

Gary L. Barckert
Study Leave – July 17-26, 2015

Sponsored by the C. S. Lewis Foundation

“The Enduring Legacy of C. S. Lewis”

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This Spring I had been considering registering for the C. S. Lewis Summer Seminar, sponsored by the C. S. Lewis Foundation – Redlands, CA. Our long acquaintance with Stan Mattson (director of the Foundation) and his vision for the Kilns bred a deep interest in studying there. The opportunity to be with Earl was equally important. Miriam's encouragement sealed the deal and I enrolled for the second week with high anticipation.

The faculty for the event was Earl Palmer, pastor emeritus of University Presbyterian Church in Seattle, and Kim Gilnett from Seattle Pacific University. Kim has a long history with the C. S. Lewis Foundation and rich experience in the Oxford / Cambridge area.



I did as much review of past reading as possible and included some previously unread material in order to be prepared.

(Reading List & Study Guide appended)

Below is the theme for the seminar

Title: "The Enduring Legacy of C.S. Lewis"

Themes:

- (1) The Man and his Journey to Faith in Jesus Christ*
- (2) Exploring the Brilliance of the Writer*
- (3) An Apologist for the Christian Faith*
- (4) Broadcast Talks in a Time of War*
- (5) Years at Cambridge*
- (6) A Writer of Letters*
- (7) The Story Teller*

I packed as adequately and lightly as possible. My flight to the UK left Seattle on July 17 at 7:55pm PDT and arrived at Heathrow Airport at 12:25pm Saturday, UK time. Jeff Lincicome (pastor of Sammamish Presbyterian Church) and I were on the same flight. When we arrived by bus from Heathrow to Headington, Oxford around 3pm, we first found our accommodations which, conveniently were next door to each other. I stayed at the Red Mullions Guest House, Jeff at the Dial House.



The Red Mullions Guest House

We were both hungry and walked about 1.5 blocks to the Britannia Pub for an early dinner. We then took the bus into Oxford and explored the streets. It seemed everyone in Oxford had the same idea. Immediately, memories of last summer in Yorkshire flooded my mind as we gazed upon centuries-old buildings.



Downtown Oxford, looking toward Christ Church University

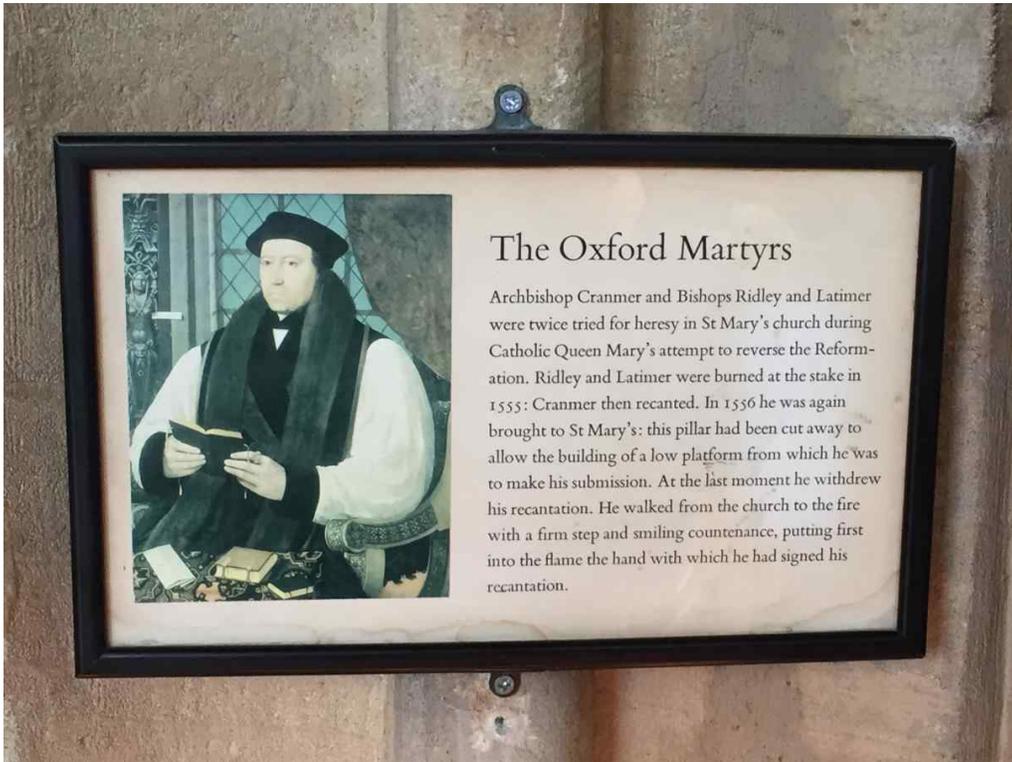
Street musicians are as present in Oxford as in Seattle.



