

Ouachita Baptist University

Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita

Honors Theses

Carl Goodson Honors Program

4-16-2021

The Good Fight Guide: A Theological Guide to C.S. Lewis' The Screwtape Letters

Sara Patterson

Ouachita Baptist University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/honors_theses



Part of the [Christian Denominations and Sects Commons](#), and the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Patterson, Sara, "The Good Fight Guide: A Theological Guide to C.S. Lewis' The Screwtape Letters" (2021). *Honors Theses*. 798.

https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/honors_theses/798

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Carl Goodson Honors Program at Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. For more information, please contact mortensona@obu.edu.

The Good Fight Guide

A Theological Guide to C. S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters*

Sara N. Patterson

Foreword

I read *The Screwtape Letters* for the first time during my freshman year of college. I heard that it was a well-written book and that was all I knew. Having no expectations, I was not prepared for the profound theological truths that I would encounter. After getting through a few chapters, I became frustrated by the feeling that there was more depth and truth held in those pages than I was deciphering. I began looking up definitions of unfamiliar words as I read, and this little decision changed my whole experience of the book. I found more spiritual fulfillment in this book as I continued to pursue the clearest meaning possible. My first method of discovery was messy, though. I was searching up all kinds of definitions and context for multiple words on every page. In my research frenzy, I missed many deeper layers of meaning present in this book from the constant back-and-forth between typing into online search engines and reading the book. The theology of this book is deep, thorough, and extremely helpful for this generation, but the barriers of its fictional genre and unfamiliar language make these truths hard for the average reader to extract. After observing this and finding that other people in my life had similar experiences with the book, I felt called to help you, the reader who picked up *The Screwtape Letters* wanting to learn about spiritual warfare, to learn the theological principles Lewis is drawing from in a concise, simple way. It is my prayer that you find this resource helpful as you fight the good fight (Ephesians 6:12).

Introduction

I have gotten to know C. S. Lewis well during this project. Lewis authored not only *The Screwtape Letters* but also *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Mere Christianity*, *The Weight of Glory*, and many other fictional and theological books. Lewis was not only a historically acclaimed writer, but also a theologian whose words continue to edify believers today. *The Screwtape Letters* combines both of Lewis' niches, as a fictional work that deals with theological issues. Instead of 'chapters', the book is divided into 31 letters. The letters are addressed to Wormwood, a demon who is ranked as a junior tempter. They are from Screwtape, a demon who is a head tempter. In each of these letters, Screwtape teaches Wormwood how to successfully tempt the 'patient' with a variety of strategies to best suit each situation. The patient, described in the book as a young male adult living in England, is the individual being tempted by Wormwood. These are the three main characters; supporting characters including other demonic tempters and friends and family of the patient are mentioned briefly. While this is a fiction book, you will quickly notice that the topics being addressed within the storyline begin an important discussion of faith and spiritual growth, one that I aim to illuminate and clarify.

How to Use this Book

If you have read *The Screwtape Letters* before, you could either read each chapter of *The Screwtape Letters* before you read its section here or read this book on its own. If you've never read *The Screwtape Letters*, I recommend that you read the two books side by side. Open the two books to the same letter, referring to the terms section as you read and the following sections after finishing a letter.

Outline of Letters

Main Idea: These state the central lesson in each letter. They are intended to help you approach each chapter with an accurate expectation of what you will learn.

Terms: These are most closely dependent on the original text and may not be as helpful on their own. I've included words that confused me when I first read this book to provide clarity to those who encounter the same confusion.

Theological Principles: These provide Christian analysis to connect the story's fictional events with the biblical truths underlying them. The principles are supported with scripture references. Bible verses are in the English Standard Version (ESV) translation unless specified otherwise.

Application: These are intended to prompt you to act, pray, or think in a new and improved way based on what you've learned.

Personal Reflection: This is added in some of the letters to give you an opportunity to work through what you've learned, write out a prayer, or brainstorm any next steps you need to take.

Preface

Main idea

It is harmful to either disbelieve in the devil's existence or to have an excessive interest in demonic things. Remember that the devil is a liar as you read this book written from his perspective.

Terms

European War: This book was written during the second World War. Lewis Scholar Paul McCusker notes that Lewis referred to WWII as the 'European War' because it only involved European nations at the time of writing. Lewis mentions the war at the end of the preface to first acknowledge that letter 17, which addresses gluttony, is not as readily applicable during this time of war and food rationing. Secondly, he does this to assert that Satan works just as well in wartime and peacetime.

Impinge: to have a negative effect on, to breach or strike.

Theological Principles

The Christian Understanding of the Devil: Lewis writes that "Readers are advised to remember that the devil is a liar." The devil deceives in every way and with every possible approach. Satan's dishonesty is both a point of confusion and an advantage to the book, because Lewis stretches His imagination to include a variety of examples that show how Satan's tactics (doubt, insecurity, jealousy, materialism, pride, etc.) affect real human life.

- **John 8:44:** “When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

Materialist versus Magician: to disbelieve in the devil as a materialist, or to obsess over the devil as a magician, are both displeasing to God and pleasing to Satan.

- **Leviticus 19:31:** “Do not turn to mediums or necromancers; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them: I am the Lord your God.”
- **Ephesians 6:18b:** “keep alert with all perseverance.”

Application

Keep Lewis’ safeguards in mind not only as you read this book, but also as you encounter spiritual struggles such as doubt, fear, and temptation in your own life. Keep a balanced view of the devil: know that he exists and that he has power (John 12:31 calls him the ruler of this world), but know that God is always more powerful than him.

Letter 1

Main Idea

Satan does not attack with argument, but with jargon. He does not lead people away from Christ by appealing to their reason, but by appealing to their desires.

Terms

Wormwood: used 10 times in the Bible (Deuteronomy 29:18, Proverbs 5:4, Jeremiah 9:15; 23:5, Lamentations 3:15, 19, Amos 5:7, 6:12, Revelation 8:11); means curse or a state or source of bitterness or grief. *In the book:* Wormwood is the nephew of Screwtape who is going through a kind of ‘devil college’ to learn how to tempt people.

Aberrations: departures of what is normal, usual, or expected ; typically unwelcome.

Fuddle: to confuse, intoxicate, or stupify someone.

Screwtape: v. to mess things up, to corrupt, to make devilish. *In the book:* Screwtape is Wormwood’s uncle who teaches his nephew how to tempt his “patient” human by way of the letters in this book.

Theological Principles

‘Real Life’: Screwtape uses this as demons’ code word for the material world. The demons’ aim is to distract humans from spiritual matters by causing them to be preoccupied with the material world. Demons want humans to believe that the material world is most important, because this will most easily keep them from developing a relationship with God.

- **Ephesians 5:15-16:** “Looking carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of time, because the days are evil.”
- **Matthew 6:19-20:** “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.”
- **Mark 8:36:** For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?
- **2 Corinthians 4:18:** As we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.
- **Colossians 3:5:** Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

‘Safe in Our Father’s House’: Screwtape refers to Satan as ‘Our Father.’ This phrase is chilling because it uses words that truthfully describe God’s relation to humans to describe Satan’s eternal dwelling of suffering and punishment. The irony of this misused phrase drives home the letter’s main point— the devil can’t draw us in with a convincing argument. There is no way of convincing a logical human being that evil is better than good. With that being said, Satan’s main strategy is to deceive. Satan makes both sin and hell seem more appealing to us so that he can lead us down a path of evil deeds ending at his hopeless door.

- **Psalms 4:8:** “In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.”
- **John 10:10:** “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

Application

1. Think about what the biggest setbacks in your spiritual journey might be: love of money? the need to be accepted? Consider how Satan could use these setbacks to weaken your faith. Pray that God would give you His strength and plenty of resources— scripture, sermons, Christian community, and mentors— to resist Satan’s schemes.
2. Read Leviticus 16:3-34 to remind yourself of the seriousness of sin. Pray that God would remove sinful desires from your heart.

Personal Reflection

Letter 2

Main Idea

Even after converting to Christianity, Wormwood's patient isn't off the hook. Screwtape stresses the significance of habit and judgment when it comes to churchgoing.

Terms

'Sham Gothic Erection': 'sham' denotes something fake or misleading. Gothic is an architectural style of a church building, and an erection is a synonym for a building. With this word choice, Screwtape is insinuating that the Church is nothing of substance, authenticity, or value, but only a superficial style of building.

Liturgy: a form in which traditional religious, Christian worship was conducted and still is in some cases. It is a group response to the divine through scripted or ritualistic public praise. This tradition is common in catholicism and some more traditional or formal congregations.

Hitherto: until now

Flit: to move or leave swiftly or lightly

Stories from the Odyssey, Greek: The Odyssey is a collection of stories from Greek mythology. If you haven't read any before, mythology is exciting material to say the least. People have multiple heads, trees talk, there's a cyclops, and more. Lewis compares this exciting experience to the experience of learning Greek. If you haven't tried to learn Greek (like me), picture any language class, maybe a spelling or vocabulary lesson. I bet you agree that whatever books you like to read are more enjoyable than learning the words that make up the book. *In the*

book: Lewis uses Stories from the Odyssey and Greek to give an example of how God allows humans to experience disappointment when we commit to something that excites us, like joining a church (see theological principles, disappointment)

Inveterate: having a particular habit, activity, or interest that is long-established and unlikely to change.

Liaisons: person who links cooperation between groups of people.

Miser: a person who hoards wealth and spends as little money as possible.

Extortioner: a criminal who extorts money from someone by threatening to expose embarrassing information about them.

Vices: immoral or wicked personal behavior or characteristic.

Ledger: a flat stone slab covering a grave or a collection of financial accounts.

Condescension: an attitude of superiority resulting in disdain.

‘Smug’: showing excessive pride for oneself or one’s achievements.

Theological Principles

Habits: While Satan is not omniscient like God is, he can make educated guesses about our inner condition based on our circumstances and actions. With this information, Satan sends tempting thoughts our way. Satan is not intimidated by our good works, just as God has not based our salvation on good works. The difference is, while God forgets our past by forgiving us, Satan remembers our past in detail and aims to keep our past mistakes at the forefront of our mind so that they become part of our identity. Satan expects the worst from us. Satan relies on

our sinful practices to make us vulnerable. If we are not relying on God's grace and allowing him to change us from the inside out, Satan can more deeply enslave us to our sinful practices.

- **Proverbs 21:2:** "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart."
- **1 Samuel 16:7:** "For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."
- **1 John 3:8:** "Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil."

Church History: Screwtape admits that the Church "spread through all time and space and rooted in eternity... is a spectacle which makes our boldest tempters uneasy." Why is this? The Church's strength as described here is a result of its endurance over time. The early Church martyrs (Polycarp, Pothinus, Saint Agnes, etc.) surely scared demons with their faith. The Church was built on this foundation and has consistently grown on a global level. As Christianity has become more accepted by the culture in some countries, like the United States, this boldness that is its foundation has withered from the carelessness of Cultural Christianity. This is why Screwtape can say "one of our great allies *at present* is the Church *itself*" (italics added).

Churchgoers: Expectation Versus Reality: Screwtape introduces the usefulness of the subconscious mind in temptation. He tells Wormwood to focus the patient's mind on judging the negative or unattractive qualities of his fellow churchgoers without bringing those negative thoughts close enough to the forefront of his mind that he ever confronts them. By keeping the

patient's judging thoughts in the back of their mind, Wormwood can get away with keeping the patient sure that "togas and sandals and armour and bare legs" are real Christian looks.

- **Matthew 7:1-2:** "Don't judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."
- **Romans 12:16:** "Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited."
- **2 Corinthians 10:3-6:** "For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete."
- **Colossians 3:2:** "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth."

Disappointment: Screwtape is not as intimidated by the patient's conversion as we might expect because of the power of disappointment and boredom. Humans grow weary of even the most beneficial things, which God allows so that we can actively and freely choose to live for Him alone, not for any other reason.

- **Galatians 6:9:** "Let us not grow weary in doing good for in the proper time you will reap a harvest."
- **2 Timothy 4:7:** "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

- **Acts 2:42:** “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

Application

1. Is there anything you are too ashamed to admit before God? I invite you to bring this to God in honest prayer. Before you continue reading, take a few minutes to pray, out loud if you can. Speak your shame to your redeemer so Satan loses that power over you. End by asking God to help you overcome your habitual sin and to give you strength to resist temptation.
2. Judgmentalism is a habitual sin that we can easily shove under the rug. Ask God to help you see the wickedness of your judgment toward others. Ask him to instead fill you with a spirit of gratitude for others, especially your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Personal Reflection

Letter 3

Main Idea

The devil uses the flaws in our human relationships to tempt us.

Terms

Glubose: name of made-up demon who used to teach on gluttony, currently assigned to tempt the patient's mother at the time of this letter.

Expurgated: to remove matter thought to be unsuitable from (ex. A book)

Innocuous: not harmful or offensive

Erroneous: wrong or incorrect

Piqued: to stimulate interest, or to feel irritated or resentful

Theological Principles

Family Relationships: Screwtape admits the truth to Wormwood: God works “from the centre outwards” in our relational matters. Screwtape advises Wormwood to work oppositely, distracting the patient from the external, real problem between him and his mother to the internal, keeping him convinced that his conversion to Christianity is an individual and deeply spiritual matter that is far removed from the very simple matters of the outside world like communication among family members. By distracting the patient from his need for a behavior change with a false sense of ‘deeper’ spiritual matters to think on, the patient is halted from actually progressing in his faith journey externally. This a victory for the demons because faith

without works is dead. God created us with intelligent brains and emotions that allow us to connect with others and mend relationships. He desires us to live in peace with those around us.

