

C.S. Lewis                      1898 – 1963

Professor of English Literature, Magdalene College, Oxford.

Chair in Medieval and Renaissance Literature, Cambridge University.

Author of 73 books, spanning 11 literary genre.

Member of the “Inklings”, the informal literary discussion group notably including J.R.R Tolkien, Owen Barfield, and Charles Williams.

Lewis considered himself atheist from the age of 15 until his reconversion in 1929.

*Wrote Lewis: “You must picture me alone in that room in Magdalen, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him who I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed, perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all of England.”*

Lewis joined the Church of England and became one of the leading Christian apologists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

One of the main theses of Lewis apologia is that there is a common morality throughout all humanity which he refers to as “natural law”.

# THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS

Published 1942

Consists of 31 letters from senior demon “Screwtape” to junior tempter “Wormwood” on how best to destroy a human soul.

The central idea of The Screwtape Letters: The road to perdition is a gentle slope; “soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts”.

3 recurring themes:

Pride: A swollen sense of self. The essential vice leading to all others. The complete anti-God state of mind.

Rationalization of evil: Vice unconscious of itself. A state of moral blindness. The rationalization of bad habits.

Temptations of the flesh: Anesthetizing behaviors in contrast to our convictions. Our wounds are deeper than our convictions.

The Characters:

Screwtape: A senior demon in Hell’s bureaucracy. The uncle and supervisor/mentor of Wormwood. The author of the letters and the only “voice” in the book.

Wormwood: A junior tempter assigned to the corruption of one particular human. Wormwood is the protégé of Screwtape and the recipient of the letters.

The Patient: The human that Wormwood is assigned to corrupt into Hell.

The Enemy: God

Our Father Below: Satan

## THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS

1. MATERIALISM: "Jargon, not argument, is your best ally in keeping him from the church".
2. DISAPPOINTMENT: "One of our great allies at present is the church itself.
3. PASSIVE AGGRESSION: "Domestic hatred usually expresses itself by saying things which would appear quite harmless on paper..."
4. PRAYER: "The best thing ... is to keep the patient from the serious intention of praying altogether".
5. WAR: "...contented worldliness is rendered useless".
6. UNCERTAINTY: "There is nothing like suspense or anxiety for barricading a human's mind against the Enemy".
7. DISBELIEF: "Our policy...is to conceal ourselves".
8. THE LAW OF UNDULATION: "We want cattle who can finally become food; He wants servants who can finally become sons".
9. EMOTIONAL/SPIRITUAL TROUGHS: "A moderated religion is as good for us as no religion at all – and more amusing".
10. VANITY: "By it we rescue annually thousands of humans from temperance, chastity, and sobriety of life".
11. FLIPPANCY: "If prolonged, the habit of flippancy builds up around a man the finest armor-plating against the Enemy that I know".
12. SIN: "Murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick".
13. PAINS AND PLEASURES: "it is always desirable to substitute the standards of the World, or convention, or fashion, for a human's own real likings and dislikings".
14. HUMILITY: "All virtues are less formidable to us once the man is aware that he has them, but this is especially true of humility".
15. THE FUTURE: "We want a whole race perpetually in pursuit of the rainbow's end, never honest, nor kind, nor happy 'now'..."
16. CHURCHGOING: "...the search for a suitable church makes the man a critic where the Enemy wants him to be a pupil".

17. GLUTTONY: "One of the great achievements of the last hundred years has been to deaden the human conscience on that subject".
18. MARRIAGE: "The whole philosophy of Hell rests on recognition that one thing is not another thing, and, specifically, that one self is not another self".
19. GOD'S LOVE: "...the Enemy really loves the humans. That, of course, is an impossibility".
20. SEX AND MARRIAGE: "The aim is to guide each sex away from those members of the other with whom spiritually helpful, happy, and fertile marriages are most likely".
21. POSSESSION: "...the word 'Mine' in its fully possessive sense cannot be uttered by a human being about anything".
22. TRUE CHRISTIANS: "The sort of creature who'd find 'ME' funny".
23. HISTORICAL JESUS: "... direct men's devotion to something which does not exist, for each "historical Jesus" is unhistorical".
24. SPIRITUAL PRIDE: "...the strongest and most beautiful of the vices".
25. CHANGE: "The horror of the same old thing is one of the most valuable passions we have produced in the human heart".
26. UNSELFISHNESS: "If people knew how much ill-feeling unselfishness occasions, it would not be so often recommended from the pulpit".
27. FALSE SPIRITUALITY: "Now is the time for raising intellectual difficulties about prayer...".
28. WORLDLINESS: "Prosperity knits a man to the world. He feels that he is 'finding his place in it', while really it is finding it's place in him".
29. FEAR AND COWARDICE: "...the act of cowardice is all that matters; the emotion of fear is, in itself, no sin and, though we enjoy it, does us no good".
30. REALITY: "Your patient...will have no difficulty in regarding his emotion at the sight of human entrails as a revelation of reality and his emotion at the sight of happy children or fair weather as mere sentiment".
31. CHRISTIAN DEATH: "Did you mark how naturally – as if he'd been born to it – the earth-born vermin entered the new life".

AND FINALLY; WORMWOOD IS CONSUMED.

