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***No Ordinary People: 21 Friendships of C.S. Lewis* by Joel D. Heck**

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Abstract

No Ordinary People: 21 Friendships of C.S. Lewis. Joel D. Heck. Hamden, CT: Winged Lion Press, 2022, 395 p. 9781935688228. \$19.50.

increasing, the academic positions for Lewis scholars are still limited. We might expect more work in the future to come from high school teachers, ministry workers, and students of other disciplines. The diverse, real world experience that these authors bring will add new flavor into the Lewis scholarship. Let us celebrate and encourage these newly published authors who are exploring—all six previous books received at least one citation in last year's three—and in some cases meaningfully expanding, the field of Lewis scholarship.

—Josiah Peterson

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NO ORDINARY PEOPLE: 21 FRIENDSHIPS OF C.S. LEWIS. Joel D. Heck. Hamden, CT: Winged Lion Press, 2022, 395 p. 9781935688228. \$19.50.

IN HIS MOST RECENT PUBLICATION, *NO ORDINARY PEOPLE: Twenty-one Friendships of C.S. Lewis*, Joel Heck tells us that "Lewis celebrates friendship, in part because the world ignores it. That's why this book is needed—to restore an appreciation for friendship in a world where so many relationships are belittled, ignored, or sexualized" (Heck 4). In addition to stressing the intrinsic value of friendship, Heck's analysis offers a studious itinerary of shared biographies that

bring new insights into Lewis's persona and world. Of the friendships Heck works with a few, such as Arthur Greeves, Janie Moore, and Warren Lewis, will be recognized by those with a general knowledge of Lewis and the Inklings. However, many of the friendships that Heck analyzes, for example A.K. Hamilton Jenkin, Stella Aldwinckle, Nan Dunbar, and F.C. Bryan, are not as well known. On this account, Heck's book has as much to offer the academic community as it does for Lewis fans looking for a more intimate biography.

The book is divided into three sections, determined by the type of friendship Lewis had with the people being reviewed. Heck explains, "The first section looks at Lewis' side-by-side friendships of the *philia* type. The second section explores Lewis's friendships with people who took opposing views on various topics, but with whom Lewis remained cordial. The third section concludes with his relationships with co-workers and fellow pilgrims" (7). Unifying the three sections is Heck's focus on the positive impact friendship had on both Lewis and those he was friends with. Heck reminds us that for Lewis, friendship was a virtue that had to be worked at, often demanding that he and his friends modify their behavior, challenge their beliefs, and forgive each other. Additionally, the book offers a diverse selection of friends. Among the twenty-one biographies there are seven women, several atheists, and colleagues who did not always share Lewis's critical, theological, and societal perspectives.

The first section opens with one of the more intriguing friendships in Lewis's life, that of Alan Richard Griffiths (a.k.a. Alan Dom Bede Richards). Lewis was Griffiths's tutor from 1927 to 1929 and two men shared a strong interest in philosophy and theology. Heck does a good job explaining how the two also shared a similar spiritual journey from atheism to Christianity. After an account of Griffiths's early life and entry into the Benedictine Order, Heck delves into Griffiths's attempts to convert Lewis to Catholicism, and Lewis's steadfast loyalty to his Anglican faith. The second chapter introduces Lewis's colleague, and fellow Inking, Hugo Dyson. After a general character sketch of Dyson, Heck points out that he "is best known for a midnight conversation with Lewis on Saturday, September 19, 1931," when he and Tolkien convinced Lewis that the story of Christ was a true myth (33). Lewis would later credit this conversation for leading to his conversion to Christianity nine days later. From here, Heck stirs the Inklings pot by advancing the argument that "While Tolkien is mentioned more often as an influence on Lewis's conversion, Hugo Dyson probably had a greater impact than Tolkien" (34). The second half of the chapter covers Lewis and Dyson's participation in three lecture series on Shakespeare, some very interesting tidbits on Dyson's participation with the Inklings, and a brief section on the walking tours and occasional dinners that Lewis, his brother Warnie, Dyson, and others engaged in.