- **James 2:17:** “So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”
- **Matthew 7:3:** “And why worry about a speck in the eye of a brother when you have a board in your own?”
- **Romans 12:18:** “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”
- **Mark 12:30-31:** “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Comparing Salvation Stories: Screwtape ends this letter by inquiring about the patient’s mom, specifically her feelings about her son’s recent salvation. Screwtape hopes that she thinks his conversion too late or too easy to be legitimate. He then asks, “Remember the older brother in the Enemy’s story?” This is a reference to the prodigal son parable from the gospel of Luke. This example helps us to put into contemporary terms the message of Jesus’ teaching. No salvation is too early or too late, too underwhelming or overwhelming, and God certainly does not find it appropriate for Christians to weigh the quality of their spiritual life by that of someone else’s.

- **Luke 15: 28-31:** “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’ ‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.’”

But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”

Application

1. What relationships in your life are most challenging? Briefly think about your actions toward others over the past week and pray that God would reveal to you areas of your social life that need practical improvement. Have the courage to humble yourself by apologizing and making a stronger effort to mend broken relationships.

Personal Reflection

Letter 4

Main Idea

Demons use distraction, feelings, and vague ideas as weapons against an effective prayer life.

Terms

Blunder: a careless mistake

Puerile: childishly silly and trivial

Theological Principles

‘Our Best Work is Done by Keeping Things Out’: When it comes to prayer, demons work by first distracting our minds from remembering to pray, or by making our outlook on prayer more important to us than the actual act of praying. He encourages us to compare our style of prayer to others, which may cause us to talk to God in a way that is irreverent or impersonal. If we rely on God’s strength to actively resist demonic distraction, we can have patience with ourselves as we learn how to talk to God in a way that is reverent and personal to each of us. It is also important that we are realistic in how we pray. As Screwtape mentions, the body and soul are connected, so being physically still and lowered, seated or prostrated, will likely help us posture our spirit in humility and stillness. We must not overestimate our prayer abilities or spiritual maturity, and we must not underestimate God’s power and love for his children when we pray to Him.

- **Matthew 6:7:** “And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.”

- **Psalm 102:17:** “He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their plea.”
- **Psalm 141:2:** “May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.”
- **Philippians 4:6:** “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

Manufacturing Feelings: If distraction fails, Screwtape advises Wormwood to turn the patient’s attention from God to himself by convincing him that he needs to manufacture feelings when he prays. By focusing the patient too much on his emotions, he will be relying too much on himself to answer his own prayer for a virtue by trying to manufacture feelings for it rather than waiting for God to work and preparing the heart to respond in obedience to His direction. Also, the focus on feelings will cause inconsistency in the prayer life, for the patient will gauge the effectiveness of the prayer by how he feels, and if he’s having an off day, he won’t enter into the presence of God.

- **Jeremiah 17:9:** “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”
- **1 John 3:20:** “Whenever our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.”

Praying to an Idea of God: No human can form a perfectly accurate mental picture of God when they pray to Him. God knows this, he made us this way. This unknown is designed by God to push us to live by faith as we converse with Him. Satan and his demons seek to twist this human inability to distract us from the real God. Screwtape advises Wormwood to keep the

patient praying to an *it*, that is, whatever image of God the patient has created in his mind, rather than surrendering in humility to God and praying to not what he thinks God is but who God knows himself to be and who the patient is confident he will know God to be in heaven one day. If believers can overcome demons' push toward praying to an idea of God, they will be able to take a posture of humility and flexibility to the God who they know is greater than they could ever imagine, rather than accepting their grossly limited mental picture of Him. Believers have hope that as they humble themselves before the real God, as Screwtape says, "There's such a thing as getting more than they bargained for!"

- **1 Chronicles 16:11:** "Look to the Lord and His strength, and seek His face always."
- **John 1:17b-18:** "grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but the one and only son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known."

Application

1. Make prayer a priority. Start today. Satan can use the illusion of 'tomorrow' to distract us. Start today's prayer by asking God to keep your focus on who He truly is and to make your prayers practical and effective. Practical and effective prayer requires real faith, because there is no use in praying to a God that you doubt the capability of. Know that He delights in your praying and is able to do more than you ask or imagine.

Letter 5

Main Idea

War or other world catastrophes can be used by Satan to accomplish his purposes, but God also uses them to increase human faith through suffering.

Terms

Rhapsody: an enthusiastic expression or feeling

Chalice: a large cup or goblet

European War: refers to World War II; the War caused shock, fears of poverty, the practice of rationing, women going to work in factories, men being drafted into war, and many other unusual things for the people of this day.

Barbarous: savagely cruel, exceedingly brutal, primitive and uncivilized

Tantalize: to torment or tease someone with the promise of something unattainable

Incessant: an unpleasant thing considering without pause or interruption

Chastity: state or practice of refraining from extramarital or all sexual intercourse

Scabtree: a demon and acquaintance of Screwtape, sees war as excellent for corruption of the human race

Pestilence: a fatal epidemic disease or plague

Theological Principles

Diffused Suffering: This phrase that Screwtape uses to denote long-term suffering summarizes his argument in this letter well. Screwtape must caution Wormwood of his over-excitement with his patient's moment of "fine thrills in the pit of his stomach," or initial feelings of fear.

Screwtape teaches Wormwood that God always fulfills his promise to work through suffering as one goes through it and eventually comes to the end of it, and 'patients' are not as vulnerable as their faith is strengthened in suffering. We learn from this letter to be aware of our initial, 'gut' reactions to tragedy, and to make sure we guard ourselves with the strength and power of the Holy Spirit given to us by God so that Satan may not attack us in these moments of weakness. When we endure long term suffering, we can feel blessed knowing that God is working and Satan is being defeated even in apparent darkness.

- **John 16:33:** "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."
- **James 1:12:** "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him."
- **Psalms 119:71:** "It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes."
- **Psalms 23:4:** "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

Application

1. Consider some ways you may be suffering. Then, consider the state of the world in general and consider those sufferings too. Now that you are aware that these sufferings are potential areas of vulnerability, you can seek God's authority and peace over feelings

of panic, distrust, or fear that may arise as you walk through the hardships in your day. Memorize one of the Bible verses listed above to turn your suffering from weakness to strength, as God intended it. In prayer, affirm that God uses suffering for victory as you work daily to believe this fully and to apply this belief to your life. Trust God in the midst of your suffering because it causes the devil to fear you.

Personal Reflection

Letter 6

Main Idea

Fear, self-image, and the condition of our heart can all be perverted by Satan to separate us from God or redeemed by God to draw us closer to Him.

Terms

Vindictive: having a strong or unreasoning desire for revenge

Scapegoats: people blamed for the wrongdoings of another; goat sent into wild after sacrificed in place

“Deplorable Milksofs”: a person who is indecisive and lacking in courage, deserving of condemnation

Benevolence: quality of being well-meaning, kindness

Pernicious: having a harmful effect, especially in a gradual way

Concentric: circles or arcs, with a large surrounding the smaller

Theological Principles

Fear of Future: Satan uses anxiety to distract us from 1) being present with God and 2) doing the work God has called us to do. Instead, Satan uses anxiety to focus our minds on what **might** happen to us, which is a useless and destructive way to think.

- **Philippians 4:6-7:** “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”
- **2 Timothy 2:7:** “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”
- **Matthew 6:34:** “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

Fears as Certain, God-ordained Events: I urge you to consider this danger today by evaluating anxieties of your own that you may be falsely accepting as your appointed cross to bear.

Screwtape advises Wormwood to pervert the patient’s idea of the phrase found in the Lord’s prayer: “Thy will be done.” Screwtape tells Wormwood to convince the patient that this daily surrender is a surrender to “only the things he is afraid of,” meaning that he’s been convinced that all the bad things that *could* happen to him in the future *will* happen. This nuance of misdirecting the patient’s good intentions to submit to God’s will but mistaking it for their own anxiety may be easier for demons to accomplish because misinterpreting God’s will isn’t a danger of fear that many people consider.

- **1 Corinthians 10:13:** “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide a way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”
- **Romans 8:28:** “And we know that God works all things to those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

- **Isaiah 41:10:** “Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Inaccurate Self-evaluation: When the patient is doing or thinking something displeasing to God, Screwtape tells Wormwood to direct the patient’s attention outward, not putting the blame on himself. But, if the patient is doing or thinking in a way that is pleasing to God, Wormwood is to keep his focus inward, so that he avoids true selflessness. Because we know that demons are striving to divert our attention in this way to cause our destruction, we should do our best to oppose these thought temptations by making a point to look inward when we witness something that sparks sin (ex: something disagreeable, tempting, provocative, enraging, easily judged, imperfect, etc.) and to look outward when we feel good about ourselves to see how this positive emotion or thought can be of benefit to more than just ourselves, for we should strive to count others, and especially God as better than ourselves.

- **Matthew 7:3-5:** “Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.”
- **John 13:12-14:** “When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.”
- **Matthew 22:36-39:** “‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’ And he said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul

and will all your *mind*. This is the great and first commandment, And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Will Equated to Heart: In equating the will to the heart, Screwtape means that both the biblical understanding of the heart and the will, whichever term one uses, is the center of a person’s decision making. Screwtape distinguishes this center of the person from what human culture tends to see as the heart (wishes, dreams, emotions, etc.) Screwtape then teaches Wormwood how to manipulate the patient’s will, their center of decision making. Screwtape tells Wormwood to get the patient to treat those around him poorly but to show great charity and kindness to those he doesn’t even know. By doing this, in the words of Screwtape, malice becomes real and benevolence becomes imaginary. By keeping kindness on the ‘outer circle’ or toward those the patient doesn’t know, like immigrant children, refugees, cancer patients, teachers, firefighters, etc., it is close enough to falsely convince the patient that he is kind but far enough from this central will to not really be there. Satan seeks to push our kindness so far outside of our personal interactions with family and friends that those virtues no longer reside in our hearts, or will, as God intended.

- **1 Peter 3:3-4:** “Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.”
- **1 Timothy 5:8:** “But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”
- **Psalms 119:10:** “With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander far from your commands!”

- **Ephesians 6:6-7:** “not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man.”

Application

1. Bring your fears to God, for him to control. You can do this quickly by writing down your most burdensome fears for the present, the near future, and the distant future. Do not spend time weighing the likelihood of your fears becoming your reality, but immediately bring these fears before God in prayer, asking him to help you from focusing on them more than you should.
2. Be aware of both your actions and your thoughts. As Psalm 139:23 says, ask God to test you. Make a concentrated effort to be kind, maybe kinder than usual, to the people in your family and close circle of friends. Especially if you are prone to joking, be sure that you do everything in love. Don't get too comfortable that you forget to be an example of Jesus' love to all people. The ends of the earth need Jesus, but those in your home and local community do too.

Personal Reflection

Letter 7

Main Idea

Satan does not want humans to believe in him, at least not in who he really is.

Terms

Coterie: small, exclusive group of people with same interests

Hothouse: v. to educate a child at an earlier age than normal

Theological Principles

Disguised Demons: Screwtape reveals to Wormwood that demons strive to be concealed, unrecognized, and disbelieved by humans. By disguising themselves, they promote worldliness, materialism, and skepticism. Exposing the human to comical visuals of the devil as a cartoon character in red tights promotes an irreverence toward spiritual matters in the person's mind, which leads to spiritual and moral complacency and therefore vulnerability.

- **2 Corinthians 11:14b-15:** “for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.”
- **James 4:4b:** “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”;

Emotionalized/Mythologized Science: Screwtape believes that this kind of science can cause humans to believe in demons but still retain closed minds to God. The demonic goal is to produce a materialist magician, a person who worships “forces” but doesn’t see themselves as spiritual. In creating this kind of environment in the patient’s mind, the person can be convinced that this kind of worship is their own idea.

- **Isaiah 44:** “All who make idols are nothing, and the things they treasure are worthless. Those who would speak up for them are blind; they are ignorant, to their own shame. Who shapes a god and casts an idol, which can profit nothing? People who do that will be put to shame; such craftsmen are only human beings. Let them all come together and take their stand; they will be brought down to terror and shame. The blacksmith takes a tool and works with it in the coals; he shapes an idol with hammers, he forges it with the might of his arm. He gets hungry and loses his strength; he drinks no water and grows faint. The carpenter measures with a line and makes an outline with a marker; he roughs it out with chisels and marks it with compasses. He shapes it in human form, human form in all its glory, that it may dwell in a shrine. He cut down cedars, or perhaps took a cypress or oak. He let it grow among the trees of the forest, or planted a pine, and the rain made it grow. It is used as fuel for burning; some of it he takes and warms himself, he kindles a fire and bakes bread. But he also fashions a god and worships it; he makes an idol and bows down to it. Half of the wood he burns in the fire; over it he prepares his meal, he roasts his meat and eats his fill. He also warms himself and says, “Ah! I am warm; I see the fire.” From the rest he makes a god, his idol; he bows down to it and worships. He prays to it and says, “Save me! You are my god!” They know nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see, and their minds

closed so they cannot understand. No one stops to think, no one has the knowledge or understanding to say, “Half of it I used for fuel; I even baked bread over its coals, I roasted meat and I ate. Shall I make a detestable thing from what is left? Shall I bow down to a block of wood?” Such a person feeds on ashes; a deluded heart misleads him; he cannot save himself, or say, “Is not this thing in my right hand a lie?”

Church Parties/Factions: These are fancy names for divisions within the Church. Screwtape uses the example from the early church when believers divided themselves into two groups: those who followed Apollos’ teaching and those who followed Paul. In 1 Corinthians (cited below), Paul rebuked the church for allowing this disagreement to split them apart. Screwtape also includes a more recent example, the high and low church of England (see Letter 16 terms page for definitions of high and low church). Satan thrives when God’s people are divided. The church should aim for unity, while still holding fellow believers accountable for any false beliefs or false teachings that come up.

