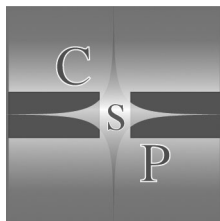


Teaching C.S. Lewis:
A Handbook for Professors, Church Leaders,
and Lewis Enthusiasts

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and Lewis Enthusiasts

by

Richard Hill and Lyle Smith



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This book is dedicated to
David Neuhouser
Professor and mentor for many generations of grateful Lewis readers
and to
Richard L. Nelson
who instigated a life-long love of C.S. Lewis

We must always be working towards the moment at which our pupils are fit to become our critics and rivals.

—C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*

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PREFACE

BRUCE L. EDWARDS, PH.D.

The most frequent question asked by visitors to my C.S. Lewis website is this: *Is there a study guide that will help me understand and teach [title of book] by Lewis?* I am happy to report that I can now say, “Yes, there is!”

Lewis’s life and work continue to inspire and provoke Christians of all ages, dispositions, and communions. He is repeatedly mentioned in surveys by seminarians, pastors, and ordinary church folk as the author most important to their walk of faith. Lewis also continues to be a publishing phenomenon. When one factors in the enormous popularity engendered by the release of the first *Narnia* film, the visibility of and worldwide interest in the fiction, apologetics, and scholarly work of this Anglo-Irish Christian polymath is at an all-time high—as is the frequency of publications about him.

What has been missing in the dramatic groundswell of public fascination with C.S. Lewis is a volume dedicated to equipping new seekers, disciples, mentors, and conveners for teaching and reflecting on his work in a systematic way. I am grateful that my fellow authors, professors, and Lewis enthusiasts Richard Hill and Lyle Smith have produced just such a book. With this publication they have provided countless readers with a quality presentation that does what it promises: chapter by chapter guides and enriches both the individual learner and the dedicated instructor looking for well-articulated and well-informed Lewis insights, background, and resources.

The really good news here is that both Hill and Smith know their subject, having studied and taught the works of Lewis in many venues. For more than two decades, they have led professional and amateur scholars, college students, and churchgoers into greater understanding of and appreciation for C.S. Lewis’s life and legacy.

Each chapter demonstrates a command of essential biography, formative influences, and ongoing impact, and, what is more, Hill and Smith understand (and share) the cardinal Christian convictions that undergird Lewis’s vision. They are able to foreground that vision in an engaging manner as they move through the major texts. Many publications summarize and paraphrase Lewis successfully—but Hill and Smith have provided a work that actually gets inside

the life and mind of Lewis, a text that assists us in discovering how best to teach his ideas and inspire his readership.

Finally, Hill and Smith have learned from Lewis how to speak to their audience with clarity and respect as they present their insights. I commend this work to you as one to which you will return again and again as you share Lewis's works with friends, family, and students.

Bruce L. Edwards
Professor of English
Author of *Not a Tame Lion* (Tyndale, 2005).
<http://www.pseudobook.com/cslewis>
<edwards@bgsu.edu>
Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, OH (USA)
October, 2006

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We would also like to acknowledge Bruce Edwards for his original idea for the book, and our respective wives, Judy Hill and Dorothy Donnelly Smith, for their encouragement and advice. Appreciation is also due to the Edwin Brown Center for Study of C.S. Lewis and the Inklings at Taylor University for providing the Socratic Club poster used on the cover.

Special thanks to two young literary scholars for their invaluable assistance with the manuscript: Katherine Manning, for her editorial suggestions and copyediting expertise, and Shaun Farrell for help with formatting and indexing.

And for their patience and encouragement through the publication process, we are grateful to Andy Nercessian, Carol Koulikourdi, Amanda Millar, and Vlatka Kolic of Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

INTRODUCTION

This handbook is intended as a practical guide for professors, teachers, and non-academic C.S. Lewis enthusiasts who lead Lewis study groups. It can also be used as a supplementary text by students or group members.

