting the right answers will change your life. Covering nearly 300 questions recorded in the New Testament under twenty-six separate themes, *All That Jesus Asks* uncovers who Jesus is by examining what was important to him and what he wants us to believe. This unique and comprehensive look at the greatest figure in history will encourage and challenge readers.

God and the Art of Happiness (L)

Ellen T. Charry, Eerdmans, 2010

"A frequently voiced complaint today is that academic theology writes only for its own guilds and too often tumbles into an ugly and lazy jargon-ridden abstraction. In this subtle, nuanced book, born from

both hope and personal anguish, Ellen Charry reconnects knowledge and healing, thereby responding to a deep need." (Iain R. Torrance)

Hurting with God: Learning to Lament with the Psalms (L)

Glenn Pemberton, Abilene Christian University Press, 2012

Giving new hope to the weary, this book brings together scholarship and personal experience to understand the necessity of lament language through the exploration of the Psalms. Many writers have considered the question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" Pemberton, however, sets this philosophical issue aside to consider the practical. How do believers live out faith in prolonged seasons of pain and loss? How can we live with God when it hurts - and continues to hurt?

C.S. Lewis - A Life: Eccentric Genius, Reluctant Prophet (Lewis)

Alister McGrath, Tyndale, 2013

Fifty years after his death, C. S. Lewis continues to inspire and fascinate millions. His legacy remains varied and vast. He was a towering intellectual figure, a popular fiction author who inspired a global movie franchise around the world of Narnia, and an atheist-turned-Christian thinker. In *C.S. Lewis—A Life*, Alister McGrath, prolific author and respected professor at King's College of London, paints a definitive portrait of the life of C. S. Lewis. After thoroughly examining recently published Lewis correspondence, Alister challenges some of the previously held beliefs about the exact timing of Lewis's shift from atheism to theism and then to Christianity. He paints a portrait of an eccentric thinker who became an inspiring, though reluctant, prophet for our times.

The Intellectual World of C.S. Lewis (Lewis)

Alister McGrath, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013

I began a substantial research project on CS Lewis (1898-1963) after moving from Oxford University to take up a newly established professorship at King's College London in September 2008. My new position allowed me more time for research. Having read much by (and about) Lewis, I decided to write a major new study of Lewis to mark the 50th anniversary of his death in 2013. As the research proceeded, I realized that I would have to write two works on Lewis to cope with its significant findings. The first was a new biography of Lewis, entitled *C. S. Lewis – A Life: Reluctant Prophet, Eccentric Genius*, published in February 2013, which has been very well received. The second is *The Intellectual World of C. S. Lewis*. This second book provides eight meticulously researched studies of aspects of Lewis's thought that have not received the attention that they deserve to date. [T]hese eight essays will allow readers to get much more out of their engagement with Lewis. For example, the essay on Lewis's approach to "myth" will help readers make sense of (and appreciate) some core features of the famous "Chronicles of Narnia." The essay on Lewis's visual imagery helps make sense of many themes in *Mere Christianity*, and some of his most famous essays, especially "The Weight of Glory" and "Meditation in a Toolshed." Lewis's elegant style and accessible prose masks the conceptual profundity of his thinking. *The Intellectual World of C. S. Lewis* will allow Lewis's readers to appreciate the depth of his ideas, while still enjoying the winsome way in which they are presented.

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