



## Special 50th Anniversary Edition Remembering Our Weekend Celebration



### “50, AT AND ALONG”

#### Friday Evening Address by Founding Member James Como

Thank you for your generosity, Clara – and for so much else.  
(Clara’s introduction before Jim’s talk is on page 2.)

This occasion – this very moment – has great significance for me. And in that light I give thanks to a gracious God for His many blessings, among whom have been old friends departed most recently, Linda Bridges and Marilyn Driscoll. And we greatly miss Bob Merchant, whose recovery we pray for. Each was and remains a pillar of re-assurance: namely, that we do and shall abide. They define us, sustain us, and provide an extraordinary ethos of integrity, range, and, especially, joy. In short, they have helped mold an identity to celebrate.

As we also celebrate those blessings who are among us here: Mary Gehringer, David Kornegay, Bob Trexler, Maggie Goodman, Eric Wurthmann, Bill Dawson, as well as so many others who have made this gathering possible and jubilant: on behalf of all who have enjoyed the Society, past and present, present and absent, from the heart – our thanks to you.

Very well. As you can see, I am presuming upon a certain role, as a founding member of the Society. That is, with respect to this anniversary, I am, apparently, the Spirit of the Society Past, summoned to a reckoning, and I will go about that business in two ways familiar to Lewis readers: first by looking *at*, then by looking *along*. Also – and here the Spirit is not lazy but mindful – I will be brief . . . ahh, well, *relatively*.

### Contents

50, At and Along.....	1
Intro to James Como’s talk .....	2
Michael Ward’s Preliminary Remarks.....	7
50th Anniversary Weekend Report.....	8
“Launcelot” and <i>Perlesvaus</i> .....	16
Future Meetings .....	17
Report of the September Meeting.....	20

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Jim and Alejandra Como, Society Founding Members

Last year Alexandra (also a founding member) and I celebrated our fiftieth wedding anniversary; that was shortly after my retirement from fifty years of college professing. The marriage goes on, of course – it seems we’re hitting our stride – but teaching? It was a very great joy, a blessing that endures, but I had emptied the tank. Now comes *this* fiftieth, also a source of the very deepest satisfaction. So I ask: just what *is* it about 50?

Some answers are ready-at-hand. For example, when one looks at fifty one sees most of an adult lifetime, so those of us who have been here for the duration, or for much of it, have more or less grown up – and into our seniority – with the Society: very nearly a lifetime journey – no small journey, that. Or we can designate our age, bombastically, as *half a century*, which certainly resonates, as though we were in a league with, say, the reign of the Sun King or the run of *Dr. Who* on Brit TV. Or – we can be counter-intuitive, as with our personal age: turning fifty “is no big deal,” notwithstanding the x-rays, bloodwork, and failing depth-perception.

Or we can begin with an obvious question, Who knew? along with its obvious answer, No one. I’ve reminisced about the excitement, charm and good fellowship of those early several meetings, held in living rooms. I can never forget our late entrance into the first meeting in the home of Jack and Elaine Boise: everyone stood, smiling, and I knew indeed that a “secret master of the ceremonies” – as Lewis puts it – was at work, and of course, like the rest of us, I’ve come to know that He does not relent.

I will add this about that first meeting, in fact the first several. No one would have imagined a fiftieth anniversary celebration, or even a first (which in fact we had, modestly).

But neither did anyone believe we were in it for the short term. Instead there was a sense that we were, somehow, though we knew not how, *consequential*. Of course, we said no such thing out loud, even though we were right.

In truth we were too fixed in the present tense – looking along, enjoying – to wonder about the future. We were few, we were making something, certainly, that *might* have some shelf-life, maybe even influence, but mostly we were discovering both Lewis – you cannot imagine now how much there *was* to discover then – and each other. (Decades ago I designated this the ‘you too’ syndrome, as when, on the subway, you saw another rider reading Lewis and mouthed,

continued on page 3

## Introduction to Jim’s Talk by Clara Sarrocco

Fifty years ago Jim and his new bride, Alejandra, had the insight and foresight to start The New York C.S. Lewis Society. Starting a society is difficult but keeping it going for 50 years is monumental.

Walter Hooper, C. S. Lewis’s biographer, secretary, archivist and enhancer of the Lewis legacy nonpareil wrote the following:

“I had a visit from Jim Como, who was on his honeymoon. We met at Keble College. This turned out to be one of the most momentous meetings of my life for Jim Como of New York was a great fan of C.S. Lewis, and he was preparing to do something about it. He told me about the founding of The New York C.S. Lewis Society which was just beginning. I was thrilled, and over the years I was a guest of many of the founders including Jim Como, Eugene McGovern and others. I could not wish for more!”  
(*CSL Bulletin*, April 1972)

If one goes through all of the almost 500 issues of back bulletins – *CSL: The Bulletin of The New York C.S. Lewis Society* – you can see how many meetings Jim has conducted, and how many essays he has written for the Bulletin. For years the July meeting was his – called “From the Floor” – which encouraged people to bring questions, objections and puzzlements about C.S. Lewis.

All this was taking place while Jim was raising a family, teaching rhetoric and public communication at York College (CUNY) since 1968, chairing the department, lecturing in the United States and Great Britain, writing essays too numerous to mention by title for various publications such as *The New Criterion*, *National Review* and *Touchstone*. Jim has written six books, four on Lewis, one on rhetoric and one of short stories. He is also a credentialed foreign journalist who has reported on the political situation and culture of Peru. He has participated in many television documentaries for PBS and Hallmark and has appeared on the Eric Metaxas Show. He appeared on a TV documentary, *The Question of God* with Dr. Armand Nicolai of the Harvard Medical School. He has also taught classes at the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in Manhattan. The talent runs in the family because Jim did a dramatic reading of some of Lewis’s works with his daughter, Alexandra, at The American Bible Society.

Jim hold a PhD from Columbia University and has received many honors and accolades for his teaching and lecturing. This evening he will speak to us on “Fifty At and Along.”

incredulously but knowingly, “you too?” and got a smile and nod in return.)

Looking back I realize we could have folded; in fact once we would have, had not a few determined and capable members – early on, Phyllis Lambert, later Clara, Mary, Joe Barbiero, a few others – risen to the moment. But even then I wondered: If we *did* want to end the Society how would we manage it? We were, and remain, so minimally formal, that surely a critical mass would have appeared at the door the following month no matter the notice!

Before I go on, a word about that minimal formality. We have never had committees or officers, notwithstanding what the *New York Times* reported (after having been told emphatically that “*we do not have a president*”), nor have we ever held elections (as opposed to selections). In fact once, at a conference, the late, great Bruce Edwards elicited from me a friendly rebuke when he referred to us as the most formal of Lewis societies. He must have confused “most formal” with “oldest” and “largest,” which we are and remain.

And influential. The veteran scholar Paul Ford publicly reminded an audience that, but for our guidance, the Southern California C. S. Lewis Society would not have had its relatively easy birth. I wonder if the same was true of another great C. S. Lewis Society, that of Oxford, when Greg Wolfe founded it in 1982, in the face of English ‘polite society’, as I’ve heard it put. Well, we Americans are an *excitable* race, New Yorkers perhaps more excitable than most, and not terribly interested in what ‘polite society’, so-called, will allow.