Many scholarly volumes expound upon C.S. Lewis's work, but our primary goal is to provide material that can help make any Lewis seminar a success without the weeks or months of research necessary to build a course from scratch. The chapters cover all of Lewis's novels, including the seven books of the *Narnia* series, the space trilogy, *Till We Have Faces*, and *The Great Divorce*. Also included are chapters on teaching *Mere Christianity* and *The Screwtape Letters*, Lewis's most popular apologetic works. Sample reading lists for small groups and a college course syllabus are included in the appendices.

Each of the chapters can be used independently, so that course leaders may choose the books they wish to cover and in which order they wish to cover them. All chapters include the following components:

I. *A biographical sketch of Lewis's life* at the time he was composing the book or series, plus a discussion of his sources and influences. This section provides basic background that eliminates the need to search through several biographies and prefaces for a well-rounded discussion of particular works.

II. *A chapter-by chapter summary* of the book for quick reference or brush-up before class sessions. The summaries can also be read or incorporated into a background handout by course leaders who opt to cover particular sections of novels rather than the entire work.

III. *A discussion of major themes* to help readers understand Lewis's concerns and how he developed them. As with the study questions that follow, much more is provided than will generally be used in a single course, so teachers may pick and choose the items that fit their own teaching priorities.

IV. *Study questions* geared to a range of reading levels, which can be used to stimulate written or oral responses from individuals or groups.

Questions may be mixed, matched, and used in conjunction with original questions from the group leader.

V. A “*For Further Reading*” *annotated bibliography* of books by, about, and/or related to the book under discussion. This section may be useful for teachers and students who want to take discussions to deeper levels.

Both of us have facilitated Lewis discussions in college classrooms, public seminars, and church gatherings, and sharing our understanding of and enthusiasm for Lewis has been a particular joy in our careers. We look forward to hearing from those who make use of our studies, and we welcome comments, corrections, and suggestions for the second edition. Please send all correspondence to rhill@pointloma.edu.

Further Up and Further In,
Richard Hill & Lyle Smith
January, 2007

CHAPTER ONE

THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS AND “SCREWTAPE PROPOSES A TOAST”

I. Historical Context

According to the diary of his brother Warren, the first inspiration for what would become *The Screwtape Letters* came to C.S. Lewis on a Sunday in July 1940, during or after church services. As Lewis explained, the idea for the piece originally called “As One Devil to Another” was “to give all the psychology of temptation from the other point of view.” He apparently came up with the character names the same day, and within a month or so was reading chapters to Warren and the other Inklings, a group of friends and fellow writers.

The narrative’s bad-is-good approach (God is “The Enemy”) may have been influenced by “The Praise of Folly,” an early sixteenth-century satire by the Dutch theologian Erasmus, in which a personified Folly employs pseudo-logic to argue in favor of human foolishness. According to Lewis’s preface, the letters were also inspired by an epistolary novel of the early twenties, *Confessions of a Well-Meaning Woman* by Stephen McKenna. The fictional author of the *Confessions* had an inverted view of her subjects, full of humorous (to the reader) hypocrisy. *Screwtape* makes the most of this narrative device, to the point where Lewis said that he made himself uncomfortable by fitting his reason to inverted diabolical logic.

While Lewis would have liked to portray both the angelic and diabolical sides of the conflict (as did subsequent popular authors, such as Frank Peretti), Lewis said he felt unqualified to even imagine the unearthly goodness of angels. On the other hand, Screwtape and his associates came rather too easily, since, as Lewis quoted ruefully in his preface, ““My heart sheweth me the wickedness of the ungodly.””

When the book was first serialized in the church-based, weekly news magazine *The Guardian* (which later serialized *Great Divorce*), readers loved it for the most part. One exception was a man who canceled his subscription

because he felt the paper was “giving space to someone with diabolical propositions that should never be printed in the *Guardian*.”

