
Preface

LOOKING THROUGH THE CLOAKROOM window I saw, looming over the quad, Elizabeth Tower—the clock tower that houses the bell known as “Big Ben.” I was privileged to be staying overnight in the guest quarters of Westminster Abbey’s Deanery, having played a role earlier that day in the Abbey Institute’s Symposium at St. Margaret’s Church, celebrating the legacy of C. S. Lewis as a Christian apologist.

Alister McGrath and Malcolm Guite gave scintillating presentations on the intellectual and imaginative aspects of Lewis’s apologetics, after which Michael Ward chaired a series of mini-presentations (from William Lane Craig, Michael Ramsden, Jeanette Sears, Judith Wolfe, and myself) and a panel discussion about what contemporary Christian apologetics can learn from Lewis.

All this was topped off by a sumptuous evening meal hosted by the Dean, Dr. John Hall. (Upon seeing the amount of chocolate involved in dessert, Michael Ramsden quipped that everyone at Westminster Abbey “must really love Jesus, because after we eat this we’ll all be meeting him sooner!”)

The following day, Friday 22nd November 2013, the fiftieth anniversary of Lewis’s death, I sat in a choir stall of the Abbey for a service that saw the dedication of a permanent memorial to Lewis in Poets’ Corner (Michael Ward gives more detail about these Westminster commemorations in his interview with Lancia Smith).

It was William Lane Craig who asked if anyone had thought about publishing a book commemorating Lewis on the fiftieth anniversary of his death? We had not, but agreement was quickly secured from various quarters that this was a good idea and I found myself appointed to try getting

such a project off the ground. Michael Ward kindly volunteered to share editorial duties and we approached Wipf & Stock, who promptly said yes.

It became clear that the thing to do was to collect together a written record not only of the Abbey Institute's Symposium, but also of the memorial service, along with some personal reflections upon it from the blogosphere, and to round out the collection with the presentations made at two other events held in November 2013 in honour of C. S. Lewis, at the universities where he worked—namely Oxford and Cambridge.

On Saturday 23rd November 2013, Magdalene College Cambridge held a conference on “Lewis as Critic,” marking his professional career in the field of English Literature. The complete proceedings from that conference are reproduced here, in the order that the lectures were delivered on the day.

On the evening of that same day, Magdalen College Oxford held a celebratory event and dinner. The speakers on that occasion included Rowan Williams (who had travelled across from the Cambridge conference in order to make his third presentation on Lewis in the space of thirty-six hours!) and Alister McGrath, following on from his appearance at the Abbey Symposium. Since Lord Williams and Professor McGrath are already well represented in these pages, we decided not to include their contributions to the Magdalen event. However, we are glad to include that of Walter Hooper, Lewis's editor and biographer. We also include a Lewis-tinged lecture given that same week by William Lane Craig at the Oxford University C. S. Lewis Society.

Altogether, these different contributions present a detailed picture of the way Lewis was commemorated in the United Kingdom on the fiftieth anniversary of his death. Their generic variety—interview, address, panel discussion, homily, article, lecture, personal memoir, poetry—aptly reflects the breadth of Lewis's own output. The numerous fields of expertise represented by our contributors—theology, pastoralia, apologetics, literary criticism, literary history, philosophy, psychology, biography, journalism, music, creative writing—reflects not only the broad sweep of his own interests but also the extraordinarily wide reach of his legacy. Editors of collected volumes like this one often try to impose uniformity on disparate perspectives in order to “theme-atize” their materials. We make no such attempt, but rather consider it a virtue that what follows is so very various. The diversity and colourfulness of these pages deliberately mirrors that of Lewis's own life and work, for as the inscription on his memorial bears witness, he did not just believe in “Christianity” but also in “everything else.”

Michael Ward and I would like to take this opportunity to thank: all our contributors for agreeing to participate in this collection; everyone at the Westminster Abbey Institute, especially its Director Claire Foster-Gilbert and Canon Vernon White; the Dean of Westminster, the Very Revd.

Dr. John Hall, for granting permission to reproduce the Order of Service; Professor Steven A. Beebe for granting permission to reproduce the photograph of C. S. Lewis in the Order of Service; Simone Fryer-Bovair, organiser of the Cambridge Conference, for allowing us to put its proceedings in permanent published form; Essential Secretary Ltd. and Peter Byrom for help in getting a transcription of the Symposium's panel discussion; Robin Parry and his colleagues at Wipf & Stock; and everyone else who generously gave their support in various ways during the process of putting this volume together.

Peter S. Williams¹

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1. Peter S. Williams is Assistant Professor in Worldviews and Communication at Gimlekollen School of Journalism and Communication, NLA University, Norway. He is the author of *A Faithful Guide to Philosophy* (Paternoster, 2013) and *C. S. Lewis vs. the New Atheists* (Paternoster, 2013). He maintains a web presence at www.peterswilliams.com.