



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

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


Fall 2015 (Volume 7, Issue 1)



Dear Reader,

We are pleased to share with you the fall 2015 Newsletter of the C.S. Lewis Society of Central Massachusetts. We have interesting articles and books to discuss during the Book Club and several new ideas we hope to try out in the upcoming year (Sept.-Aug.). We hope you'll check out our upcoming activities (see below) and 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. Discussion of the Future of C.S. Lewis Society of Central MA
- II. Book Club to Resume in September
- III. Special Event: Peter Kreeft Talk at New England Christian Study Center (Oct. 22)
- IV. News (Narnia, Lewis, Events, etc.)
- V. Books of Interest

I. Discussion of the Future of C.S. Lewis Society of Central MA

Saturday, September 12, 9:00-10:30 AM, Auburn Public Library. "Discussion Session" on the results of the email survey and future of the C.S. Lewis Society of Central MA. We hope you can attend; we want (and need) to hear your ideas.

II. Book Club to Resume in September

During the fall term, the Book Club will usually meet at the Auburn Public Library, 369 Southbridge St. We may hold one or two of our meetings at a coffee shop. If we do, we will of course let you know.

Saturday, September 12, 9:00-10:30 AM, "Discussion Session" on the results of the email survey and future of the C.S. Lewis Society.

Saturday, September 26, 9:00-10:30 AM, "Religion and Rocketry" by C.S. Lewis. This is a fascinating article about possible theological implications of rational life on other worlds. Before discussing the article, Chuck will provide a 5-10 minute non-expert's overview of estimates of the number of planets in the universe from the field of astronomy (the number is too big to print here), the number of other worlds that have been discovered so far outside our solar system (about 2,000), and the methods that

astronomers use to discover such "exoplanets." Amateur and professional astronomers are especially welcome to attend. The article will be made available at the September 12 meeting or can be mailed to anybody who is unable to attend that meeting (if that's your case, please email your name and address to infolewisma@gmail.com).

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

Saturday, October 24, 9:00-10:30 AM, book to be determined by attendees

November Meetings: we plan to have two meetings in November. The book, dates and times, and locations to be determined by attendees

III. Special Event at the New England Christian Study Center (Thursday, Oct. 22, 7 pm)

Peter Kreeft, Professor of Philosophy at Boston College, will give a talk on Christianity and culture at the New England Christian Study Center, Thursday, Oct. 22 at 7 pm. The Center is located at Faith Baptist Church, 22 Faith Ave., Auburn, MA. (Note: In the spring we discussed Kreeft's book, "Between Heaven and Hell: A Dialog Somewhere Beyond Death with John F. Kennedy, C. S. Lewis & Aldous Huxley".)

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

[How J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis Revived Modern Myth-Telling \(The Atlantic\)](#)

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"). 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.

Galileo Goes to Jail and Other Myths about Science and Religion (S,C)

Ronald L. Numbers, ed., Harvard University Press, 2009

If we want nonscientists and opinion-makers in the press, the lab, and the pulpit to take a fresh look at the relationship between science and religion, Ronald Numbers suggests that we must first dispense with the hoary myths that have masqueraded too long as historical truths. Until about the 1970s, the dominant narrative in the history of science had long been that of science triumphant, and science at war with religion. But a new generation of historians both of science and of the church began to examine episodes in the history of science and religion through the values and knowledge of the actors themselves. Now Ronald Numbers has recruited the leading scholars in this new history of science to - puncture the myths, from Galileo's incarceration to Darwin's deathbed conversion to Einstein's belief in a personal God who "didn't play dice with the universe." The picture of science and religion at each other's throats persists in mainstream media and scholarly journals, but each chapter in *Galileo Goes to Jail* shows how much we have to gain by seeing beyond the myths.

Faith and Wisdom in Science (S,C)

Tom McLeish, Oxford University Press, 2014

"Can you count the clouds?" asks the voice of God from the whirlwind in the stunningly beautiful catalogue of nature -- questions from the Old Testament Book of Job. McLeish takes a scientist's reading of this ancient text as a centerpiece to make the case for science as a deeply human and ancient activity, embedded in some of the oldest stories told about human desire to understand the natural world. Drawing on stories from the modern science of chaos and uncertainty alongside medieval, patristic, classical and Biblical sources, *Faith and Wisdom in Science* challenges much of the current 'science and religion' debate as operating with the wrong assumptions and in the wrong space. Its narrative approach develops a natural critique of the cultural separation of sciences and humanities, suggesting an approach

to science, or in its more ancient form natural philosophy -- the 'love of wisdom of natural things' -- that can draw on theological and cultural roots. Following the theme of pain in human confrontation with nature, it develops a 'Theology of Science,' recognising that both scientific and theological worldviews must be 'of' each other, not holding separate domains.