- **1 Corinthians 3:3-6:** “for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? For when one says, ‘I follow Paul,’ and another ‘I follow Apollos’ are you not being merely human? What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.
- **Mark 3:24-26:** “If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end.”
- **Romans 16:17:** “I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.”

Religion as Part of One's Cause: In the context of the book's time period, World War I, Screwtape advises Wormwood to make the patient's belief in pacifism or patriotism as part of his religion. That is, making a secular opinion a spiritual value in his mind; bringing something of less importance up to equal importance as Christian core values. This temptation strategy flips the believer's priorities so that instead of viewing life's political or social dilemmas as opportunities to practice obedience to God, he instead views his Christian identity as an opportunity to practice the values of a political or social cause. In the current context, this may look like spending more time, money, and energy at political rallies or in heated debates with friends than in time learning about God's character and finding ways to tell others about the gospel. Distracting humans with political/social issues leads to divisions, individuals drawing away from faith, and can even create a negative image of the church.

- **Romans 14:1: "As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions."**

Application

1. Curate the kind of content you're consuming. There are many popular tv series that satirize the devil; it wise to stay away from these. Educate yourself on popular modern beliefs that may be pushed on you by society that contradict what God teaches. Lastly, we can only know if what we are consuming contradicts what God teaches if we know what God teaches, so it helps to spend consistent time in the word.
2. Evaluate your personal beliefs on political or social matters against God's word. Once you have discovered your personal values and passions, be gentle with them, making sure you hold each of your beliefs in their appropriate level of importance. Put the central

tenets of Christianity first, and seek to help fellow Christians live in this way by your example and gentle redirection when necessary.

Letter 8

Main Idea

Screwtape teaches Wormwood to manipulate humans in the common highs and lows of life.

Terms

Training College: The made-up name of the place where demons are trained before being assigned a patient

Law of Undulation: states that the soul continues on after the body dies

Ravish: to seize or carry off by force

Ignoble: not honorable in character or purpose

Theological Principles

Humans Grow in Troughs: Screwtape tells Wormwood the real truth of ‘troughs’ or hardships: that God uses these times to grow us more. Screwtape includes that he knows the prayers and obedient acts of a person who is suffering. Knowing this, demons strive to lead us to disobedience in our weak moments, which comes up in depth in the next chapter.

- **Deuteronomy 8:2-3:** “And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor

did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”

- **1 Peter 1:6-7:** “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith- more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire- may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. “
- **Romans 5:3-4:** “We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

Application

1. Reflect on past hardships and identify how God has worked within you through them. Gradually and patiently, adopt an outlook of gratitude for the hard things in your life; not that you are glad they have happened to you, but that you can see and expect good in them. In the ‘troughs’ of life we learn to trust the Lord and move away from ultimate self-trust, a chief competitor of our attention.

Personal Reflection

Letter 9

Main Idea

Screwtape goes deep when he teaches Wormwood how to take advantage of human weaknesses without them knowing it is happening.

Terms

Innocuous Merriment: harmless enjoyment

Concomitants: phenomena that naturally follow something

Anodyne: deliberately unlikely to provoke offense or controversy

Redolent: strongly reminiscent or suggestive of something

Ardours: enthusiasms or passions

Desponding: to become dejected or lose confidence

Acquiesce: to accept something reluctantly but without protest

Patronising: treating in a way that is apparently kind or helpful but that betrays a feeling of superiority

Adolescent: the phase between childhood and adulthood. The word occurs in the last sentence of this chapter, finishing Screwtape's argument that the idea that life is made entirely up of phases helps convince the patient that his Christian faith is also a temporary phase.

Theological Principles

Trough Sexuality: One's ability to resist sexual temptation is typically lowest in times of suffering. Satan wants to get humans to treat sexual matters lightly and turn to sexual satisfaction as a distraction when their life is frustrating or discouraging.

- **1 Corinthians 6:18-20:** “Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”
- **Matthew 5:28:** “But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”
- **Ephesians 4:18-19:** “They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.”

Increase Craving, Decrease Pleasure: The enemy steals, kills, and destroys. Screwtape's language here suggests that God has not given demons the ability to produce pleasures on their own. Rather, demons exploit pleasures that are originally good.

- **Proverbs 21:17a:** “Whoever loves pleasure will be a poor man.”
- **1 Timothy 5:6:** “But she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives.”

Keep the Patient’s Knowledge Out: Satan prefers ignorance. Screwtape tells Wormwood to subtly convince the patient that his spiritual ‘trough’ is as permanent as his conversion to Christianity. As with other temptations, the key to success for demons is ignorance. Satan does his best work on humans who aren’t aware of the possibility of temptation.

- **1 Thessalonians 5:21:** “But test everything; hold fast to what is good.”
- **Hosea 4:6:** “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.”

Religious Moderation: This is Screwtape’s continuation from the lesson on convincing the patient that his ‘trough’ is permanent. Building on that false belief, Screwtape tells Wormwood to get the patient to see his religion as temporary when the initial excitement from his conversion to the faith passes away. Satan seeks to confuse believers by portraying our feelings as objective truth. But how does Satan use a *feeling* of temporary-ness to convince humans that Christianity is false? By presenting people’s lives as a series of phases. As phases are familiarized, humans are likely to see everything in their life as temporary, which would make everlasting faith impossible to them.

- **Jeremiah 17:9:** “The heart is deceitful above all things; who can understand it?”
- **Ecclesiastes 3:14:** “I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that people will fear him.”

Application

1. Think about how moments of sexual or other temptation have caused you to sin in the past. As you acknowledge and process this, you gain leverage over Satan, who wants to shame you into avoiding your sins and distancing yourself from God.
2. Seek biblical knowledge to inform your emotions. You can do this by reading scripture daily or even memorizing a verse that applies to your particular life season. Pray that God would give you the information you need to resist temptation.

Personal Reflection

Letter 10

Main Idea

Screwtape teaches Wormwood how to use friendship to weaken the patient's faith, character, family relationships, and work ethic.

Terms

Triptweeze: name of a devil colleague of Wormwood

Mammon: wealth regarded as an evil influence or false object of worship and devotion

Treacherous: guilty of or involving deception or betrayal

Theological Principles

Skeptical Friends: Wormwood's patient makes friends with a sophisticated couple and Screwtape tells Wormwood that this can be used in tempting the patient. These friends are vain and just believe differently than the patient in general. By being around these friends, the patient can drift away from his faith if he continues being around them, for his speech and reactions to their speech will be in agreement with their views, which contradict his, in an effort to continue the friendship and avoid conflict. If this people-pleasing and being around the wrong crowd stays part of the patient's life, Screwtape says he may actually adopt the "cynical and skeptical attitudes" of his friends.

- **1 Corinthians 15:33:** "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals'"
- **Proverbs 22:24-25:** "Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare."

Modern Versus Old Christian Teachings: Screwtape continues to explain temptation via friendship. He includes the failure of current Christian writings to talk about the dangers of ‘the World’ in context. According to Screwtape, Puritan preachers did a better job of including everyday temptations like vanity and friends, while ‘the World’ is not discussed in the same readily-applicable context currently. Screwtape advises Wormwood to convince the patient that old Christian writings are illegitimate in comparison to newer ones. This makes no sense, considering that the Bible is inerrant yet the oldest Christian book, but again, temptation does not rely on logic.

- **Romans 3:4:** “By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, “That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged.”

Living a Double Life: This mentality brought on by Satan is a lie that disguises the truth of our hypocrisy. A person who seeks to please their friends of little faith or poor character while also striving to live a Christian life is not well-balanced, but causing conflict in their own soul and running the risk of being a hypocrite.

- **John 15:18:** “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.”
- **Ephesians 4:17-20:** “Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!”

Family Tension: Screwtape explains the impact that wrong priorities can have on the patient’s other relationships. By making friends the patient’s first priority, the patient’s commitment to his

mother (family) and his work will decrease. Unlike God, humans are limited in energy and time, so we must be intentional in how we prioritize our responsibilities. We can find clear advice on this matter in God's word.

- **Exodus 20:12:** "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you."
- **Matthew 19:19:** "Honor your father and mother, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself"
- **1 Timothy 5:8:** "But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

Application

1. Consider your closest friends. Are these friends sinning without feeling any conviction to repent? Are you doing that too? If your closest friends are not believers, make an effort to add Christian friends into your life. If you can think of a strong Christian who would be a good friend to you, reach out to them. Take initiative to quench the spiritual dryness in your social life. If you've asked yourself these questions and identified friends who are believers that discourage you in your faith, I encourage you to bring this to God in prayer. Be sensitive to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. You will likely need to have a gentle but firm conversation with these friends about how their actions are hindering you.
2. Take practical steps to put your family first in your human relationships, if it is safe and possible for you to do so (if it isn't, bring that hurt to God in prayer. He sees your situation and knows what you need). Challenge yourself to serve your family members: Make them food, write them letters, call them regularly, clean the house, and most

importantly, I encourage you to engage in conversation with them. I think Satan feeds us the lie that we already know everything about our family members and don't need to check in on them, but God gave us family for that uniquely close connection.

Personal Reflection

Letter 11

Main Idea

Screwtape reveals how demons use humor to deceive.

Terms

Austerity: sternness or severity of attitude

Incongruity: being out of keeping with surrounding truths, inappropriateness or inconsistency

Bawdy: dealing with sexual matters in a comical way, humorously indecent

Lasciviousness: clearly marked by an overt sexual desire

Tedium: the state of being tedious or monotonous

Jocular: characterized by being joking or playful

Twits: to tease or taunt someone, especially in a good-humoured way

Theological Principles

Laughter: Screwtape identifies four causes of laughter: 1. Joy 2. Fun 3. Joke Proper 4.

Flippancy. Joy is good and not useful for corruption. Fun is mostly pleasing to God as well, but can be used to distract from something else God may be wanting the person to focus on. Joke Proper, or crude humor, is a point of temptation. Joke Proper is dangerous not because jokes about sex will lead a person to hell, but because through a life of crude humor they risk discovering that they can do anything and get the approval of their friends if they treat it as a

joke. This can lead to sinful habits that the patient doesn't even realize are creating dangerous distance between themselves and God. Flippancy is the most dangerous humor because flippant jokers are people who discuss every serious matter in a joking way. This type of humor desensitizes a person from not only the wisdom of God, but also Joy, intellect, and true bonding among friends.

- **Ephesians 5:4:** “Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.”
- **Proverbs 26:18-19:** “Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death is the man who deceives his neighbor and says, “I am only joking!”

‘See That He Does Not Find Out’: Like every other sin temptation discussed in this book, Satan does his best sabotage of our souls when we are not aware of it.

- **1 Peter 5:8:** “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

Application

1. Ask God to help your words be pleasing to him (Psalm 19:4). You should also feel free to ask fellow believers who are close to you if you have ever offended them, as we often do when we use crude humor without knowing, and ask for their forgiveness.

Letter 12

Main Idea

Satan can distract us from feeling the full weight of our guilt with outward religious behavior.

Terms

Revocable: capable of being revoked or canceled

Roistering: to enjoy or celebrate in a noisy way

Dim labyrinth of reveries: a dungeon to get lost in one's thoughts

Theological Principles

External Habits: Going with the central message of this book, Screwtape adds another example of the subtlety demons use to tempt humans. Contrary to popular opinion in Christian circles, demons trying to lead us to hell, eternal separation from God, are not the most intimidated by our churchgoing. In fact, this external action that some modern day Christians subconsciously accept as the definite mark of a Christian can be poorly used to cover up other poor choices and internal moods or attitudes in a person being led astray by the evil one.

- **Luke 18:10-14:** “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other.

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

- **James 1:26:** If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless”

‘Dim Uneasiness’: As Wormwood gradually draws the patient away from God, he must keep him feeling only a dim uneasiness so that he will not discover the true poor state of his spirit. As mentioned in the previous principle, this is done by corrupting the feelings without changing one’s actions, so that the temptation goes unnoticed. Screwtape advises Wormwood to make the patient dislike religious duties but not stop doing them and feel guilty enough to experience uneasiness but distracted enough to never address the guilt in honest prayer before God.

- **2 Corinthians 11:3:** “But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.”

‘Let Sleeping Worms Lie’: Screwtape uses this term to describe the ideal prayer mentality for a human to be most vulnerable to deception. As a result of the “dim” guilt that demons like to impose on humans, they will consequently want to avoid prayer, honest prayer especially. Dim guilt that a person chooses to ignore, maybe without fully realizing it, causes that person to fear what they might feel if they actually encounter the full weight of that guilt. With this fear, Satan can convince them to let their sleeping sins lie unbothered by avoiding communing with God.

- **1 John 1:9:** “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
- **1 John 2:1:** “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

- **Proverbs 28:13:** “Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.”

Application

1. Whatever you do, do it for God and not for others’ approval. Practically, serve with a sincere heart. If you are committed to serve in something but you serve bitterly, commit to allow God to change your heart for that thing or drop it.
2. The best way to avoid an empty, works-only faith is to interact with God on your own, privately. Right now, I challenge you to pray for at least 10 minutes in silence. Keeping with the message of this letter, I recommend that you use this time to be honest about your sin temptations and actions. Thank God for forgiving and saving you, and ask Him to dwell in you so richly that you become more like Him in mind, word, and deed.

Letter 13

Main Idea

Demons corrupt humans' likes and dislikes to draw them away from themselves and God.

Terms

Clamour: a loud and confused noise, especially of people shouting

Childe Harold: The main character in "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" by Lord Byron. This long narrative poem is about the mental transition from adolescence to adulthood and is deeply philosophical.

Werther: The main character in *The Sorrows of Young Werther* is a loosely autobiographical novel by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. The novel's theme is the importance of the individual and the individual's feelings. This story is rich in emotional depth, pegging emotions as the single most important component of the human.

