

In The Screwtape Letters, C. S. Lewis provides a series of lessons in the importance of taking a deliberate role in Christian [faith](#) by portraying a typical human life, with all its temptations and failings, seen from devils' viewpoints. Screwtape holds an administrative post in the [bureaucracy](#) ("Lowerarchy") of Hell, and acts as a [mentor](#) to his nephew Wormwood, an inexperienced (and incompetent) tempter. In the thirty-one letters which constitute the book, Screwtape gives Wormwood detailed advice on various methods of undermining [faith](#) and of promoting [sin](#) in "the Patient", interspersed with observations on human nature and on [Christian doctrine](#). In Screwtape's advice, individual benefit and greed are seen as the greatest good, and neither demon can comprehend God's [love](#) for man or acknowledge human virtue.

Versions of the letters were originally published weekly in the Anglican periodical [The Guardian](#), in [wartime](#) between May and November 1941,^{[2][3]} and the standard edition contains an introduction explaining how the author chose to write his story.

Lewis wrote the sequel *Screwtape Proposes a Toast* in 1959 - a critique of certain trends in British public education (Although Britain calls its major private schools "public schools", Lewis is referring to state schools when he criticizes "public education"). Omnibus editions with a new preface by Lewis were published by Bles in 1961 and by Macmillan in 1962.

This Present Darkness takes place in the small college town of Ashton. Bernice Kreuger, a reporter for the *Clarion*, Ashton's town [newspaper](#), is falsely arrested on [prostitution](#) charges after taking a photograph at the annual Ashton Summer Festival. When she is released the next day, she discovers that the film in her camera was destroyed.

Marshall Hogan, owner/editor-in-chief of the *Clarion* decides to go to the town police station/courthouse and confront Alf Brummel, the police chief, about the incident. Brummel denies any wrongdoing on behalf of the police department and insists it was all a mistake. Brummel then advises Marshall to drop the matter. Marshall does not fall for Brummel's story and, ignoring Brummel's advice, begins an investigation.

As the investigation continues, Marshall and Bernice begin to realize that they're onto something much bigger than they thought. They slowly uncover a plot to take over the town via buying the college, that is being carried out by The Universal Consciousness Society, a powerful [New Age](#) group. When the Society decides Marshall has found out too much they take the *Clarion*, and his house. They also falsely accuse him of murder, adultery and molesting his daughter, who attends the college and who unwittingly has been pulled into the Society.

When he and Bernice are caught in a desperate attempt to keep the society from winning out, he is arrested and thrown in jail, and she escapes, running off to find help.

Meanwhile Hank Busche, the unwanted [pastor](#) of the little Ashton Community Church discovers that there are many [demons](#) in the town and wonders why they have all congregated here. When he gets to be a nuisance to the demons they have the Society falsely arrest him for rape.

Hank and Marshall meet in jail. They compare stories and finally put both halves of the puzzle together.

During the time that this is happening, the story takes on a spiritual dimension – revealing a perspective based on the idea of unseen forces at work. The angels who wage warfare for the souls of mankind look and act similar to humans—they have names, they are in charge of specific regions of earth, and they are propelled by heavenly forces that often manifest as wings. They wear armor and wield weapons forged in heaven - most notably, swords. Demons, as well, are depicted as being ink-like shadows in the darkness, flowing from shadow to shadow, until the time comes when they truly reveal themselves as monstrous beasts with bat-wings and armor. Their spiritual combat spans from one-on-one battles to vast armies charging into each other in the "unseen realms" above us.

Meanwhile, Bernice finds help and makes contact with the County Prosecutor, the State Attorney General, and the Feds. When Alf Brummel finds out about this he releases Hank and Marshall. After Hank and Marshall are released they "team up" against the Universal Consciousness Society and the demons working to take over Ashton.