For we are blessedly immune to condescension. Maybe that is why America was ahead of the curve; indeed, why we *became* the curve. According to Walter Hooper, publishers, reluctant to invest in a declining Lewis market shortly after the master’s death, noticed the Society in its earliest days and took the leap: perhaps not quite cause-and-effect, but maybe rising climate-of-opinion-and-effect?

So we went about our business. Learning and enjoyment were and remain central features of the Society, along with good fellowship. But herein lies a point, taken directly from Lewis’s Law of Inattention. We do not *aim* at either (let alone at any proselytizing: for example, we have never prayed collectively); rather, we aimed and aim *at Lewis* (and, of course, at other related subjects and objects); that is, we look both at and along *Lewis*. Everything else is, so to speak, collateral grace.

Along the way we have been accused – and by

some people who should have known better – of being a cult, as though we never acknowledged Lewisian faults. In fact, the very next February and June meetings after our first meeting we did just that. Since then we have conducted a handful of meetings doing *only* that, with miscellaneous jabs coming along the way.

In the event, the accusation of cultism seems to have died away, not least, I suspect, because the rest of the Lewis world has caught up with *us*. We know this for a very obvious reason. Some will recall Jack Haynes’ Lewis Watch, in which he noted any mentions of Lewis in the press and popular culture.

Now, well, who would bother, and how? such is the semi-diffusion into our culture of Lewisian ideas, apothegms, re-issuings, and adaptations. I recently saw a photo of a ramshackle country inn with the name, *Narnia*, at the roadside – in Slovenia. (Notice, too, that no one – not only here but anywhere -- would take the adjective ‘Lewisian’ to refer to Sinclair!) And what company we have now, with societies, institutes, foundations, websites, and conferences abounding.

Not so by-the-way, it is worth noting that we were born at an unlikely time, those late Sixties. This chronology matters because it drives home a point: like Lewis, *we* – not hippies, or anti-war protestors, or rising liberation movements of all kinds – no, *we* were and remain – more than ever? – the *actual* counter-culture, as Christians – Lewis has preached no less – necessarily are.

Our early years – certainly the first two – were, shall I say, idiosyncratic. In truth, as I look back, it was *we* who were idiosyncratic – and the Bulletins reflect this. We had a Question Box (“Was there a real Malcolm?”), “Is there a source for the name ‘Narnia?’” and many others; noteworthy is the fact the Major Lewis personally answered a number of these); we also had a Quiz Box, a Library, almost from the beginning a reading to open the meeting and a quotation in the Bulletin, both from Lewis, later on “Bits and Pieces” (news and notes about the world of Lewis: this was long before the advent of the internet, of course), many letters (often expressing gratitude as well as disagreements both with Lewis and among members), and no set length, either for meetings or for the Bulletin.

One meeting, on Lewis’s poetry, went on till almost 2 am; at another Bernice Hess reported a treasury deficit of \$16.32, “which was made up,” the Bulletin reports, “by contributions . . . that evening.” We even proposed to collect our own anthology – having the naiveté to communicate the idea to Walter

Hooper and thus to the Major! I will say only that, after a correspondence about copyright law prompted by an alarmed Warnie, we were chastened, and that both Hooper and the Major joined the Society.

The production of those early Bulletins was an adventure that must strike any millennial as Paleolithic. The first several were reproduced on purple ditto, long gobs of it now nearly unintelligible. When I volunteered for my first stint as editor I did not know I would be typing most of it myself, having to be sure it measured precisely to column-width and page size.

That stint was brief; later, for my second, ten-year run we were nearly mechanized. It was still typed, largely remotely by the tireless Madge Mattichak (may she be resting in a Heaven of typeless tranquility), then printed, and soon mass-mailed. It bore little resemblance to the polished product now delivered smoothly by Bob Trexler, who has introduced appealing features of his own, such as Dale Nelson's revealing "Jack and the Bookshelf."

Iffy production values notwithstanding, the early content was impressive. The articles presented at meetings or offered in print – from readers' responses to literary journalism to very fine scholarship – were probative, learned, and not at all trivial. I particularly recall a very early exchange – begun by Dick Shramko – on the composition of the Chronicles: clever, illuminating, daunting in its detail. He was answered by Richard Hodgens, I think, with whom one did *not* want to debate on literary matters (and who, by the way, claimed to see *no* Lewisian personality at all in the fiction!). During this Weekend you will have an opportunity to hear more about our history and growth, for example tomorrow from Gene McGovern, our first formal Bulletin editor, and from Bill Dawson, who has composed the music for this celebration.

Rock solid attendees, notable Lewis familiars, authors of studies on Lewis (many fewer than you might suppose back then), new Lewis books coming by way of the stewardship of Walter – all made for lively discussion. The world was fresh, and how not? *We* were discovering C. S. Lewis! And here I must note a change in the Society that has slightly dismayed me; namely, the decline of the amount of sheer conversation at meetings, which was one the features I had in mind when I mentioned 'idiosyncratic'. Is it the arrangement of chairs? The preponderant custom of paper-reading? The departure from certain other formats, such as forums or panels (with respondents and interlocutors)? I don't know. But as we look

towards our second half-century I suggest the Eldila examine the question.

I recall a conversation with the late wonder-worker Chris Mitchell, then Director of the Wade Center. He noted the waves of Lewis scholarship (we are now, he thought, in the fourth), with each wave a bit inattentive to the achievements of prior waves or in the habit of raising trendy issues of questionable fruitfulness. In scholarship neither tendency is a good thing, but *at meetings* both may be engaging: primary reasons for meeting in the first place. It keeps us, and Lewis, fresh. After all, every wave – if not of scholarship then certainly of discovery – feels like the first!

For example, *I* feel a *frisson* of recognition and satisfaction every time readers of *Till We Have Faces* report their delight in, and admiration for, the book Lewis considered his best, vindicating my forty-year struggle in the wilderness. I will presume to go further. I suggest that we mount a debate. The proposition? Resolved, that *Till We Have Faces* is the greatest novel in English of the Twentieth Century. And, yes, I say that with a straight face! Fr. Ward: would you take the First Affirmative on that?

Often someone would ask, "what would Lewis think?" (though not lately, I note). For example, some members did ask, What would he think of the Society? Henry Noel, our founding member, had a simple and succinct answer: "doesn't matter – he's dead." Facile, maybe, but not without its own logic. Certainly some have tried to match their thinking to Lewis's; that is, they have checked their brains at the door. Worse are those who try to match Lewis's thinking to their own – their own politics, denominations, or philosophical schools. Worst are those who try to dismiss him for this or that infraction or – and here I must chuckle – his datedness. ("What does Lewis have to offer my generation?" a young chap once asked me. "Hope, young man. Or isn't that enough . . .") Lewis, really, is *not* a tame apologist, nor even close.

It is tempting, very tempting, to broaden the boulevard of time by recalling certain members, not only those who were central to the creation and survival of the Society but others who were as important for their faithfulness, participation, and sometimes for their anonymous contributions to our well-being and identity. That is another answer to the question about 50: there is much history, and history is people, including thousands spread hither and yon who have been members.

History is also, in our case, some six hundred meetings, and how various they have been! – various, and not all, I must say, of equal success. Lewis and Management? Just didn't work. Here our conversations about many meetings, I'm sure, would widen that slipstream of time. Which moves me from Looking At to Looking Along our double helix of the Society and Lewis himself. Of course, from this perspective the view becomes personal.

