



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

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

Winter 2013 (Volume 4, Issue 2)



[Source](#)

Dear Reader,

Happy New Year! We are pleased to share with you the winter 2013 Newsletter of the C.S. Lewis Society of Central Massachusetts. We have a special event scheduled for later this month and some interesting books and poetry to discuss at the Book Club. 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.

Follow us on 

Newsletter Contents:

- I. Special Event: "An Open Dialogue: The C.S. Lewis Society of Central Massachusetts, Where Do We Go from Here?" Saturday, January 26, 9:00-10:30 AM, Auburn Public Library
- II. Book Club to Resume in February
- III. News (Narnia, Lewis, Events, etc.)
- IV. Books of Interest

I. Special Event: "An Open Dialogue: The C.S. Lewis Society of Central Massachusetts, Where Do We Go from Here?" Saturday, January 26, 9:00-10:30 AM, Auburn Public Library

The C.S. Lewis Society of Central Massachusetts is now in its 4th year and 2013 represents the 50th anniversary of Lewis's death. Has the time come for critical self-assessment? Regarding the importance of assessment, Adam Urbanski has said: "If we always do what we've always done, we will get what we've always got." And Douglas Eder has said: "If you don't know where you are headed, you'll probably end up someplace else." What are the purposes of the C.S. Lewis Society of Central Massachusetts and what are its strengths, weaknesses, and blind spots? Where should the C.S. Lewis Society of Central Massachusetts go from here? After a brief introduction (about 10 minutes) on the origins of the Society and the cultural times in which we live, we will have an open dialogue on these and other questions related to the Society. By "open dialogue," we mean that we really want to know your thoughts and the conversation will not be programmed to arrive at a pre-determined outcome. We will have Dunkin Donuts coffee and good snacks (both healthy and unhealthy :)) available. We hope you can join us.

II. Book Club to Resume in February

During the winter/spring 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, February 9, 9:00-10:30 AM, "The Chronicles of Narnia: The Last Battle" by C.S. Lewis

Saturday, February 23, 9:00-10:30 AM, "The Chronicles of Narnia: The Last Battle" by C.S. Lewis

Do you need a copy of "The Last Battle"? We have 2 used copies available at \$5 (our cost). If you might attend the book club in February and you'd like us to mail you a copy of the book, just email your address to info@lewisma.org. We'll send you the book in the mail and settle up later for the \$5.

Saturday, March 9, 9:00-10:30 AM, "Till We Have Faces" by C.S. Lewis

Saturday, March 23, 9:00-10:30 AM, "Till We Have Faces" by C.S. Lewis

Saturday, April 6, 9:00-10:30 AM, book or readings to be determined by attendees

Saturday, April 20, 9:00-10:30 AM, book or readings to be determined by attendees

Saturday, May 4, 9:00-10:30 AM, selected poems from Irma Stevens' new book, "Golden Glory"

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

[Flaherty: "Multiple Opinions" On Fourth Narnia Film](#)

[Poetic justice for CS Lewis](#)

[Philip Yancey on the problem of pain](#)

[Catholic Review of "The Problem of Pain" by C.S. Lewis](#)

[The problem of pain song lyrics](#)

[Review of The Screwtape Letters Play in the Washington Post](#)

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.

Mapping the Origins Debate: Six Models of the Beginning of Everything (S,C)

Gerald Rau, IVP Books, 2012

The debate over evolution and creation has raged for decades.... Many promote one view as the only reasonable solution. But what are the main viewpoints, and just why do they disagree? In the midst of an increasingly intense dispute, Gerald Rau answers the important questions with level-headed clarity and evenhanded analysis. Rau lays out six models of origins, ranging from naturalistic evolution to young-earth creation. He shows how each model presupposes an underlying philosophy that adherents take on faith. With the sensitivity of a seasoned educator, Rau demonstrates how each model assesses the scientific evidence in relation to four different kinds of origins: the universe, life, species and humans. In an age of specialists, Rau sees the big picture. *Mapping the Origins Debate* cuts through the cacophony and the complexity to provide a lucid and charitable contribution to the conversation.

iPod, Youtube, Wii Play: Theological Engagements with Entertainment (A,C,L)

