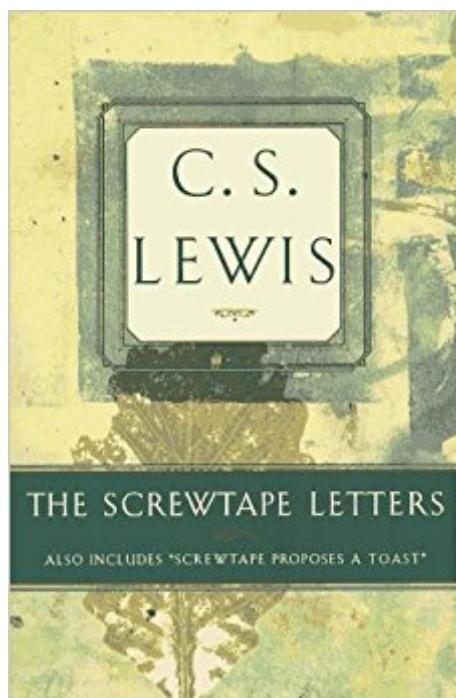


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The Screwtape Letters: Includes Screwtape Proposes A Toast



Synopsis

A "Positively Diabolical" Correspondence "My dear Wormwood,..." So begins this product of C.S. Lewis's wickedly funny imagination, a correspondence between two devils, Screwtape and his young nephew, Wormwood. As the senior fiend advises his young apprentice in leading humanity astray, Lewis delves into questions about good and evil, temptation, repentance, and grace, offering knowledge and guidance to all who are trying to live good Christian lives.

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Customer Reviews

Who among us has never wondered if there might not really be a tempter sitting on our shoulders or dogging our steps? C.S. Lewis dispels all doubts. In *The Screwtape Letters*, one of his bestselling works, we are made privy to the instructional correspondence between a senior demon, Screwtape, and his wannabe diabolical nephew Wormwood. As mentor, Screwtape coaches Wormwood in the finer points, tempting his "patient" away from God. Each letter is a masterpiece of reverse theology, giving the reader an inside look at the thinking and means of temptation. Tempters, according to Lewis, have two motives: the first is fear of punishment, the second a hunger to consume or dominate other beings. On the other hand, the goal of the Creator is to woo us unto himself or to transform us through his love from "tools into servants and servants into sons." It is the dichotomy between being consumed and subsumed completely into another's identity or being liberated to be utterly ourselves that Lewis explores with his razor-sharp insight and wit. The most brilliant feature of *The Screwtape Letters* may be likening hell to a bureaucracy in which "everyone is perpetually concerned about his own dignity and advancement, where everyone has a grievance, and where

everyone lives the deadly serious passions of envy, self-importance, and resentment." We all understand bureaucracies, be it the Department of Motor Vehicles, the IRS, or one of our own making. So we each understand the temptations that slowly lure us into hell. If you've never read Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* is a great place to start. And if you know Lewis, but haven't read this, you've missed one of his core writings. --Patricia Klein

C.S. Lewis was a professor of medieval and Renaissance literature at Oxford and Cambridge universities who wrote more than thirty books in his lifetime, including *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the *Space Trilogy*, and *Mere Christianity*. He died in 1963.

I could not find my copy, and I wanted to read it again, and I bought a copy for my sister. If you like C. S. Lewis you will love this book. It isn't difficult to read, (as I know he can be), rather, these are letters written from Screwtape, whom Mr Lewis refers to as the devil; to his nephew and pupil Wormwood. In these letters, Screwtape explains to Wormwood what he is doing wrong in trying to 'turn the patient' which is how Screwtape describes getting a Christian person to turn away from the Enemy, as he refers to God. Don't worry about reading about the devil, as I was concerned with when I started to read it. But the more you read it the better and closer relationship you can develop with God, which of course is what Mr. Lewis has intended. The author is pure genius. I have read *Mere Christianity*, *The Problem with Pain* and *A Grief Observed*. I have also read his space trilogy *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra* and *That Hideous Strength*; which are all wonderful. Word of warning, *A Grief Observed* is a difficult, depressing book. DO NOT READ IT if you are grieving about anything or one. I hope this helps and helps people discover the genius, as I have, of C. S. Lewis.

C.S. Lewis brings forth a rather unorthodox look in the life and times of the world of the devil. Using only two characters being the senior Demon Screwtape and his young demonic nephew Wormwood we learn through Screwtape's letters the finer nuances of tempting the patient who is in fact the human being living his life on earth. During a series of instructional letters Screwtape gives step by step instruction to leading this human being down the path to damnation. Wormwood being an inexperienced tempter is sometimes chastised and at other times encouraged in his demonic antics. Screwtape shows to one and all that demonic acts can be cleverly disguised and will lead the faltering human to continue bad acts but without the person feeling any guilt or sense that he is doing something wrong which will lead him down below instead of high above. Screwtape gets aggravated when Wormwood takes the easy ways of temptation

which shows laziness and lack of attention to demonic detail. The forces of good are called the "enemy" in which Screwtape has much respect for and inspires Screwtape to be even more devious and hard on his young trainees such as Wormwood. His letters showed herein reinforces the forces of the devil are still very much among us.

One of C.S. Lewis' greatest. As it says on the back cover, "A Masterpiece of Satire on Hell's Latest Novelties and Heaven's Unanswerable Answer. Inside flap "wildly comic yet deadly serious". For the unfamiliar, Screwtape (assistant to the Devil) is writing instructions to Wormwood (novice demon in charge of securing the damnation of an ordinary young man by setting up temptations which are triumphed over. As a Christian, it was humorous to see the satire while being a participant observer from the pew and the world how hard the devil works (often very successfully) to pull Christians (me too) away from "The Enemy" (God). A bonus, perhaps even better, is another essay "Screwtape Proposes a Toast" (In Hell at the annual dinner of the 'Tempters' Training College for young Devils. This is a must read for all Christians and even non-Christians. Note: The sexual content is not explicit, but only to show how sex is used as a temptation to draw people to the dark side.
(Remember C S Lewis is of Narnia fame)

I really enjoyed how The Screwtape Letters was laid out. The preface pointing out that things in these letters can't be trusted because of the author and the reality of time put me in a mind set to trust nothing. I'm constantly going back and forth trying to see half truths and true lies. It can be a bit dizzying. But it shows the reality of what side these letters are coming from. With that in mind, as well, the constant use of 'the Enemy', if not constantly monitored can put you in a mindset of being on Screwtape's side. It's the whole them and us mentality, and enemy always means evil (at least in my mind) so it is easy to forget which side is 'evil'. Often I have wondered how the other side spins their version of events and what interpretation of these actions they are assuming. Every side always assumes they are on the right and it was interesting to see what Screwtape's "right" was. The way they all seem to struggle with understanding the 'Enemy' is captivating.

Our church "book club" usually chooses stiffly theological books to read, so we were pleased to find something a little lighter on the schedule for summer. We are captivated by the "Bad is good and Good is bad," idea behind all of Uncle Screwtape's letters to his nephew Wormwood as the apprentice trains to be an effective demon. Between that and unravelling Lewis's criticisms, we are moving slower than one would expect from such a slender book. What really stalls us is that we are

Missouri Synod Lutherans trained to examine every turn of phrase for theological variations and inconsistencies to Biblical teaching of anything not Lutheran. (And we debate the solidness of Lutheran works too.) However, we're pleased to find that for a majority of the time, Lewis manages to follow our Lutheran line of thinking more closely than he does his own Anglican Church. But maybe it's that convolution of bad and good that has us slightly discombobulated. We like Lewis, anyway, and are generously giving him the benefit of the doubt. KL

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