I see three features of Lewis that my experience in our Society has amplified for me. These are 1/ Lewis's rhetoric, or, better, I think, Lewisian rhetorics, perhaps better called his 'voices'; 2/ the concept and experience of friendship; and, far more important than any, 3/ what I have learned to call the Oil of Gladness.

It is tempting to describe the many Lewisian voices that appeal to us, from the Narnian, to the broadcaster, to the scholar, and on to the public intellectual, preacher, faithful correspondent and the poet, with so many other stops there amongst, almost all at the very highest level of literary achievement. More narrowly I can declare that, for his "dialectical obstetrics," as Barfield called his style of argument, Lewis became my own Great Knock. Thus, one of my favorite Lewises is the take-no-prisoners book reviewer.

The Society has met all of these Lewises, together demonstrating a rare richness of rhetorical genius: adjustments of style and voice – both micro and macro – to genre, topic, purpose and audience but never betraying his unalloyed integrity. And we have seen that he knew and never forgot the lesson taught by St. James while cautioning preachers and teachers, namely, that "the tongue is also a fire."

As many Lewises as we encounter, there seem to be exponentially more Lewis friends. As the years rolled along, discovering them was almost as satisfying to me – to us – as to Lewis. 'Friend': the very word is related to the Norse 'Frigg', the goddess of love. We know that Lewis means friends to "stand together," beholding not each other but some common interest, so that *philia* is a disinterested love – or, as Lewis would put it, not really *compelled*; it is unencumbered.

Have we not come to love Greeves, Sayers, Barfield, Tolkien, and, of course, the Major? And Ruth Pitter and Charles Williams? And Bede Griffiths and Roger Green, and Sister Penelope? And Havard, Hamilton-Jenkin, Harwood, Jean Wakeman, and Father Calabria? To me they seem part of *my* circle, and Lewis's relationship with each has taught

me something about friendship. That is, not only has Lewis helped us look *at* this love in his great book on loves but also *along* it, in his fictions – consider St. Anne's – and, especially, in his life.

To put a point on it, Lewis lived Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books 8, 9, and 10. (By the way, at an early meeting we heard that Lewis referred more frequently to Aristotle than to any source other than scripture, but I've never checked that claim.) He understood friendship not only as an activity but as an *ethical* activity. That is, of Aristotle's three species of friendships – those of pleasure (I like his stories), utility (one must give to get), and goodness (a similarity of virtue) – he practiced the last, which Aristotle regards as the only *complete* friendship. The Philosopher writes, "[decent people] are in concord with themselves and with each other, since they are practically of the same mind; for their wishes are stable, not flowing . . . like a tidal strait." Can we *not* think of the Inklings?

There is more, very much more, that can be said about Lewis, friendship, his friendships, *and* about their conversations, starting with Lewis's letter to Arthur Greeves in December of 1935: "Friendship is the greatest of worldly goods. . . . the chief happiness of life. If I had to give a piece of advice . . . I should say, 'sacrifice almost everything to live where you can be near your friends.'" (He might have been reading Epicurus: that old hedonist agreed absolutely.)

Two scriptural passages seem to me to epitomize Lewis's apologetic project. The first is from Psalm 45: "You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness." Here we have the central theme of Lewis's Christian project, I am convinced, expressed most explicitly in the great sermon "The Weight of Glory" but in fact appearing all over the place. Certainly it appears where we expect it, for example in the Canticle of the Great Dance in *Perelandra*, or at the end of *Malcolm*. But more telling are its appearances where one does *not* expect it: in the atheist-era poetry, or in *Miracles*, or at the end – in of all places – *The Problem of Pain*, in that final chapter tellingly called 'Heaven'.

Who now would not be tempted to quote? But I desist: I'm sure you would be mouthing the words along with my recitation of them aloud. Instead I will remind us all that, from his earliest childhood, Heaven summoned Lewis and never stopped – in friendships, in nature, in scripture and tradition, in arts and letters,

in the mystics and in myths. And it is Lewis who has taught us to read the signs from all these sources, to acknowledge the *Sehnsucht* they arouse, and to understand its origin. Thus do his *works* inspire awe and desire. Through Lewis holiness itself beckons from Heaven. After all, is not Joy its serious business?

Thus this second scriptural passage, I think, best summarizes Lewis's achievement. It is from Romans 15: "May the God of hope bring you such joy and peace in your faith that the power of the Holy Spirit will remove all bounds to hope."

There, then, are three Lewisian features – voice, friendship, and holiness – that have brought a leavened maturity to the thinking, beliefs and conviction of this Spirit of the Society Past as he has "looked along." And this: the further we look into Lewis the more we discern an unfathomable genius of enormous amplitude and preternatural perspective.

Now I look forward to hearing from our spirits of the Present and Future, Michael and Josiah respectively, and from Abigail, whom I happen to know has a tale or two to tell, and to listening to the composition of our old friend, the superb musician and composer Bill Dawson (whose generousities go far beyond his music). How rewarding it is to enjoy him again fifty years after that momentous first movement. Bill, who could have known?

For someone who has been around a long time, some established customs already two decades old can seem . . . new. (Well, these days most people under the age of forty look to me like twenty-year-olds.) I mean From the Floor, the annual reading from a play-cycle by Dorothy L. Sayers, the singing of carols prior to the December meeting to the accompaniment of David on the guitar. Of course, I know these

are *not* new, but everyone should know that self-introductions, first-time attendees mentioning a first or favorite Lewis work, our Eldila choosing their own successors and more or less guiding the whole show, final refreshments – these go back to the beginning, as do actual by-laws. And I find this – as I routinely find tradition and continuity – enormously comforting. The secret Master of the Ceremonies abides.

In precisely that light, and before closing, I must remind us of seven people, all crucial to our existence, for whose souls I ask prayers. These are Jack and Elaine Boise and Phyllis and Byron Lambert, of whom you've heard, and Jerry Daniels, Henry Noel, and the very godmother of our society, Hope Kirkpatrick, each deserving a eulogy of her and his own.

Finally, I give the last word not to Lewis but to Gene McGovern. It is from his "Our Need for Such a Guide," which was prescient forty years ago and remains relevant now – perhaps more counter-culturally so than ever. After entertaining the questions Why Lewis? and Why a Society? Gene concludes, in the spirit of St. James: "So problems and issues of the kind Lewis addressed will not grow fewer. . . [and] his help on those can be obtained from his books. But by learning about the man himself we find that, for this most reliable guide on the subjects that matter most, the center remained unchanged" – that merits repetition, *the center remained unchanged* – Gene continues, "he really did believe what he wrote, and he practiced what he preached. Our need for such a guide will not diminish in the years ahead."

And so, in that spirit, let us jubilate – thus to begin our *next* fifty years. After all, we, too, seem to be hitting our stride.

# # #



## Saturday Evening Preliminary Remarks by Michael Ward

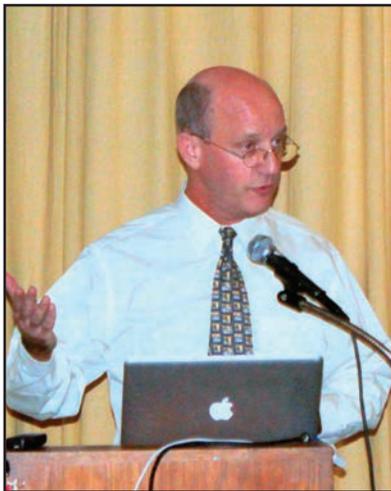
Thank you, Maggie. Thank you, Peter and Lottie Frein for driving me here from Princeton; we battled the Friday afternoon traffic and won through in the end! And thank you, New York C.S. Lewis Society, for the invitation to give this keynote address on your 50th anniversary weekend.