D. Brent Laytham, Cascade Books, 2012

"Brent Laytham carefully analyzes the social and theological problems attached to entertainment as it has become wedded to technology. But this is neither a screed against its dangers nor a doomsday resignation to its hegemonic power. Rather, Laytham asks us to keep entertainment in its proper place in God's economy, practicing resistance to its idolatrous tendencies while embracing it as a 'trivial pursuit' that acknowledges God as 'the giver of laughter, pleasures, and joy.'" L. Edward Phillips

The Great Evangelical Recession: 6 Factors That Will Crash the American Church...and How to Prepare (C,L)

John S. Dickerson, Baker Books, 2013

In 2006, few Americans were expecting the economy to collapse. Today the American church is in a similar position, on the precipice of a great spiritual recession. While we focus on a few large churches and dynamic leaders that are successful, the church's overall membership is shrinking. Young Christians are fleeing. Our donations are drying up. Political fervor is dividing us. Even as these crises eat at the church internally, our once friendly host culture is quickly turning hostile and antagonistic. How can we avoid a devastating collapse? In *The Great Evangelical Recession*, award-winning journalist and pastor John Dickerson identifies six factors that are radically eroding the American church and offers biblical solutions to prepare evangelicals for spiritual success, even in the face of alarming trends. This book is a heartfelt plea and call to the American church combining quality research, genuine hope, and practical application with the purpose of igniting the church toward a better future.

Bad Religion: How We Became a Nation of Heretics (C,L)

Ross Douthat, Free Press, 2012

As the youngest-ever op-ed columnist for the *New York Times*, Ross Douthat has emerged as one of the most provocative and influential voices of his generation. In *Bad Religion* he offers a masterful and hard-hitting account of how American Christianity has gone off the rails—and why it threatens to take American society with it. Writing for an era dominated by recession, gridlock, and fears of American decline, Douthat exposes the spiritual roots of the nation's political and economic crises. He argues that America's problem isn't too much religion, as a growing chorus of atheists have argued; nor is it an intolerant secularism, as many on the Christian right believe. Rather, it's *bad religion*: the slow-motion collapse of traditional faith and the rise of a variety of pseudo-Christianities that stroke our egos, indulge our follies, and encourage our worst impulses. These faiths speak from many pulpits—conservative and liberal, political and pop cultural, traditionally religious and fashionably “spiritual”—and many of their preachers claim a Christian warrant. But they are increasingly offering distortions of traditional Christianity—not the real thing. Christianity's place in American life has increasingly been taken over, not by atheism, Douthat argues, but by heresy: debased versions of Christian faith that breed hubris, greed, and self-absorption. In a story that moves from the 1950s to the age of Obama, he brilliantly charts institutional Christianity's decline from a vigorous, mainstream, and bipartisan faith—which acted as a “vital center” and the moral force behind the civil rights movement—through the culture wars of the 1960s and 1970s to the polarizing debates of the present day. Ranging from Glenn Beck to Barack Obama, *Eat Pray Love* to Joel Osteen, and Oprah Winfrey to *The Da Vinci Code*, Douthat explores how the prosperity gospel's mantra of “pray and grow rich,” a cult of self-esteem that reduces God to a life coach, and the warring political religions of left and right have crippled the country's ability to confront our most pressing challenges and accelerated American decline. His urgent call for a revival of traditional Christianity is sure to generate controversy, and it will be vital reading for all those concerned about the imperiled American future.

Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible (C,L)

E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien, IVP Books, 2012

“The authors of *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes* make a convincing case that those who trust in the Bible should (for biblical reasons) be more self-conscious about themselves. Their demonstration of how unself-conscious mores influence the understanding of Scripture is as helpful as the many insights they draw from Scripture itself. This is a good book for better understanding ourselves, the Christian world as it now exists and the Bible.” Mark A. Noll

Laying Down the Sword: Why We Can't Ignore the Bible's Violent Verses (C,L)

Philip Jenkins, HarperOne, 2012

Laying Down the Sword brings to light biblical texts that have been hidden from view and overturns popular stereotypes that continue to generate more heat than light. Jenkins offers a way to read these

troubling passages, presents a vital framework for understanding the Bible, and calls believers in every tradition to create a more honest and deeper-rooted faith.