While meandering, Jeff and I happened upon St. Mary the Virgin Church where many of the Reformers were tried for heresy before they were taken outside and burned at the stake. The pulpit in this church (picture on right) is also where C. S. Lewis gave his two famous war-time sermons, "The Weight of Glory" and "Learning in Wartime."



Placards inside the church



Walking toward our accommodations, we came across an athletic field with a wooden fence which prohibited viewing the field, but the sign atop the fence was significant.



It felt good to retire Saturday evening into my room before going to “the Kilns” on Sunday.

Taking a good picture of the Lewis residence is difficult because of the plant growth surrounding the house. In 1930 the Lewis brothers and Mrs. Moore, the house keeper (whose son Paddy, a soldier/buddy of CSL, was killed in WWI), bought the home for £3,300. It was on a 9-acre site. The old brick kilns to the right of the house are long gone.





Those of you familiar with Earl Palmer's personality and delivery style in preaching and teaching will understand when I say: Earl was in vintage form! His knowledge of Lewis and colleagues, along with the historical era, plus Kim Gilnett's experience with the places and events of Lewis' life made the entire time so meaningful. To walk, sit and eat there was a deep privilege.

In the **Sunday class**, Earl drew from material in Lewis' book, An Experience in Criticism, a book about how to read a book. "You must get yourself out of the way and, at the risk of being 'taken in', let it flow over you first." All good writing must have a touchstone of reality and make sense.



The room where we met – the remodeled Lewis car garage

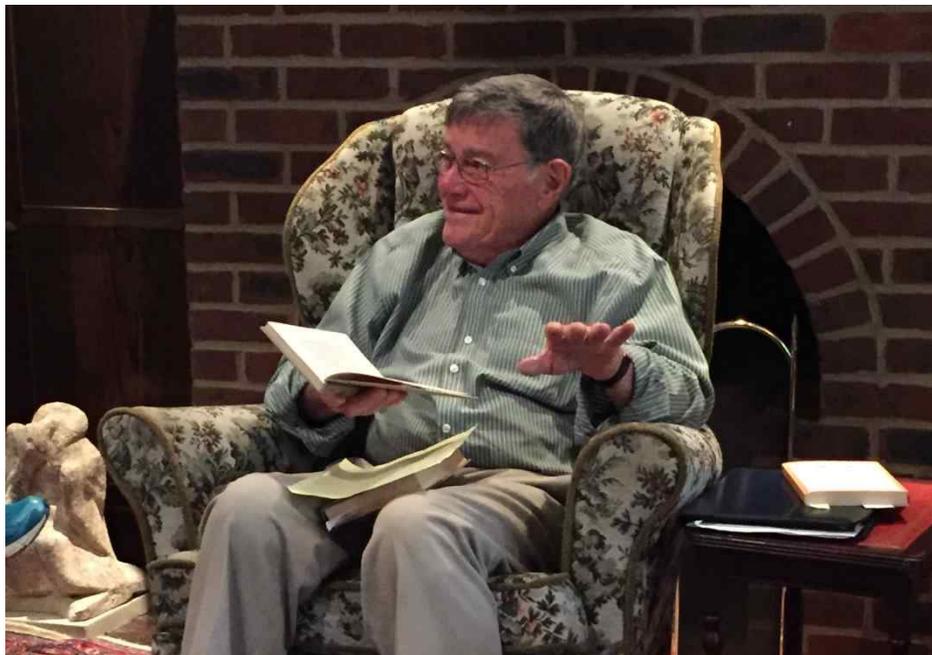
Sunday evening we were anticipating “Evensong” at Holy Trinity Church where the Lewis brothers worshipped for 30 years. It was not to be. Instead a small group of the parishioners was meeting out of doors, which they do in various places six times a year. This evening they were at the vicarage property next to the church, and celebrated a Celtic type service, contemplative in style.



