

# C. S. LEWIS DEAD; AUTHOR, CRITIC, 64

## Cambridge Professor Wrote 'The Screwtape Letters'

Special to The New York Times

LONDON, Nov. 24 — Prof. C. S. Lewis, literary historian, Christian apologist and author of "The Screwtape Letters," died Friday at his home in Headington, Oxford. He would have been 65 years old this Friday.

Professor Lewis resigned last month as professor of medieval and Renaissance English at Cambridge University, after suffering heart trouble. He also resigned his fellowship at Magdalen College, Oxford.

Although he was acknowledged in university circles as a brilliant lecturer and tutor, his wider fame rested on his three dozen or so books. He wrote science-fiction and children's stories as well as works on literature and religion.

In paperback editions alone, about one million copies of his books have been sold.

He married Mrs. Joy Davidman Gresham of New York, poet and essayist, in 1956. She died three years ago.

### Religion Led to Success

Clive Staples Lewis had a natural literary gift, but he attained success as a writer after he had returned to religion.

After "The Screwtape Letters" appeared in London in 1942 and in New York the next year, the author's numerous books began to sell rapidly. In this satirical book a devil named Screwtape wrote letters to his young nephew, Wormwood, about how to lead a man to perdition.

Professor Lewis never mentioned many details of his life, even in an autobiography, "Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life." He was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, on Nov. 29, 1898, son of A. J. Lewis, a solicitor, and Flora August Hamilton Lewis, a clergyman's daughter.

As a boy, he was poor at games but read a great deal. G. K. Chesterton, himself a paradoxical and religious writer, was an early favorite of the boy. His mother died when he was young. At 10, he was sent to school with a clergyman for headmaster who generously wielded a cane and shouted admonitions to "Think!"

### Lost Faith at School

During his schooling, he lost faith in Christianity. In 1955, when he had completed "Chronicles of Narvia," seven religious allegories for children, he wrote that he thought "stories of this kind could steal past" the inhibition that had paralyzed his own religion. "An obligation to feel can freeze feelings," he commented.

He became a classics scholar at University College, Oxford, in 1918. In the last year of World War I Mr. Lewis served as a second lieutenant in the Somerset Light Infantry. He was wounded in the back, as he said dryly, "oddly enough by a British shell." Returning to Oxford he became a lecturer at University College and a fellow and tutor at Magdalen College.

His subject was medieval and Renaissance English literature. Over the years he gained a scholarly reputation capped by his "English Literature in the 16th Century," in 1954, and "Experiment in Criticism" in 1961.

In "The Allegory of Love," in 1936, which won the Hawthornden Literary Prize, Professor Lewis pointed out an important change in human outlook that had come in "the slow evolution of the passion of human love, and the slow evolution of the literary expression of that passion through the Middle Ages."

### Joined Anglican Church

At the same time, he built a larger reputation as a novelist and essayist dealing with religion. In his own words: "I gave up Christianity at about 14. Came back to it when getting on for 30. Not an emotional conversion; almost purely philosophical. I didn't want to," he continued. "I'm not in the least the religious type. I want to be let alone, to feel I'm my own master; but since the facts seemed to be just the opposite, I had to give in." He became a member of the Anglican Church.

At Oxford, Professor Lewis led a cloistered life. His pleasures were walking and, as he said, "sitting up till the small hours in someone's college rooms, talking nonsense, poetry, theology, metaphysics over beer, tea and pipes."

In 1940 he wrote "The Problem of Pain," which stated the Christian position that the universe was not evil simply because the Ruler of the universe believed in discipline.

From 1954 until 1963, he was professor of medieval and Renaissance literature at Cambridge University.

His books included "Dymer," written under the name of Clive Hamilton, 1926; "The Pilgrim's Regress," 1933; "Out of the Silent Planet," 1938; "Rehabilitations," 1939; "The Personal Heresy," with E. M. W. Tilliard, 1939; "A Preface to Paradise Lost," 1942; "The Case for Christianity," 1942; "Perelandra," 1943; "Christian Behavior," 1943; "Abolition of Man," 1943; "Beyond Personality," 1944; "That Hideous Strength," 1945; "Miracles," 1947; "Weight of Glory," 1949; "Mere Christianity," 1952, and "Studies in Words," 1960.

Professor Lewis wrote "Miracles" in 1947. This was an expression of belief that the existence of Christianity was a miracle in itself, so he believed in miracles. This book had a particularly influential effect on one person, Mrs. Gresham.

Daughter of a New York Jewish couple, she had been graduated from Hunter College, joined the Communist party, be-



Walter Stoneman

Prof. C. S. Lewis

came a movie critic for The New Masses, was married to William Lindsay Gresham and become disillusioned with the party. When her husband had a nervous breakdown, she turned to prayer. She read Professor Lewis's book, and it led her to attend Presbyterian services. Eventually it led her, after her divorce, to Professor Lewis himself.