Theological Principles

Protection from Satan: God's presence with humans, what Screwtape calls "the asphyxiating cloud," makes demons unable to access them. Screwtape says that some humans are always surrounded by God's presence; he likely is referring to believers in Christ indwelt with the Holy Spirit. Demons cannot fully understand the details of this powerful presence against them.

- **1 John 5:18:** "We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him."

Real Pleasures: Screwtape scolds Wormwood for giving the patient ‘real’ or pure pleasure. This is not good for temptation because demons strive to convince us that pleasure detaches us from ourselves and from reality, and if we believe that we are happiest when we are detached and distracted, we are highly less likely to confront not only our true selves but also the true greatness of God, and in turn find the realest pleasure there is. Satan wants to keep us from real pleasures, God offers them to us abundantly.

- **James 1:17:** “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”
- **Matthew 7:7:** “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”
- **Ecclesiastes 2:10:** “And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward from all my toil. Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.”

Identity in Christ: This point clarifies the attributes of the ‘new life’ given to the believer at conversion. Screwtape writes that God takes pride in the unique individuality of each of His children and when He commands us to lose ourselves, he means to deny our selfishness and self centered perspective. Once we’ve abandoned ourselves in this way, God re-forms our personalities so that we are more ourselves than ever and more aligned with His righteous desires for us. These two things create a more abundant life on earth and are pleasing to our Father in heaven.

- **Genesis 1:27:** “So God created mankind in His own image”
- **Ephesians 4:24:** “and to put on the new self, created in the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”

Substituting Worldly Pleasures for Personal Preference: Screwtape advises Wormwood to make his patient confuse his likes and dislikes with what is popular or unpopular in society. This will cause the patient to abandon the things he actually likes for what is popular. This mental shift, Screwtape says, makes the patient more vulnerable to Wormwood’s spiritual attack against him.

- **Mark 8:36:** “For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?”
- **Romans 12:2:** “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Anything but Act: Demons do their best work in our minds, not our actions. They are not seeking to make us literal devil-worshippers but to feed evil thoughts into our minds so subtly that we can ignore our corruption. Screwtape reveals that it is not intimidating to the demonic forces for Wormwood’s patient to think about repentance as long as he doesn’t act on it. It is not enough for us to feel like we should do something for God, we need to do it. It is more than idly holding a belief— we must live out our trust in God daily to resist the evil schemes of Satan. An active spiritual life scares Satan.

- **James 4:17:** “So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”

Application

1. Thank God for protecting you from Satan's attacks even when you aren't aware of it.
2. Deny your selfishness. Do something for someone else that you normally wouldn't do.
This can be a sacrifice of time (sending a text of encouragement), a sacrifice of money (buying them a coffee or meeting a need you know of), a sacrifice of rest (making plans to mentor someone), or a sacrifice of reputation (reaching out to the lonely person who could use your company).
3. Be active in your faith by devoting time to engage with Christian community and spending time alone with God regularly. Devoting yourself to these actions is possibly the best way to resist evil powers.

Personal Reflection

Letter 14

Main Idea

Screwtape teaches Wormwood how to corrupt the patient's sincere desire to be humble.

Terms

Pittance: small amount of money paid to a person as an allowance or wage

Formidable: inspiring fear by being impressively large or powerful

'By Jove!': 'Jove' is the roman god of the sky in mythology. This expression means the same as 'By God' without being blasphemous.

Abjection: a low state of being cast off

Bipeds: animal that uses two legs for walking

Vainglory: excessive vanity or pride in one's self and achievements

Theological Principles

False Humility: Screwtape tells Wormwood to draw the patient's attention to his humility when he is being humble to make his pride appear. By making him proud of his every attempt at humility, Wormwood can rid the patient of any real traces of humility. Instead of selflessness, Wormwood is to cultivate a low view of self in the patient. This attempt to think less of himself will cause the patient to think about himself more, so it becomes counterproductive. God wants to produce in his children a pure love for all things, even ourselves, with humility. He does not

want us working to hate ourselves, as Screwtape is suggesting. Humility is a virtue because it allows us to work on loving our neighbor by directing our attention away from ourselves.

- **Philippians 2:3:** “Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”
- **James 3:14:** “But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.”
- **Mark 12:31:** “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Application

1. Evaluate your own humility. Do you try to convince yourself that you aren't gifted at something that you honestly take pride in? Understand that you are allowed to like things about yourself. Humility is not obsessing over yourself, negatively or positively. Act humbly by noticing good qualities in your friends and family. Speak humbly by complimenting them on the things you notice. Make a habit of appreciating the good things about you and everything around you. Make sure your perspective is not limited to your own interests, but is focused outward.

Letter 15

Main Idea

Screwtape teaches Wormwood how demons exploit human fear and their understanding of time, using World War I as an example.

Terms

European War: World War I

Analogous: comparable in certain respects that makes the compared items clearer

Temporal: secular

Creative Evolution: evolution that is a creative product of a vital force rather than a spontaneous process explicable in terms of scientific laws. (Merriam Webster)

Scientific Humanism: a philosophy that accepts human reason, secular ethics, and philosophical naturalism but rejects religious dogma, supernaturalism, and superstition.

Avarice: extreme greed for wealth or material gain

Posterity: all future generations of people

Hag-ridden: tormented or afflicted by nightmares or anxieties

Imminent: about to happen

Avert: to turn away, avoid, or prevent

Philological Arm: described as a branch of hell in the book, philology is the study of the structure, historical development, and relationships of a language or languages.

Theological Principles

Tortured Fear Versus Stupid Confidence: Both of these extremes are useful for Satan's purposes. An overly confident person can be more easily nudged toward self-reliance and further from God. Oppositely, tortured fear can torment a human, making them irritable and unable to trust God, which also can move them further from God.

- **Luke 21:34:** "But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap."
- **John 15:5:** "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

Present and Eternity: God wants believers to focus on the present and eternity. God is omnipresent, not regretful of the past or worried about the future because he is present for all of it all at once. God certainly does not expect us to be omnipresent as he is, but rather he wants us to focus our attention on what he knows is best for us. He wants believers to have a heavenly perspective because we are destined for this eternal life. Satan tempts us to live in the past or in the future; living in either will draw us further from God. Obsessing over the future is more spiritually dangerous because the future is actually least like eternity, according to Screwtape, because it is the most temporary. All vices are caused by future thinking: fear, extreme greed, lust, and selfish ambition.

- **Ephesians 5:15-16:** “Be very careful, then, how you live- not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.”
- **Matthew 6:34:** “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”
- **James 4:13-15:** “Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”— yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”

False Complacency: Screwtape teaches Wormwood how to use the patient’s idea of complacency as a weapon against the patient’s attempts to live in the present. Demons create a fear of complacency by feeding us a false definition of complacency. Living in the present, which is God’s will for us, is not complacent. God does not intend for us to feel complacent because we aren’t worrying about the future. The devil tells us this to drive us further into dissatisfaction with our lives. God desires us to rest and take full grasp of every present moment in this life he has blessed us with! Even when our present is not perfect, God has called us to rejoice in the life he has given us to live.

- **Hebrews 4:9-11:** So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.
- **John 14:27:** “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”

- **Psalm 23:2-3:** “He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.”

Application

1. Consider these two questions: What are you most afraid of? What are you most proud of? List and surrender these to God. Pray that He would bless you with right and balanced thinking to rely on him to keep you safe and to give him credit for the things you take pride in. We talk about our fears and prides often, and how we talk about these spiritually significant items matters. The next time you are discussing a fear or a proud moment with someone, be diligent in including God in that conversation. Not only will your intentional, worshipful, and honest words solidify a mindset of worship in your own mind, they will also be a witness of your faith to others.
2. Many Christians today may not keep a Sabbath because they are either unsure of what the ideal Sabbath should entail or they logistically cannot make Sunday a rest day. As a college student, I have found that Saturdays are the best day for me to practice rest because Sunday evenings are always spent preparing for Monday classes. Some may have abnormal work schedules and cannot rest on the same day every week. Others may not be able to rest on one full day a week because of the busy season they are in. Commit to find a time to rest that is consistent and works for you. If you are new to keeping a Sabbath, you might want to make a to-do list of restful activities that you would enjoy.

Personal Reflection

Letter 16

Main Idea

Screwtape teaches Wormwood how to sabotage the patient by making him critical of his church.

Terms

Parish: (in the Christian Church) a small administrative district typically having its own church and a priest or pastor.

Connoisseur: an expert judge in matters of taste

Parochial: relating to a church parish

The congregational principle: a product of the Protestant movement (began in the early 1500s), this principle states that each congregation has the right to determine their own outlook without being required to submit to a higher authority.¹

Coterie: a small group of people with shared interests or tastes, especially one that is exclusive of other people.

Faction: a small organized dissenting group within a larger one, especially in politics.

Groveling: acting obediently to obtain forgiveness or favor

Platitudes: remark or statement, especially one with a moral content, that has been used too often to be interesting or thoughtful.

¹ Britannica, "Church of England."

Bestir: to make a mental or physical effort; to exert oneself

Vicar: religious council in the church of England/Christian church, handled monetary tithes

Incredulous: unwilling or unable to believe something

Parishioners: an inhabitant of a parish, especially one who belongs to or attends a particular church.

Laity: ordinary attenders, distinct from the clergy

Theocratic Fascism: fascism in the political sphere is a belief in a strong dictatorial style of government that also carries a strong sense of nationalism. A Theocratic fascist would apply this kind of belief to church politics and/or their understanding of who God is.

Insipid: lacking vigor or interest

Maritain: Jacques Maritain, french catholic philosopher

Hooker's Doctrine: Richard Hooker was a great anglican theologian who is known for his doctrine of justification which states that even those who do not rightly understand God's salvation through Jesus Christ can still be saved, asserting that God does not seek to trap us in our ignorance.²

Thomas Aquinas: A Roman Catholic theologian who taught that God appeals to human reason because God has given us a mind. This idea supports Natural Theology, the belief that one's mind, reason, and conscience is sufficient to lead one to God.³

² "Foord, Martin. "Richard Hooker's Doctrine of Justification." Besso, Michael. "Thomas Hooker and His May 1638 Sermon."

³ Called to Communion. "St. Thomas Aquinas on Assurance of Salvation: Called to Communion."

Pestilent: destructive to life or annoying

Scruples: a feeling of doubt or hesitation with regard to the morality or propriety of a course of action

Genuflecting: church act of bending one or both knees to the ground

‘High’: Referring to the High Church of England, which is the Oxford Movement of the Church that emphasized the Roman Catholic heritage of the Church. High Church keeps with Catholic traditions such as liturgy.⁴

‘Low’: Referring to the Low Church of England, which is the Evangelical Movement of the Church that emphasized the protestant heritage of the Church.

Church of England: The primary state church of England upholds both customs of Roman Catholicism and Protestant ideas.

Theological Principles

Church tasting: A critical spirit is poisonous to not only the individual Christian but also the Church as a whole. Screwtape advises Wormwood to guide the patient toward a critical and opinionated approach to churchgoing. Rather than going to Church to give his time to God and his fellow believers, Wormwood is to convince the patient that he goes to church to get something for himself; to be served rather than to serve. This view of church will discourage the patient from fully gaining and giving in the way God desires him to. This bad attitude is more than immoral, it is toxic to the Christian community and offensive to God. It is important to note

⁴ Bratcher, Dennis. “‘Low Church’ and ‘High Church.’”

that the church is not a service to the individual Christian, but a community of people seeking Christ together.

- **Philippians 2:1-2:** “So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.”
- **Mark 10:44-45:** “And whoever would be first among you must be a slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
- **Hebrews 10:25:** “Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”
- **Acts 20:28:** “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.”

Weak and Strong: In the last paragraph of this letter, Screwtape refers to the apostle Paul’s teaching on weak and strong believers. Paul covers this topic in Romans 14 & 15 and in some of his other letters. The biblical definitions of weak and strong may differ from the modern reader’s understanding of spiritual weakness and strength. Paul defines the weak as the person who finds that they need to refrain from certain food or drink because it leads to temptation for them, while the strong are those who do not find that they need to refrain from these because it does not lead to temptation in their case. This does not include overtly sinful practices that are clearly prohibited in scripture, but rather activities that are spiritually neutral on their own.

- **Romans 14:1-7:** “Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. One person’s faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak,

eats only vegetables. The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand. One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone.”

- **Romans 15:1-2:** “We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up.”

Application

1. Purify your view of church. When churchgoers act like consumers, the church suffers. Because this is an inner attitude problem rather than an action problem, spending time in prayer that focuses on your attitude of church is going to be the most helpful. Take a few moments to ask God to help you see the church for what it truly is: the bride of Christ and a place for believers to find community and mutually uplift one another.
2. Reflect on where you fall on the spectrum of weak and strong believers. Have you struggled with not understanding someone who is the opposite of you? Take time to understand your role in this interaction between the weak and the strong.

Personal Reflection

Letter 17

Main Idea

Screwtape teaches Wormwood about the deceptive power of a kind of gluttony that often goes unrecognized.

Terms

Contemptuous: showing disrespect, scornful

Dossier: a collection of documents about a specific subject

Querulousness: of complaint or grievousness

Demure: reserved, shy characteristics of a woman

Enquiry: act of asking for information or an official investigation

Ammunition: quantity of bullets or considerations that can be used to support one's position in a debate

Imperil: put at risk of harm or danger

Chastity: state or practice of refraining from extramarital or any sexual intercourse

Abstinence: the practice of restraining oneself from something, commonly alcohol or sex.

Theological Principles

Gluttony of Delicacy or Excess: Screwtape tells Wormwood that demons have been successful in leading humans astray by tempting them in gluttony of delicacy rather than gluttony of excess.