Vicarage property



Holy Trinity Church



Monday's class – the focus was on Lewis, the man and his autobiography, Surprised by Joy. We followed his journey from childhood belief into pessimistic atheism, into a belief in God, and subsequently his personal faith in Jesus – God in human life.

Lewis was highly influenced positively with respect to the meaning of words by his private teacher W. T. Kirkpatrick – aka, “The Great Knock” – a personal teacher of his father and his brother “Warnie”. Kirkpatrick, a Presbyterian turned devout atheist, undoubtedly had deep

influence on Lewis' being an atheist. He also insisted that Lewis know the meaning of each word he used; otherwise he "would have no right to any opinion whatever on the subject."

During his hospital stay following his injury in the battle of Somme in WWI, CSL read G. K. Chesterton's "Essays". Lewis had instant affinity for Chesterton's goodness – "the first chink in the armor of his pessimistic atheism."

Lewis' friendships with Arthur Greeves (from childhood), Owen Barfield, Hugo Dyson, and J. R. R. Tolkien began to break down his pessimism. e.g. All great stories wrestle with good and evil at the cosmic and personal level. The greatest stories contain catastrophe but end with joy; a catastrophe superseded by a eucatastrophe – a catastrophe ending in goodness.

In the late morning, a CSL aficionado, Peter Cousins, led us on a guided walking tour around Headington, showing us where Joy Davidman lived before marrying CSL. We also walked through Bury Knowle Park where there are sculptures commemorating CSL and JRR Tolkien's works.



Following our time with Peter Cousins, we had lunch at The Eagle and Child, a Pub where the "Inklings" met regularly on Tuesday mornings. The painting below hung in the Pub, but Walter Hooper was able to purchase it for £10, and it now hangs in the room where we had class.



Following lunch, we visited the Tolkiens' grave site as well as Joy Davidman's niche, drove to Binsey where there is a small functioning church, and then went to The Perch, one of the many

Pubs CSL and friends visited. Kim read aloud to us from Kenneth Grahame's epic novel, Wind in the Willows. Rested, we then walked about 1.5 miles along the Isis River (a section of the Thames) where rowing is a pronounced sport. But think Wind in the Willows and the animal sub-culture along the river when you reflect on the picture (below). At the end of the walk, we had a savory dinner at The Trout. Our guest during this time was Aidan Mackey, 92-years-old, who is head of the G. K. Chesterton society. He walked the entire 1.5 miles with us – without the use of a cane! What a presence! What humor! Thought for the day: "We cannot predict the influence we will come to have. We must simply live rightly!"



Aidan Mackey



Isis River



The Trout Pub – where we had dinner

Tuesday morning in class we focused on Lewis, the writer. This session was very valuable to me. Lewis' writing for clarity had everything to do with the influence W. T. Kirkpatrick had on him. You must write in clear sentences – just enough, not too much. Make sure the sentence won't mean anything else. Use plain, direct words. Use concrete rather than abstract nouns. Don't use adjectives which tell us how you want us to feel. Describe it so we'll feel it. Don't use words too big for the subject.

C. S. Lewis produced technical writing, adult novels, speeches, poems, letters, children's stories, and the case for Christianity.

Novels: Out of the Silent Planet; Pearlman; Hideous Friend; Till We Have Faces

Case for Christianity: Pilgrim's Regress, Mere Christianity, The Problem of Pain, Screwtape Letters, Miracles, The Great Divorce

Always Lewis is grappling with Good and Evil. The devil is not the equal opposite of God, but a fallen, created being with limited power.

We addressed the kinds of literature Lewis wrote – speeches, poems, letters and children's stories, and also his Christian writings. It was his Christian writings, composed while he was a Fellow at Magdalen College, Oxford that sunk his chances for appointment as Chair at Oxford. Later, Oxford admitted treating him "shabbily." Due to Tolkien's influence, Lewis was appointed Chair at Cambridge.