Justice in Love (C,L)

Nicholas Wolterstorff, Eerdmans, 2011

An eminent Christian philosopher's thought on the relation between love and justice. The concepts of love and justice have long been prominent in the moral culture of the West, yet they are often considered to be hopelessly at odds with one another. In this book acclaimed Christian philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff shows that justice and love are indeed perfectly compatible, and he argues that the commonly perceived tension between them reveals something faulty in our understanding of each. True benevolent love, he says, is always attentive to justice, and love that [brings] injustice can only ever be "malformed love." Charitably engaging alternative views, Wolterstorff's *Justice in Love* is a welcome companion and follow-up volume to his magnificent *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton, 2010).

How the Church Fails Businesspeople (And What Can Be Done About It) (C,L)

John C. Knapp, Eerdmans, 2011

Why do so many Christians struggle to relate their faith to their daily work? Is the church to blame? In this book John C. Knapp argues that the church's ambiguous teachings about vocation, money, and business have long contributed to Christians' uncertainty about discipleship in the workplace. Drawing on his own expertise in business ethics and on numerous interviews with Christians in diverse occupations, Knapp brings fresh perspectives to this troubling problem. *How the Church Fails Businesspeople (and What Can Be Done about It)* explores the historical, cultural, and educational background to the faith-work gap and proposes a new theological framework for Christian life in the public sphere. Real-life examples enliven the discussion throughout, and each chapter concludes with "Questions to Consider," making this constructive book ideal for group study.

Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking (C,L)

Susan Cain, Broadway, 2013

At least one-third of the people we know are introverts. They are the ones who prefer listening to speaking, reading to partying; who innovate and create but dislike self-promotion; who favor working on their own over brainstorming in teams. Although they are often labeled "quiet," it is to introverts that we owe many of the great contributions to society--from van Gogh's sunflowers to the invention of the personal computer. Passionately argued, impressively researched, and filled with indelible stories of real people, *Quiet* shows how dramatically we undervalue introverts, and how much we lose in doing so. Taking the reader on a journey from Dale Carnegie's birthplace to Harvard Business School, from a Tony Robbins seminar to an evangelical megachurch, Susan Cain charts the rise of the Extrovert Ideal in the twentieth century and explores its far-reaching effects. She talks to Asian-American students who feel alienated from the brash, backslapping atmosphere of American schools. She questions the dominant values of American business culture, where forced collaboration can stand in the way of innovation, and where the leadership potential of introverts is often overlooked. And she draws on cutting-edge research in psychology and neuroscience to reveal the surprising differences between extroverts and introverts. This extraordinary book has the power to permanently change how we see introverts and, equally important, how introverts see themselves.

Sensible Shoes: A Story about the Spiritual Journey (C,L)

Sharon Garlough Brown, IVP Books, 2013

Sharon Garlough Brown tells the moving story of four strangers as they embark together on a journey of spiritual formation: Hannah, a pastor who doesn't realize how exhausted she is; Meg, a widow and recent empty-nester who is haunted by her past; Mara, a woman who has experienced a lifetime of rejection and is now trying to navigate a difficult marriage; Charissa, a hard-working graduate student who wants to get things right. You're invited to join these four women as they reluctantly arrive at a retreat center and find themselves drawn out of their separate stories of isolation and struggle and into a collective

journey of spiritual practice, mutual support and personal revelation. Along the way, readers will be taken into a new understanding of key spiritual practices and find tangible support for the deeper life with God.

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Tough Questions, Direct Answers (C)

Dale Hanson Bourke, IVP Books, 2013

With all of the heat surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, even the most basic facts can be hard to grasp. How do we make sense of what we read in the Bible—and what we read in the news? Dale Hanson Bourke sheds light on the places, terms, history, and current issues shaping this important region. Offering an even-handed presentation of a range of views on the most controversial issues, she provides a framework for American Christians to use in understanding why the conflict occurred, why it continues—and what remains to be done. With maps, charts, photos, and quotes, the guide answers such tough questions as: What is meant by a two-state solution? Who are the Palestinian Christians? Do other countries help or hurt the peace process? How does the Arab spring affect the conflict?