The Territories of Science and Religion (S,C)

Peter Harrison, University of Chicago Press, 2015

The conflict between science and religion seems indelible, even eternal. Surely two such divergent views of the universe have always been in fierce opposition? Actually, that's not the case, says Peter Harrison: our very concepts of science and religion are relatively recent, emerging only in the past three hundred years, and it is those very categories, rather than their underlying concepts, that constrain our understanding of how the formal study of nature relates to the religious life. In this book, Harrison dismantles what we think we know about the two categories, then puts it all back together again in a provocative, productive new way.

What Your Body Knows About God: How We Are Designed to Connect, Serve and Thrive

(S,A,C,L)

Rob Moll, IVP Books, 2014

Have you ever had an experience where you felt particularly aware of God? If God is real, and we are created in God's image, then it makes sense that our minds and bodies would be designed with the perceptive ability to sense and experience God. Scientists are now discovering ways that our bodies are designed to connect with God. Brain research shows that our brain systems are wired to enable us to have spiritual experiences. The spiritual circuits that are used in prayer or worship are also involved in developing compassion for others. Our bodies have actually been created to love God and serve our neighbors. Award-winning journalist Rob Moll chronicles the fascinating ways in which our brains and bodies interact with God and spiritual realities.

True Paradox: How Christianity Makes Sense of Our Complex World (S,A,C,L)

David Skeel, IVP Books, 2014

do we explain human consciousness? Where do we get our sense of beauty? Why do we recoil at suffering? Why do we have moral codes that none of us can meet? Why do we yearn for justice, yet seem incapable of establishing it? Any philosophy or worldview must make sense of the world as we actually experience it. We need to explain how we can discern qualities such as beauty and evil and account for our practices of morality and law. The complexity of the contemporary world is sometimes seen as an embarrassment for Christianity. But law professor David Skeel makes a fresh case for the plausibility and explanatory power of Christianity. The Christian faith offers plausible explanations for the central puzzles of our existence, such as our capacity for idea-making, our experience of beauty and suffering, and our inability to create a just social order. When compared with materialism or other sets of beliefs, Christianity provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding human life as we actually live it. We need not deny the complexities of life as we experience it. But the paradoxes of our existence can lead us to the possibility that the existence of God could make sense of it all.

Why Christian Faith Still Makes Sense: A Response to Contemporary Challenges (S,A,C,L)

C. Stephen Evans, Baker Academic, 2015

In recent years the Christian faith has been challenged by skeptics, including the New Atheists, who claim that belief in God is simply not reasonable. Here prominent Christian philosopher C. Stephen Evans offers a fresh, contemporary, and nuanced response. He makes the case for belief in a personal God through an exploration of natural "signs," which open our minds to theistic possibilities and foster belief in the Christian revelation. Evans then discusses why God's self-revelation is both authoritative and authentic. This sophisticated yet accessible book provides a clear account of the evidence for Christian faith, concluding that it still makes sense to believe.

Knowledge and Christian Belief (S,C,L)

Alvin Plantinga, Eerdmans, 2015

In his widely praised *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford, 2000) Alvin Plantinga discussed in great depth the question of the rationality, or sensibility, of Christian belief. In this book Plantinga presents the same ideas in a briefer, much more accessible fashion. Recognized worldwide as a leading Christian philosopher, Plantinga probes what exactly is meant by the claim that religious -- and specifically Christian -- belief is irrational and cannot sensibly be held. He argues that the criticisms of such well-known atheists as Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens are completely wrong. Finally, Plantinga addresses several potential "defeaters" to Christian belief -- pluralism, science, evil and suffering -- and shows how they fail to successfully defeat rational Christian belief.

Three Theological Mistakes: How to Correct Enlightenment Assumptions about God, Miracles, and Free Will (S,C,L)

Ric S. Machuga, Cascade Books, 2015

Is the existence of God a matter of faith or knowledge? Does God sometimes act miraculously or are there physical causes for everything? Is morality absolute or relative? Are humans truly free or does God's sovereignty determine everything? When bad things happen, is God the cause or are they the fault of humans? Too frequently Christians answer these questions with a Yes to one side and a No to the other side. Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth answer Yes to both. Following their model, Machuga defends a "third way" which transcends the Enlightenment dichotomies of fideism vs. rationalism, supernaturalism vs. naturalism, relativism vs. absolutism, free will vs. predestination, and God's justice vs. his mercy. Machuga begins by showing how these false dichotomies grew out of the Enlightenment assumptions of mechanism, universal quantification, and mono-causation. He then corrects these...dubious assumptions by articulating a theory of dual-causation. The result is a thoroughly biblical understanding of God, miracles, and free will that can withstand the contemporary criticisms of both science and philosophy.