Screwtape reveals that the quantity of food a person desires has no significant impact on the sin of gluttony. Small or large portions, a person who prioritizes the food they are consuming above other people or God is practicing gluttony. A big appetite is not required to struggle with gluttony. God opposes gluttony because he does not want us to be distracted by our fleshly desires so deeply that it affects our character and treatment of others. Food is a blessing from God, and valuing it as anything better or worse than that can be dangerous for our spiritual health.

- **1 Timothy 4:4-5:** “For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God in prayer.”
- **Proverbs 15:17:** “Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fattened ox and hatred with it.”

Abstinence: Gluttony of excess can make humans more vulnerable to sexual temptation, Screwtape suggests. Satan can accomplish this kind of sexual temptation by keeping the person in a state of “false spirituality” and keeping the “medical aspect” of sexual urges out of his or her mind. When the patient faces sexual temptation, Screwtape advises Wormwood to make the patient overthink and criticize their spiritual condition and cause him to ignore the possibility that “what he has been eating or drinking for the last twenty-four hours would show him” how the temptation has come about. Once the patient figures out this simple cause and effect, they could deny the demon’s tempting much more quickly. Screwtape then says if the patient does begin to think practically about sexual temptation, Wormwood should feed him the lie that lots of exercise will curb his sexual appetite. Screwtape uses sailors and soldiers as examples of this lie. Screwtape continues discussing sexual temptation in the next chapter.

- **1 Corinthians 6:12-13:** “‘All things are lawful for me,’ but not all things are helpful. ‘All things are lawful for me,’ but I will not be dominated by anything. ‘Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food’—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.”

Application

1. Take a few minutes today to evaluate your thoughts about food. Write down these thoughts and bring them to God when you pray today. Tell him about your fears, habits, weaknesses, and joys surrounding food. God is faithful to hear us and help us with everything, even food, when we ask him. It can also be helpful to pray before every meal, silently or out loud. Thanking God for what you’re about to eat reminds you that food is a blessing from God. Your body is a holy temple for the Holy Spirit to dwell. Know that God wants you to steward your body well. Know that God also wants you to enjoy your life, which includes fellowship and food.

Personal Reflection

Letter 18

Main Idea

Screwtape teaches Wormwood how to use common misconceptions about sex and love to deceive.

Terms

Unmitigated: absolute or outright

Axiom: a statement which is regarded as being established, accepted, or self-evidently true

Panacea: a solution or remedy from all difficulty or diseases

Arithmetical unity: a fancy way of saying numerically singular, something that is only one being or composed of only one part, unlike the trinity attribute of God.

Copulation: sexual intercourse

Rhetorical eulogies: a eulogy is a speech or writing that praises or speaks highly of someone or something, so a rhetorical eulogy is a topic that is presented using rhetoric (an appeal to logic) to describe it as something greater. In the letter's context, descriptions of sexual intercourse are rhetorical eulogies to being in love.

Transcendental: relating to spiritual realm

Gift of continence: ability to deny sexual desire

Wanton: a sexually unrestrained woman

Theological Principles

Negative Competition Versus Positive Contradiction: Screwtape says that, from Hell’s point of view, each person lives for their own interests and in competition with other people. Hell disbelieves in the mutual benefit of love between two people. God, on the other hand, calls people to become one and to desire the good of others as well as themselves. He calls this love. Because God exists as three entities in one being (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), this definition of love is displayed in his nature. With this idea of love, God designed sexual desire to be associated with affection between two parties, while Satan would rather convolute sex as an act in which each participant is seeking their own pleasure without regard for the other person, without regard for love at all.

- **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12:** “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”
- **Ephesians 5:1-3:** “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints”
- **Ephesians 5:21-25: 21** “... submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church

submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her... ”

A Distorted View of Marriage: Screwtape explains that humans often go against God’s plan by assuming that all acts resulting in “one flesh” regardless of marital status will produce real love. When this happens, humans place emotion and sex on a pedestal as the most important factors to consider before marriage, rather than considering that God promises those good things as a result of the marriage. The primary purpose of marriage is to honor God.

- **1 Corinthians 7:1-2:** “Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.” But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.”

Application

1. Reflect on your personal views of spiritual competition versus spiritual contradiction. Do you struggle with condemning sex even inside of marriage? Do you consider sex a taboo topic or a blessing from God when in the right context? Do you judge women or men by their relative sexual purity? Or do you seek a deeper understanding of God’s gift of love and forgiveness? After reflecting on competition versus contradiction, make an effort to interact with others in a way that shows love and grace rather than pride and jealousy. Someone else’s success does not diminish your own, because God definitively wrote in the Bible that he has great plans for YOU, without comparing that promise with his plans for anyone else. Rest in God’s contradictions and learn to marvel at the things that don’t make sense to human minds.

Personal Reflection

Letter 19

Main Idea

Screwtape discusses God's love, harmful divisions, and parts of life that are spiritually neutral.

Terms

Insoluble question: a question impossible to solve

Mooted: raised a question for discussion or suggest an idea

Cock-and-bull: far-fetched, ridiculous, or hard to believe story

Implored: earnestly begged someone to do something

Contempt: feeling that a person is beneath consideration, disregard

Flouting: openly disregarding

Overweening asceticism: excessively prideful self-discipline and limitation

Meritorious: deserving reward or praise

Unchastity: not pure, sexually suggestive

Theological Principles

The Secrecy of God: Screwtape expresses his confusion with the idea that God loves humans.

He claims that this kind of love is impossible because it contradicts hell's philosophy of competition. Demons want humans to have hell's philosophy too, to think that God could not

possibly love them because a. He is greater than them and b. He is not for them/He is in competition against them. We fight against hell by believing and proclaiming that God's love, while it doesn't make sense, is absolutely real. Screwtape also says that demons see God's secretive explanation for being able and passionate about loving humans as a bad thing that discredits him. The secrecy of God to them proves that he does not really love in the way he says he does. Humans who have a relationship with God know that this secrecy is actually part of God's divinity and wonder. It is a beautiful mystery of grace that God can love us as a perfect, holy being who knows our sins.

- **Romans 5:8:** "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
- **Colossians 2:2-3:** That their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Good or Bad: Screwtape reveals that focusing on the goodness or badness of minor things, not commandments or biblical instructions but things like politics, relationships, or education, is not important nor is it helpful in living a Christian life. When these minor things are seen by humans as "good" or "bad," they can become arrogant and divided, which are actually biblically "bad."

- **Titus 3:9-11:** "But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned."

Spiritual ‘Raw Material’: Screwtape uses this term to describe all the things in human life that fall into the category of neutral, meaning they can be sources of temptation or sources of spiritual encouragement depending on the condition of one’s mind, heart, soul, and spirit. A person who relies on God will learn how to respond to these things in life in a way that honors God and blesses them in return, while someone who doesn’t look to God in these things will face more and more temptation, frustration, and spiritual exhaustion. Screwtape says that these ‘things’ include health and sickness, age and youth, or war and peace.

- **1 Chronicles 16:11:** “Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!”
- **Jeremiah 17:5:** “Thus says the Lord: ‘Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes his flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord.’”

Application

1. If you are someone who struggles with anxiety or overthinking, you may have something similar to Screwtape’s idea of God’s secrecy in your mind. You might find it hard to trust God because you don’t feel that you could ever deserve His love, which you can’t. Knowing that God’s love is so miraculous that humans cannot fully understand it, write down every reason that you think God would reject you, then draw an X over the entire list and write “grace” across your list.
2. In the words of Paul, avoid foolish controversies. This week especially, work on your awareness of which of your values are truly biblical values and which are allowed to vary from person to person. God has created each of us uniquely so we will have different opinions, as frustrating as that may seem in the moment. Prioritize walking in love over defending your opinion of a minor topic.

Personal Reflection

Letter 20

Main Idea

Screwtape explains the role of secular media in tempting humans to lust.

Terms

Lowerarchy: people or things representing a lower level of a whole category; opposite of a hierarchy

Statuesque: attractively tall and dignified - striking

Prodigal women: lavish and recklessly extravagant women

Rôle: the part played in a scene or life situation.

Terrestrial and Infernal Venus: First, Venus is the roman goddess of beauty. In the book, these are the names of two symbols of women that a man is “haunted by”; the terrestrial venus is the natural woman and produces a natural, appropriate desire that God intended. The infernal venus, contrastively, is an objectified woman, an object too “brutally”, unnaturally, and immorally desired.

Amenable: open to response or suggestion, easily persuaded or convinced.

Accomplice: a person who helps another commit a crime.

Fornication: sexual intercourse between two people not married to each other.

Exquisite: beautiful and delicate, or a man affectedly concerned with his appearance.

Theological Principles

Lust Propaganda: Screwtape explains that the unrealistic portrayal of women in modern media serves Satan's goal of tempting humans to lust passionately for someone that doesn't truly exist, this way their desire will never be satisfied it will only become more and more distracting and consuming. Lust propaganda also promotes a demonic lie to women, that they are not good enough as they were created because the doctored magazine models are more beautiful and desired by men than they are. The lie that allows this spiritual torment of men and women to continue is that lusting after these unnatural depictions of women is the most "natural" instinct, merely an animal-like sexual desire, rather than a sin temptation or sin pattern that can and should be overcome like any other sin.

- **1 John 2:16:** "For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions— is not from the father but is from the world."

Application

1. It's highly likely that every person, male and female, has struggled with lust in some way. Consider how you struggle with lust: real life? pornography? television? movies? social media? Bring this struggle before God, repent of your sin, and ask for help. Having an accountability partner is also helpful in this area. Find a trusted person, preferably of the same gender, that you can honestly open up to. Because the world has aided Satan in promoting lies that cause us to lust in isolation, it is important to talk about lust with God and with other people to weaken its hold on our hearts and minds.

Letter 21

Main Idea

Screwtape teaches Wormwood how to increase a person's likelihood of becoming angry and hurting others with that anger.

Terms

Subordinate: lower rank of position

Peevishness: a bad mood, vexed or annoyed disposition

Induced: influenced to do something

Zealously: fervently or passionately

Chattels: personal possession or property

Operative: functioning or having effect, effective

Perilous: full of danger or risk

Pulsating: to be throbbing or very exciting

Ejected: to escape or throw something out

Titular: holding a purely formal position with no authority, name that also denotes one's artistic work, churches in which cardinals are formally appointed "titular churches"

Pedantic: like a pedant, overly concerned with detail and specific knowledge

Theological Principles

Misfortune Conceived as Injury: The difference between misfortune and injury is what a person considers they deserve and how intensely they believe that they are entitled to whatever it is. The more demons can get humans to “claim” their life on earth, the more they can produce feelings and actions of anger. This tactic goes beyond material things and can produce other sins. Demons want humans to think that they own their bodies. Demons seek to distort our understanding of the phrase “My God” from a being we are to serve and obey to a being who is supposed to serve and obey us. Really, the latter sense of ‘mine’ is not applicable to anything for humans. Everything we are, see, touch, and experience is a gift from God. When we remind ourselves of this, minor inconveniences or misfortunes will be less likely to lead us to sin.

- **Proverbs 28:22:** “A stingy man hastens after wealth and does not know that poverty will come upon him.”
- **Ephesians 5:3:** “But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.”
- **Psalms 62:10b:** “if riches increase, set not your heart on them.”
- **James 4:1-2a:** “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight.”

Stewarding Time: Screwtape advises Wormwood to make the patient see their day as their own. In reality, every hour in each day is a gift from God. Screwtape makes the interesting point that if humans ever saw God with their own eyes and heard him with their own ears, they would be quick to obey if He requested them to serve Him with their day. They would want to do that out

of their love for God. But, when humans cannot see God literally and make no effort to set our focus on him spiritually as they go about their day, demons have an opportunity to fill our forgetfulness with selfishness rather than service.

- **Proverbs 16:3:** “Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.”
- **Ephesians 5:15-17:** “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

Application

1. What do you consider yours? Make a list of everything you think you own. Next, pray over that list and surrender ownership to God. Thank Him for each of these undeserved blessings.
2. Act on this transfer of ownership. Increased generosity is a likely action to result from this heart change. Keep what you’ve learned today in mind, and say “yes” more when you’re asked to make a sacrifice to someone else. Let God be honored with your yes. Also, less stinginess equals more peace! If you have a sibling, you likely remember arguing about something they took from you, whether it’s a toy or an activity that was supposed to be fun. When you find yourself thinking that you deserve something that you don’t have, catch and stop yourself right there. Change that conversation to one of gratitude for who God is, whether he gives you what you want that day or not.

Letter 22

Main Idea

Screwtape teaches Wormwood how to distort human pleasure.

Terms

Secret Police: For the purposes of this book, a police force in Hell that Wormwood contacted about an issue with Screwtape.

Unguarded Expressions: Something wrong that Screwtape said, and Wormwood reported to Hell's secret police. This statement is likely found in letter 19, page 99 when Screwtape says, "If, as I have clearly shown, all selves are by their very nature in competition, and therefore the enemy's idea of Love is a contradiction in terms, what becomes of my reiterated warning that He really loves the human vermin and really desires their freedom from continued existence?"

*Another of these unguarded expressions is Screwtape's trash talk of Slubgob in letter 8, page 37: "I always thought the Training College had gone to pieces since they put old Slubgob at the head of it, and now I am sure."

House of Correction of Incompetent Tempters: A made-up place of punishment in Hell that Screwtape brings up to scare Wormwood.

