



Marion E. Wade Center Friends of the Wade

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A Lost Lewis Letter Donated to the Wade

Imagine sorting through a box of books given to you by a relative who has passed on. You pick out a book that you would like to read and notice a folded, tattered letter sticking out between two pages. As you open it, you see the letter is handwritten, with “Magdalene College, Cambridge” in one corner, along with a date, 27 October 1962. When you flip over the letter, you see the handwritten signature “C. S. Lewis.”

This is precisely what happened to David (“Dave”) and Lillian (“Lil”) Rea of Florida in 2006. When Dave’s Aunt Mary Alice moved into a retirement home in Indiana, she gave several boxes of books to the Reas. After Mary Alice’s passing, the Reas were sorting through the boxes. Lil picked up Karen Armstrong’s *A History of God* and saw a handwritten note tucked inside. It was a letter from Lewis to one “Mr. Gardiner,” who remains to be identified.

The Reas treasured and enjoyed this letter for over a decade. Then in November 2020, Dave read a column in the *Wall Street Journal* by Lewis scholar Dr. Joseph Loconte titled “Preserving the Legacy of C. S. Lewis.” It was a tribute to Lewis’s private secretary and literary executor, Walter Hooper, who died on December 7, 2020, after a

lifetime of service, first to Lewis himself and later to his literary estate.

After reading Dr. Loconte’s article, the Reas decided

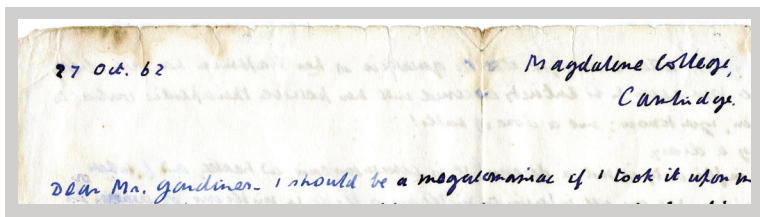
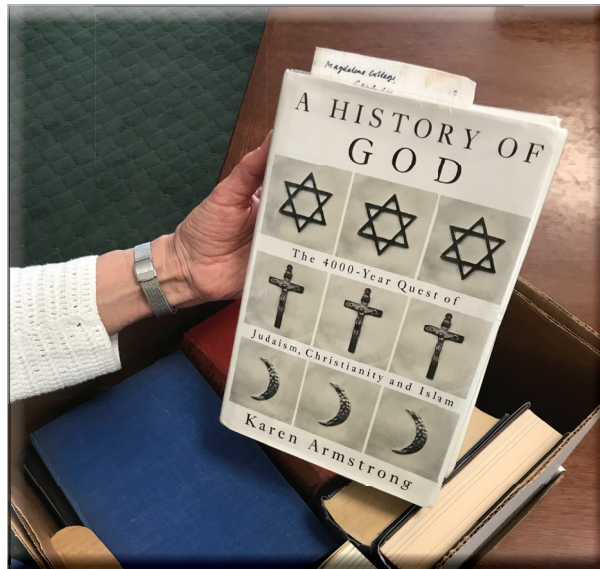
they should find an appropriate repository for the Lewis letter they possessed. When they wrote to Loconte, he recommended three possible collections for Lewisiana. The Reas chose the Wade Center, because, as Dave explained, “it gives the best access to both the public and to scholars.”

This letter to the mysterious “Mr. Gardiner” is especially interesting because of its contents. Apparently, Gardiner had written to Lewis asking for advice on marriage. He was wondering, in part, if his fiancée was a woman that other men would find attractive.

Lewis replied sternly, even starchy, asking if Mr. Gardiner had considered things from his fiancée’s point of view. His full response is very characteristic of Lewis: a thoughtful reply to a letter from someone he had never met, offering candid advice in order to help those seeking insight.

The Wade Center staff are extremely grateful to the Reas for generously donating this significant letter to our collection. We are hoping to publish the full contents in our next issue of *VII*, our annual academic journal, along with an article about C. S. Lewis as Counselor.

As his note demonstrates, Lewis was not just interested in his own career as a scholar or popular author. He also sincerely wanted to use his gifts to provide Christian guidance to individuals who reached out to him in need of spiritual advice, even those he did not know. W



CLYDE S. KILBY:

The following abridged piece was originally written as the Fall 2020 devotional for members of the Wheaton College Blanchard Society, an honorary group of people who have remembered the College in their estate plans.

DIRECT FROM THE DIRECTORS

Crystal and David C. Downing

This year Wheaton College instituted small-group chapel sessions on Wednesdays called “Life Together Groups.” Some groups use a liturgy of Scripture reading and prayer provided by the Chaplain’s Office, while others customize their sessions around a particular topic or author.

Crystal and I volunteered to lead Life Together Groups (LTGs) this semester, and Wade Archivist Laura Schmidt is participating in a group as well with students from the Wheaton College Tolkien Society. Crystal is using excerpts from Dorothy L. Sayers in her LTG, especially apt during Lent and Easter week as Sayers wrote a famous cycle of plays about the life of Christ called *The Man Born to Be King*.