Who's Afraid of Modern Art?: Essays on Modern Art and Theology in Conversation (A,C,L)

Daniel A. Siedell, Cascade Books, 2015

Modern art can be confusing and intimidating-even ugly and blasphemous. And yet curator and art critic Daniel A. Siedell finds something else, something much deeper that resonates with the human experience. With over thirty essays on such diverse artists as Andy Warhol, Thomas Kinkade, Diego Velázquez, Robyn O'Neil, Claudia Alvarez, and Andrei Rublev, Siedell offers a highly personal approach to modern art that is informed by nearly twenty years of experience as a museum curator, art historian, and educator. Siedell combines his experience in the contemporary art world with a theological perspective that serves to deepen the experience of art, allowing the work of art to work as art and not covert philosophy or theology, or visual illustrations of ideas, meanings, and worldviews. *Who's Afraid of Modern Art?* celebrates the surprising beauty of art that emerges from and embraces pain and suffering, if only we take the time to listen. Indeed, as Siedell reveals, a painting is much more than meets the eye. So, who's afraid of modern art? Siedell's answer might surprise you.

The Gospel According to the Blues (A,C,L)

Gary W. Burnett, Cascade Books, 2014

The Gospel According to the Blues dares us to read Jesus's Sermon on the Mount in conversation with Robert Johnson, Son House, and Muddy Waters. It suggests that thinking about the blues--the history, the artists, the songs-provides good stimulation for thinking about the Christian gospel. Both are about a world gone wrong, about injustice, about the human condition, and both are about hope for a better world. In this book, Gary Burnett probes both the gospel and the history of the blues as we find it in the Sermon on the Mount, to help us understand better the nature of the good news which Jesus preached, and its relevance and challenge to us.

Catholic Literary Giants: A Field Guide to the Catholic Literary Landscape (C,L)

Joseph Pearce, Ignatius Press, 2014

Joseph Pearce takes the reader on a dazzling tour of the creative landscape of Catholic prose and poetry. Covering the vast and impressive terrain from Dante to Tolkien, from Shakespeare to Waugh, this book is an immersion into the spiritual depths of the Catholic literary tradition with one of today's premier literary biographers as our guide. Focusing especially on the literary revival of the twentieth century, Pearce explores well-known authors such as G.K. Chesterton, Graham Greene and J.R.R. Tolkien, while introducing lesser-known writers Roy Campbell, Maurice Baring, Owen Barfield and others. He even includes the new saint, Pope John Paul II, who wrote many literary and poetic pieces, among them the story that was made into a feature film, *The Jeweler's Shop*.

Outposts of Hope: First Peter's Christ for Culture Strategy (C,L)

Douglas D. Webster, Cascade Books, 2015

The original recipients of the Letter of First Peter inhabited a radically different social context from our own. We do not live under Roman imperial rule. Slave labor is not the driving force of our economy. Women are not under patriarchal domination in our culture as they once were. Society has changed, but what is beyond dispute is that Western culture remains antithetical to God's will and hostile to the Jesus way. The imperial Caesar has been replaced by the imperial self. The Pax Romana has been replaced by the American Dream. Western capitalism still trades in the bodies and souls of human beings. Culture obsesses over sexual freedom and material indulgence. Idolatry is pervasive. Autonomous individualism is the ideal. First Peter is about the inevitable clash with culture that ensues because of the good news of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Peter's bottom-up profile of costly discipleship is far more radical than we may realize. Hostility against the church is the believer's opportunity under pressure to reveal the goodness of God. Suffering and submission are essential for Peter's Christ for culture strategy. Sacrifice is the leverage of the gospel. Cross-bearing humility is the strategy for relating to culture and Christ-like humility is essential for living in the household of God.