Interestingly, Lewis burned all the correspondence he received to protect those who corresponded with him. Marvelous that he included children in his correspondence! And why not! He wrote for them in his novels. He wrote to the mother of a boy named Lawrence, who as an adult visited the Kilns and met Kim Gilnett.

Lewis cared deeply about life and about people. He wrote out of this care, and his brilliance led him to address the big issues of life in the small circumstances.

It was time for lunch again; and of course that meant another Pub CSL was known to have frequented – The Plough (pictures below). We had dinner that evening at The White Hart, Joy's favorite!



The Plough, larger room



The Plough, smaller area



The White Hart



The White Hart: outside eating area

Wednesday we left in the morning for Cambridge. Travelling through all of the “roundabouts” is an experience that can be left behind. Just before we arrived in Cambridge, we visited the WWII Maddingley American Cemetery. The British government designated the cemetery as sovereign USA property. I’m so grateful we did not miss this opportunity. We must never forget!! Below are pictures from the cemetery and its unique chapel. There are 3,800 graves.





There are approximately thirty five colleges which comprise Cambridge University. Of course the highlights were Kings College and Magdalene College (where C. S. Lewis was the Chair).

Punting is a “big deal” in Oxford, and no less in Cambridge.



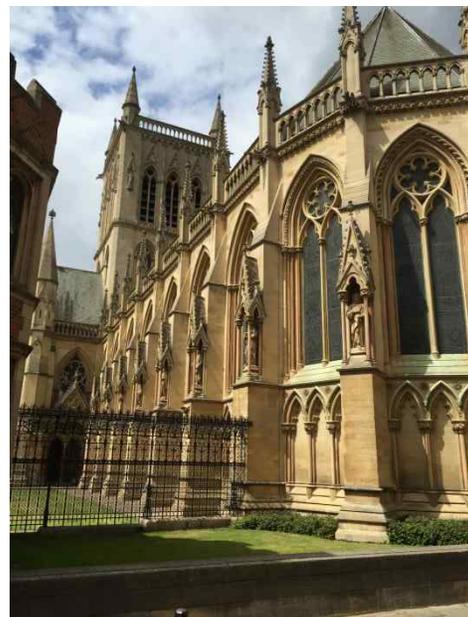
Punting in Cambridge



Lunch at the Eagle



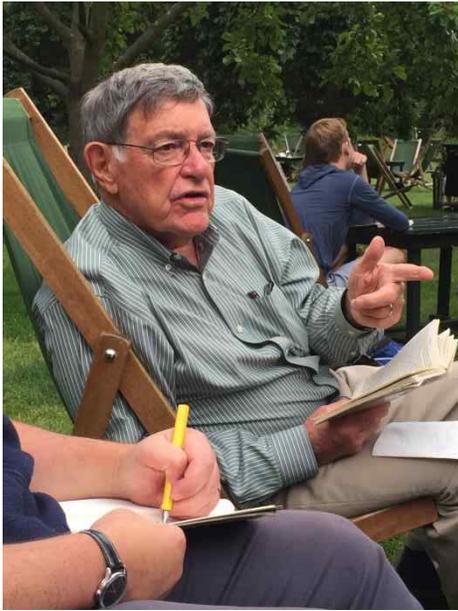
King's College Chapel



St. John's College Chapel

Class today was at “The Orchards”, a spacious outdoor grassy area with lounge chairs and tables. Earl focused on G. K. Chesterton’s influence on CSL. Chesterton said of himself: “I get more help from stories than anything. I felt before I could think.” Earl described CSL’s movement toward faith in Christ as “from the edges to the center.”

“Pessimism is an emotional half-holiday.” Chesterton, [The Everlasting Man](#)



Earl “holding forth on Chesterton” at The Orchards

Thursday morning’s class was a potpourri referring to Essays Presented to Charles Williams, Tolkien, John’s prologue, Sartre, and a variety of Lewis’ writings. Various thoughts more than a theme stayed with me.

*Sartre – “I only trust those who trust in God, and I don’t believe in God.”

