



Friends of the Wade

The Marion E. Wade Center Wheaton College

An Advent Reflection: "Lazy With the Love of Good"

I owe a great deal to G.K. Chesterton. He helped heal me from a nasty case of cynicism, and he managed to do it with six little words that burst off the page and into my imagination; words that were full of a wealth of new meanings and possibilities. I first encountered them in December 1995. The phrase comes at the end of the middle stanza of Chesterton's poem "The Truce of Christmas."

The idle humble hill and wood
Are bowed upon the sacred birth,
And for one little hour the earth
Is lazy with the love of good—

"*Lazy with the love of good.*" It is a phrase both simple and elegant. With an ease that may cause the reader to miss the significance, Chesterton transforms our notion of a vice into a virtue, turning lazy into a posture supremely suited to the good.

Chesterton's lazy is a virtue for at least two reasons. First, it guards the integrity of the good. That is, it recognizes that the good is worthy of our undivided attention or involvement. It carries with it the idea of being able to give oneself to something or someone for its or their own sake, without thought of utility. Second, it denotes freedom. It calls attention to the human capacity to bring our entire attention and focus to the present—the freedom of an undistracted moment, a time of complete attentiveness—to be lazy with my children, my wife, my friends, my work, my world. With this turn of phrase, Chesterton captured my imagination, communicating a

sense of pure pleasure and delight—unrestrained and undistracted. It was also an experience of longing for the days of small things, the days of contentment.

In my childhood I certainly knew this laziness and experienced it often. But childhood is short-lived, and the call to grow up soon followed. Like every other child, I wanted to grow up. And yet I knew that things would never be the same and that by moving up I was losing something vital to what it means to be human. Oh, but the longing remained, buried under a hundred-and-one things to do, to be, to achieve, to acquire, to be accomplished.

Today all too few, I fear, are able to enter into and share in the experience Chesterton's words seek to convey. This is due, in part, to the kind of world in which we live, or more particularly to the culture we contend with each day. It is a driven world, at times insanely so. It is a world of people—people like us—caught up in a desperate attempt to make something of ourselves. In this world,



A young G.K. Chesterton.

The Marion E. Wade Collection

"It might reasonably be maintained that the true object of all human life is play. Earth is a task garden; heaven is a playground."

— G.K. Chesterton



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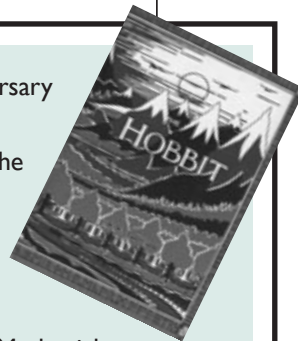
At the C.S. Lewis Festival in Petoskey, Michigan this fall, Mickey Maudlin, senior vice president and executive editor at HarperCollins, San Francisco, observed that although Lewis died fifty years ago, “he has sold in the past ten years more books than any other ten-year period his books have been available. That is well over fifty million volumes.” He went on to say that most people do not understand how unusual this is—“What other deceased authors sell so well, especially when it comes to nonfiction?” C.S. Lewis not only continues to be popular, he is, according to Maudlin, a literary “phenomenon.” But Lewis is not the only Wade Center author garnering attention these days. In December, the first of three films of Peter Jackson’s adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* will be released. Already the publishing floodgates are opening, spilling forth a host of related books. And there is more. The recent stage productions of *Shaw versus Chesterton*, *Freud’s Last Session*, and *The Screwtape Letters* have all received critical acclaim and played to enthusiastic audiences. Clearly there is an enduring—even growing—hunger for the wise and winsome words of these remarkable authors. We all have reason to be encouraged. Thank you for partnering with us; we invite your continued support of the Wade’s work to sustain these authors’ import in today’s society.

WISHING YOU JOY AND PEACE THIS CHRISTMAS,



Did You Know?

J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* celebrates its 75th anniversary this year. The anniversary brings a flurry of new publications, and the first of three films based on the book will hit theaters in December. The Wheaton College Tolkien Society, advised by Wade Archivist Laura Schmidt, will celebrate by inviting campus members to a reserved screening of the movie on opening day. At the Wade, Office Assistant Shawn Mrakovich has crafted a new museum display in honor of *The Hobbit*. Come visit this impressive tribute to Tolkien’s beloved novel! **W**



“Lazy With the Love of Good”

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ideas of lazy and the love of the good rarely find a place to exist, let alone flourish. Like Jesus calming the storm, Chesterton’s idea of lazy speaks peace into this madness.

But Chesterton points us to more: to be lazy with love, and more particularly the love of the good. Chesterton believed that humans have the tendency, especially where love is concerned, to celebrate the idea or ideal, but despise the experience. Few things have been elevated and celebrated by the human community as much as love; and yet human history demonstrates how elusive a thing real love is, how very difficult it is to sustain. What Chesterton is advocating is the wonderful skill of being lazy with the love of *real* things, not merely their ideal constructs. Good, like love, is not an idea; it is a thing, real and concrete.

Chesterton was not convinced that others shared his opinion that goodness was a real thing. In his novel *Manalive*, he raises the question of whether being perfectly good, holy, and keeping the laws of God in all respects can make a person truly happy and full of joy. Chesterton’s answer was an unqualified yes; in fact he also believed that goodness was the final destiny of every redeemed human soul. He agreed with the apostle Paul, who wrote that real goodness leads to real joy, real peace, and genuine well-being (Phil. 4:8-9).