Despite the less-than-unanimous praise, the book version was published in 1943 and became a best seller in both the UK and the United States. Lewis was even paid for a movie option, but he later shied away from a proposal to buy all rights and the movie was never made. Between the success of *Screwtape* and the BBC broadcasts of what would become *Mere Christianity*, Lewis was lifted from academic obscurity to minor celebrity. He even appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine, with a drawing of Screwtape on his shoulder.

That Lewis was uncomfortable with the ensuing distinction “famous Christian apologist,” can be seen in the encounter between the narrator in *The Great Divorce* and the Ghost of George MacDonald. Readers can also detect discomfort with fame in Lewis’s preface to a later edition of *Screwtape*, in which he dismisses much of the popularity of the book as due to young people and others thinking that they had to read (or at least claim to have read) *Screwtape* in order to impress others.

During this prolific period of Lewis’s writing, World War II overshadowed all. Lewis was hosting young evacuees from London and living with shortages and rationing. Still, the Inklings (a group of friends and writers, including J.R.R. Tolkien, and Charles Williams) met regularly. As a wounded veteran of the First World War, Lewis served in the home guard, made up of older men mobilized for the expected German invasion. He was also beginning his talks over the BBC and his tour of Army bases. His home life was somewhat chaotic; his “adopted mother” Mrs. Moore was descending into poor health and evacuee children were billeted at the Kilns. Lewis later used the experience with the children as inspiration for beginning the *Narnia* series, and many of the irritations he felt with Mrs. Moore may have found their way into the mother/son sections of *Screwtape*.

Lewis revived the Screwtape character in a 1959 short story for the *Saturday Evening Post* called “Screwtape Proposes a Toast.” Though this later installment featured the distinctive Screwtape writing voice, it is less spiritually focused and much more a commentary on modern society, government, and schools—perhaps the closest Lewis came (at least in large circulation publications) to outright editorializing on current events.

II. Summary

The book has only the barest bones of a story; there is no dialogue, we never learn the name of the “patient,” and not much action takes place until the last chapter. The heart of the book is obviously not in the sketchy action, but rather in Screwtape’s explication of hellish philosophy. The fiction occurs offstage and

is told third-hand, distancing the reader from the characters. The form the work follows most closely is that of the epistolary novel, but the thin plot and rising action are secondary to the novel's Christian apologetic.

Wormwood, a junior tempter, has been assigned a human "patient" to bedevil and turn from God. His uncle Screwtape, a senior devil, is advising him on the best way to achieve this goal. Wormwood's "patient" is a young Englishman living in London during the time of the German bombing "Blitz." The young man decides to become a Christian, and, as he tries to understand and live by his faith, he meets with various difficulties, usually exacerbated by Wormwood. He is troubled by pride and sloth, and he finds it difficult to be charitable to his mother, his fellow parishioners, and others.

A crisis comes when the young man meets and becomes fascinated with worldly people who would lead him away from Christ. But then he meets a Christian girl who is, to Screwtape's disgust, a good influence. As the war intensifies, the young man manages to hold onto his faith despite his fear, so that when he is killed, he is in a state of grace. He meets Christ and the Angels, foiling Wormwood's and Screwtape's machinations.

A subplot concerns the superficially affectionate, yet deadly rivalry between Screwtape and Wormwood. Lewis models Hell on contemporary corporate culture and fascist states, with no real loyalty between denizens for whom "dog eat dog" is a core—and literal—value. Wormwood yearns to rise at Screwtape's expense, and, at one point, exposes his uncle to Satan's secret police for heresy. Screwtape is able to smooth over his indiscretion, but Wormwood is now on his "affectionate uncle's" enemies list. Screwtape continues to advise Wormwood, but he also seeks to terrorize him by veiled threats of what will happen if he fails.

When Wormwood does let the patient slip through his fingers, Screwtape crows triumphantly. In keeping with the rules of Hell, he is authorized to consume Wormwood, which he presages with bloodthirsty gloating.