*Lewis was very direct in his portrayal of good as personal.

*Evil will eventually implode!

Matthew 21:28 – Parable of two sons: One says he will go work in the field and then doesn’t; the other says “no” and then changes his mind. Jesus is not surprised when we say “no”. The journey takes time and comes sometimes from the negative side to the center. Lewis affirms the radical center is Jesus Christ.

“The route to the center should itself not be the center.”

*When you’re making a point try to state what it is like.

*The doctrine of Jesus’ divinity is not something “stuck on” which you can unstick. You’d unravel everything.

*Equal freedom should be matched by equal obligation.

*Everyone is in mid-story.

Our tour of Magdalen College at Oxford is one we’d looked forward to all week. First we gathered for lunch at the Aldates Pub after browsing at the Aldates Bookstore known for classic volumes of theological and historical works. We connected with Kim Gilnett at Magdalen College and he led us on a tour of the campus. Serendipitously we connected with Mark (last

name?), the chaplain at Magdalen and faculty member – a personal friend of Kim's, who took us into the chapel proper (below).



The commons where faculty and students shared meals

For hundreds of years, Magdalen College has been home to a herd of deer. This one was not afraid of us – on the other side of the fence.



The faculty quarters where CSL lived at Magdalen, Oxford.

This is where C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien and Hugo Dyson had their long evening conversation about the elements of metaphor and myth in their writing compared with the story of Jesus. The exception, Jesus' story is historic and true. They continued conversing on "Addison's Walk" and parted company around 3 am. The following day, riding in the side car of "Warnie's" motorcycle from one side of town to the other, Lewis' journey to faith in Jesus Christ was complete! Lewis was convinced it had everything to do with the previous nights' conversation.



"Addison's Walk"



Lewis' poem (see below)

Following his conversion to Jesus as divine, Lewis composed the following poem.

"What the Bird Said Early in the Year"

I heard in Addison's Walk a bird sing clear:
 This year the summer will come true. This year. This year.
 Winds will not strip the blossom from the apple trees
 This year nor want of rain destroy the peas.
 This year time's nature will no more defeat you,
 Nor all the promised moments in their passing cheat you.
 This time they will not lead you round and back
 To Autumn, one year older by the well-worn track.
 This year, this year, as all these flowers foretell,
 We shall escape the circle and undo the spell.
 Often deceived, yet open once again your heart,
 Quick, quick, quick, quick, the gates are drawn apart.

We returned to the Kilns and had high tea! The warden and his wife, David and Sheila Beckman, showed us warm hospitality throughout and the food they prepared was the best!

On **Friday**, the class emphasis was on Lewis in a time of war. He gave speeches to the RAF. At the outset of Germany's invasion into Poland, Lewis published The Problem of Pain (1939). In 1940 Winston Churchill was made Prime Minister of England. In June 338 thousand soldiers were trapped on the beaches of Dunkirk, Warren Lewis among them. With the "gift" of fog and 693 British ships, the famous miracle of Dunkirk occurred. Churchill's famous speech following the miracle – "Their Finest Hour!" In July, 1940, 684 German planes were shot down over Britain while Britain lost only 140 planes.

The BBC asked CSL to give a series of talks on the radio. They suggested the title: "Right and Wrong as a Clue to the Meaning of the Universe." He gave 29 talks in all, each one 15 minutes. Among them were talks which became Mere Christianity.

Today the rain broke loose and didn't stop. It only varied in intensity. We still toured in the afternoon – to Snowhill Arms (pictured below) where we had lunch, Stow in the Wold, and Bladon where Winston and Clementine Churchill are buried (picture next page).



Snowhill Arms Pub



Burial site of Winston and Clementine Churchill in Bladon at St. Martin's Church

Friday evening, the flavors of the week's experiences were celebrated with a banquet of roast lamb, tasty squash, kale based salad, wine, and a gourmet chocolate dessert to be eaten very slowly. Our guests were Aidan Mackey, whom we had met earlier in the week, and Walter Hooper.



Aidan shared his composition, "C. S. Lewis - an Acrostic." Here it is.

