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Review of C. S. Lewis' Little Book of Wisdom: Meditations on Faith, Life, Love, and Literature

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C. S. Lewis, *C. S. Lewis' Little Book of Wisdom: Meditations on Faith, Life, Love, and Literature*, compiled by Andrea Kirk Assaf and Kelly Anne Leahy (Charlottesville, Virginia: Hampton Roads Publishing, 2018). 383 pages. \$15.95. ISBN 9781571748454.

As the title suggests, this small book contains nearly four hundred pages of wit and wisdom from C. S. Lewis. The volume is divided up into ten parts covering a range of topics, each section containing thirty to forty quotations specific to the title of that section. Section titles include broad topics such as joy, love, and the Christian journey. Compilers Andrea Kirk Assaf and Kelly Anne Leahy summarize the purpose of this book in the introduction: "In the pages that follow, you will find, dear reader, maps to help you make the same journey as that of Eustace Scrubb" (16). They are, of course, referencing the transformation from a dragon into a changed and softened little boy, which takes place within the Narnia story, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. The editors invite readers to shed their preconceived notions concerning the topics at hand and welcome the wisdom of Lewis that is saturated by the same love and truth one always finds when reading his works.

The first section is entitled "Living a Full Life with Christ" and contains many quotations from *Mere Christianity* and *The Screwtape Letters*. Assaf and Leahy have done a phenomenal job selecting quotations that make the nature of the reading feel like a conversation rather than a lecture. For example, quotations from *Mere Christianity* convey the feeling that Lewis is addressing the reader directly, thus heightening the reader's experience, such as "Look for yourself, and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin, and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in" (31). It is within this first section that one is introduced to several longer quotations, which occupy space on two consecutive pages. However, because the format remains the same for the single-page quotations as well as the double-page quotations, it can easily cause a disjunct in the reading experience. One must read intently and carefully to avoid the slight distraction this may cause.

As the reader continues to the section of the volume entitled "Choosing Joy," another important aspect of Lewis's writing is brought to light: the timelessness of his words. The following quotation is taken from

his sermon “Learning in Wartime”: “Never, in peace or war, commit your virtue or your happiness to the future” (65). Though written in 1939 when the effects of the Second World War were keenly felt, Lewis’s words remain timeless and applicable to any period of time. This is a definite strength of this compilation of writings: the quotations cited reveal a constancy and contemporary relevance that are not bound by time, a rare and special aspect of talent that C. S. Lewis truly had.

When pulling specific quotations from an author’s body of work, it can be easy to focus primarily on taking sections from the two or three of the author’s most popular and well-known pieces. However, another strength of this book is that the quotations provided are from a wide variety of Lewis’s work. To be sure, there are plenty of quotations from popular books such as *Mere Christianity* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*, but there are also many quotes pulled from books and essays that are not as popular outside of the scholarly community. The compilers chose quotations from a wide variety of Lewis’s writing, which spurs the reader to expand her scope of reading to pieces of Lewis she may not be familiar with or would not have otherwise discovered.

Lastly, the final fifteen pages contain resources for the reader that include a complete list of C. S. Lewis’s works, a bibliography, as well as a small section introducing Andrea Kirk Assaf and Kelly Leachy. The most interesting aspect of these final few pages is the inclusion of a few journal pages for readers to jot down or reference their favorite quotations.

This small book, no more than a few inches in length and width, provides the reader with a sampling of Lewis’s diverse works. The sections are well chosen to represent a variety of topics, and the quotations selected are succinct and helpful to gain an understanding of the topic as well as to discover more of Lewis himself. Because this immortalization of Lewis’s wisdom is structured in such a well-organized and accessible way, it is a wonderful resource for both the fan and the scholar of C. S. Lewis.

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