III. Key Themes

Satan Has No Redeeming Qualities

A concurrent project with *Screwtape* was *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, which shared the aim of *Screwtape* in debunking the notion that Satan is a sort of Promethean Hero or Faustian gentleman. *Perelandra* also took up this theme in a more serious portrayal of the absolute baseness of evil. The pop-culture perception of the Devil as some sort of mischievous adolescent, punished for his spirit of adventure by the pompous authoritarian parent-figure of God, was a simplification of Faust disseminated relentlessly into popular storytelling and

film. Portraying Satan as anti-hero plays right into the Devil's hands, of course—why not, he would seem to say to wavering souls, go along with the dashing rebel? Why not have a little fun and take a break from the goody-goodies and their lemony Father of Light?

But in *Screwtape*, (and perhaps even more shockingly so in *Perelandra*), Lewis shows Satan as thoroughly evil, and evil as thoroughly ugly. The Devil is certainly brilliant (much too brilliant for any human to ever outsmart) and he can at will cloak himself in the personality of a debonair, educated gentleman like Screwtape. But his real personality is inhumanly repellant and extremely dangerous. By choosing selfishness and evil over obedience to God, he has devolved into a monstrous creature. He is to us humans as a disturbed young boy is to the flies he enjoys capturing and tormenting by pulling off their wings.

Likewise, Screwtape presents himself as a suave bureaucrat who has risen to his station as senior devil by intelligence, diabolical diplomacy, and the use of modern psychology. However, the twisted being that delights in cruelty shows through the “company man.” We see the senior tempter’s undisguised delight in Wormwood’s failure to capture a soul for the corporation. He is gloating, sneering, “My poppet, my pignie,” reveling in his imminent, cruel revenge for perceived slights by Wormwood. Likewise in *Perelandra*, the suave, articulate persuader by day gives way to a nasty, idiotically cruel monster that slices open frogs, even tears at shrubbery in a mindless delight in destruction.

For all of his frightening aspects, the Devil is also self-centered, vain, and mendacious to the point of ridiculousness, and throughout the book Lewis echoes Martin Luther and Thomas Moore (whom he quotes in epigraphs after his preface) in suggesting that one of the best weapons against Satan and his machinations is ridicule. He takes this idea an important step forward by including the willingness to ridicule our own shortcomings and vanity when they arise to bedevil us.

Satan is Not Co-Equal with God

In his preface Lewis immediately rejects the Manichean Heresy that God and Satan are spiritual beings of equal power who struggle on a level playing field for control of the universe. Rather than being a co-equal of God, Satan is merely a high angel who went bad. Lewis sees the Devil and his voluntary fallen angels as no threat to God, but a definite threat to those who, by misuse of free will, put themselves outside God’s protection. Screwtape and his minions play havoc with non-believers or lukewarm Christians, but those solidly in “the enemy camp” of Christ are generally shielded from hellish machinations. God is also able to reach into Hell itself at will, as illustrated in Letter XXII, when Screwtape is temporarily transformed into a centipede.

Lewis portrays Hell as neither a serious rival to Heaven nor even necessary. The suffering humans endure at the hands of Satan and his junior devils fulfills no heavenly plan. Hell was not created or even tolerated by God because it serves any purpose. It is, rather, an unfortunate side effect that came with God's grant of free will to his angels and to humans. In Letter XIX, Screwtape relates an "interview" between God and Satan, in which God wishes only that Satan would see the truth and come back to the fold.

Damnation as "The Gentle Slope, Soft Underfoot"

Screwtape takes place during the worst years of the Second World War, when civilians were being terror-bombed by planes and rockets, when many believed that invasion and enslavement by Germany was imminent. Civilians were dying in record numbers, men were falling by the hundreds of thousands on the battlefield. Around the world, both evil and good men perpetrated monstrous cruelties in the name of nationalism. Yet the focus of the book is on a young man and his struggles with the mundane: church membership, which friends to pick, courtship, and petty irritation with his mother, with whom he still lives. As we learn from Screwtape, these seemingly trivial areas, not the more dramatic evils of war and despotism, provide the most fertile ground for sowing the seeds of damnation. Lewis also brings out this theme later in *The Great Divorce*, where the sins of those in Hell—self-pity, possessiveness, petty pride, and the like, are often technically minor.