In the third chapter, Heck draws our attention to Austin Marsden Farrer, one of the most renowned Anglican philosophical theologians of the twentieth century. The first half of the chapter delivers a well-packed biography, which includes the friendship Lewis and his wife Joy shared with Austin and his wife Katharine. Heck does an admirable job of explaining Farrer's participation in the Oxford University Socratic Club, a Christocentric undergraduate speaker's society given to the debate and discussion of religious topics.¹ The chapter also includes an appendix on Farrer's contributions to the Socratic Club, followed by a useful bibliography of Farrer's better-known works. Chapter 4 offers a thoughtful narrative describing Lewis's life-long friendship with his childhood neighbor, Arthur Greeves. Heck concentrates on their shared appreciation for the arts, presenting the reader with a good account of the books Greeves and Lewis shared, and how their reading influenced later pursuits. Most of all, Heck's review of Lewis and Greeves's relationship reminds us that shared loyalty and a delight in simple pleasures are two of the strongest components in the making of a strong friendship.

Chapter 5 takes on what many consider Lewis's most controversial friendship, his thirty plus year relationship with housemate, Janie 'Minto' Moore. Much of what Heck covers is the standard fare found in many biographies on Lewis or the Inklings. Nevertheless, in Heck's depiction of the relationship, there are a host of minor details that will be new to many readers. For example, I wasn't aware of the theory that Janie Moore was an inspiration for the wicked Queen of the Underland in the Narnia book *The Silver Chair*.² Similarly, while I knew that Janie Moore was an atheist, Heck's analysis of this is informative and one of the highlights of the chapter. Chapter 6 is on Lewis's friendship with his older brother Warren. Highlights include a detailed history of Warren's military career, including his training, transfers, promotions, and extensive travel. This is complemented by a candid review of the two brothers answering to the complexities of life, including their similar paths from atheism to Christianity, the stress that Janie Moore incurred in the household, Warren's alcoholism, their respective roles as authors and Inklings, and his grief following the death of his younger brother.

In the seventh chapter, Heck shares with his reader a most-welcomed biography of a truly distinguished person, Sister Ruth Penelope Lawson. Throughout the twenty-eight pages of the chapter, Sister Penelope is the primary focus of Heck's attention, possibly giving rise to one of the most thorough biographies of her in print. Heck begins the chapter by pointing out what many in Lewis Studies know about Sister Penelope, "In the middle of

¹ For more on the Socratic Club, see Mitchell.

² See Kotzin.

World War II, C.S. Lewis sent a copy of *The Screwtape Letters* to an Anglican nun for safekeeping, fearing that the bombing [...] might obliterate his book manuscript." (135). Born in 1890, and raised in Clent, Worcestershire, where her father was vicar of St. Leonard's Church of England, Ruth Penelope Lawson studied German and Theology at Keble College, Oxford from 1909 to 1912. Shortly after graduating, she joined the Convent of the Community of St. Mary the Virgin at Wangate. In 1915, she would take her vows and commit to a life of worship and service. In 1939, she wrote her first letter to C.S. Lewis to express her delight in reading his 1939 science fiction novel *Out of the Silent Planet*. Along with the letter, she sent Lewis a copy of her book *God Persists: A Short Survey of World History in Light of Christian Faith*, initiating a twenty-four yearlong correspondence. From here, Heck tells of the breadth of their correspondence, and the effect it had on both, including their mutual concern over animal suffering, theological questions, and Lewis's advice to Sister Penelope on writing and publication. At the end of the chapter, there is a very good bibliography of Sister Penelope's books and translations, an appendix of Lewis's letters to Sister Penelope, and an appendix on books and authors the two of them discussed.