I should have had a keen interest in the proceedings of this weekend in any case, but to be asked to participate in this way is a special honour and privilege. And I ought to begin my remarks by simply and straightforwardly congratulating the Society for all its many achievements over the last half century.

You are the oldest Lewis Society in the world. You were the first to see the value in meeting together to discuss this man's extraordinary body of work. You blazed the trail and thereby put to shame Lewis's own countrymen, for it wasn't until 1982 - a whole thirteen years later - that the Oxford Lewis Society was founded, and even then the prime movers were Americans in Oxford (Greg and Suzanne Wolfe and Walter Hooper chief among them), not native Britons. Surely, a prophet is not without honour, save in his own country! I myself am a relative rarity, even now, among the members of the Oxford Society in not being an American!

The Oxford Society is a university club, which means that it must have a 'Senior Member', as we call it - that is, a Faculty Supervisor, - and I currently hold that position, and so I offer you congratulations not just as a private individual but officially, on behalf of the Oxford group, and also on behalf of our mutual friend, Walter Hooper, who has been the mainstay of the Oxford Society for most of its merely 37 years of history, and who would want me to remember his name to you fondly and warmly on this occasion.

Who knows whether the Oxford Society would ever have begun at all, if the New York Society had not led the way? The American pioneering spirit is usually associated with the move westward across this continent, conquering the wild, wild west. But with regard to C.S. Lewis, you New York pioneers have, as it were, moved eastward, back across the Atlantic, setting a much-needed example to the Mother Country. And given that the Oxford Society has meant so much to me ever since I matriculated as a student there in 1987, and has done so much to inform and inspire my career as a scholar, I thank you for setting that example, as well as congratulating you on reaching your Golden Anniversary. I'm deeply grateful.



Photographs in this issue are by Robert Trexler and Eric Wurthmann with the exception of the Founding Members photograph on page 10 by Chezmin Sheehan

## A Report of the 50th Anniversary Weekend - October 18-20

The celebration of our Society’s 50th anniversary was held on the weekend of October 18-20, 2019, almost 50 years to the day of the first meeting (November 1, 1969). The venue was the Molloy Retreat House in Jamaica Estates, New York. Accessible to public transportation and major airports, attendees traveled from as far away as Romania, Great Britain, Washington (the State, not the Swamp), North Carolina, Kentucky, and Massachusetts. Fighting rush hour traffic on Friday afternoon added to an authentic New York experience.

Mary Gehringer was on hand to give people their room assignments and orientation packets. Her welcoming personality was an apt indication of the hours and days ahead. Mary handed each person registering a piece of paper with a four digit security key code. “You’ll need to enter this code to get back into the building if you plan to be out after hours,” she advised. To which our plenary speaker, Michael Ward, quipped, “Yes, thank you; I’ve really come here to experience the night life.”

Room assignments were on the second and third floors, accessible most conveniently by a large elevator which could accommodate, according the signage, up to ten people. The rooms were plain, but comfortable – bed, desk, chair, sink, and a place to hang your clothes. Shared bathrooms with four or five private toilets and showers were on each floor with women’s facilities on one end of the hallway and men’s on the opposite end.

Our first gathering was for dinner located in the lower level dining room. Circular tables were arranged to accommodate 40 to 50 attendees seated in groups of eight. The Lewis Society tables were marked off by a bright pumpkin in the center of each table. The dining staff served meals cafeteria style and guests



Molloy Retreat House Entrance



Jim Bash, Mary Gehringer, Clara Sarrocco, and Eric & Susan Wurthmann



Guest Bedroom



helped themselves to coffee, tea, and dessert at a separate table.

Following dinner, we gathered on the main floor meeting room to hear from a founding member, Jim Como on the topic “50, At and Along” (printed in this issue). Jim was eloquently introduced by Clara Sarrocco, our Society corresponding secretary for nearly 30 years and the tireless organizer of our anniversary weekend (Clara’s introduction is also in this bulletin). Jim’s reflections, presented in his inimitable style set the mood for a weekend replete with insightful reflection and congenial fellowship. Longtime member Neil Gussman entered the Friday event with unconventional attire. Having biked his way to the retreat house, Neil wore a red, white, and blue helmet and spandex shorts and shirt – looking like a slightly older version of Captain America.

Saturday morning called for a fortifying breakfast in order to make the difficult decisions for two sessions of break-out talks. Between 9-10 am three local Society members made presentations: Margaret Goodman, David Kornegay, and Eric Wurthmann. The 10:30 – 11:30 sessions were offered by James Como, Robert Trexler, and Charlie Starr.



Mr. Tumnus (aka Charlie Starr) making tea



Main Meeting Room



Maggie Goodman on CS Lewis and DL Sayers

Our first plenary speaker, Abigail Santamaria, is a native New Yorker who spent 10 years researching and writing her biography: *Joy: Poet, Seeker, and the Woman who Captivated C.S. Lewis*. When introducing Abigail, Eric Wurthmann inadvertently (or perhaps not?) substituted the word “captured” instead of “captivated” thus suggesting that Joy Davidman “Captured C.S. Lewis”. As we would learn from Abigail’s talk, both words would be appropriate. In her address, “The Polarization of Joy Davidman”, Abigail described how her perspective about Joy changed



Eric Wurthmann introduced Abigail Santamaria



Abigail Santamaria

during her research, and how previous researchers tended either to whitewash Joy’s less attractive personality traits or, alternately, to demonize her. The inaccuracies of earlier biographers added to some difficulties in gathering source material from some of Joy’s relatives who were suspicious of her enterprise. In the follow up question period, Abigail adroitly sidestepped a direct response to what she thought of the accuracy of the recent novel *Becoming Mrs. Lewis*. (It is a novel, after all.)

Clara Sarrocco then presented founding members James Como, William Dawson and Gene McGovern with gifts to memorialize the occasion – crystal paperweights in the shape of an apple (a New York City symbol) with the inscription “In Gratitude”, the person’s name, “Founding Member” with the date and “50th Anniversary”. There was also a “door prize” raffle with names of attendees drawn out of a bag to win one of several prizes. Those “lucky” winners had to accept two caveats - the prizes had to be accepted and they could not be returned. Prizes included 2 packets of the Narnia series of postcards produced by Puffin Press, a scroll of the history of The Eagle and Child (The Bird and Baby) pub dating back to the 17th Century - where the Inklings met, two “unique” T-shirts emblazoned with the our Mr. Tumnus and Lucy Society logo and the name of the Society, and finally a throw pillow with Lewis’s picture on it.

There was some free time before the afternoon musical presentation. Appropriately, there were many books to survey – some to purchase and some free. A book table hosted by publisher Robert Trexler of Winged Lion Press contained several dozen choices of books about C.S. Lewis and George MacDonald. Several books by James Como were available as well as two books by Charlie Starr who gave a morning talk. There were over 60 free books generously donated by founding member Gene McGovern – many first editions, rare Inklings titles, and indispensable studies which he collected over the past 50 years. Wishing to downsize his vast library, he wanted the books to find “a good home”. Astonished and grateful attendees were courteous in limiting their selection to two or three books to allow for more people to take some treasures home.