While Screwtape takes diabolical pleasure in human misery, he often admonishes Wormwood to get down to business—the task is to capture a particular soul, not to delight in wars and disasters. In Letter XII, Screwtape admonishes, "It does not matter how small the sins are, provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the Light and out into the Nothing. Murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick." And later,

Pray do not fill your letters with rubbish about this European War. Its final issue is, no doubt, important, but that is a matter for the High Command. I am not in the least interested in knowing how many people in England have been killed by bombs. In what state of mind they died, I can learn from the office at this end. That they were going to die sometime I knew already. Please keep your mind on your work. (Letter XXIV)

The "work" is, of course, convincing the patient to justify selfishness, to indulge in petty vanities, to practice subtle slights, and otherwise to turn away from the generousness of spirit with which God would have us conduct ourselves during our time on Earth. Screwtape's art is to take all and give nothing, if at all possible. If a patient enjoys his sins, the tempter lacks finesse. If the patient

doesn't even notice that all the small, self-justified sins constitute the surest path to Hell, if it is all "soft underfoot, with no signposts or turnings," then the soul is all the more secure.

IV. Other Themes

The Modern World is Fertile Hunting Ground for Devils: In addition to profound reflections on human nature, damnation, and salvation, *The Screwtape Letters* (and to a greater extent, "Screwtape Proposes a Toast") are also a vehicle for Lewis's criticism of the modern world. Where modernity begins is up for debate, and Lewis would perhaps place the line farther back than most scholars. In some instances, such as the misleading presentation of debonair devils and insipid angels in popular art, the problems go back for centuries. But the "Modern Age" of the Twentieth Century incubates the most trouble.

The Rise of the Government and Corporate Bureaucracy: This is the model of the "Lowerarchy" of Hell: an organization of polite functionaries who smile at one another but can never trust anyone. Totalitarian governments are the fruition of this ethos, wherein monstrous cruelties can be dispensed under the guise of "organization," "order," and "efficiency"; where evil is accompanied, as in the Nazi and Soviet regimes, by well-organized committee meetings, accounting records, and insipid memos.

The Modern Church is also a target of Lewis's scrutiny. The current popularity of what he calls *Christianity and . . .* plays right into Screwtape's hands. In Lewis's day, the "and" comprised Christianity and Spelling Reform, Christianity and the New Order, Christianity and Pacifism, and the like; today, it could be all those plus Christianity and Ecology, Christianity and Lifestyle Tolerance, Christianity and Social Justice, and so on. In both cases the trouble begins when the "and" part of "Christianity and" assumes the greater importance, and the church becomes merely a vehicle for the worship of an ideal or cause other than the love of God, the belief in Christ's atonement for sin, and the spreading of the gospel.

Speculations on the "Historic Jesus" is an area that Lewis, through Screwtape, sees as a potential distraction for the modern church. As a Christian, Lewis believed that Christ actually was fully human, subject by his own plan and design to some limitations of human perception. As a scholar, Lewis welcomed all historic evidence of Jesus' time on Earth. What he objects to is the Screwtapian device of reaching wishful thinking conclusions based on pure speculation and skewed interpretation. When Jesus is portrayed as a

revolutionary, or a pacifist, or a health crank to support modern secular notions, then the “Historical Jesus” becomes another tool of Screwtape.

Modern Culture is a phenomenon upon which Screwtape and Lewis seem to agree, though the former is delighted and the latter appalled by the modern obsession with sex, androgyny, film crooners, the modern education system, and consumer culture. Screwtape is delighted that “Puritanism” is an extreme pejorative in the modern age. Lewis’s apprehension at what he saw in the nineteen-thirties seems certainly justified by subsequent developments in the areas he cited. This area, particularly modern education, is the prime focus of “Screwtape Proposes a Toast.”