In Chapter 8, Heck covers Lewis's friendship with his family physician, Dr. Robert Emlyn Havard. Heck brings this friendship to life by presenting some of the more memorable events Havard shared with Lewis and others. Highlights include Havard (who had been in the Navy), Lewis, and Hugo Dyson borrowing Warren's boat and taking it up the Thames River, Havard's participation with the Inklings, his role as the first person to speak to the Socratic Club, and the many dinners and walking tours that he and others enjoyed over the years. Chapter 9 introduces one of Lewis's lesser-known undergraduate friends, A. K. Hamilton Jenkin. Heck provides with an efficient biography that points out Jenkin "produced eleven books and many articles about the history and culture of his native Cornwall" (177). Throughout the chapter, Heck stresses Jenkin's passion and enthusiasm for life. Appealing to Lewis's letters, he notes that, "Jenkin's most endearing quality was his appreciation of nearly everything he encountered" (183). Heck shares several wonderful vignettes about the bike tours the then young men went on, leaving us with a nice account of Lewis's love for cycling. Heck also looks at the role that faith played in their relationship, with Lewis going from atheism to Christianity, and Jenkin going from Christianity to atheism. This chapter stands out in that it is almost entirely given to Lewis's younger years.

Chapter 10, the first of five chapters in the second section of the book sub-titled "Opponents, But Friends," scrutinizes the correspondence between Lewis and science fiction author Arthur C. Clarke, their 1954 meeting at the Eastgate Hotel in Oxford, and the mutual respect that the two writers had for

one another. Heck starts with another claim that might raise an eyebrow or two when he tells us, “Lewis wrote eight letters to Clarke over a twelve-year period, at Clarke’s initiative, mostly about science fiction writing. As a result, Clarke became a better writer” (195). This is followed by a good biography of Clarke, in which Heck makes it clear how accomplished Clarke’s career was. Next is a straightforward explanation of how the friendship began, with Clarke writing Lewis to “disagree, somewhat violently, with you” over what he saw as several sins against the science fiction genre occurring in Lewis’s 1943 science fiction novel, *Perelandra* (202). This led to a friendship premised in constructive criticism and a love for science fiction. Heck does a good job of conveying the spirit of their exchange and defends his earlier claim with conviction. The eleventh chapter is a brief account of Lewis’s friendship with his Magdalen College colleague, Kantian philosopher Harry Weldon. Most of what is shared in this chapter occurs in 1926 and 1927, when both men were in the early years of their careers. As Heck points out, Lewis and Weldon’s friendship revolved around Weldon’s cynical worldview, including his unconventional and caustic comments on Christianity, and was washed down with bouts of heavy drinking. The most interesting aspect of this chapter is how Lewis’s friendship with Weldon ends, and Heck’s interpretation of how this affected Lewis.

The twelfth chapter is a lively rendition of Lewis’s friendship with Cyril Edwin Mitchinson Joad. The first half of the chapter does a good job of explaining what Lewis and Joad had in common, and disagreed over, when it came to their philosophical views. The second half of the chapter covers Lewis and Joad’s experiences at the BBC, Joad’s participation with the Socratic Club, and his eventual return to Christianity—which Joad credited in part to Lewis’s 1943 book *The Abolition of Man*. With concern given to Joad’s ‘reconversion’ (Heck’s term), several observations on Heck’s part puts the polish on one of the best chapters in the book. The sub-title of Chapter 13 is “J.B.S. Haldane AKA Edward Rolles Weston.” In his biography of Haldane, Heck points out, “In the 1930s and 1940s, Haldane became well known [...] for his research and writing,” and with his research being in physiology and genetics, he was often caught up in controversy (255). Moreover, Haldane was a vocal atheist and Marxist. For these reasons, and several others, Heck informs us that “J.B.S. Haldane was the model C.S. Lewis used for physicist Weston in the Ransom Trilogy” (251). The Ransom Trilogy was Lewis’s three science fiction novels published between 1938 and 1945, and Weston is the antagonist of the first two books. Although Lewis and Haldane were not friends who met casually, or corresponded on a personal level, there was a lively banter between the two men, at least one Socratic Club meeting, and an exchange of articles over the Weston issue.

