



C. S. Lewis and his Circle: Essays and Memoirs from the Oxford C.S. Lewis Society

Roger White (editor) , Judith Wolfe (editor) , Brendan Wolfe (Editor)

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For thirty years, the Oxford C.S. Lewis Society has met weekly in the medieval colleges of Oxford University. During that time, it has hosted as speakers nearly all those still living who were associated with the Inklings--the Oxford literary circle led by C.S. Lewis--as well as authors and thinkers of a prominence that nears Lewis's own.

C.S. Lewis and His Circle offers the reader a chance to join this unique group. Roger White has worked with Society past-presidents Brendan and Judith Wolfe to select the best unpublished talks, which are here made available to the public for the first time. They represent the best of traditional academic essays, thoughtful memoirs, and informal reminiscences about C.S. Lewis and his circle. The reader will re-imagine Lewis's Cosmic Trilogy with former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams; read philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe's final word on Lewis's arguments for Christianity; hear the Reverend Peter Bide's memories of marrying Lewis and Joy Davidman in an Oxford hospital; and learn about Lewis's Narnia Chronicles from his former secretary.

Representing the best of both personal and scholarly engagement with C.S. Lewis and the Inklings, the talks collected here set a new tone for engagement with this iconic Oxford literary circle--a tone close to Lewis's own Oxford-bred sharpness and wryness, seasoned with good humor and genuine affection for C.S. Lewis and his circle.

C. S. Lewis and his Circle: Essays and Memoirs from the Oxford C.S. Lewis Society Details

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From Reader Review C. S. Lewis and his Circle: Essays and Memoirs from the Oxford C.S. Lewis Society for online ebook

Chris says

Disclaimer: ARC via Netgalley.

The most interesting part of this book is the essays by people who knew Lewis. Those make it somewhat worth reading. The rest of the book is essays, mostly about his non-Narnia works and his Christian philosophy. While those could have been interesting, they tend to be worshipful. This doesn't mean that they are bad or un-informed. They are quite good, but the essays do not deal with any negative aspect of the work. The closest you get is an oft quote from JRRT and then a comment about how we shouldn't judge him for it.

Susan says

This is a beautifully presented volume of essays and memoirs from the Oxford C.S. Lewis Society. The Oxford C.S. Lewis Society has met weekly for over thirty years and now, for the first time, they have made available essays, memoirs and reminiscences about C.S. Lewis and the Inklings, which have formed talks made to the Society over the years.

The book is split into two main parts: Essays and Memoirs and, within those categories, are sub-categories (Philosophy and Theology, plus Literature in the Essay section and, within Memoirs, memories of C.S. Lewis by family and friends and also memories of the Inklings.

Obviously, this collection has been compiled with great care and is ideal to dip into, as well as read cover to cover. Personally, I found this a fascinating collection. There are essays on the making of the Chronicles of Narnia, W.H. Auden and the Inklings and Lewis as, "Defender of the Faith," amongst other thought provoking reads. The memoir selection is equally as interesting, with recollections from Joan Murphy, a Lewis cousin, or John Wain, a fellow Inklings member, amongst others. If you have enjoyed the work of C.S. Lewis – and I have adored the Narnia books for many years, both as a child and as a parent re-reading the works to my own children – then this is an indispensable collection and both looks, and feels, a quality book in its own right.

Steve says

I've only read the first essay and am already certain that this is going to be a great book for any CS Lewis fan.

Lory Hess says

See my full review at The Emerald City Book Review. Closely following **The Fellowship**, a splendid group

biography of the Inklings, comes this new collection, a fine companion volume for those looking for more on CS Lewis and company. A student society founded in 1982 with the aim of grappling with "the rich relationship between Christianity, culture, and the imagination, including literature," the Oxford CS Lewis Society has had hundreds of talks given under its aegis throughout the years. What a delight it must have been for an Oxford student sympathetic to these themes to be able to belong to this club and participate in its activities.

Much of the material produced for the club has never been published, but in this volume we are privileged to read a pithy but very rich and deep selection, encompassing essays on philosophy, theology, and literature in the first half, and memoirs of the Inklings in general and CS Lewis in particular in the second. Some highlights for me included Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, giving an appreciative reassessment of one of Lewis's less popular novels, *That Hideous Strength*; Peter Bide's memory of how he married Lewis and Joy Davidman, setting straight the record which has been rather sentimentalized and distorted by fictional treatments; and Owen Barfield himself, who outlived almost all his fellow Inklings, brilliantly analyzing his relationship with Lewis and teasing apart their intertwined opinions.