*Christ knew His man before His man knew Him;
Saved and supported one who served Him not
Long years of searching, heart in pathways dim
Endured before this good man found that what
Was seen as gold was nothing but the dross
In life's deep crucible. The new-found light
Showed him that service due to Christ and Cross
Is freedom, is the dawn that follows night.
New-armed with truth, sustained with holy fire
Knight of the book and pen he went his way
Laughter and love in God's cause his desire
In pain and torment steadfast in the fray.
Now came an end. To where love will not cloy
God brought His servant to awaiting Joy.*

Walter Hooper (now 88) is a North Carolina native. As a young man he wrote a letter to CSL, asking if he might come to Oxford and meet with him. CSL wrote back and extended the invitation. Walter thought he might have one visit with CSL. Instead he stayed longer, attended several other events with CSL and became his personal secretary. Later, at CSL's request, Walter and Roger Lancelyn Green teamed up and wrote CSL's authorized biography, published initially in 1974. Walter also wrote (2002) the official revision to the initial C. S. Lewis biography after Roger Lancelyn Green passed away in 1987.

Walter gathered as much of CSL's extant correspondence as possible. Nearly 4,000 letters were compiled into three volumes, each one about three inches thick. I had the privilege of sitting next to Walter at the banquet. Below – L-R – Aidan Mackey, Walter Hooper, Earl Palmer



Saturday morning was our last class, a bit shorter in time, but some good takeaways.

*With respect to the Narnia Chronicles, CSL said, "I decided to write books I always wanted to read."

*One last go around on good and evil

*On The Great Divorce: Hell = infinite, eternal distance from one another

*On fantasy: Fantasy is not dangerous for children. Evil without consequences – this is what's dangerous for children.

*When you commit sin, you begin to belong to what you commit. Eventually you lose your freedom to the evil.

My journal on Saturday morning: *"This morning as we concluded at the Kilns, I was tearful both in my eyes and spirit for the impact and significance of the time here with Earl, Kim and our group. I know it will take time for this significance to reveal its layers of importance and application. I am not merely grateful for having attended and participated; I am deepened and strengthened in ways I do not yet know. The entire time was like taking a long, slow walk in truth with good companions – both enriching and comforting."*

Kim reminded us frequently that from now on we would be a part of the Kilns as the Kilns would be a part of us; we will carry its influence, and our influence will be felt at the end of Lewis Close (the narrow street that takes you in and then sends you out).

Experiencing the Kilns is described well in Earl's poem "I Know a House."

*"I know a house that took me in to send me out.
And I keep finding this house in all the places in my life,
As if it were as itinerant as I.
My first memory of this place I call a house
Is of friendly fragrances; the smell of coffee brewing,
Sometimes of old wooden doors that are out of fashion,
And sometimes the new aroma of children singing.
I came to know the people of this house who took me in to send me out,
Because they taught me here about the owner of the house;
And in time I learned his name.
I always love best of all the main room,
Right in the center of this house,
A room that always seems vast to me
With its grand sounds, solemn and joyous,
And the flood of color on both sunny and cloudy days.
I learned the memory of a royal past because of this house,
And like a waterfall cataract of some mysterious river
That flowed around its open door,
I felt the powerful surprise of hope and resolve.
I know this house, and wherever I go,
I find it either 'settled in' OR 'precariously perched';
Yet always the house that takes me in to send me out."*

READING LIST & STUDY GUIDE

C.S. Lewis Study Week in Oxford 2015 – Session I (July 11-17) Session II (July 19-25)

A Reading Guide for the Study of C.S. Lewis – The Man and Writer by Earl F. Palmer

C.S. Lewis is the Oxford Don who shared his faith and caught us off guard so that more than two generations of men and women, young and old have been encouraged in their own discoveries of Christian faith. This guide for study is designed to recommend a pathway of readings and possibilities for interpersonal dialogue and also individual inquiry into the life story and writings of C.S. Lewis.

I divide this guide into six parts:

1. Books by C.S. Lewis about himself
2. Letters of Lewis
3. Books by Lewis on various themes
4. Speeches of Lewis
5. Books about Lewis that endeavor to track his life story and his significance as a writer and Christian apologist.
6. Media presentations that feature his life and work.