Another founding member, William (Bill) Dawson, gifted the weekend program with an original musical presentation. Bill is a renowned pianist and composer, who, as a young man, studied under another legendary Society member who taught



We were honored to be joined by Dr. Denise Vasiliu (on left), the CEO of Agora Christi and a founder of the C.S. Lewis & Kindred Spirits Society (for the Romanian and the Central and Eastern European Universities). Their goal is to share the love of Christ with students and professors in post-communist countries who, after long years of atheistic education, don’t know the treasure and heritage of Christian writers.



Founding Members:  
William Dawson, James Como, Gene McGovern



Soprano, Beverly Butrie, Composer, William Dawson, Pianist, Christopher Holloway, and Baritone, Peter Fanovic take a bow after musical performance.

music composition at Yale University, namely John Kirkpatrick (husband of Hope Kirkpatrick who served as corresponding secretary for our first twenty years). Bill set five poems of C.S. Lewis to music and brought three musicians to perform the pieces – a pianist, a soprano, and a baritone. The result was fabulous, bringing a new appreciation of Lewis’ words through the medium of music.

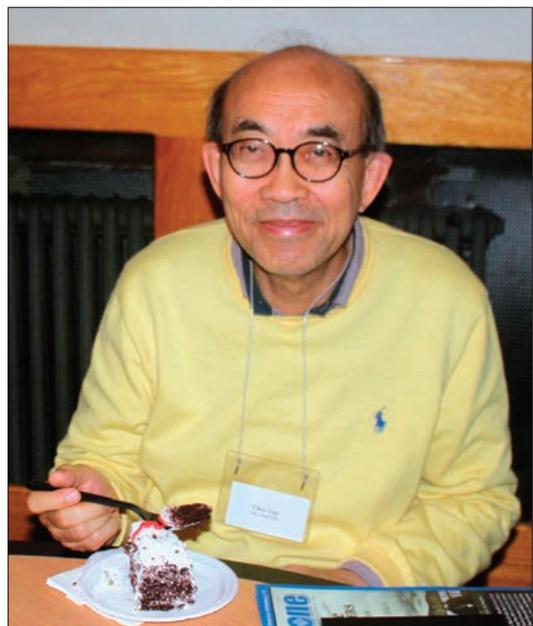
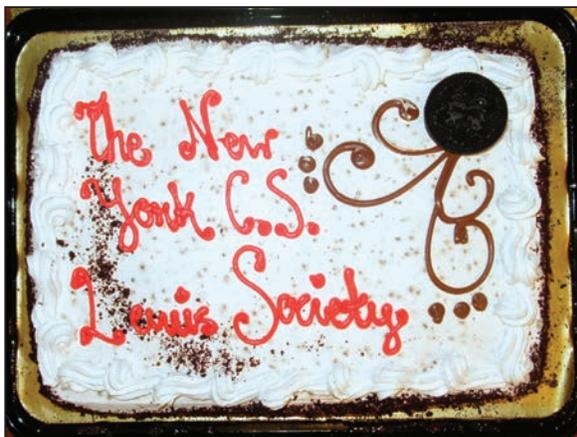
Our keynote speaker for Saturday night was Fr. Michael Ward, who was introduced by Maggie Goodman. Before beginning his talk, Michael kindly paid tribute to the Society’s achievement over the years. (His remarks are included in this bulletin on page 7). With great originality and insight, Michael explored Lewis’ book *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life*. He brought up some negative reactions to the book, particularly by John Wain, a student of Lewis and occasional attendee of Inklings gatherings. Fr. Ward, however, argued for the appropriateness of Lewis’ approach to his conversion account. Following the talk, everyone went to the Dining Room to enjoy the anniversary cake.



William Dawson, Jr.

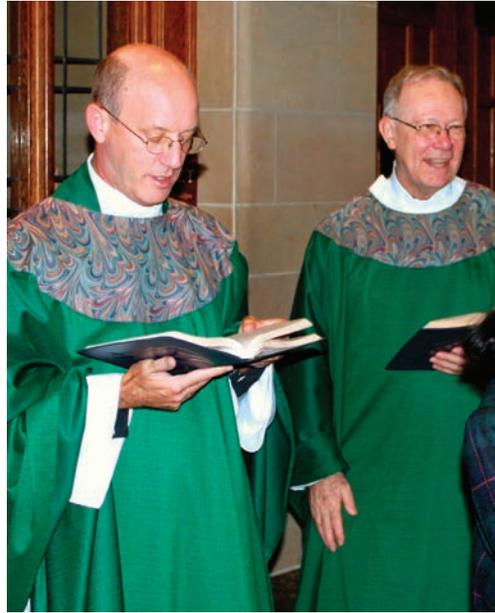
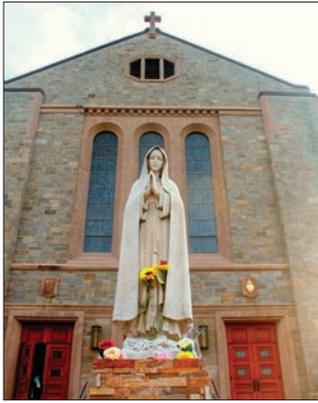


Clara Sarrocco and James Como cutting cake



Chee Yap enjoying anniversary cake

On Sunday morning, there were two worship opportunities: at the adjacent Church of the Immaculate Conception, Fr. Michael Ward concelebrated Mass. In the main meeting room of the retreat house, David Kornegay led a Protestant worship service.

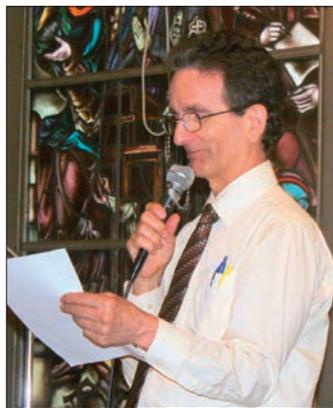


Fr. Michael Ward, co-celebrant for Mass at Church of the Immaculate Conception

Our final talk was presented by a rising star in the world of Lewis scholarship, and a man the Society is proud to claim as one of our own, since he is a local member of just a few years. Josiah Peterson is the debate coach and adjunct instructor of Argumentation and Debate and the Debate Practicum at The King's College in New York City. As such, he was uniquely qualified to address us on the topic "C.S. Lewis and the Socratics: How to Talk with Those Who Disagree with You." Josiah explained the significance of Lewis's leadership in creating the Socratic Club at Oxford University, where he was its president for a decade, presenting the Christian position at many of the weekly debates. Josiah then outlined seven lessons we can learn from Lewis about how to engage others courteously and effectively.



Peter & Lottie Frein with Tammy and Jeff Patterson, Adrianne Navon (back to camera)



Josiah Peterson introduced by David Kornegay (middle) at closing Sunday address.