V. Teaching Strategies

1. The “bad is good” approach to the narrative is a wonderful device for holding students’ attention and encouraging self-searching, which can lead to productive open discussion sessions. Students can find common ground in discussing self-deceptions and self-serving rationalizations practiced by most people. A “top ten list” of the most common and hypocritical rationalizations for bad behavior can be a diverting and enlightening class activity.
2. Another good general prompt at any point in the reading is, “What are we to think when we find ourselves *agreeing* with Screwtape on *anything*? And what are we to think when Lewis’s views and Screwtape’s views coincide?”
3. An excellent writing exercise is to have students invent their own tempter, give him/her an appropriately ugly Wormwood/Screwtape/Slubgob-style name, and have the tempter write letters to Uncle Screwtape about progress in befuddling the student/“patient.” Sessions where students read excerpts from these letters can be both entertaining and enlightening.
4. The letters are short but full of discussion opportunities, so a “serial” approach to *Screwtape* works well in a course devoted to several of Lewis’s works. In a sixteen-week course which covers six books, three weeks could be devoted to each of five complete works, with two chapters from *Screwtape* discussed each week in addition to the assigned book. Following are questions for each letter, which can be presented as writing assignments or discussion prompts.

The Preface

1. What does Lewis mean on p. vii when he says he does not believe in “the Devil”? What does he believe?
2. What are some important differences between scriptural angels and human conceptions of angels? (pp. viii, ix)
3. Why does Lewis find Goethe’s Mephistopheles “pernicious”? Some background and/or excerpts from the Goethe text would be useful here.
4. What does Lewis imagine to be Satan’s ultimate aim? (pp. xi-xii)
5. What is the book’s real purpose? (xii)

Preface to the First Edition

1. What are the “two equal and opposite errors” humans can fall into about the devils? (3)

The Letters: General Questions

1. What is unusual about the point of view adopted throughout the novel? Why did Lewis choose this point of view for this book?
2. Are there times when Screwtape seems to be speaking for Lewis as well as for himself? Given the fact that Lewis and Screwtape are opposed on ultimate things, how do you account for this apparent overlap or agreement?
3. Is there a story here, or do we see only thirty-one chapters on a random assortment of subjects? If there is a story here, what is it?
4. What themes emerge from the book? For instance, what idea is Lewis presenting about not only the spiritual life of humans, but that of our adversaries as well? How do these ideas connect with one another? Give examples.

Questions on Individual Letters

Letter I

1. Why does Screwtape discourage the use of argument in temptations?
2. Why does Screwtape distrust Reason?
3. Does Screwtape seem to think of “the real” differently than we do? How so?
4. What is the true task of tempters—to teach or to fuddle? What is the difference?

Letter II

1. How does Screwtape see the Church as an ally to Wormwood as he seeks to reverse his “patient’s” conversion to Christ?
2. What risks does God take with us?
3. What part does human pride have in the disillusionment for which Screwtape hopes?

Letter III

1. What sort of picture of the human soul does Screwtape present in the first paragraph? What is the “centre”? What would lie beyond the “centre”? (For younger American groups, this is a good place for a side discussion on English vs. American spelling.)
2. Why does Screwtape want Wormwood to keep the “patient’s” mind on the “inner life”?
3. Why does Screwtape encourage Wormwood to try to make the “patient’s” prayers very “spiritual”?
4. Who is the “elder brother” in the Enemy’s story? What is the point of this allusion?

Letter IV

1. What tensions are beginning to surface between Screwtape and Wormwood?
2. How does Screwtape suggest the “patient” can be kept from the serious intention of praying? What would he substitute in its place?
3. How can inducing the “patient” to focus his attention on the way he “feels” be used to distract him?
4. How does Screwtape fail to understand God?
5. What is the one thing Screwtape fears when a person is praying?

