

Lewis, Clive Staples (1898-1963)

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Lewis, Clive Staples

(1898–1963),

Scholar, writer and Christian apologist. Born in Belfast, he was educated mainly privately until he entered University College, Oxford, in 1917. He was Tutor in English Literature and Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, from 1925 to 1954, when he was appointed Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature in the University of Cambridge. His critical works include *The Allegory of Love* (1936), *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (1942), *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama* (vol. 3 of the Oxford History of English Literature, 1954), *An Experiment in Criticism* (1961), and *The Discarded Image* (1964). At Magdalen, Lewis underwent a gradual conversion described in his spiritual autobiography, *Surprised by Joy* (1955). He became widely known as a Christian apologist through a series of broadcast talks given between 1941 and 1944 and later published in book form (*Mere Christianity*, 1952), and through a number of other works of public theology which had a very wide circulation; these included *The Problem of Pain* (1940), *The Screwtape Letters* (1942; ostensibly from a senior devil to his nephew, a junior devil), *The Abolition of Man* (1943), *The Great Divorce* (1945), *Miracles* (1947), and *The Four Loves* (1960). Lewis was equally noted for his fiction, which, together with that of George MacDonald and J.R.R. Tolkien, shaped the genres of science fiction and fantasy. This work includes the Cosmic Trilogy – *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938), *Perelandra* (1943), and *That Hideous Strength* (1945) –, the seven Chronicles of Narnia, beginning with *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), and *Till We Have Faces* (1956). Like Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, much of Lewis's work took shape in the company of a circle of literary friends known as 'The Inklings', who met from the early 1930's to the late 1940's to talk and read aloud their works. In 1956 Lewis married Joy Gresham (*née* Davidman); *A Grief Observed* (originally pub. under a pseudonym in 1961) is a profound treatment of bereavement written after her death. Lewis's clarity, wit, and skill as a communicator made him one of the most influential Christian writers of the 20th century. He continues to exercise deep and ecumenical appeal, and his children's books have been widely adapted for film and television.

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