Heather Mortenson, Denise Vasilu, & Erin Seidel



Paul & Erin Seidel



David Kornegay & Alexander Wei



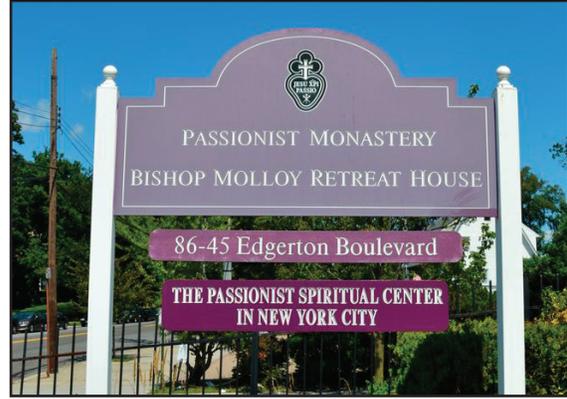
Jeff Patterson & Johnny Chavez



Johnny Chavez, Jared Houseman, Chee Yap, David Kornegay, Mary Gehringer, Jim Bash, Robert Trexler, Lorraine Collazo, Rachelle Peterson, Fr. Kenneth Meyers, Josiah Peterson, Michael Ward, Susan Wurthmann, Eric Wuthmann, Clara Sarrocco, William Maddock, Denise Vasiliu, Erin Seidel, Alexander Wei, Peter Frein, Lottie Frein. (photo by Paul Seidel) Note: This photo was taken after the final session on Sunday morning, thus many attendees had already departed.



Molloy Retreat Center



Retreat Center Sign



Macbeth Derham, Lottie and Peter Frein, Bill and Georgiann Henderson



Michael Ward, Jared Houseman, Chezmin Sheehan, Fr. Kenneth Meyers



Jim Bash, Mary Gehringer, Clara Sarrocco, Eric Wurthmann, Susan Wurthmann



Front Table:  
Left side: Sherrie Murphy, Paul and Erin Seidel (backs to camera), Thomas Robson.  
Right side: Robert Trexler, Josiah Peterson, Charlie Starr

## “Launcelot” and a Book Common to Lewis, Tolkien, and Williams: *The High History of the Holy Graal (Perlesvaus)*

by Dale Nelson

Among Lewis’s less-known works is a 296-line narrative poem called “Launcelot” (as it is titled in 1969’s *Narrative Poems*) or “When the Year Dies in Preparation for the Birth” (as it’s titled in Don King’s 2015 critical edition of Lewis’s poems).

The poem describes the return of the Round Table knights who had set out on the Sangrail quest, but failed to attain the vision. Gawain is first to return, taciturn and quickly securing the king’s leave to depart for his clan in the North. Other knights straggle back to court in pairs and threes, eerily estranged from those who stayed home. Launcelot is the last knight to return.

After a few days, he reluctantly, privately, tells the Queen what happened to him.

In his journey through strange lands, he had learned of the catastrophe that fell upon the lands of the King Fisherman when a knight, Percivale, who beheld the spear that pierced Our Lord and the Grail, failed to ask for whom the Grail served.

After this, Launcelot came upon a rich green valley and a maiden who dwelt at a beautiful shrine. She disappeared, and an innocent but mocking bodiless voice told Launcelot that this tomb is set apart for Christendom’s three best knights – namely, Bors, Percivale, Galahad -- but not for him. Humiliated, he continued his journey.

He made his way through a dreary, miry waste. He found a manor house on an island. The poem’s narrator tells us that its queen uncannily reminded Launcelot of Guinever and the witch Morgan. He was refreshed by this lady’s wine and his senses were dimmed by the scent of her rich spices. Launcelot was not asked his name, nor did he volunteer it. The lady drank cup after cup.

The poem leads up to a horrifying moment in which this Queen of Castle Mortal, trembling with unholy excitement, reveals to Launcelot that she has rigged up in her chapel a cunning trap, a machine by which, when she gets the chance, she means to behead the three best knights of earth, Lamorake, Tristram, and Launcelot – not from hatred but because she loves them. Once she shall have succeeded, she means to hold their heads to her breasts and to adore them. There the poem ends.

This poem, probably from the early 1930s, is usually ignored by writers on Lewis. I will say here that I think the notion of Lewis as having failed as a poet is overdue for reconsideration. Many people will allow Lewis to have written some good short poems, and are willing to glance at Dymer, but “Launcelot,” “The Nameless Isle” (“In a Spring Season I Sailed Away” in King’s edition), and “The Queen of Drum” deserve to be more widely read. They belong with such poems as Tolkien’s eldritch “Lay of Aotrou and Itroun” and Coleridge’s weird “Christabel.”

In his *C. S. Lewis Companion and Guide* (p. 160), Walter Hooper states that “Launcelot” derives from Chrétien de Troyes and is a “fragment.” Don King, in turn, mentions Malory and Tennyson as influences, and describes “Launcelot” as an unsatisfying “narrative fragment” (*C. S. Lewis, Poet*, p. 140). But what that is needed is lacking? Surely everything it needs to be a satisfying whole is present. I’m the more persuaded that it is complete, having read what seems to me Lewis’s true source for the story of the perilous lady and her gruesome engine.

It’s likely that the incident derives from the early 13<sup>th</sup>-century Old French prose romance *Perlesvaus*, in Sebastian Evans’s 1898 translation, where it is called *The High History of the Holy Graal*. Lewis owned a copy, and recommended it warmly in letters written many years apart.

In *Perlesvaus*, Gawain is the knight who encounters the treacherous lady. She is known as the Proud Maiden and has a custom of not condescending even to ask the names of knights who come to her residence. The lady tells Gawain that she means to behead the best earthly knights, namely Launcelot, Gawain, and Perceval, in her chapel: when they kneel to venerate three coffers of saints’ relics, a guillotine-like blade will rush down and decapitate them. Gawain simply leaves the castle in the morning. (See Vol. 1, pages 87-88. Although Lewis used the name Castle Mortal, and the *Perlesvaus* mentions the “Castle Mortal,” in Evans’s book the Proud Maiden’s residence is called the Castle Orguelleux.)

In what I take to be his retelling and expansion of this sketchy episode, Lewis substituted Launcelot for Gawain. Lewis was thus able, right off, to invent

continued from page 19

wonders; we read in passing of Perceval seeing a burning castle: that is where King Pelles' son Joseus killed his own mother, and it is one of two burning castles that will kindle the fire that will burn up the world at last.

### Versions

I read Evans's *High History* in the two-volume 1898 edition published in the Temple Classics by Dent, which I downloaded and printed from archive.org. This is the same edition Lewis owned and annotated. Nigel Bryant's 1978 version of the *Perlesvaus* is *The High Book of the Grail*. I have spot-checked the translations and there are differences. Evans has pagan worshipers of a copper bull where Bryant has a copper tower. Evans has the bull melt and Bryant has the tower crumble. Perceval approaches a sepulcher and the body therein revealed is that of Josephus (Evans) or Joseph of Arimathea (Bryant). Where Evans's style resembles that of William Morris's prose romances, Bryant's is in easy-to-read

contemporary English. I wanted to read the version available to the Inklings and Machen.

### Further Reading

Lewis, C. S. Review of *Sir Thomas Wyatt and Some Collected Studies* (1933), reprinted from *Medium Aevum* 3 (Oct. 1934) in Walter Hooper, ed., *Image and Imagination* (Cambridge UP, 2013).

Nelson, Dale. "Sorcery and Sanctity: Tolkien's 'The Lay of Aotrou and Itroun' and Other Eldritch Poems." *Beyond Bree* May 2017: 1-5.

Williams, Charles. *The Figure of Arthur*, part of *Arthurian Torso*, with C. S. Lewis. This was published with Williams's *Taliessin Through Logres* and *The Region of the Summer Stars* in a one-volume paperback edition by Eerdmans in 1974.