Dossier: a collection of documents of a specific subject

Simpering: effectively coy or ingratiating, presented to gain approval

Demure: reserved, modest, shy

Monosyllabic: response of one syllable, symbolizing reluctance to engage in conversation

Virginal: quality of being a virgin

Brute: absent of intelligence, savagely violent person or animal

Scalds: burn

Hedonist: a person who primarily prioritizes pleasure, a pleasure seeker

Facade: outward concealing appearance

Austere: severe or strict in manner, attitude, or appearance

Miserific: coined by C. S Lewis, supposedly means terrific misery

Bourgeois: materialistic, conventional, middle class

Insolent: showing a rude and arrogant lack of respect

Impenetrable: impossible to pass through or enter

Obscenity: offensive or disgusting content by standards of morality or decency

Dynamism: being characterized by vigorous activity and progress/ the theory that phenomena of matter or mind are due to the action of forces rather than motion or matter

Exultant: triumphantly happy

Virile: having strength, energy, and a high sex drive

Qualms: uneasiness of doubt or fear, usually about one's own actions/faint sick feeling

Scruples: feelings of hesitation regarding the morality of an action

Inadvertently: unintentionally, accidentally

Milton: author of *Paradise Lost* whom Screwtape references as he attempts to explain why he has turned into a centipede.

Pshaw: allusion to George Bernard Shaw, a man who wrote about the idea of a Life Force in his play, *Man and Superman*.

Life Force: The theorized inner force of a living being that strives toward a greater power by self-realization

Indissoluble: unable to be destroyed, everlasting

Toadpipe: fertile, branching plant. In the book: the name of Screwtape's assistant.

Abysmal sublimity: very deeply wonderful, uplifted, or exalted

Theological Principles

Natural Pleasure: Screwtape admits that Hell is at a disadvantage because they have no natural pleasures. However, God gives us natural pleasures: “sleeping, washing, eating, drinking, making love, playing, praying, working.” Hell must use “twisted” pleasures, like laziness, vanity, gluttony, addiction, violence, mysticism, greed, etc. These provide very fleeting pleasure followed by deep regret and serious damage.

- **Psalm 16:11b:** “at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

Christian Community: Screwtape describes the patient's girlfriend's family as having a kind of love that rubs off on everyone they come into contact with. This "impenetrable mystery" is God's love; Screwtape writes of it with disgust.

- **Colossians 3:13-14:** "And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."
- **John 13:34-35:** "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Music, Silence, Noise: Music and Silence are both enjoyable, while noise is distracting and annoying at best, and disturbing at worst. Screwtape includes that heaven has been described as a place of either music or silence, never just noise. This was originally said by George Macdonald in *Unspoken Sermons*: "The Hands of the Father." Macdonald was referring to the literal sounds and, arguably moreso, the feelings that these sounds cause. God offers us the peace of Music and Silence, and this peace will be made perfect in heaven. Satan tortures us with noise that makes us restless, worried, and angry. This noise is loudest in hell.

- **Isaiah 32:18:** "My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."
- **Isaiah 26:3:** "You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts you."

Punishment: As Screwtape begins insulting Wormwood, the paragraph cuts off. Screwtape explains, and his secretary writes down, that he has been turned into a centipede. Screwtape attempts to brush it off like it's a good change, "a glorious manifestation of that Life Force." It

isn't. Screwtape is being punished and humbled by God. We can infer that this was God's doing because Screwtape references Milton's *Paradise Lost* in which God turns demons into snakes as a result of them raging against him. Not to mention, Satan himself is turned into a snake by God in the Bible. This event teaches us that God is sovereign over hell, even the speaking of demons. This sovereignty shows that God's omnipresence knows no limits, but his personal presence is not there, which is the ultimate punishment.

- **Proverbs 15:3:** "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good."
- **Genesis 3:14:** "The Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.'"

Application

1. Can you think of any sin in your life that you enjoy in the moment and regret later?
Confess this to God in prayer and ask Him to help you. Next, consider alternative actions, thought patterns, habits, etc. that will give you the lasting pleasure of abundant life that God offers to us.
2. How can you live out the "impenetrable mystery" of God's love this week? This was a characteristic of the family in the book because it was a practiced habit in their lives.
Living in this love doesn't happen overnight. This week, come up with one way you can show/be God's love to someone else.
3. What's noisy in your life? What happens in your day-to-day that distracts, angers, disturbs, or tempts you? It could be anxious thoughts, a negative outlook, a rude person, a

financial problem, a busy schedule, or even music with a negative message. Now that you have the sound analogy under your belt, use God's music and silence to drown out the noise. This could look like taking a moment of silent prayer before checking your bank account or scrolling on social media, finding worship music you love to replace some of the discouraging content, or speaking with humility in situations of conflict.

4. Rejoice and give thanks to God for his power over even the most evil acts of hell! To live out this worship, rest by relying on God's power. This looks like moving on from past sin, forgiving others, resisting worrying about your future, and being still and quiet for a few moments to reflect on His power. Let His power over even hell give you confidence to fight the good fight for yourself and others. This power gives you the power to spread the gospel with love.

Personal Reflection

Letter 23

Main Idea

Screwtape teaches Wormwood how to corrupt the patient's spirituality by promoting a false idea of Jesus and a wrong treatment of Christianity.

Terms

Debauchee: a person given to excessive indulgence in sensual pleasures

Accretions and perversions: gradual process of growth or increase/ disruptions of something from original course

Marxian: sharing qualities of Karl Marx's ideas and philosophies. Marx thought that classes and wealth divisions were the downfall of society. Something that is Marxian goes along with this belief and has a critical attitude toward society.

Manifold: numerous and various

Promulgated: promoted or made widely known

Terminus: terminal/final point in space or time

Centrifugal: moving or tending to move away from center

'A Crank Vending a Panacea': a solution or remedy for all diseases

Primeval moral platitudes: cliché, common statements from early in human history

Sophists: teachers of ancient Greek philosophy who received payment for teaching young men about rhetorical persuasion to make clever but false arguments to get what they want. Sophists prioritized making money over living a moral life.

Socrates: classical greek philosopher who laid the fundamentals of Western philosophy; he argued against the Sophist philosophy, claiming that the soul needs care to function properly.⁵

Sacrament: a ritual imparting divine grace- baptism, eucharist, anointing of the sick, offering of bread, holy spirit/ religious symbol

Uncouth: lacking good manners or refinement

Edify: to instruct morally or intellectually

Platitudinous: used too often to be interesting or thoughtful

Rift: serious break in friendly relations

Theological Principles

Remove or Corrupt: Demons have two options for ruining human spiritual life: to remove spirituality from their life or to corrupt that spirituality. The second option leads to the gradual fade of a well-meaning, “good” person away from God and into enemy territory with Satan. Spirituality is corrupted by misleading a human’s understanding of God or how God fits into the world, both of which are discussed in the next two points.

⁵ Blackson, Thomas A. “The Sophistic Movement”

- **Colossians 2:8:** “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.”

Historical Jesus: Screwtape shares that demons promote a false identity of Jesus to modern Christians. This means that demons lead men away from the real Jesus by creating a persona for Him that isn't real. Demons do this by exaggerating one truth about Jesus and minimizing another. Demons can most easily convince humans of this false historical Jesus by making him fit their societal norms. Demons present him as a famous moral teacher, glossing over the reality that God himself sends actual moral teachers not to bring something new but to remind people of the original and cosmic impact that came from Jesus fully divine and fully human life. By ignoring this and presenting Jesus as an impersonal “great,” demons promote the loss of relationship between humans and Jesus. Screwtape ends this argument by stating that biographical study is not what leads people to Jesus... a real encounter with the real presence of Jesus does.

- **Galatians 1:9:** “As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.”
- **1 Timothy 2:5:** “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus...”
- **Hebrews 13:8:** “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday today and forever.”
- **1 Timothy 6: 3-4a:** “If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.”

Christianity and Politics: Demons tempt believers to see their Christianity merely as something that supports their own political views, not something so powerful that it changes every part of their life and causes them to hold onto their personal opinions less tightly. Screwtape says God will “not be used as a convenience.” He then mentions that humans fall for this by arguing for their faith by stating its moral benefits for society, rather than arguing if it is true. Christianity was never intended to endorse a political party or social justice issue, but to bring the hope of Jesus into the hearts of those who seek him with their whole lives.

- **John 8:36:** “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.”
- **Matthew 10:34:** “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.”

Application

1. To have a right view of Jesus, it’s important for us to remember how we met him. Think about your conversion to Christianity. In a few sentences, describe what made you decide to believe and how you felt. It’s okay if you can’t remember much of it, use the extra space to thank God for drawing you to him sooner rather than later so that you can spend an abundant life on earth with him.
2. Both a wrong view of Jesus and misusing the gospel for one’s own political agenda can be combated with a strong prayer life. When you pray, thank God for who He is and say his true characteristics out loud, such as faithful, selfless, full of grace, powerful, holy, etc. Ask God for His will to be done also. As you make a habit of saying these things,

your heart's desire will be inclined to recenter on Jesus' desires rather than your own.

Letter 24

Main Idea

Screwtape teaches Wormwood about the power of Spiritual Pride.

Terms

Slumtrimpet: The demon in charge of corrupting the patient's love interest

Chink: narrow opening or crack that emits light

Unobtrusive: not attracting attention

Pedantic: too concerned with accuracy or formality

Venial: denoting a sin that is not regarded as depriving the soul of divine grace/ slight and pardonable

Notion: conception or belief of something/ whimsical impulse or desire

Congruity: agreement and appropriateness

Trumpery: showy but worthless

'Clerks': religious council member

Theocrats: people who govern as representatives of God

Theological Principles

Spiritual Pride: Screwtape shares that the patient's love interest struggles badly with spiritual pride and advises Wormwood to have her struggle rub off on his patient. Spiritual pride is a strong and common sin among many devoted Christians because there is a fine line between being confident in your faith and being prideful for knowing something others do not. This is especially tempting for new Christians who have recently experienced the joy of Christianity and likely found a new circle of nice people from it, as Wormwood's patient had. If these blessings are not met with humility and giving credit to God, they can cause a person to commit the sin of spiritual pride. Spiritual pride can last for a long time in believers if they never question what exactly they are proud of, or what exactly makes them better than the unbeliever. If the prideful believer truly faced this question, they could have a chance of finally denying that spiritual pride and embracing God's lavish, undeserved goodness.

- **Proverbs 16:5** "Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord; be assured, he will not go unpunished."
- **Galatians 6:3**: "For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself."
- **Ephesians 2:8-9**: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast?"

Application

1. Face those questions that can set you free from spiritual pride: What about yourself, free of any help from anyone else, are you proud of? What makes you a better person than your unbelieving neighbor? Hopefully you realize that these are trick questions; there is

no right answer. We do not get to take the credit for the supernatural working of Jesus Christ in our lives.

2. Fill the reflection page with a prayer of thankfulness and willingness. Thank God for His biggest blessings to you: you salvation, family, church, calling, etc. For the second half of your prayer, tell him that you want these blessings to help you encourage and save others. Ask him to increase your awareness of and compassion for others.
3. The next moment that you find yourself inclined to brag about something, think about how you could use that blessing you are proud of to help or encourage someone.

Letter 25

Main Idea

Screwtape teaches Wormwood how to exploit the patient's desire for change.

Terms

Hedonist: a person who prioritizes pleasure

Contrived: deliberately created and unnatural

Immemorial: very old, originating in the distant past

Absolute novelty: distinctly new, unequal, or original

Conkers: a children's game where each child has a conker (brown nut) on a string, taking turns to break another child's with it.

Law of Diminishing Returns: point where profit is less than energy invested

Avarice: extreme greed

Rapacious: aggressively greedy or grasping

'low-brow'/'high-brow': (not) highly intellectual or cultured

Lasciviousness: sexual eagerness

Endemic: disease found among people in a certain area

Byronic: of Lord Byron and his poetry, dark and mysterious

Feckless: lacking initiative or character

Lecherous: showing excessive or offensive sexual desire

Bogey: an evil spirit causing fear or alarm

Modern European thought: In the 20th century, European thought was characterized by deep, abstract thinking about how one goes about life, especially in light of the two World Wars.

Theological Principles

Mere Christianity: This phrase is the title of a previous and popular book by C. S. Lewis. It denotes the ideal kind of Christian faith, where one's belief in God is the most important interest in their life, and all other interests are secondary. The opposite of mere Christianity is what Screwtape calls "Christianity And." This is a kind of Christianity that occurs when a believer combines their faith in God with their interest in another issue, such as a political topic, a social justice issue, a field of study, a moral conviction, or even a preferred way of worship. Because God does delight in His children enjoying these secondary interests, it is dangerously easy for a believer to fall into "Christianity And" if they aren't careful to avoid idolizing their other passions. This kind of idolatry or syncretism (def: the combining of one or more faiths) satisfies a person's desire to be a unique Christian. However, this satisfaction is fleeting and harmful to one's faith. God calls believers to be uniquely set apart from the unbelieving world but calls us to be unified in our devotion to Him alone.

- **1 John 5:21:** "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."
- **Ephesians 4b-5:** "The one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism."

Change and Permanence: God gives us both of these in a perfect ratio. Satan exploits our desire for change, leading Christians into adultery, religious heresy, idolatry, and faithlessness in areas like friendships and careers. God gives us change and permanence to produce pure pleasures in us. Satan also exploits these pleasures and presents us with habits that offer a spiritually lethal amount of that pleasure, i.e.: gluttony and lust. This causes a gradual increase in desire and decrease in pleasure. Essentially, doing things Satan's way will always leave us feeling empty in the end. The kind of life that God calls us to live is the most abundant, pleasurable, satisfying life both now and for eternity.