In my LTG, I am having students read excerpts from letters by C. S. Lewis, focusing on passages where Lewis offers spiritual advice. The students especially enjoyed our discussion one week on Lewis’s aphorism, “You can’t keep temptations from knocking at your door. But you mustn’t invite them in for tea.”

Laura’s LTG is focusing on the topic, “What it means to be in Fellowship.” The students take turns leading the discussion each week, often citing passages from J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis. Conversation often leads to sharing examples of friendship, forgiveness and other spiritual milestones in the lives of the group members. Laura notes that “providing encouragement and opportunity for prayer support in this stressful season is a key way these groups can be life-giving.”

Indeed, it is a privilege and blessing that the authors we study at the Wade Center can provide such valuable resources for ministry to Wheaton students.

For those who never had the privilege of knowing Dr. Clyde S. Kilby, this is how we described just a few of his contributions on a plaque in our Kilby Reading Room at the Wade Center:

Clyde S. Kilby . . . was the founder and first curator of the Marion E. Wade Collection. Dr. Kilby’s career in the world of literature was a distinguished one. As Chairman of the Wheaton College Department of English, he began the Annual Writing and Literature Conference in 1956. . . . His greatest legacy, however, can be seen in what is now the Marion E. Wade Center. An internationally recognized research library and archive, this center is a tribute to Dr. Kilby’s vision and his love for the seven Wade Center authors. . . . Together, Clyde and Martha Kilby challenged generations of Wheaton students and others to seek the world of the imagination with all their heart and mind.

Dr. Kilby’s deep love for literature as well as for his students was an engaging combination that drew many to his classroom. But it was his unique ability to see the extraordinary in the ordinary that made such a great difference in how these students began to engage with the life around them. In brief, Dr. Kilby taught them not only to see the goodness of God’s created world – including the simplest, most ordinary things that make up our daily lives – but, significantly, to be truly grateful for these divine gifts as well.

How did Dr. Kilby accomplish this? In large part, through introducing his students, as well as others, to writings that had spoken to him. I remember him often walking through the door of the Wade Center, his eyes bright with excitement: “Listen to this, listen to this,” he would urge, and with the air of a monarch

bestowing great treasure, he would begin to read aloud some newly discovered passage. One of the writers that he often quoted was Wade author G.K. Chesterton who, like Dr. Kilby, reveled in the simple everyday aspects of life and wrote often about



Dr. Clyde S. Kilby, circa 1970

Rejoicing in the Ordinary

by Marjorie Lamp Mead, Associate Director

the importance of wonder. For example, Chesterton declared: “We should always endeavor to wonder at the permanent thing, not at the mere exception. We should be startled by the sun, and not by the eclipse. We should wonder less at the earthquake, and wonder more at the earth.” In this, Chesterton provides a word of caution for our own times, when fascination with the novel and flashy blinds people to the more enduring value of familiar things.

C.S. Lewis wholeheartedly shared Chesterton’s belief in the value of the ordinary, just as he understood that familiarity often prevents us from seeing the importance of our everyday surroundings. To this point, Lewis wrote that myth (a type of story that he loved) “. . . takes all the things we know and restores to them the rich significance which has been hidden by ‘the veil of familiarity’ . . . If you are tired of the real landscape, look at it in a mirror. By putting bread, gold, horse, apple, or the very roads into a myth, we do not retreat from reality: we rediscover it.”

What Lewis is talking about here is not the glorious experience of standing in awe before a breathtaking sunset or even rejoicing in a spectacular vista as seen from a mountain peak, but rather the ability to be able to perceive significance in the ordinary. This is something Dr. Kilby understood well. For, unlike most who gravitate primarily to the grand and the remarkable, he was capable of experiencing great enjoyment and wonder

from those aspects of the creation that others too often overlooked. Thus, not only did Dr. Kilby celebrate the exquisite loveliness of a delicate iris, but he also delighted just as exuberantly in the fragile beauty of the most “ordinary” dandelion. Indeed, in his eyes, the scorned and under-appreciated dandelion became a thing of splendor, a lovely gift to be enjoyed for its

uniqueness rather than a weed to be tossed aside.

One of Dr. Kilby’s great talents was that he inevitably drew people to him who loved the same things he did. But, just as importantly, he also succeeded in awakening countless

others to the transcendent beauty surrounding them, a beauty which they had previously missed. In sharing this passionate love for the glories of this world, wherever they may be found (whether in books, nature, people or even the simple things of daily life), Dr. Kilby never failed to acknowledge his everlasting gratitude to the source of these good gifts – God, himself.

It is a way of life that C.S. Lewis described thus: “I have tried . . . to make every pleasure into a channel of adoration. I don’t mean simply by giving thanks for it. One must of course give thanks, but I mean something different. . . . There need be no question of thanks or praise as a separate event, something done afterwards. To experience the tiny theophany is itself to adore.”