For the identification of Gerald Hayes, I am indebted to this online source:

<https://thremnir.wordpress.com/2014/05/06/zimiamvias-cartographer-gerald-ravencourt-hayes-1889-1955/>

Dale Nelson's first article in *CSL*, "But This Time It's True: C. S. Lewis and William Law," was published in 1990. After several sequels to Henry Noel's "Little-Known Books in Lewis's Background," Dale's "Jack and the Bookshelf" series began in 2007. He has also contributed reviews and articles on weird fantasy, Coventry Patmore, Martyn Skinner, and other topics to the *Bulletin*. Dale writes reviews and a frequent column on the 1965-1969 "Hobbit Craze" for the Tolkien newsletter *Beyond Bree*. His work has appeared in *Mythlore*, *Touchstone*, and other periodicals and fanzines, and he is the author of the long entry on 19th- and 20th-century literary influences for the *J. R. R. Tolkien Encyclopedia* (2006).

## FUTURE MEETINGS

- |               |   |               |   |
|---------------|---|---------------|---|
| Dec 13, 2019  | A reading of Dorothy L. Sayers' "Royal Progress" from <i>The Man Born to Be King</i><br>coordinated by Margaret Goodman | Feb. 14, 2020 | "C. S. Lewis and Thomas Aquinas and the Problem of Evil"<br>with Paul Kucharski |
| Jan. 10, 2020 | "Tolkien's Medieval English Sources"<br>with Ethan Campbell   | Mar. 13, 2020 | "C. S. Lewis and <i>The Wind in the willows</i> "<br>with Josiah Peterson       |
|               |   | Apr. 10, 2020 | Good Friday – no meeting  |

We meet at 7:30 in the Parish House of The Church of the Ascension at 12 West 11th Street, Manhattan. Call 1 (212) 254-8620 after noon on the meeting day if there is a question of possible cancellation. On the block of the Parish House, on-street parking is legal all day (alternate side rules apply). On some nearby blocks, parking becomes legal at 6:00. Nearby subway stations are at 14th Street and 6th Avenue (F train) and 14th Street Union Square (many trains 4, 5, 6, N, R, L, Q). The Strand Bookstore, dealing in new and second hand books, is nearby. ALL ARE WELCOME.

**continued from page 16**

a poignant but bleak meeting of Launcelot and Guinever. The reader has already seen that lesser knights have been changed by their futile quest, but now the storyteller moves in close to show one particular change, more affecting than Gawain's evident frustration: the distance that has widened between the Queen and her old lover.

Furthermore: Launcelot was the greatest of courtly lovers, but in the bizarre eroticism of the lady of Castle Mortal, he beheld earthly love that has eventuated in a ghastly idolatry. I think this may be why, when, in Lewis's poem, he returns to Arthur's court, he is subdued: he has glimpsed the deathward trajectory of unlawful, unregenerate Eros, a transgression in which he himself is deeply ensnared. This poem anticipates a key theme of Chapter 5 of *The Four Loves*, that when Eros becomes an idol, it becomes a demon.

Underlying his poem is Lewis's interest in Launcelot as the key to Malory's understanding of knighthood. Malory, Lewis argued in a 1934 review, doesn't ultimately rest content with a twofold contrast between mere armed bullies and robbers, on the one hand, and the Round Table's valiant warriors on the other. Malory sees the medieval man of arms according to a threefold scheme.

Thus, compared to the base-behaving King Mark, Launcelot is warm-hearted and noble, the very model of what a knight should be: respectful of ladies, well-mannered in the courtly household, brave, highly skilled, stern to his foe, but always honorable in battle. Over against the brutes, Launcelot gloriously embodies the chivalric ideal and deserves our admiration. But as compared to Galahad, Launcelot, as a sinner, indeed an unrepentant sinner, false to his earthly as well as divine lord, is all too much like Mark. Lewis said that Launcelot is "perhaps the first truly tragic hero in our literature."

Accordingly, it seems to me that Lewis's poem is complete and ends as it should, even if we wonder what happened to the appalling lady and her death device and about possible further adventures of Launcelot before his return to the royal court.

In Lewis's poem, the point is not really to tell The Strange Episode of a Treacherous Lady as an adventure in the career of Launcelot. The poem is about the falling-short of even the best of worldly men and the exposure of that failure over against the demands of holiness. And that story is told. Yes, we might wonder -- did Launcelot and Guinever

eventually feel their old passion rekindle? It seems pretty well spent, here... But that too would be another story.

Evidently, Lewis discerned in this episode from early in the *Perlesvaus* the possibilities of a macabre, brooding poem such as no one had written before, with a potential depth of meaning in its treatment of romantic passion that he could be the first to evoke.

The *Perlesvaus* / *High History* does return to the lady of the three coffins, late in the second of the two volumes, but glancingly. Lancelot has braved a haunted chapel in order to secure a sword and a portion of a grave-cloth by which a wounded knight may be healed. As he leaves, a damsel comes running, her kirtle tucked up, and begs him to stay with her and see the three tombs she has made for him, Gawain, and Perceval. Lancelot simply refuses and continues on his way, leaving her disappointed. We may expect an episode in which Perceval, in turn, will encounter this thread; but no.

Without doubt, Evans's *High History of the Holy Graal* really appealed to Lewis.

As a teenager, Lewis praised Evans's *Perlesvaus* rendering to his best friend, Arthur Greeves (letter of 8 Nov. 1916): "It is absolute heaven: it is more mystic & eerie than [Malory's] 'Morte' & has [a] more connected plot."

Almost 40 years later, he recommended Evans's translation in a brief list of British and European classics, by way of replying to a teacher's request for suggestions (letter to William L. Kinter, 28 June 1955).

In between, Lewis wrote to a friend of E. R. Eddison, the author of *The Worm Ouroboros* and the Zimiamvian books about his favorite reading. He listed *Amadis of Gaul*, Malory's *Morte*, *Orlando Furioso*, the *Faerie Queene*, Sidney's *Arcadia*, William Morris's prose romances, and *The High History of the Holy Grail* [sic] (letter to Gerald Hayes [1889-1955; civil servant, cartographer, and musicologist], 12 March 1943).

A listing of books in Lewis's library reveals that he owned the two-volume Temple Classics edition, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, and annotated it.

Tolkien too owned Evans's *High History*, reprinted as #445 of the Everyman's Library, the Penguin Classics of its day. Tolkien's copy is "preserved at the Weston library under the auspices of the English Faculty Library (Oxford)," according to Oronzo Cilli's *Tolkien's Library* (2019).

Charles Williams commented on the *Perlesvaus*, "It was translated into English [prose] in the

nineteenth century by Sebastian Evans. He was a poet of a certain power, though his medievalism is of the usual mannered and slightly picturesque kind common to that period; if not pre-Raphaelite it is at least kindred to that manner." Williams wrote several pages of summary and commentary, but did not complete them.

Evans's *High History*, then, was a book shared by the principal Inklings. Readily available in inexpensive printings, the version by Evans (1830-1909) circulated amongst many other readers.

For example, Arthur Machen (1865-1947), author of Graal-related works including the unsatisfactory novel *The Secret Glory* and the moving wonder-tale "The Great Return," knew it. (In fact, "The Great Return" may well be a "sequel" to the closing pages of the *High History*.)