Each reader, however, will find his or her particular points of interest, whether in studies of the esoteric fiction of Charles Williams, considerations of the relationship of WH Auden to the Inklings, or personal reminiscences of Lewis and his family and friends. Framed by a Foreword and Afterword that put them into the context of the origin and history of the Society, these diverse contributions give a welcome taste of the many ways there are of encountering and understanding Lewis and the Inklings.

Jeanie says

I have read only a few of CS Lewis books and the books I have read, I have enjoyed. CS Lewis tells a story like no other. In this memoir on CS Lewis, you gleam from those that knew him and worked with him, Lewis' understanding of truth, and the purpose of life, and the question of evil. Lewis stories always reflected the contrasting of evil and good.

This was at times a hard read to get thru and it may be because I was not familiar with the work that it reflected. However, I was still captured by the spirit of Lewis and what he is still teaching even today. His work is still relevant and will always be classic.

A Special Thank You to Oxford University Press and Netgalley for ARC and the opportunity to post an honest review.

Stan Shelley says

19 marvelous essays based on papers presented to the Oxford CS Lewis Society. The memoirs by people who knew him are really nice. Vicar Head was the Anglican priest where Lewis attended church. His modest, straightforward discussion of his famous parishioner is a joy to read. And Peter Bide is a favorite of mine. He writes about marrying Lewis and Joy Davidman.

Some of the essays are more academic like the literary criticism of *That Hideous Strength*. Something for everyone.

Michelle Kidwell says

C.S Lewis And His Circle

Essays and Memoirs from the Oxford C.S. Lewis Society
by Edited by Roger White, Judith Wolfe, and Brendan Wolfe

Oxford University Press

Christian

If you are looking for an indepth study on C.S Lewis and his contemporaries this collection of essays and memoirs is the book for you.

This book discusses not only C.S Lewis and men like J.R.R Tolkeins writing but also there faith. If you are looking for a leisurely read then C.S Lewis and His Circle is not for you but if you are looking for an indepth book that will help you to write a paper or you simply want to know more about C.S Lewis and his contemporaries then this is the book for you.

I give C.S Lewis and His Circle five out of five stars.

Happy Reading...

Amanda says

A mix of the interesting and the tedious

With a title like C.S. Lewis & His Circle, I expected the essays to cover Lewis & close friends about equitably (with Lewis being an obvious name draw) OR for the essays to focus primarily on Lewis and his relationship with various friends. The work is neither.

This volume appears, quite honestly, confused. C.S. Lewis & His Circle naturally focuses much (indeed almost exclusively) on Lewis, but there is a random essay or two about someone who is a friend of Lewis (yet Lewis is not mentioned at all in the essay, save a possible passing reference). Those random essays are quite perplexing, though not necessarily unenjoyable.

That cannot be said for all of the essays. The book is unevenly divided in two sections (Section 1 occupying about 2/3 of the work).

The first is comprised of lectures about the works of Lewis (with a random one on Williams). While some are quite interesting, others are seriously boring. - to the point that I really, really wanted to put the book down and leave an review about how tediously academic is was. I enjoy a good academic work - which this collection did contain some of - but others in this collections are to be dreaded. Some, while not necessarily boring or tedious made claims about Lewis & his writings that I disagreed strongly with. I readily admit that

I am no professional expert in Lewis. I have, however, read a great deal of his writings and have some ideas of my own. It pained me to see some "academic" essays making claims I disagreed with, but that will always happen I suppose.

I must say this first section made me wonder about the claim that the work contained the "best unpublished" lectures the C.S. Lewis Society has hosted. The very hit-and-miss nature of the essays made me seriously wonder if maybe there was a reason these essays had been hitherto unpublished. Perhaps the true "best" essays had already been published.

I did not have those thoughts about the second part of the collection.

Mercifully, the second part of the book is far superior, containing nothing dull or boring. This section of the book is about the man Lewis (with one delightful essay about his brother), containing recollections from those who knew him in various capacities. It's a pity what while this section is only one essay shorter than the first part of the book, the essays are generally shorter in length. As this is the part of the book that shines, it is a shame that it is only a third of the whole.