- **Hebrews 13:8:** "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday today and forever."
- **Ecclesiastes 3:1:** "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven."
- **Lamentations 3:22-23:** "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

Future: Screwtape relates his idea of exploited pleasures to human decision making. He advises Wormwood to make humans avoid the simple questions about their actions, like whether they are morally correct, pleasing to God, responsible, and possible. Instead, Wormwood should cause the man to overthink and wonder if the action is accepted by their society or in the direction that history is headed. These are ineffective questions because they are too worldly and too future-focused. Screwtape reveals that this kind of thinking distracts humans with future things, allowing demons to have their way with humans' present actions. By being so afraid of becoming stagnant, humans never allow themselves to lean into and find rest in the permanent omnipresence of God.

- **Romans 12:2:** ‘Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.’
- **1 John 2:17:** “And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”
- **Matthew 6:34:** “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

Application

1. Brainstorm 3 things that could be idols in your life. What do you fill in the blank after “Christianity And”? Next to each potential idol, write a sentence about what this looks like when it is placed secondary to your faith and another sentence about what this looks like when it is placed at the same level as your faith, competing against it. Consider which way you’re leaning with each of the 3 things and decide what changes you can make to keep God first in your life.
2. What is the most unstable thing in your life? What is changing the most? Does this have anything to do with your decisions, or is it simply the circumstances? Consider how you can lean into God’s stillness and permanence. Is there anything you should make a permanent commitment to? What choice are you putting off or overthinking? God doesn’t expect us to have it all figured out, but he does want us to go about our lives from a place of stability and confidence in him. When we rely on ourselves or our relationships with others too heavily, we will find ourselves constantly searching for the next best

thing. God calls us to grow in a way that is healthy and informed by his love and patience.

3. When you catch yourself overthinking a decision, slow that down by asking yourself the three questions Lewis includes in this chapter: Is it righteous? Is it prudent (responsible)? Is it possible? Don't let the devil distract you with unnecessary what ifs.

Personal Reflection

Letter 26

Main Idea

Satan teaches Wormwood how to make his patient corrupt in unselfishness.

Terms

Avail: use, help, or benefit

Foment: to instigate or stir up violence or undesirable situation

Render: to offer, provide, give, or make

Philological arm: made-up department in Hell. Philological means something relating to the study of languages- their structure, historical developments, and relationships.

Complaisance: inclined to please

Harbours: holds, conceals, or gives shelter to

Ostensibly: apparently, but perhaps not actually

Altruisms: belief in/practice of disinterested/selfless concern for the well being of others

Debauch: to destroy moral purity of

Obstinacy: stubbornness

‘Hunted Expression’: nervous and agitated in appearance

Theological Principles

Charity Versus Unselfishness: Screwtape tells Wormwood to confuse his patient's negative type of unselfishness with God's positive virtue of Charity. Negative unselfishness is characterized by putting others first not because you want them to be happy, but because you want to feel good about your unselfishness. Screwtape describes this in the context of a new relationship where both people are in a state of enchantment, or blind love. Because the lovers are practicing this unselfishness so early on, they will struggle when they can't keep it up long term. Charity, defined as a love of humankind, can last longer because it has a pure and truly unselfish motive that is supported by the Holy Spirit.

- **James 3:16:** "For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice."
- **Ephesians 5:21:** "Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."

Application

1. Many of us love the praise and warm feelings we receive when we serve or give. Can you recall a time when you did something selfless and didn't receive these positive results? Write about how this did or would make you feel. Next, take a few minutes to think of one thing you can do for someone else's sake that you might not receive instant or public praise for this week. Here are some ideas: mailing a friend an encouraging letter, doing the most unwanted chores around the house, or paying for the person behind you at the drive-thru. These actions can help remind you to do acts of selflessness without thinking selfishly when you do them.

Letter 27

Main Idea

Screwtape teaches Wormwood how to hinder his patient's prayer life.

Terms

Pious: devoutly religious/ hypocritical display of virtue/ sincere but unlikely to be fulfilled

Temporal: secular

Corporeal: body as opposed to spirit

Meddlesome: commonly interfering

Boethius: Christian philosopher

West EU Intellectual Climate: societal trend moving away from deep thought and toward quick entertainment and information relating to current events

Inculcating: persistently instilling of an idea

Unutterably: unspeakably; exhibiting a quality so extremely that it cannot be spoken about

Theological Principles

Distraction in Prayer: Screwtape knows that Wormwood is already aware that distractions during his patient's prayer is an effective strategy in drawing him away from God. Many humans are aware of this demonic strategy. But, Screwtape goes on to teach Wormwood how demons should persuade humans to respond to distractions. Skilled demons will persuade humans to

continue praying as if the distraction never happened, while God wants humans to acknowledge and pray through the distraction. If we feel like we can use our distractions to continue a conversation with God, our prayer life is more likely to last long term.

- **Luke 18:30-31a:** “But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’” I tell you, this man went down to his house justified.”
- **Matthew 26:41:** “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Crude Prayers: This term is used by Screwtape to describe the practical prayers that Jesus has told us to pray; things like asking for our daily bread and physical healing. Practical or ‘crude’ praying is not beneficial to Satan because it is an act of obedience to God. Demons are supposed to tempt us with thoughts that practical prayers don’t work by using the “heads I win, tails you lose” argument: if one thing a human prays for doesn’t happen, demons use this as a reason for them to doubt God even though this isn’t how God works. Further, demons are taught to trick humans into denying God’s work in a situation if they are able to see a sequence of physical or “human-caused” events that led to the answered prayer. Isn’t it odd that demons often successfully distract us from the truth that God is the creator of everything and everyone?

- **Matthew 6:9-13:** “Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

- **Colossians 1:16:** ‘For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities- all things were created through him and for him.’
- **Psalms 121:2:** “My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”

Creation Leaves Room for Free Will: Humans experience life as moments of past, present, and future. God does not. It’s hard for us to understand, but God experiences life all at once. Because of this difference in perspective regarding time, it is false that God predicts human actions. The future is not a thing for Him as he is present in every moment, so He watches all humans at every point in their life. God does not see our lives as a sequence of events as our limited eyes do, so He does not “make us” go in a certain direction or make a certain choice for our future because He is already there. He knows what we’re going to do because He is already watching it through his divine eyes. God made our perspective of time this way so that we would have free will and gave us His word and access to Himself so that he may help inform our decisions. He is a perfect creator.

- **Psalms 90:2:** “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.”
- **James 1:13-14:** “Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.”

Learn from the Past: Demons aim to stop this from happening by causing each generation to feel completely separate and different from the generations before and after them. This separation stops humans from learning from others' mistakes on a very large scale. By removing

their generation from the actions of other generations, humans forfeit the opportunity to discover truth that the past generation discovered, or to learn from the past generation's inability to see the truth as a means to discover it in their time. The truth is, God gave humans history and generations so that we would learn from each other and seek him more. If we ignore this gift of learning that he's given us, we lose the full scope of what he has to teach us.

- **Romans 15:4:** “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”
- **Deuteronomy 32:7:** “Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you, your elders, and they will tell you.”

Application

1. Be honest and intentional with your prayers. Pray for a few minutes, silently or aloud, and let every thought that comes through your mind be part of that prayer. God will use your honesty, weakness, and struggles for so much good. Don't be afraid to pray for practical, physical needs along with spiritual matters. Know that he wants to heal it all.
2. Appreciate the past and future in a new way. When you learn about or remember anything from your past or the past in general, consider what that memory can teach you. When you think about the future, don't try to predict every little thing, but consider how amazing it is that God is literally already there. Ask Him to help you trust Him to establish your steps in the right direction. You can get excited about the future when you're walking with God.

Letter 28

Main Idea

Screwtape reveals the real way demons view human life and death.

Terms

Infantile rhapsodies: enthusiastic expressions, for babies

Obtuse: annoying, insensitive, hard to understand

Defence: denying or resisting attack

Fiends: an evil spirit or demon

Inarticulate resentment: unclear bitterness or malice

Attrition: gradually breaking down or reducing strength of

Prudent: acting with care or thought for the future

Eugenics: controlled breeding in human population

Theological Principles

Death Versus Survival: Demons don't desire for humans to die, especially not while they're Christian. They want long human lives to work with, so that they have more time to tempt past a person's breaking point. Humans naturally view death as the worst evil that could happen and survival as the best result in any situation. This is largely a lie that demons use to keep the human soul focused on this temporary life on earth, desiring it so earnestly that eternal life does not even

compare to earthly pleasures according to the mistaken human mind. Demons would rather us survive and be distracted and distant from God than for us to die even a horrible death on earth and end up in heaven. Demons also find that older, more successful humans are easier to deceive because a) they are growing tired of resisting temptation for so many years and b) their years of work have likely resulted in wealth, which binds humans closer to the world and its desires.

- **Psalm 116:15:** “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.”
- **Philippians 1:22:** “For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

Application

1. Stay alert and faithful to God as you live here on earth. Trust that God has you for your entire life. We can trust him with any and every trial that comes your way even to the point of death and after death. Our salvation in Jesus Christ is secure, but we still face temptation. Though it can be hard to see the reality of eternity as the years go by in this temporary physical world, take time to refocus your life on knowing and honoring God.

Letter 29

Main Idea

Screwtape teaches Wormwood how to use God-given virtues and emotions for evil.

Terms

Attila: Attila the Hun was the ruler of the Huns from 434 to 453 AD. A powerful military leader, Attila was known for terrifying his enemies.

Shylock: The lead antagonist character in Shakespeare's play, *The Merchant of Venice*. The character is known for charging high interest rates on loans, making him characteristically greedy.

Anodyne: something that soothes or comforts

Calamity: disaster

Stupor: a state of near unconsciousness

Chloroforming: reducing pain of

Enjoined: urged to do something

Honeycombed: filled with holes; to be infiltrated and undermined

Expedients: a means for an end, one that is convenient yet improper

Theological Principles

Virtuous Wickedness: Contrary to what many Christians might assume, demons are not working to make us merely bad people. They are working to get us away from the presence of God. This means that they are not focused on destroying our virtuous qualities, but rather manipulating our good qualities and using them for evil purposes. Screwtape gives the examples of a historical figure (Attila) and a fictional character (Shylock) who had high virtues but were engaging primarily in evil, immoral acts. This strategy works because it's harder for humans to detect. We can be deceived into believing that all of the virtues we possess automatically make each of our actions virtuous. Demons deceive us this way; a person can be loyal and act insincerely, honest and act offensively, courageous and act violently, humble and act enviously. Positive virtues are in fact good and produced in us by God, but demons can corrupt and employ even these seemingly good virtues into their evil plans.

- **2 Peter 1:5-7:** “For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.”
- **Colossians 3:12-14:** “Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”

Hatred: Demons can conceal our own hatred from us by convincing us that our hatred for someone is for the good of someone we love (ex: hating the boy who cheated on your sister). Demons want us to feel entitled to hate someone who has wronged somebody else, but not

affected enough to feel that they need to extend forgiveness to them just as they should forgive their own enemies. Screwtape goes on to say that hatred is best combined with fear. Fear is not as pleasurable to feel as hate is, so if demons can produce both evil emotions in a human, they know those emotions will exist in a favorable climate. Hatred also makes humans feel justified, delivering them from uncomfortable feelings of shame. Deliverance from the discomfort of fear and shame is how demons work to make something as obviously wrong as hate all too common in the human heart.

- **Luke 6:27:** “But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.”
- **Mark 11:25:** “And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”

War and Discovery of the Moral World: Screwtape points to World War I as the first time that many people recognized the presence of good and evil forces on earth. Demons can easily distract humans from ever considering the moral quality of life in times of peace, when nothing regarding morals is being messed with. This point speaks to God allowing evil in the world. He uses it to make us more aware of the deeper things happening to the souls around us and to make us more passionate, and therefore effective, for His kingdom mission of salvation for all people.

- **Isaiah 45:7:** “I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the Lord, who does all these things.”
- **1 John 2:17:** “And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”

Courage: Screwtape says that courage is not only a single virtue, but the form that every virtue takes at its testing point. By this he means that courage allows for the carrying out of every other kind of virtue. One cannot be merciful without courageously resisting the urge to just keep that grudge, one cannot be kind without courageously denying temptations to gossip, one cannot be honest without courageously denying the easy way out that lies can provide. Screwtape includes that God agrees with the role of courage he describes. With this being said, Screwtape concludes that demons can do a lot of damage by making humans cowardly; they can destroy every virtue if they can destroy one's courage.

- **1 Corinthians 16:13:** “Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong.”
- **Psalms 27:14:** “Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!”

Shame to Despair: Shame can be aggravated to the level of despair. Despairing is a sign of a person's distrust in God's ability to forgive, because the person cannot forgive themselves. A person in despair is a person who doubts and therefore does not seek God's mercy, making despair “a greater sin than any of the sins which provoke it.”

- **Romans 8:1:** “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
- **2 Corinthians 12:9:** “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

Precaution to Fear to Control: Precautions, such as hand-washing, locking doors, or wearing a seatbelt, are helpful when they are a normal and necessary part of one's routine. However, demons take good precautions and tempt humans to dwell on them, overthinking precautions into fears. When one begins to think of all the possible worst scenarios that could happen if the precautions fail or aren't followed, especially obsessively, they fall into a fear-driven desire for control, for the ability to be their own god. Screwtape clarifies at the end of this letter that fear as an emotion is not a sin and does the cause of hell no good. Fear that helps tempt a person to sin is helpful to hell and harmful to humans.

- **Psalm 56:3:** “When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.”
- **Matthew 6:27:** “And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?”

Application

1. With so many theological principles in one chapter, I've included a quick list-making exercise to help you reflect on these truths.
 - What would you say are your best qualities? How do you think those qualities could be or have been used for evil rather than good?
 - Who do you love the most? Probably your family and a few close friends. Jot down five names. Can you think of a time when you sinned against them? How did you feel in that experience? Were you aware of it at that moment? Pray that He would help you be aware of your actions, even those done for people you love.

