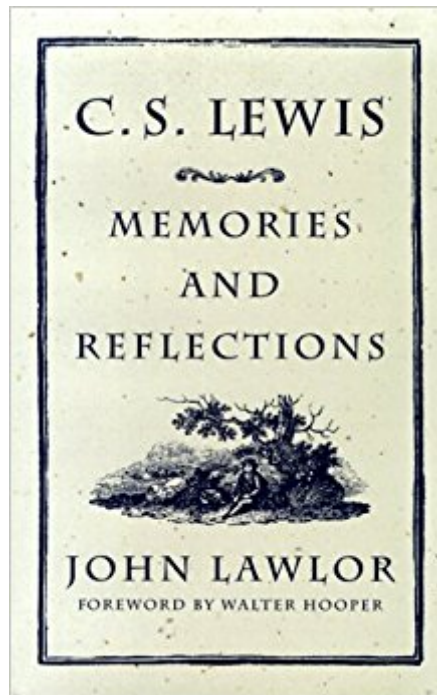




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C.S. Lewis: Memories And Reflections



Synopsis

As the centenary of the birth of C.S. Lewis approaches and the number of his surviving friends necessarily dwindles, a uniquely personal book by one of these privileged few offers an intimate portrait of Lewis the tutor, scholar, and friend, along with new insights into his towering literary and scholarly achievement. From his rare vantage point as Lewis's student, friend, and professional colleague, Lawlor recalls Lewis "in his habit as he lived." There is an unforgettable account of studying under Lewis and an enchanting depiction of undergraduate life at Oxford between the wars. To round out his picture, Lawlor draws on the recollections of other associated of Lewis, including a close comparison with J.R.R. Tolkien. These sketches are complemented by an exposition of Lewis's science fiction and the Chronicles of Narnia, There is also an assessment of Lewis's neglected notion of "happiness," noting its links with nineteenth-century English romanticism. After measuring Lewis's scholarly achievement, Lawlor concludes with his own understanding of this complex man, in whom "maddening obstinacies and sword-sharp disclaimers co-existed with an untroubled awareness of the highest order." The book is illustrated with previously unpublished personal correspondence, annotations from Lewis's personal library, and a hitherto unrecorded photograph of a young Lewis newly returned to Oxford from the First World War. Walter Hooper, Lewis's literary executor who has contributed the Foreword, calls Lawlor's memoir "a treasure...almost as good as another work from Lewis's pen."

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Customer Reviews

The centennial of C.S. Lewis's birth is upon us, and it is not surprising that a slew of publications mark this milestone, as his popularity continues unabated. In fact, more than 1.5 million copies of his works are sold annually. Lewis (1898-1963) was a professor of English at Oxford and Cambridge, and he made significant contributions in that subject. A Christian apologist who used popular essays and literature to justify belief in Christianity and clarify the elements of belief, he is best known for his children's books (especially the Chronicles of Narnia, begun in 1950 with *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*) and his space trilogy, as well as from the recent movie *Shadowlands*, which portrays his relationship with Joy Davidman, whom he married and soon lost to cancer. The *C.S. Lewis Readers' Encyclopedia* contains more information about Lewis than most of us would want to know—good news in the case of all cult figures, for there are those who want to know everything. Major entries on Lewis's chief works, relatives, and acquaintances and lesser entries on almost everything else associated with Lewis—every letter to the editor, every poem, receives its own entry—are arranged alphabetically. All but the briefest articles include a bibliography. Also included are a brief biography; an appendix listing Lewis resources, including web pages, bookstores, centers, and the like; and a chronology of his life. With a perspective influenced by their experience in political science, editors Schultz (coeditor of *The Encyclopedia of the Republican Party/The Encyclopedia of the Democratic Party*, LJ 11/1/96) and West (*The Politics of Revelation and Reason*, Univ. Pr. of Kansas, 1996) present articles on those who influenced Lewis (e.g., Aristotle and Aquinas) and on his ideas (e.g., "Friendship," "Prayer," and "Natural Law"). This welcome approach helps to elucidate his thought. This is sure to become an essential reference for students of Lewis's works. The *Pilgrim's Guide*, concerned specifically with Lewis's Christian beliefs, collects 17 articles by authors who are all committed Christians of a conservative bent. They make no bones about their faith and for the most part agree with Lewis on certain moral issues such as abortion and homosexuality. Some of the essays examine the origins of his thought, others look at his method of apologetics, and still others consider his critique of contemporary Christianity. While this book discusses his children's literature and his space trilogy, it does so in terms of the theology behind them. A fine bibliographical essay by Diana Pavlac Glyer on books and other resources, as well as a Lewis time line, complement the essays. Those who agree with Lewis, and serious students, will find much to like in this collection. In *C.S. Lewis: Memories and Reflections*, Lawlor (English, emeritus, Univ. of Keele, Great Britain) offers insights into Lewis's personality and little-known details about already-known incidents through this memoir of his friendship with Lewis. (He was Lewis's student, friend, and professional colleague.) Enhanced by the inclusion of previously unpublished correspondence and a previously unpublished photo of Lewis just returned