Do we believe this? Do you, do I, believe that being perfectly good will make us perfectly happy? That is the question Chesterton would have us ask, and ask in a serious way. Why, for example, does the thought of absolute goodness so often leave us yawning? Why does heaven often hold little attraction? Could it be an anemic sense of the good? Scripture would have us understand that a life of goodness on earth and in heaven is nothing more and nothing less than an eternal adventure. We are invited to search out the wonders of this adventure, as well as the unfathomable depths of God, exploring both unencumbered, unrestrained, and undistracted—lazy to the extreme with the love of good. **W**

By Christopher Mitchell

Up Close

Dr. Alister McGrath, C.S. Lewis Biographer

This coming spring heralds the publication of an exciting new book on the life and work of C.S. Lewis, written by Alister McGrath, one of the world's leading Christian theologians and an acclaimed writer and speaker in his own right. His newest work, *C.S. Lewis: A Life*, reveals new insights into Lewis's conversion and his enduring impact on American evangelicals.



Alister McGrath

"2013 marks the 50th anniversary of [Lewis's] death," explains Dr. McGrath, "and I felt that a very appropriate way of marking this occasion was to produce a biography which was rigorously grounded in scholarship on the one hand, and which told the story of his life in a way that was accessible, interesting, and reliable on the other."

That life and Dr. McGrath's own share certain similarities. Both men were born in Belfast and came to faith in God at Oxford University after periods of atheism. Both Dr. McGrath, whose own career largely concerns Christian apologetics, and Lewis defended the Christian faith from intellectual standpoints. "[Lewis's] approach to apologetics, his defense of the reasonableness of faith, and his powerful engagement with the imagination have all been important to my own thought and ministry," says Dr. McGrath.

Dr. McGrath spent two days at the Wade in the fall of 2011 to research Lewis's life, using Reading Room and Archives material, particularly the oral history collection and books from Lewis's library. "[The] Wade is unique," Dr. McGrath says, "bringing together in one location a mass of material about Lewis and his circle. In addition, they have a marvelously informed and helpful staff! . . . I regard the Wade's resources as indispensable to any serious Lewis scholar."

Dr. McGrath's research at the Wade was part of a schedule of study that began with a close reading and annotation of Lewis's complete works, followed by a reading of 250 secondary texts on Lewis and a "ransacking" of historical archives. Such abundant research has enabled Dr. McGrath to write a second book, *The Intellectual World of C. S. Lewis*, to be published by Wiley-Blackwell in 2013. The Wade awarded Dr. McGrath a Clyde S. Kilby research grant in support of his work on both of these books.

On March 20, the Wade and Tyndale House Publishers will host Dr. McGrath for a book release event. Dr. McGrath will speak on his study of Lewis's life and a new assertion about the dating of Lewis's conversion, and reveal photographs from Lewis's life that have rarely, if ever, been seen by the public. *C.S. Lewis: A Life* will be available for purchase and signing that evening. We hope that you will be able to join us in Barrows Auditorium at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 20, 2013, to delight in this new assessment of Lewis's life and work by one of today's finest scholars. **W**

Spotlight on *SEVEN*

Volume 29

Along with highlighting the literary works of our seven authors, *VII: An Anglo-American Literary Review* seeks to provide a window into the world of these writers, depicting what life was like for each and how their experiences affected their writing. In the forthcoming issue, Volume 29, Andrew Lazo questions the historical dating of Lewis's conversion to Theism and considers its implications. Don King explores Lewis's life through love sonnets written by his wife, Joy Davidman—some of which can be read here for the first time. The new volume also features an insightful comparison of Stephen E. Ambrose's *Band of Brothers* with J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, as well as a commentary on the influence of Dante on George Macdonald's *At the Back of the North Wind*. View the complete contents on our website: www.wheaton.edu/wadecenter/Journal-VII. **W**

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Highlights

In the 1920s, Bishop George Bell (then Dean of the Cathedral) began the Canterbury Festival out of a desire to reinvigorate the Church's connection to the dramatic arts. A variety of significant plays was commissioned as part of this effort, including T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* (on the murder of Thomas Becket), and dramas by both Charles Williams and Dorothy L. Sayers. The Wade has recently unveiled an extensive new museum display, designed by Wade Office Assistant Shawn Mrakovich, that highlights the artistic contributions of both Williams and Sayers to the Canterbury Festival.

Along with this new display, a wood carving reminiscent of J.R.R. Tolkien's character Treebeard is once more gracing the walls of the Wade Center. The piece, which was created by Jim Nelson of the Ozark Folk Center in Stone Country, Arkansas, is an engaging

example of American folk art. Though not originally intended to be an "Ent," there is no doubt that it imaginatively evokes the spirit of Tolkien's beloved character. Wheaton College alumna Jeanne Clark (class of '76) discovered the piece and, after recognizing its resemblance, presented it to Wade Center founder Clyde S. Kilby. Treebeard, which has not been on public display since we moved into our current building in 2001, has received a beautiful new frame—courtesy of Shawn Mrakovich's husband, Pete—and has once again become a favorite piece amongst visitors, especially kids. **W**

