



2015

Brown's "A Life Observed: A Spiritual Biography of C.S. Lewis" (Book Review)

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Recommended Citation

Cox, Debbie (2015) "Brown's "A Life Observed: A Spiritual Biography of C.S. Lewis" (Book Review)," *The Christian Librarian*: Vol. 58: Iss. 2, Article 58.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55221/2572-7478.1293>

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Neo-Pentecostalism, and womanist approaches are all included. His final section in the chapter is “Black Churches and Presidential Politics in the Post-Civil Rights Era.”

Although Floyd-Thomas does an excellent job of expounding black church history in an easily readable way for the lay person and scholar alike, he still concludes that “the historic Black church tradition continues to be shaped by the personal as well as collective experiences of African peoples who maintained spiritual faith in the midst of enslavement and emancipation alike.” He proposes that confronting complicated issues surrounding the history of the African-American church need not negate the fact that the “foundation of this faith remains intact” (p. 142).

A Life Observed: A Spiritual Biography of C. S. Lewis,

by Devin Brown, Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2013. 256 pp. \$16.99.

ISBN 9781587433351

Reviewed by Debbie Cox, Librarian, Grace School of Theology, The Woodlands, TX

One’s first thought on seeing the title of Devin Brown’s work *A Life Observed: A Spiritual Biography of C. S. Lewis* might be that the title does not sound original. Quite correct: the title is a play on the titles of other books including Lewis’ own *A Grief Observed*. However, despite its rather derivative title, Brown’s book takes a refreshing look at the spiritual development of C. S. Lewis. The forward to this book is written by C. S. Lewis’ stepson Douglas Gresham who affirms what could be the most important issue for the reader when he says that the “real Jack [C. S. Lewis] whom I knew walks the pages of this book.”

The author, Devin Brown, who has a voluminous knowledge of works by and about Lewis, manages to write a spiritual biography of only 228 pages, far less than other tomes on the subject of Lewis. One of the pleasures of reading Brown’s book is the writing style. Many people who write well have picked up a good deal of their writing styles by osmosis – by reading well-written books, and what can be noticed almost from page one is that Brown has absorbed a great deal of the C. S. Lewis non-fiction writing technique. The result is that the many Lewis quotations flow beautifully into Brown’s own writing style. In this book, you will never be tempted to skip the quotes!

But what of the word “spiritual” in the title? The reader will not be disappointed here either. The total emphasis of this work is Lewis’ spiritual development from a child to a mature Christian. If the book has any faults, and they are few, it is that Brown quotes a bit overmuch from *Surprised by Joy*, so that a reader who has only recently read that book by Lewis may feel that Brown is a bit repetitive.

If you are a C. S. Lewis aficionado, or if you have merely enjoyed some of his books, this is a biography that is worth your time. If you want to read a short biography of C. S. Lewis that emphasizes Christianity and spiritual growth, this is definitely the book for you.

A Little Book for New Theologians: Why and How to Study Theology,

by Kelly M. Kopic. Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012. 126 pp. \$8.00.

ISBN 9780830839759

Reviewed by Brad Doerksen, Library Director, Briercrest College & Seminary, Carleton Place, SK

Kelly Kopic from Covenant College has written a handy little guidebook for students embarking on the journey of formal theological study. Written in the spirit of classics such as Thielcke’s *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, this brief guide seeks to set out not the substance of theology but the way its study should be approached and practiced. This “little book” is divided into two sections; the first sets out reasons why the study of theology is important and the second, larger section outlines characteristics of the faithful theologian. There is nothing in this work that most evangelical Protestants will find controversial or problematic. Kopic does well to move beyond just such topics as the relationship between faith and reason, prayer and study, and the humble posture of the theologian. He also engages such matters as the need for faithful theology to be rooted in the church and a faithfully practicing community that seeks justice for all and has a living faith. As such, the book is balanced and holistic in its approach and would make for a great assigned text for introductory theology courses at colleges and seminaries.

Throughout the book, numerous short quotations are inserted as text boxes. While these provide additional tidbits to support and enlighten the discussion, their insertion into the middle of paragraphs and even breaking sentences in half can interrupt the flow of the reader. Despite this potentially distracting feature, the work as a whole should make for a very helpful resource to both students beginning the formal study of theology as well as everyday Christians in the pew who wish to take the theological nature of Christian practice seriously.