Letter V

1. What is the reason for Screwtape’s impatience with Wormwood? Why is Wormwood so excited about war?
2. How can a war work against Hell?
3. Why does Screwtape find God “so unfair”?
4. What is Screwtape’s view of an “undesirable death”? Why does he desire long life, and death in a nursing home, for humans?
5. Why is “contented worldliness” one of Screwtape’s “best weapons”?

Letter VI

1. Why does Screwtape want to keep the “patient’s” attention fixed on the future?
2. What is the usefulness to Screwtape of keeping the “patient” thinking about “a dozen different and hypothetical fates”?
3. What is Screwtape’s “important spiritual law”? Explain the “general rule.” Why does it work the way it does? What would be some benefits of consciously resisting it?

4. What sort of picture of the human soul does Screwtape present? How does it both resemble and complete the picture in the first paragraph of Letter III?

Letter VII

1. Why do the devils want to conceal their existence for now? What might a “materialist magician” be? Why are devils predominantly comic figures in the modern imagination?

2. Why does Screwtape like to encourage most forms of “extremism” in human beings?

3. What importance do the issues of patriotism and pacifism have for Screwtape?

4. How does this letter challenge current Christian thinking about politics, patriotism, pacifism, and related topics?

Letter VIII

1. What is the “law of undulation”? What is the law’s spiritual importance?

2. What are some important differences between the ways in which God and the Devil view human beings?

3. What are “peaks” and “troughs”? How does God seek to use “troughs”?

4. What use does God seek to make of periods of spiritual dryness? What use does Screwtape want to make of these periods?

Letter IX

1. Why do the trough periods of human undulation present Screwtape with an excellent opportunity for sexual temptation?

2. How does God view pleasure? How does Screwtape view it?

3. How does Screwtape seek to use, or pervert, pleasure in human temptation?

4. How does Screwtape want the human to think about his or her own “trough” periods?

5. Why does Screwtape want to keep a human's mind off "the plain antithesis between True and False"?

Letter X

1. What sort of people are the "desirable new acquaintances" to whom Wormwood has introduced the "patient"?

2. What sort of "false position" is the "patient" now in? Why is this important to his spiritual life?

3. Why do "all mortals tend to turn into the thing they are pretending to be"? What implications does this principle have for our daily conduct?

4. How have Screwtape and company transformed the meaning of the word "Puritanism"? What spiritual significance does the transformation have?

5. How does Screwtape seek to turn even the "patient's" spiritual aspirations against him?

Letter XI

1. What are the categories under which Screwtape classifies the causes of human laughter?

2. What is joy? Why does Screwtape not understand it?

3. What is fun? Why does Screwtape distrust it?

4. How does "the Joke Proper" work? What is incongruity?

5. What is flippancy? How does it tend to be spiritually destructive?

Letter XII

1. Does Screwtape seem to favor getting the "patient" to commit spectacular sins, to rebel in an obvious and spectacular way? If not, what does he seem to favor, and why?

2. Why does Screwtape advise keeping the "patient" dimly aware of his need to repent? How can vague spiritual discomfort be turned to the devils' advantage?

3. How can “Nothing” be made strong enough in a person’s life to alienate him from God and destroy his capacity for Joy?
4. What, according to Screwtape, is the “safest road to Hell”?

Letter XIII

1. What error did Wormwood allow? How has this worked to the advantage of the “patient”?
2. How was the “patient” protected from Wormwood? What probably happened on the “patient’s” walk back from the old mill?
3. What is the great danger of Pains and Pleasures from Screwtape’s point of view?
4. What are the great differences between the way God seeks to detach us from ourselves and the way Screwtape does?
5. How does Screwtape think even the “patient’s” repentance can be made temporary and ineffective?