(1) Books by Lewis about himself

The most important introduction to this journey is his 1955 autobiography *Surprised by Joy* (1955). Read also the tender book he wrote after the death of his wife, Joy, *A Grief Observed* (1961).

(2) The letters of C.S. Lewis

The letters and his only personal diary, *All My Road Before Me* (1922-1927) gives to us a remarkable inside look into the way Lewis felt about life, friends, and his own faith journey. The most important resource is the collection edited by Walter Hooper, *Letters of C.S. Lewis: Revised and Enlarged Edition* (1966). Other letters that are helpful are *Letters to an American Lady* (1967); *The Latin Letters* (1968); *Letters to Children* (1985); and the Arthur Grievies letters, *They Stand Together* (1979)

(3) The major books by C.S. Lewis fall into groups:

- Major **technical studies** in his scholarly field. (See the list in the Colin Duriez book, *Tolkien and Lewis: A Gift of Friendship* (2003).
- **Novels and Stories**: See also the reference to the Duriez list above (publication dates from earliest to last provided in the list) including books, *The Space Trilogy*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and *Til We Have Faces*. Begin by reading *The Chronicles of Narnia*, however.
- His books on making **the Case for Christianity** books begin with *the Pilgrim's Regress* (1933). The next very important title is *The Problem of Pain* (1940). Key books that help us to understand that theological perspectives and affirmations of Lewis are *Screwtape Letters* (1942); *Miracles* (1947); *Mere Christianity* (1952); and *Letters to Malcolm Chiefly on Prayer* (1964).

(4) **The Speeches of C.S. Lewis**

These speeches offer a profound insight into his mind and heart. Note especially, *Learning in Wartime* (1939); *Weight of Glory* (1941); and *De Descriptiome Temporum*, his inaugural lecture at Cambridge University, in which he gives his defense of what he called “old Western values.”

(5) **Books about C.S. Lewis are many.** I will list my favorite ones: The best overview of the two great men is in *Tolkien and C.S. Lewis The Gift of Friendship* (2003). I would add *The Inklings* by Humphrey Carpenter (1979); and *Jack* by George Sayer (1988). *C.S. Lewis: Companion and Guide* by Walter Hooper (1996) is the most complete overview of the man and the writer.

(6) **Media Resources** include films that are very useful in the study of Lewis and his influence on culture. See the three films of *The Chronicles of Narnia* and especially *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* with the outstanding additional bonus on Lewis, Tolkien, and Oxford. *Shadowlands* was both a major London and Broadway play and is available in both the BBS version and a US film version. I prefer the latter. *Screwtape Letters* has been presented as a one man show with great success. *The Question of God: C.S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud* (2002) by Armand Nicholi, professor at Harvard University, inspired the play *Freud's Last Session* that was a success Off Broadway. Taproot Theater in Seattle, WA offered a brilliant production of this play as well.

Here are some of my suggestions for **your further reflection**:

- Lewis was able to make friends. In your reading of his story, how would you describe the role that friends played in the faith journey of C.S. Lewis?
- Lewis read widely and he notes the influence of key writers and especially storytellers. Are you surprised by the kinds of writers who were influential in his thinking? Why did Lewis like George McDonald?
- Lewis as a Christian answered every letter he received. What do you learn about Lewis through his letter writing?
- Lewis wrote to a schoolgirl, “Be sure to know the meaning of every word that you use.” What influence did his schoolmaster, Kirkpatrick, have that would lead Lewis to make this statement?
- Lewis wrote that he loved reading G.K. Chesterton because of his humor and because of his goodness. What can you learn from Lewis about the connection between humor and goodness? How does Lewis integrate the themes of humor and goodness into his writing?
- Lewis liked George Hebert because he felt that he “understood people.” Why do you think this model was important to Lewis as a writer himself? What examples can you give to illustrate the importance of “understanding people?”
- Lewis tells of the importance of his friend J.R.R. Tolkien in helping him to understand the meaning of Christ as the Lord who dies on our behalf. In what ways are Lewis and Tolkien soul mates in the faith?
- How might you describe how C.S. Lewis has affected your own life and faith journey?
- Which of Lewis’ books have meant the most to you? Why?