

PREFACE TO THE
HENDRICKSON CLASSIC BIOGRAPHIES
EDITION

It is an honor and privilege to have *And God Came In* as part of Hendrickson's classic biographies series. It not only encourages me as the book's author to see the book "Revived," so to speak, but it is especially pleasing to know that the true story of Joy Davidman, particularly her years with C. S. Lewis, will be offered to the public in an exciting new format. To be sure, this brilliant American novelist, poet, and critic is no longer obscure like she was before *And God Came In* first appeared more than a quarter century ago. Nevertheless, Joy Davidman, if not unknown, needs to be rescued from the utterly false images of her that have appeared in two *Shadowlands* films. Both movies relied heavily upon my research and writing, but in both films the producers and screenplay writers distorted important facts for dramatic effect and for purposes of promoting their own biases. Joy, for instance, never begged C. S. Lewis to marry her so that she could remain living in England. On the contrary, Lewis insisted on the marriage rather than see her deported to America. Furthermore, when Joy suffered from a dreadfully advanced case of cancer, the lengthy and unexpected remission, according to her physician, resulted primarily from the healing prayer of an Anglican priest, Father Peter Bide, not as a consequence of the radiation therapy depicted in the

film. In the same fictional vein the motion picture shows C. S. Lewis devastated and nearly robbed of his faith when Joy's cancer returns with a vengeance and causes her death. But letters Professor Lewis wrote after Joy's death, as well as testimony of several of his friends, reveal that his faith and courage survived in robust fashion.

I am deeply grateful for the advent of this new edition of the Joy Davidman story. It is my earnest prayer the reader will find that the true story of Joy's life is much more interesting and God glorifying than the story that the fictional films offer.

Lyle W. Dorsett
January 2009

PREFACE TO THE 1982 EDITION

There was absolutely nothing ordinary about Joy Davidman Lewis. Her IQ was unusually high; her memory nearly photographic. She read H. G. Wells's *Outline of History* at age eight and promptly announced her atheism. A voracious reader, ready for college by age fourteen, Joy postponed matriculation until the following year. Graduation from Hunter College came at nineteen; Joy was awarded a master's degree at Columbia University three semesters later. During the depression of the 1930s, Joy Davidman grew disillusioned with the American economic system and joined the Communist Party. After teaching high school for two years, she experimented with scriptwriting in Hollywood. By 1940 the twenty-five-year-old dynamo was serving on the staff of a weekly magazine and, in addition to editing a book of poetry, had published a poetry book of her own as well as a novel and numerous pieces in magazines.

The Davidman family was Jewish, but socialism and rationalism—not Judaism—comprised their religion. The first in a series of disappointments to Joy's family came in 1942 when she married William Lindsay Gresham. Not only a gentile and a Southerner, he was also an impoverished freelance writer who supplemented his income singing folk songs in Greenwich Village nightclubs. Although Joy's family was delighted when she gave birth to two healthy sons, they were dismayed in 1947 when she embraced Christianity and was baptized.

The new Christian had a knack for astounding people. If her Jewish relatives were stunned by her marriage and conversion, her

literary colleagues were perplexed by the fact that she published only one more novel, turning from writing fiction and poetry to Christian apologetics. Finally she angered some of the Anglican world and bewildered all when she moved to England, and, after her divorce, married celebrated bachelor C. S. Lewis.

Joy Davidman continued to shock people until the day she died. Doctors had pronounced her cancer incurable. Near what was assumed to be the end, physicians gave her only days to live. But the plucky and unpredictable woman emerged from her bed, made of Lewis a happy husband, traveled to Ireland and Greece, and began work on another book.

I decided to write a biography of this most remarkable woman because her story needs to be told. Not only has there been no one to step forward and write about her life, the little that is known about her is obscured by the shadow of C. S. Lewis. Joy Davidman Lewis had a full and fascinating life before she ever met the renowned writer. Furthermore, she was markedly more important to him than their brief time together might suggest.

Her story must be told because it glorifies God rather than herself or C. S. Lewis. Joy was not a saintly person. Few people remember her as being particularly righteous. She most certainly did not appear pious. The point is that for over three decades she was a tortured soul who sought fulfillment in numerous places—to no avail. After her encounter with Christ, Joy did experience meaning, direction, happiness, and eventually peace of mind. She did not *find* these riches; they were a *gift* from God.

What is notable about Joy's life is not that she was imperfect after conversion; the significance of her life is that she did grow into spiritual maturity. To be sure, her old nemesis, self-will, emerged from time to time; more than one person was the victim of her volatile temper and acerbic tongue. Nevertheless, as she

allowed Jesus to become the Lord of her life, he changed her and he was able to use her in strikingly important ways. There is a lesson here for us.

L. W. D.
September 1982