

# C. S. Lewis: A Mere Christian

## The Life and Work of The 20<sup>th</sup> Century's Premier Christian Author

### Prime Lewis

#### *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1933).

- A spiritual journey inspired by John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.
- An allegorical dream and a mystical vision of a distant Western Island.
- Guided by "Contemplation."
- Lewis' "argument by desire."
- The problem of "Virtue."
- The middle path.
- Puritania.

#### *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938).

- Part I of Lewis' Space Trilogy.
- Inspired by H. G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* and David Lindsay's *Voyage to Arcturus*.
- Covert evangelism.
  - "I think that this great ignorance might be a help to the evangelisation of England; any amount of theology can now be smuggled into people's minds under cover of romance without their knowing it." [Quoted in George Sayer, *Jack*, p. 255]
- The power of myth.

#### "Why I Am Not a Pacifist."

- Conscience, Natural Law, and the realities of human behavior.
- The prudent use of force.
- The problem of Pacifism.

#### *A Preface to 'Paradise Lost'* (1942).

- A master assessment.
- The negative response.

#### *The Problem of Pain* (1940).

- Living in enemy-occupied territory.
- Purpose: A defense of the Christian faith that is reasonable and humane in light of the killing and suffering of World War II.
- Some sound theological wisdom.
- A philosophy of Hell.
- A logical, prosecutorial style.
- The lynchpin argument.
  - CSL: "There was a man born among these Jews who claimed to be, or to be the son of, or to be one with the something which is... the awful haunter of Nature and the giver of the moral law. The claim is so shocking – a paradox and even a horror, which we may easily be lulled into taking too lightly – that only two views of this

- man are possible. Either he was a raving lunatic of an unusually abominable type or else he was, and is, precisely what he said. There is no middle way. If the records make the first hypothesis unacceptable, then you must submit to the second.”
- An intellectual approach to the subject.

### ***The Screwtape Letters* (1941).**

- The drama of redemption.
- CSL: “I’ve had this idea of letters from a senior devil to a junior devil.”
- Irony, comedy, and satire.
- The tangled web of delusions that binds serious and conscientious believers.
  - CSL: “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence [anti-supernatural atheism]. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them [the Occult]. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or the magician with the same delight.”
  - Screwtape: “I note with grave displeasure that your patient has become a Christian.... there is no need to despair.... One of our great allies at present is the Church itself.”
  - Screwtape: “[The Enemy] rally does want to fill the universe with a lot of loathesome little replicas of Himself – creatures whose life... will be qualitatively like His own... because their wills freely conform to His.”

### ***Mere Christianity* (1942, ‘43, ‘44).**

- A defender of orthodox Christianity.
- “The Christian Faith As I See It – By a Layman.”
- *Broadcast Talks* (1942), *Christian Behaviour* (1943), and *Beyond Personality* (1944).
- Mere Christianity (1952).
  - A misleading title.
  - An informal primer in Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

### ***That Hideous Strength* (1945).**

- The socio/political message.

### ***The Abolition of Man* (1944).**

- An analysis of the philosophical and moral decline of Western civilization.
- The fundamental concept: The Dao.
- Natural Law and universal virtues.
- The culture war.
- A message for scientists.

### ***The Great Divorce* (1945).**

- The journey from Hell to Heaven.
- The theme of free will.
- G. K. Chesterton: “Hell is a monument to human freedom.”

### ***Miracles* (1947).**

- The key to understanding our universe.
- A parallel (supernatural) realm of reality.
- A naturalistic (closed) universe.
- The supra-rational, the metaphysical, and the supernatural.
- The “miracle” of thought.
- The problem of a materialist view of reality.