Machen said that Evans was "the accomplished and admirable, if somewhat archaistic translator of one of the Romances, to which he gave the title *The High History of the Holy Graal*." (This is from a long, controversial essay called "The Secret of the Sangraal," reprinted in American and British collections of 1924, both titled *The Glorious Mystery*, but with some differences in their contents.)

Machen's occultist friend A. E. Waite (1857-1942) wrote *The Hidden Church of the Holy Graal* and brought Williams into the esoteric Fellowship of the Rosy Cross. In that 1910 book, which Williams knew, Waite wrote of the *Perlesvaus* as having been "translated into English of an archaic kind, beautiful and stately, by Dr. Sebastian Evans, a gorgeous chronicle, full of richly painted pictures and pageants" (p. 11).

*The High History* had been praised in the pages of *The Speaker* (7 January 1899) -- "translator, editor, and publishers together have rendered a signal service to literature....the very first rank of Prose Fiction. To read it, even after Malory, is to break upon an undiscovered country and be amazed by its loveliness," and in *The Academy* (15 April 1899) -- "our blood pricks to the authentic thrill of Faery and Chivalry....not a little of the magic of this magical book flows from the pen of the translator."

*The High History* is like Malory's *Morte* in some ways, not just the appearance of many of the same characters, but, for example, the importance of feuds. But striking contrasts are abundant.

In the *High History*, we read a great deal about Sir Gawain, who sees the Graal early in the book, where in Malory he throws over the Quest early on without seeing it; in the *High History* there's more of a quest to find Perceval than to find the Graal; in the *High History*, Arthur's queen just dies, of unspecified causes, and there is nothing like Malory's unforgettable incident of the final horrible battle, following upon a truce broken when a soldier innocently draws sword to kill a snake; the book starts with Arthur and his court in disgrace because the king has become slothful, rather than starting, as in Malory, with the begetting of Arthur and then the story of the Sword in the Stone; where Malory imagines his story as occurring in the fifth century, the *Perlesvaus* implies that the adventures occur in the first! -- a mule that had belonged to a soldier of Pilate is alive when Perceval and Lancelot meet.

A key theme is the conflict of the New Law (Christianity) with the Old, which is represented by such persons as Queen Jandree, who demands that Arthur renounce the faith and accept her gods, and herself as his queen, once Guinevere has died. (Later, though, Jandree embraces the new faith and requires her subjects to do likewise.) The *Perlesvaus* is evidently intended to be taken as drawn from a record of the historian Josephus, the "good clerk," whom we know as the author of *Antiquities of the Jews* and *The Jewish War*.

The Graal, in the *High History*, may appear in five different forms, we are told, but, as chalice, it supplies Arthur with the "pattern" according to which the Cup in the Sacrament is henceforth to be designed. Arthur also is told how bells for each church are to be crafted.

*The High History* is more tightly organized than the *Morte*, but less varied and more repetitious -- what an insistent series of villainous knights and dwarfs, and combats on horseback, with the good knights' opponents having their arms shorn off, and hermitages wherein the knights may rest. Here and there are

continued on page 17

Do you have an essay, book review or other relevant content for publication in the Bulletin? Contact the editor through the submissions page on our website: [www.nycslsociety.com](http://www.nycslsociety.com).

You may also renew your subscription through our website, as well as ordering back-issues.

## REPORT OF THE SEPTEMBER 2019 MEETING

The September 13th meeting of the New York C.S. Lewis Society was called to order by Eric Wurthmann. The reading for the month was given by Maggie Goodman. Maggie read from *That Hideous Strength*. The reading for next month will be given by Bill McClain. After the preliminary introductions and sign-in Eric announced the new Eldila. They are Josiah Peterson and Chee Yap. Mary Gehringer reminded everyone that free back samples of the Bulletin were available. Eric announced the upcoming 50th anniversary weekend and that it is time to sign up. Clara Sarrocco said that forms for signing up for the weekend were on the table.

Further announcements:

Happenings at the Wade Center, Wheaton College:

Inaugural lecture by David C. Downing - "When is a Dragon More Than a Dragon?: the Imaginative Worlds of Lewis and Tolkien" - November 14, 2019, at 7:00 p.m

A Night at the Ballet with C.S. Lewis on November 1st - "The Space in Between," a ballet set on a bus ride between heaven and hell, is based on C.S. Lewis's *The Great Divorce*. As a special bonus, the troupe will also perform ballets based on Lewis's "Meditation in a Toolshed" and "The Weight of Glory".

A Visit to The Conservation Center - The Wade Center staff recently had the opportunity to visit The Conservation Center in Chicago to get a behind-the-scenes tour and see the work in progress on the 389 books of C.S. Lewis's library that are currently undergoing conservation treatment

Aslan Talk & Gifting - "Over 60 people joined us on August 1 to welcome Sally (Brestin) Hale—artist of "Aslan" hanging in our Bakke lobby—as she talked about the artistic process and story behind her painting, including how the sacrificial lamb appeared. Already one of our most watched videos, her talk can be accessed from our YouTube channel."

A Newman Symposium will take place on November 1 & 2, 2019. This two day event will begin with dinner at 7 pm on November 1st with a short talk by Mr. Edward Short. In the past, Mr. Short has given a presentation to the Society on C.S. Lewis and John Henry Newman. Saturday will begin at 8:30 am and end with a 5:00 pm light reception. Guest registration for the two day event will be \$125.00.

Eric then introduced the program for the meeting. This month's meeting was a discussion of two of Lewis's essays: "The Inner Ring" and "On Forgiveness" from *The Weight of Glory*. The discussion was led by Mary Gehringer.

Mary has been a long time member of the Society, having joined and started to attend meetings just after it celebrated its 5th anniversary. She began to read Lewis in her early teens and he has been a major influence in her life. Mary worked for many years at Time Warner Inc. in various administrative positions. She also does the billing, the membership mailing list, and setting up the arrangements for the monthly meetings.

Mary proposed several questions pertaining to the essays: Is Lewis clear in his definition of the inner ring? This precipitated a discussion on the meaning of the inner ring with many examples from the academic, religious, business and social worlds. How did the inner ring affect Lewis's life? When the discussion moved to "On Forgiveness" Mary asked: "What facts did Lewis emphasize? What is the difference about saying you are forgiven and knowing that you are forgiven? This prompted further discussion on forgiveness not depending on liking the person forgiven. Mary ended the talk by a quote from Lewis about his need to forgive the horrible treatment he experienced in boarding school as a young boy and the effects this had on his adult life.

The discussion continued over cake and coffee:

Present at the meeting were: Eric Wurthmann - Maggie Goodman - Helene DeLorenzo - Rob Clere - Chee Yap - Susan Wurthmann - Bill McClain - Clara Sarrocco - Mark O'Sullivan - Lorraine Collazo - Adrienne Navon - Tom Mariani - Josiah Peterson - Mary Gehringer - MacBeth Derham - Mary Ellen Green - John Morrison V - John Morrison III - Johnny Chavez - David Kornegay - Dr. An - Zoe Blake

**We will continue collecting responses through 2020 to "What C.S. Lewis has meant to you over the years" as part of our 50th anniversary celebration. Please send us a letter or email with your short statement (less than 60 words), indicate if you want to be identified by name, initials only, or anonymous - and please include your city/state. Our physical and e-mail addresses are listed on the front page of the Bulletin. Thanks in advance for your responses!**