The fourteenth chapter of the book ends on a high note, with a compelling explanation of Lewis’s contentious friendship with Alec Vidler,

editor of the monthly journal *Theology*. The best part of this chapter is the mystery Heck presents us with. As he sums the matter up, when Vilder became editor of the journal in 1939, “he began to recruit both subscribers and authors who could help him energize the periodical, one of the latter being C.S. Lewis” Lewis made ten contributions to *Theology*, and he and Vilder wrote “to one another for a time, but then, about nine years after the start of their communication, the correspondence ceased. Was there some animosity between them?” In his reply to this question, Heck looks at “their views on theology and related writings,” so as to demonstrate “that even people with profound disagreements can work together” (263). Heck’s analysis of the theological divide between the two men, and his answer to the mysterious end of their friendship, is one of the highlights of the book.

The third section of the book explores Lewis’s “Co-workers and Fellow Pilgrims,” and begins with the fifteenth chapter looking at Lewis’s friendship with Stella Aldwinckle, founder and Chairman of the Oxford University Socratic Club. As was the case with his chapter on Sister Penelope, Heck does an excellent job of bringing forward Aldwinckle’s dedication to her mission as pastor to Oxford’s undergraduate women, and her success in shepherding the Socratic for twenty-five years. In addition to writing about meetings, speakers, and the club journal, the *Socratic Digest*, Heck also looks at other Socratic activities, demonstrating how robust and influential the club was. Chapter 16 explores Lewis’s friendship with Classics scholar Nan Dunbar. Lewis and Dunbar met in 1955 at the University of Cambridge, and even though Lewis was thirty years older than Dunbar, and world-renowned, their scholarly interests brought them together. Heck tells us that “Dunbar crossed paths with Lewis through their common interest in the Classics, particularly through a writer named Statius [...] a Roman poet of the first century, [who] appears as a guide in the *Purgatory* section of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*” (309). Other works that Dunbar and Lewis worked with, or talked about, were Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Sophocles, Shakespeare, Herodotus, Tacitus, and Aristophanes and his play *The Birds*, a work on which Dunbar was an authority. Heck’s point is rather easy to pick up on: as famous as Lewis was, he found the time to befriend a younger scholar, respected her scholarly contributions, and benefited from her friendship.

Chapter 17 covers Lewis’s friendship with Cambridge Shakespeare scholar Muriel Bradbrook. As Heck explains, “During Lewis’s second year of teaching in Cambridge, Dr. Bradbrook, Fellow of Girton College and University Lecturer, invited Lewis to dinner at Girton College along with Nan Dunbar” (317). Bradbrook was both a medievalist and Renaissance scholar, and a year after the dinner Lewis wrote her asking her to critique a paper he had written on Chaucer. Heck points out several other exchanges between Lewis and

Bradbrook, making it clear the relationship was reciprocal, and Lewis held Bradbrook's scholarship in high regard. The second half of the chapter offers a good biography of Bradbrook, emphasizing her distinguished career. Chapter 18 is about Lewis's friendship with one of his most successful students, Derek Stanley Brewer. Brewer first came to Oxford in 1942 to be interviewed for a scholarship at Magdalen College. Brewer was awarded the scholarship, but was called back into action, and served as an infantry officer from 1942 to 1945. He completed his undergraduate studies in December 1947. While he was at Oxford, he became friends with Lewis, and the two of them kept in touch after he left to be a Lecturer of English at Birmingham. In 1955, Brewer would invite Lewis to be the General Editor of Nelson's Medieval and Renaissance Library, a series of medieval writings that had been largely neglected by the publishers (326). In 1964 Brewer became a Lecturer in English at Cambridge, becoming a Fellow of Emmanuel College. In 1977, he became Master of Emmanuel. During his academic career, he published several books on Chaucer, gaining recognition as a leading medievalist of his generation.