Because of the widely disparate quality of the essays of the first part (which numerous times made me want to walk away from the work altogether) I cannot give this book a hearty recommendation. That I reserve for the second part of the work, which pulls the book up from the two stars it would otherwise have received (and which the first section deserves). As is, the work hovers between 3 stars and 3.5 stars.

This is certainly not a work I recommend purchasing without first checking out of the library to see if it is of real value to you as an individual or researcher.

I received a complimentary copy of this book in exchange for my honest opinion.

Nicol Legakis says

This book is a brilliant compendium of speeches and essays given at the Oxford CS Lewis Society. For those of you who cannot get enough of CS Lewis, this book will give you deeper insights into the man, his theology, some of his lesser known works, his friendships, and his unique ability to grasp human frailty and beauty.

Oh, and dare I mention that we get further details of the illustrious Inklings?

*I received a free copy of this, via Netgalley, in exchange for an honest review.

Matt Moser says

A charming collection of essays on the life and work of Lewis and his friends. This is not a work of high scholarship; it is a work of friendship and enjoyment. It is an invitation to enter the crowded room of those whose lives have been touched by Lewis, and to say, "What? You too? I thought I was the only one!" This book is a celebration of Lewis, and a truly joyful one at that.

Stuart says

The Oxford University of C. S. Lewis Society is a group founded to discuss the works of C. S. Lewis, including his theology, fiction, and poetry. It is inspired by the Inklings and adopted a lot of their traditions, like retiring to the "Eagle and Child" after most meetings. Members include C. S. Lewis's friends, family, former students, and even his editor/biographer. To make a small sample of these meetings available to the public, Oxford University Press combed through the more than 200 talks given and published a book entitled *C. S. Lewis and his Circle*.

The book is divided into two parts - Essays and Memoirs. The essays focus on philosophy, theology, and literature with the memoirs focusing on memories of both C. S. Lewis and the Inklings. There are some pretty big name contributors in this book including Owen Barfield; Alister McGrath; Rowan Williams; and a personal hero of mine, Metropolitan Kallistos Ware. However, not all the selections were of equal interest to me. Some I had to force myself to get through, but others kept me so engaged that I was sad when they were finished. This is all a matter of personal preference, though. What I find interesting you might find a bore and vice versa.

Anyone who has read my other reviews knows I am a sucker for anything Narnia, so of course I found Chapter Ten: "It All Began with a Picture: The Making of C. S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*" to be the most fascinating. In this essay, Lewis's biographer Walter Hooper references a Lewis quote which goes, "At every tick of the clock, in every inhabited part of the world, an unimaginable richness and variety of 'history' falls off the world into total oblivion." This is the basis for Hooper's essay in which he talks about how so little of Lewis's work on Narnia survived because Lewis destroyed most of it. Thankfully, some of it did escape the trash bin, and Hooper shares with us how the stories came into being, grew, and evolved into the series we know and love.

Overall, this was a worthwhile read and one that will be of interest to C. S. Lewis fans and to a lesser degree, Inklings fans. I have read many books which offer opinions on Lewis and the Inklings, but few of them had contributions from people who actually knew the man. Therefore, it was refreshing to glean some first hand knowledge of the man. As I said earlier, not everything that captured or even kept my attention, but the essays and memories that did made the book worthwhile to me. If you are a serious fan of C. S. Lewis, like me, then you'll definitely want to check this book out.

Casee Marie says

// full review available at [Literary Inklings](#)

Born of Lewis's inspiration, the Oxford C.S. Lewis Society has for decades been an important institution in the continued study of Lewis and his ideas, as well as a tribute to the lives and works of those who shared his intellectual circle. By sustaining the ideas of the Inklings, the society stands as a guide for generations of thinkers whose visions would blossom under such influence.

This year the society released *C.S. Lewis and His Circle*, a new book which adds to the extensive library of publications exploring Lewis's ideas and insights. *C.S. Lewis and His Circle* contains many previously

unpublished talks from influential speakers, giving Lewis enthusiasts a new chance to witness what the study of Lewis is like in the writer's own home, so to speak.

Cassie says

I started this book and read maybe 3 essays/chapters. I just couldn't get excited about reading it. I was expecting something for the average reader; this book is definitely more for the scholar. Twenty years ago, I would've had a completely different experience reading this book as a college student. It just wasn't for me at this time in my life.