Letter XIV

1. What “alarming thing” does the “patient” seem to be doing?
2. What is the first way Screwtape suggests this development can be countered?
3. What is a more complex way Screwtape suggests of perverting the “patient’s” new awareness from its proper end?
4. What is the state of mind to which Screwtape believes God wants to bring the “patient”?
5. What will be God’s “whole effort” with the “patient”? Why?

Letter XV

1. What does God want humans chiefly to attend to?

2. How does Screwtape say a human should be induced to regard time? What is problematic for humans about the past and future?
3. Under what circumstances would Screwtape allow a human to focus on the present? Under what circumstances does he say such a focus should be attacked “at once”?
4. In the last sentence of the letter, what recurring attitude toward humans does Screwtape betray? Where has he let slip similar sentiments in previous letters?

Letter XVI

1. Why does Screwtape want the “patient” to visit many churches rather than settle down at one?
2. What attitude toward a church does God desire of a layman?
3. What are platitudes? Why does God desire to render them audible to us?
4. Describe the two churches Screwtape recommends. Why would either of them render spiritual growth difficult for their parishioners?

Letter XVII

1. What is gluttony? Distinguish between gluttony of excess and gluttony of delicacy.
2. How can gluttony be used to introduce sin into areas of a person’s life other than the physical appetite?

Letter XVIII

1. What is the “whole philosophy of Hell”? Does it make sense? Is it logical? What is wrong with it?
2. What is God’s “philosophy”?
3. How does God’s “philosophy” explain the use He has made of sex as the method of reproduction among humans?
4. What kind of relation does copulation set up between a man and a woman?

5. Why does Screwtape have such a low opinion of being “in love”?

Letter XIX

1. What is the contradiction Screwtape fears he may have inadvertently fallen into?

2. What does Screwtape’s denial that God really loves humanity, and the speculations that flow from that, show us about the way he thinks? Discuss the mixture of truth and untruth in his thought processes.

3. What is the only real interest Screwtape feels in the “patient’s” thoughts about romantic love? What is the only thing that matters to Screwtape?

Letter XX

1. How does God protect the “patient’s” chastity?

2. Why does Hell seek to tamper with “sexual taste”? Is sexuality seen as the end, or as simply a means to other ends?

3. What kind of pressure does the world place on women—on their self-image, on the way they present themselves?

4. How would Screwtape comment on the present state of sexual mores in Europe and America? Can we see a consistent pattern from 1941 to the Present?

5. What are the “two imaginary women” haunting “any human’s heart”? Should Screwtape have written “any man’s heart” instead? Why does he include women?

Letter XXI

1. What is the importance of getting the “patient” to make claims on life?

2. Why do we feel particularly possessive about time? What is illogical about this feeling of possessiveness?

3. How does Screwtape view the human claim to ownership of their bodies? Is this only Screwtape’s point of view at work, or does God (according to Lewis) agree with this view?

4. In the last paragraph, is Screwtape speaking the truth? Does Screwtape often say true things from the “wrong end,” as it were? Find examples in earlier letters.

Letter XXII

1. How does Screwtape’s disgust at the dossier of the girl show how Hell reverses all human and all Christian values?

2. What does Screwtape mean when he says that God is a hedonist at heart?

3. What makes the girl’s house particularly odious to Screwtape?

Letter XXIII

1. Screwtape writes “The World and the Flesh have failed us; a third Power remains.” How have the World and the Flesh failed? What is the “third Power”?

2. Why would a spoiled saint make better sport in Hell than a debauchee or a tyrant?

3. What is an “historical Jesus”? What use does Screwtape suggest making of such a conception?

4. How does the “historical Jesus” differ from the Jesus of the Gospels?

5. Describe the link Screwtape would like to see made between Christianity and politics.

Letter XXIV

1. What is “spiritual pride”? What does Screwtape mean by saying “It is always the novice who exaggerates”?

2. How does Screwtape seek to use the hospitality and kindness of the girl and her family to generate spiritual pride in the “patient”?

3. What is an “inner ring”?

4. What is the role of illusion and unexamined thought in leading the “patient” into spiritual pride?