from World War II, this work provides a weighty assessment of Lewis's scholarship and, like the others, defends Lewis from his critics?in this case the literary critics. This makes a welcome addition to Lewis biography. Also for the serious reader, Branches to Heaven looks at Lewis's work for the purpose of examining the inner man and finds an unsettled convert. Como (editor of C.S. Lewis at the Breakfast Table and Other Reminiscences, Harvest: Harcourt, 1992) quotes extensively from the few sermons extant. Like Lawlor, he adds interesting tidbits to the Lewis biography and defends him from his critics. Como generally reexamines Lewis's writing and his life from the perspective of rhetoric and in doing so adds some good insights into Lewis the man.?Augustine J. Curley, O.S.B., Newark Abbey, NJCopyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"A welcome addition to Lewis biography." -- Library Journal

I have been a fan of Lewis since the 1950's - maybe in was 1949 when my Sunday School teacher gave me The Screwtape Letters. I picked up C. S. Lewis: Memories and Reflections at a reduced price table in my favorite book store at Cape Cod. When I got back to our beach cottage I opened the book and could scarcely put it down for three days. It was like spending those days in the company of Lewis himself.Lawlor was an intimate friend - maybe there's no other kind vis-a-vis C. S. Lewis. Page after page I had a sense of Lewis' presence especially through Lawlor's eyes. I recently read an article about what is important about a classroom education - the writer concluded that it was about the presence of the teacher and his/her love of their experience of knowledge and the exchange of those loves with other 'lovers'.Lawlor can be a challenge to read but I am a subscriber to The London Review of Books, The New Yorker and The Atlantic. I keep a dictionary at hand and use the PC to Google references - such as Lawlor's Britishisms and (to me) obscure scholars imposed by dons.A few quotes will suffice to suggest how Lewis shouldered his way into my 3 day retreat with him:Lawlor: "the cut and parry of prolonged fierce, masculine argument"; "the degree of open-mindedness he practised that he chose me for a Magdalen award;" "Lewis was one of the most cheerful givers, according to his means, who ever lived;" Lewis: "The student is, or ought to be, a young man who is already beginning to follow learning for its own sake, and who attaches himself to an older student, not precisely to be taught, but to pick up what he can, (I'm not your schoolmaster, you know)."Finally, a quote from the Postscript: Lawlor on Lewis' absolute distinctiveness, "I have to say that it was his being able to accept, with unusual simplicity and absolute constancy, the concept of Divine forgiveness of sin...being able to receive it, and to rejoice in it as an objective fact, so that henceforward there could be no dwelling on failure." And this was

his attitude toward students and others with their off-the-wall ideas and lack of understanding.

If you happen to have a copy of the out of print book LIGHT ON C.S. LEWIS, you have basically all the comments that Lawlor has to give about his memories of the man. As for the commentary Lawlor gives on Lewis's books, I found it uneven. Unlike the lucid Lewis, Lawlor's sentences are often murky and their meanings difficult to understand. His commentaries on Lewis's books didn't really enlighten anything. I have been an avid reader of Lewis for a long time, and this is the first time I bought a book about Lewis in which I returned to the bookstore for a refund when I was finished.

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