Clyde S. Kilby knew what it was to look around him, to

notice and to receive – and then, most of all, to worship, with genuine adoration, the divine Giver of all good gifts. To our eternal gain, he taught so many of us to see and adore also – whatever our current life circumstances may be. Hopefully, one of the unintended benefits of our living through these days of COVID challenges will be that we, too, will have learned to value the simple, everyday things of our life as we respond with hearts full of gratitude and praise for the good gifts that God has given us. W



the author with Dr. Kilby, 1978



Announcing “The Marion E. Wade Collection” in 1974 (L to R): Ken Hansen, H. LeRoy “Pat” Patterson, Hudson Armerding, Lillian Wade, Ken Wessner, Clyde Kilby, Deborah Wade, Mary Wade

Remembering Mary Wade and Her Legacy

Mary L. Wade was born April 30, 1923, in Chicago to Marion and Lillian Wade. Her brother James Wade was born five years later in 1928. Mary delighted in her family, which includes her three daughters (Sallie, Betty, and Susan) and one son (Jack) as well as her eight grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren.

She died peacefully and unexpectedly on December 27, 2020, at age 97.

Mary worked for a number of years with her father Marion Wade at Service-Master, the company he founded in 1947.

She was also a talented interior designer and used those skills to create beautiful spaces for many ministries, including the Wade Center.

First and foremost, however, Mary was a person of deep faith who was always ready to help those in need. A caring friend to countless individuals, she unfailingly brought meals, provided rides, visited those who were ill, and abundantly shared her delicious cookies.

A member of the Wade Board

for many years, Mary was also the primary donor for the Wade Center building, which enabled our move in 2001 from the second floor of Buswell Library to a beautiful English Cotswold-style building dedicated solely to the work of the Wade. This generous and far-sighted gift dramatically strengthened and extended the outreach of the Wade Center.



As Wheaton College Provost Karen Lee noted with gratitude: “Mary’s vision made the Wade Center a special place for researchers, scholars, faculty, students, visitors, and tourists over the decades.” Indeed, all

of those who have researched or visited the Wade Center, since the time when it was first named for Marion Wade in 1973, have benefited greatly from Mary Wade’s generosity as well as her desire to share the writings of our seven authors with others.

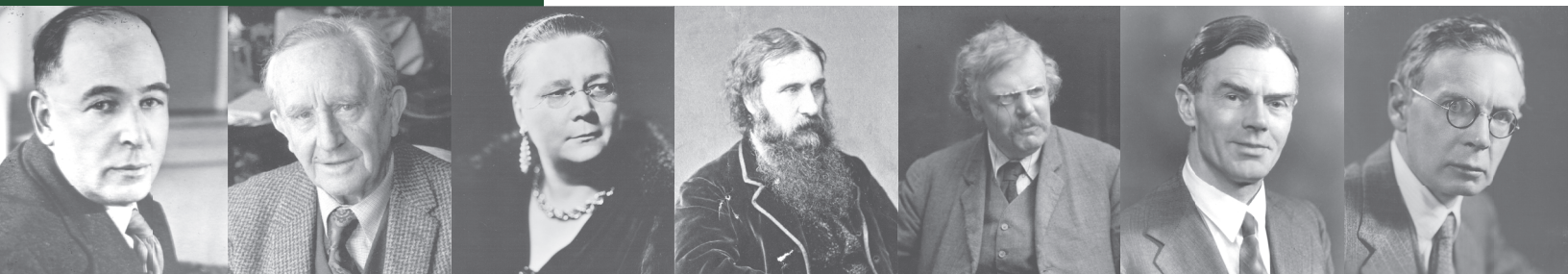
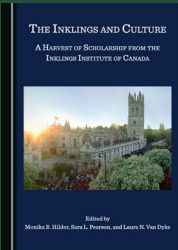
We are grateful to the family of Mary Wade for designating gifts made in her memory to the Wade Center. If you would like to celebrate Mary and the important role she played in the history of the Wade, please see the enclosed card. **W**

book talk

The subtitle of the 2020 book, *The Inklings and Culture: A Harvest of Scholarship from the Inkling Institute of Canada*,

alludes to a harvest planted primarily by Canadian authors. However, editors Monika B. Hilder, Sara L. Pearson, and Laura N. Van Dyke enriched their crop with work from around the globe, including essays from David and Crystal Downing. While David explores C. S. Lewis’s fascination with journeys to the underworld, Crystal discusses the different ways Lewis and Dorothy L. Sayers responded to influential theologian Reinhold Niebuhr.

Included in the collection is a piece by Hannah Hempstead, a former student worker at the Wade. Upon learning that Hannah was studying Sayers while a Wheaton graduate student, Crystal suggested she submit an essay to the Canadian editors. Not only did Crystal and Hannah have fun emailing Sayers quotations back and forth, but Hannah helped fulfill an important Downing goal: to raise up a new generation of Wade scholars.



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