Vainglory: The Forgotten Vice (C,L)

Rebecca K. DeYoung, Eerdmans, 2014

Julia Roberts on the red carpet at the Oscars. Lady Gaga singing "Applause" to worshipful fans at one of her sold-out concerts. And you and me in our Sunday best in the front row at church. What do we have in common? Chances are ... that we all suffer from *vainglory* -- a keen desire for attention and approval. Although contemporary culture has largely forgotten about vainglory, it was on the original list of seven capital vices and is perhaps more dangerous than ever today. [This book] tells the story of this vice, from its ancient origins to its modern expressions. DeYoung defines vainglory, gives examples from popular culture, explores motivational sources, and discusses other vices associated with it such as hypocrisy and boasting. After exposing the many ways in which vainglory can rear its ugly head, she explores personal spiritual practices that can help us resist it and community practices that can help us handle glory well.

The Gospel in the Marketplace of Ideas: Paul's Mars Hill Experience for Our Pluralistic World (C,L)

Paul Copan and Kenneth D. Litwak, IVP Books, 2014

Our world is multicultural, multireligious, multiphilosophical. It ranges from fundamental monotheism to do-it-yourself spirituality to strident atheism. How can Christians engage in communicating across worldviews in this pluralistic and often relativistic society? When Paul visited Athens, he found an equally multicultural and multireligious setting. From Jews to Gentiles, elite to poor, slaves to slave owners, from olive-skinned Gentiles to dark-skinned Ethiopians, the Greco-Roman world was a dynamic mix. Religious practices were also wide and varied.... Seeking to embolden the church's witness in today's society, philosopher Paul Copan and New Testament scholar Kenneth Litwak show how Paul's speech to the Athenians (found in Acts 17) provides a practical model for Christians today. They uncover the cultural and religious background of this key episode in the apostle's career and they encourage believers to winsomely challenge the idols of our time to point contemporary Athenians to Christ.

Wearing God: Clothing, Laughter, Fire, and Other Overlooked Ways of Meeting God (C,L)

Laurie F. Winner, HarperOne, 2015

Lauren F. Winner -- a leading writer at the crossroads of culture and spirituality and author of *Still* and *Girl Meets God* -- joins the ranks of luminaries such as Anne Lamott and Barbara Brown Taylor with this exploration of little known -- and, so, little used -- biblical metaphors for God, metaphors which can open new doorways for our lives and spiritualities. There are hundreds of metaphors for God, but the church only uses a few familiar images: creator, judge, savior, father. In *Wearing God*, Winner gathers a number of lesser-known tropes, reflecting on how they work biblically and culturally, and reveals how they can deepen our spiritual lives. Exploring the notion of God as clothing, Winner reflects on how we are "clothed with Christ" or how "God fits us like a garment." She then analyzes how clothing functions culturally to shape our ideals and identify our community, and ruminates on how this new metaphor can function to create new possibilities for our lives. For each biblical metaphor -- God as the vine/vintner who animates life; the lactation consultant; and the comedian, showing us our follies, for example -- Winner surveys the historical, literary, and cultural landscapes in order to revive and heal our souls.

Fool's Talk: Recovering the Art of Christian Persuasion (Lewis,C,L)

Os Guinness, IVP Books, 2015

In our post-Christian context, public life has become markedly more secular and private life infinitely more diverse. Yet many Christians still rely on cookie-cutter approaches to evangelism and apologetics. Most of these methods assume that people are open, interested and needy for spiritual insight when increasingly most people are not. Our urgent need, then, is the capacity to persuade -- to make a convincing case for the gospel to people who are not interested in it. In his magnum opus, Os Guinness offers a comprehensive presentation of the art and power of creative persuasion. Christians have often relied on proclaiming and preaching, protesting and picketing. But we are strikingly weak in persuasion -- the ability to talk to people who are closed to what we are saying. Actual persuasion requires more than a one-size-fits-all approach. Guinness notes, "Jesus never spoke to two people the same way, and neither should we." Following the tradition of Erasmus, Pascal, G. K. Chesterton, C. S. Lewis, Malcolm Muggeridge and Peter Berger, Guinness demonstrates how apologetic persuasion requires both the rational and the imaginative. Discover afresh the persuasive power of Christian witness from one of the leading apologists and thinkers of our era.

JOY: Poet, Seeker, and the Woman Who Captivated C.S. Lewis (Lewis)

Abigail Santamaria, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015

Joy Davidman's marriage to C.S. Lewis stands as one of the twentieth century's greatest literary love stories, immortalized in the film *Shadowlands* and Lewis's memoir *A Grief Observed*. Yet Davidman has remained in her husband's shadow, despite being a remarkable writer and thinker in her own right. Her epic narrative, in all its fullness, has never truly been told--until now. Drawing on previously unmined material, including an extraordinary cache of letters and papers, as well as years of research and interviews, Abigail Santamaria finally brings Joy Davidman Gresham Lewis to the page with the breadth and depth she deserves.

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