The nineteenth chapter looks at Lewis's friendship with Frank Colin Bryan, a Baptist pastor and author of several Christian books. Bryan was at Tyndale Baptist Church, Bristol when he first met Lewis at a Socratic Club meeting in January 1943. This would be followed by two conferences in 1943 and 1945. Heck does a good job of introducing the reader to Bryan and his career and participation with the Socratic Club. The latter half of the chapter is on Bryan's friendship with Lewis and puts a strong emphasis on what the two men had in common when it came to their Christian faith, and what they read and published. The twentieth chapter focuses on the friendship between Lewis and another one of his students, Mary Shelley. Shelley studied with Lewis from 1931 to 1933 and began her teaching career shortly after her graduation in 1935. Shelley would marry Daniel Neylan, and the couple would have two children, Sarah and Mary Elizabeth. Lewis agreed to be Sarah's godfather and would be an active and influential figure for her and the other members of the family. Heck finishes the chapter by looking at Lewis's role as a mentor to Mary Neylan, particularly when it came to what she read and matters of faith. The last chapter presents an interesting take on Lewis's support and friendship for Janie Moore's daughter, Maureen. The best aspect of the chapter is Heck's biography of Maureen, especially his account of her adulthood. Heck also offers an easy to follow explanation of the estate agreement the Lewis brothers had with Janie and Maureen Moore, and how both men cared for Maureen's welfare. The chapter has a fairy-tale ending, with the reader being told the true story of how Maureen became Dame Dunbar, 8th Baronetess of Hempriggs.

Overall, Heck's book succeeds at sharing with the reader many of the interesting stories and details that arise from analyzing Lewis's friendships.

Should Heck offer a revised edition, or a second book on Lewis's other friendships, the inclusion of more recent sources would be welcomed. Finally, as is the case with any book on Lewis, some readers will find certain aspects, statements, or sections questionable. In an ironic twist, objections of these sorts are a large part of what defined many of the friendships Lewis held dear.

—James Stockton

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THE UNDISCOVERED C.S. LEWIS: ESSAYS IN MEMORY OF CHRISTOPHER W. MITCHELL. Edited by Bruce R. Johnson. Hampden, CT: Winged Lion Press, 2021. 398 p. 9781935688136. \$24.99.

WHEN CHRISTOPHER MITCHELL, FORMER DIRECTOR of the Marion E. Wade Center, died suddenly in 2014, he left behind not only friends and family, but also a large number of scholars whose work had been touched by his kindness and generosity. Bringing together new essays by quite a few of these scholars, this memorial volume does so much more than just honor him. The essays in this collection break new ground in Lewis studies, inviting other scholars into exciting new conversations. The idea for the volume began when Mitchell gave a talk at the Arizona C.S. Lewis Society outlining six areas of Lewis studies that needed more academic work. In editing the book, Johnson was able to combine the eighteen essays spanning these six categories into three manageable sections: "Historical Studies," "Assessments and Reassessments," and "Interactions with Contemporaneous or Current Writers." Each of these essays presents new research in Lewis studies that is sometimes enlightening, sometimes surprising, and occasionally even challenging to long-held thoughts about Lewis and his world. However the reader finds herself responding to any individual essay, this collection opens many doors to new scholarship on the life, work, and influences of C.S. Lewis.

The book begins with a forward by Doug Gresham, C.S. Lewis's stepson. Gresham presents a moving description of conversations and adventures he shared with Mitchell. This is followed by Bruce Johnson's preface explaining the events that led to the idea of this book, followed by several paragraphs thanking the many people who helped make this collection possible.

The first section of the book, "Historical Studies," is made up of five essays that approach Lewis studies from a different historical angle. Each of