The Lion's World: A Journey into the Heart of Narnia (C,Lewis)

Rowan Williams, Oxford University Press, 2013

Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams offers fascinating insight into *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the popular series of novels by one of the most influential Christian authors of the modern era, C. S. Lewis. Lewis once referred to certain kinds of book as a "mouthwash for the imagination." This is what he attempted to provide in the Narnia stories, argues Williams: an unfamiliar world in which we could rinse out what is stale in our thinking about Christianity—"which is almost everything," says Williams--and rediscover what it might mean to meet the holy. Indeed, Lewis's great achievement in the Narnia books is just that--he enables readers to encounter the Christian story "as if for the first time." How does Lewis makes fresh and strange the familiar themes of Christian doctrine? Williams points out that, for one, Narnia itself is a strange place: a parallel universe, if you like. There is no "church" in Narnia, no religion even. The interaction between Aslan as a "divine" figure and the inhabitants of this world is something that is worked out in the routines of life itself. Moreover, we are made to see humanity in a fresh perspective, the pride or arrogance of the human spirit is chastened by the revelation that, in Narnia, you may be on precisely the same spiritual level as a badger or a mouse. It is through these imaginative dislocations that Lewis is able to communicate--to a world that thinks it knows what faith is--the character, the feel, of a real experience of surrender in the face of absolute incarnate love. This lucid, learned, humane, and beautifully written book opens a new window onto Lewis's beloved stories, revealing the moral wisdom and passionate faith beneath their perennial appeal.

The Magician's Twin: C. S. Lewis on Science, Scientism, and Society (S,C,Lewis)

John G. West, ed., Discovery Institute Press, 2012

Beloved for his Narnian tales and books of Christian apologetics, bestselling British writer C. S. Lewis also was a perceptive critic of the growing power of scientism, the misguided effort to apply science to areas outside its proper bounds. In this wide-ranging book of essays, contemporary writers probe Lewis's prophetic warnings about the dehumanizing impact of scientism on ethics, politics, faith, reason, and science itself. Issues explored include Lewis's views on bioethics, eugenics, evolution, intelligent design, and what he called "scientocracy." Contributors include Michael Aeschliman, Victor Reppert, Jay Richards, and C. John Collins.

As One Devil to Another: A Fiendish Correspondence in the Tradition of C. S. Lewis' The Screwtape Letters (C,Lewis)

Richard Platt, Tyndale Momentum, 2012

As One Devil to Another is an astonishing debut work that C. S. Lewis's biographer and foremost Lewis authority Walter Hooper calls "a stunning achievement, the finest example of the genre of diabolical correspondence to appear since this genre was popularized by C. S. Lewis." Enter into this chilling and diabolical tale, one that reveals the very tricks and strategies of Hell. Through a series of letters between devils created by Platt, senior devil Slashreap trains his young protégé, Scardagger, to win an individual soul away from Heaven and into their clutches. As the devils plot their way to triumph, they reveal the

spiritual dangers and risks we face in today's society. Their frighteningly accurate perspective on issues such as contemporary technology and sexual mores is interwoven with timeless matters such as the power of prayer, the purpose of suffering, and the promises held out by Heaven . . . and Hell. Destined to become a modern classic, *As One Devil to Another* is a brilliantly written, deeply unsettling perspective on twenty-first-century society . . . a glimpse of ourselves through the eyes of those who have embraced their underworldly existence.

Screwtape's Master Plan: A Satirical Take on Christianity and Culture (S,C,Lewis)

Charles Anderton, Cascade Books, 2012

He's baaack! That infernal demon, Screwtape, from C. S. Lewis's classic book, *The Screwtape Letters*, has returned. Screwtape is armed with a "Master Plan" designed to acidify and ultimately destroy the cultural tapestries of a critical region of the world and the humans therein. In a series of lectures delivered to a legion of demons, Screwtape highlights key principles and tactics for twisting human thinking and behavior in the areas of materialism, sexuality, intergroup relationships, self-actualization, work and vocation, and understandings of Jesus. Screwtape's ultimate objective is to snuff out God's light in the region by encouraging Christians to assimilate to prevailing cultural norms or withdraw into their own "cultural bubbles" rather than faithfully integrate into the cultures around them. Through a process known as the "Amishification of the Church," Screwtape expects the Christian church to become a minor backwater institution in the region by the end of the twenty-first century.

We do not sell, exchange, or share email addresses with third parties.