- What keeps you from being all that you feel God has called you to be? Fear of judgment? Fear of not doing it perfectly? Shame? Bring these to God. End this reading with honest prayer about what you are afraid and ashamed of.

Personal Reflection

Letter 30

Main Idea

Screwtape teaches Wormwood how to subtly exploit his patient's fatigue and encourage him to doubt the goodness of God.

Terms

Infernal Police: fictional name of Hell's police force, whose job is to make sure that patients are being tempted effectively and acting evilly

Irremediable: impossible to fix

Fortitude: courage in pain

Fogged: bewildered or confused

Escapist: person who seeks distraction in that which is not real or fantasy

Sentiments: attitudes or views

Entrails: innermost parts of something

Theological Principles

Fatigue: Screwtape says that fatigue can be useful for good or evil, so Wormwood must manipulate it to produce anger, malice, and impatience in his patient. Fatigue is best manipulated by tricking the patient into expecting their tiredness to come to an end sooner than it will. This works because humans often make a "contract" in their heads that they can only bear a trial with

grace for a certain amount of time before breaking down, even if they don't consciously recognize it. Screwtape adds that this kind of prolonged fatigue can hurt relationships, as women generally talk more when fatigued while men talk less.

- **1 Corinthians 13:7:** "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."
- **Romans 12:12:** "Rest in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer."

Emotional Versus Physical: When encountering a spiritual experience, humans judge its reality based on physical facts, like the worship music that was played or the way the sanctuary or sunset looked, often leading them to discount the power of that real spiritual encounter. However, humans use the word "real" the other way too, when they suggest that one doesn't "really" understand something until they experience it. That is, they can have the facts but can't fully understand it without their raw emotions involved. Demons exchange both human understandings of "real" depending on which will more successfully cause us to doubt God. Many Christians fall for this tactic. To us it may look like pessimism. We are often more powerfully affected by our sufferings and refer to them as the realities of life. When we are blessed, we are quick to doubt that this good thing was meant for us or if we are enjoying it too much. Screwtape calls this "paying for the cake and not eating it" rather than the popular saying "have your cake and eat it too."

- **1 Corinthians 2:14:** "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned."

Application

1. Evaluate how fatigued you feel right now. Consider how your personal experience with fatigue affects the decisions you make, the things you say, the thoughts you think, and the ways you act. Ask God to give you both rest and endurance to continue living well.
2. Pray a prayer of thankfulness today. Recall good things that have happened to you spiritually, physically, and emotionally. Thank God for all of them and ask him to help you see the reality of his goodness. If you're interested in learning more about God's blessings in the context of spiritual life, I recommend reading through the book of Acts.

Letter 31

Main Idea

Wormwood is defeated when his patient dies and goes to heaven.

Terms

Poppet: pretty child or small being used for sorcery or witchcraft

Pignie: a term of endearment, similar to “darling”

Kingdom of Noise: imaginary preliminary level of Hell

‘The very Throne itself’: *In the book:* a lower, likely the lowest, level of Hell where Satan reigns

Tetter: skin disease

Reeling: to lose balance

‘Begotten in a bed’: conceived from sexual intercourse

Prostration: laying on the ground, state of weakness or exhaustion

Raddled harlot: aged or exhausted rebel

Transfinite: beyond the finite; having no end

Arithmetic: manipulation of numbers

Intelligence Department: Made-up department in Hell that contains information on humans, namely their spiritual strengths and struggles.

Mawkish: sentimental in a feeble or sickly way

Claptrap: absurd talk or ideas

Theological Principles

‘Beyond death’: To Screwtape and Wormwood’s disappointment, the patient entered heaven when he died. The patient experienced freedom from temptation for the first time as he moved from death on the battlefield to beyond death, in the presence of God. His death was surely terrifying and painful, but all of that sorrow faded as the patient came into God’s presence for good.

- **John 11:25:** “Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, he shall live.”
- **Romans 8:18:** “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

‘Them’ and ‘Him’: Once the patient reached this point beyond death, he met ‘them,’ heaven’s angels. The sight of them hurt Wormwood even more than the lethal bomb hurt the patient when he died. The patient could stand before the angels comfortably, while Wormwood remained in trembling fear. To Wormwood’s surprise, the patient wasn’t scared or confused by the angels, even though he had never seen one or even been certain that they existed until this moment. Just as the patient saw Wormwood at his death and recognized the role he had in tempting him, he also recognized the angels and their roles in his life as though he had always known them. The

patient then met ‘Him,’ God. The patient could look at God, who had a cool light that embodied perfect clarity. To Wormwood, God was a blinding fire and the air from heaven caused him to choke. The patient laid on his face before God, feeling the pain of his sinfulness. These pains are special as they are not nearly as horrible as those that Wormwood felt in this moment. The patient embraces his pain and finds it better than the greatest pleasures on earth. The patient is overwhelmed still by the joy of being in the presence of God.

- **Revelation 21:4:** “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”
- **1 Corinthians 2:9:** “But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him.”

Application

1. This chapter offers believers so much hope as to what awaits us after death. The patient’s joyful after-death experience would be possible without Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross on our behalf. Take today to reflect on this hope that you have. What is your response to this hope?

Personal Reflection

Screwtape Proposes a Toast

Main Idea

Screwtape tells new tempters about the main vulnerabilities of their incoming patients.

Terms

Imminence: A play on the word eminence (meaning fame and influence), Imminence in this context refers to someone who is approaching fame and influence. Imminence usually means the state of anything being about to happen.

Thorns: These are associated with works of the devil (i.e. Jesus' crown of thorns at crucifixion)

Shadies: A play on the ancient roman use of the word "shades" in reference to ghosts

Trepidation: Agitated fear of something that may be about to happen

Farinata: (1212-1264) Italian aristocrat and leader of the Ghibelline military in the 1200s. In 1283, Faratina degli Uberti was condemned as a heretic.

Henry VIII: (1491-1547) King of England who established the Church of England after the nation's Catholic pope would not recognize his desire for divorce.

Hitler: (1889-1945) Adolf Hitler founded and led the Nazi party in Germany and eventually killed millions of Jews in concentration camps while serving as the chancellor of Germany.

Egotism: talking and thinking of oneself excessively due to an biased sense of self-importance

Municipal: relating to a city or town

Graft: corrupt use of money

Tycoons: a person of wealth and power in business

Little Man: an ordinary person

Virility: having strength, energy, and a strong sex drive

Messalina: Valeria Messalina (25-48) was the wife of a Roman emperor and known for her promiscuity and ill morals. She was executed for scheming against her husband.

Casanova: Giacomo Casanova (1725-1798) was a notorious Italian womanizer; his name is synonymous with a sexual predatory man

Trade Unionist: a member of a trade union (organization representing workers in an industry)

Gastronomically: relating to the art or science of “good eating” or culinary quality

Inscrutable: impossible to understand

Flabbiness: hanging loosely or limply

Limbo: Lewis explains this idea in *The Pilgrim's Regress*. It is essentially an in-between place between heaven and hell that Lewis imagined up for what he calls “the virtuous unbeliever”

Sub-humanity: quality of less-than human behavior

Conventional: based on what is generally done or expected

Puritan: adhering to traditional puritan moral beliefs, especially regarding sexual matters

Bourgeois: characteristic of the middle class, especially its materialistic and conventional values

Prim: strictly formal and opposed to all that is informal

Demure: reserved and modest, usually describing a woman

Genial: friendly, warm, cheerful

Cerberus: In Greek mythology, a 3-headed dog who guards the entrance to hades

‘The great Saints’: famous practicing Christians, many associated with Catholic tradition

Xgogue: political leader who appeals to followers’ prejudices rather than their rationale

Bell-Wether: the leading sheep of a flock, usually wearing a bell around their neck

Ciphers: meaning zero, a person who is a “Cipher” is someone of no influence or importance

Anti-clericalism: in the Roman Catholic church, opposition to the clergy for its alleged influence in society and politics

Rousseau: French philosopher; believed government must prioritize the freedom of all citizens

Hegel: George Hegel (1770-1831) was a philosopher and the founder of Hegelianism, a philosophy stating that “the rational is real,” which places ultimate reality in ideas rather than items. His philosophy contributed to German idealism, a philosophical movement focused on pursuing a perfect belief or vision for humanity. This idealistic thinking gave way to the Nazi party and communist government.

The Nazi State: Fascist party in Germany that held power from 1933 to 1945 under the leadership of Adolf Hitler; the German political party responsible for the Jewish Holocaust

The Communist State: of the economic ideology that advocates for a classless, government led economy

Tenuous: very weak or slight

Aristotle: Aristotle, ancient Greek philosopher, doubted the effectiveness of democracy alone because of its unbalanced focus on the interest of the democratic leaders rather than all its citizens⁶

Incantation: the use of words as a magic spell or charm

Derided: ridiculed

Denigrates: criticize unfairly

Euphoniously: sweetly, pleasantly

Odious: extremely unpleasant or repulsive

Incipient: developing

Minx: a cunning, provocative woman

Prigs: a self-righteous moralistic person who looks down on others' morality

Cranks: someone who holds very strongly a belief that others think is false

Rabble: ordinary people who are regarded as socially inferior

“Hanged for a sheep as a lamb”: an expression meaning one might as well commit a greater crime if they are going to receive the level of punishment which that crime requires

⁶ “Tyranny, Democracy, and the Polity: Aristotle's Politics.”

Pre-eminence: superiority

Idlers: a habitually lazy person

‘Parity of esteem’: political theory of seeking to set all groups of people equal to one another; applied in British education as an effort to equate all students learning in a classroom together, which had the negative consequence of more capable students being limited in learning to their potential.

Beelzebub: another name for Satan

Aeschylus: famous ancient Greek poet and dramatist; known for his tragedies

Dante: famous ancient Italian poet; one of his most popular works is the book *Inferno*

Coeval: one’s peer

Imperturbable: unable to be upsetting, calm

Penal: used for the punishment of offenders under the legal system

Extirpating: completely destroying

Subliterate: people who are not fully able to read

Cocksurenness: greater certainty than circumstances warrant

French Revolution: 1789-1799, French citizens overthrew the French monarchy and took control of the government. In 1805, Napoleon, who had been a leader in overthrowing the monarchy, became essentially monarchical in his authoritarian rule of France. This created a system opposite of the goal of the revolutionaries.

Delusion: a belief that is firmly established despite being contradicted by reality

Relics: part of a deceased person's body or belongings kept for reverence

Rosaries: a Roman Catholic prayer tradition including multiple repetitions of 'Hail Mary's, followed by a recitation of 'Our Father' and 'Glory be' or a string of beads used for counting repetitions while saying the rosary

Litany: a style of prayer used during church worship in which a few petitions to God are recited by the leader and fixed responses are recited by the congregation.

Impenitent: not feeling shame about one's actions

Theological Principles

Flavorless Humans: As the demons are eating humans at the banquet, they complain that they are bland. Screwtape explains that a flavorless human is one who wasn't evil by the world's terms. In this story, the most flavorful humans are the evil, extreme, rare kind: the murderers, rapists, tyrants, etc. While those who slipped into hell passively taste worse, the demons are still proud of the quantity of flavorless humans they have tempted. This metaphor reiterates one of the book's central messages: the road to Hell is gradual. Demons tempt most effectively when they gradually lead humans away from heaven through lies and deception.

- James 1:10: "For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits."

Rejection of grace: Screwtape teaches how to bring a person to the point of rejecting God's grace. Demons must get a person to be content with him or herself as he or she is, avoiding improvement. Screwtape describes this as a narrow mental state that excludes reflectiveness as well as defiance. A person who both fits into society well and avoids thinking deeply about their own flaws will reach a "real and deliberate" rejection of faith, even if it isn't fully articulate, if nothing else changes for them spiritually.

- **2 Corinthians 3:5:** "Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God..."
- **John 15:15:** I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.
- **1 John 1:8:** "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

Tempting Through Human Leaders: While most humans in hell aren't the famous evildoers people automatically think of, demons use these evil powerhouses to influence other, more neutral humans. These hell-bound leaders aren't just traditional leaders like abusive dictators, they are also film stars, other celebrities, renown academics, and charismatic social lights. These bad influences make the demons' job easier, as they don't have to put the work in that individual temptation requires but can tempt one well-known person very aggressively and watch them lead thousands or even millions astray.

- **Acts 20:28:** "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood."

- **Colossians 2:8:** “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.”
- **2 Timothy 4:3:** “For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions.”

Equality: Instead of accepting equality for what it is, a political ideal, humans believe that equality is a fact, a present reality. This allows demons to tempt humans to accept this statement of self-approval: “I’m as good as you.” This phrase is not only false but also isn’t actually believed by the person aiming to convince themselves and everyone else that they believe it. The successful scholar doesn’t truly see himself as objectively equal to the middle school dropout, for example. Screwtape says that the claim to be equal is “made only by those who feel themselves to be in some way inferior.” This flawed idea of equality has led to less than ideal practices in this world, such as more lenient education systems that fail to challenge advanced students so that struggling ones can make it through. This obsession with equality of characteristics among humans thwarts the uniqueness of the individual and their ability to grow as God created them to. Screwtape concludes that this sense of equality excludes charity, humility, contentment, and gratitude; it can close off many opportunities for acceptance of the gospel. (See nation versus individual below)

- **2 Corinthians 10:12:** “Not that we dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding.”

- **Galatians 6:3-4:** “But if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself and not in his neighbor.”

Salvation of ‘Great Sinners’: Screwtape argues that it isn’t necessarily easier to save the ‘great sinners’ like criminals, murderers, rapists, etc. because the demons cannot be certain that God won’t appeal to them at the last minute, year, or decade, even after a lifetime of successful temptation and even extremely evil acts. These great sinners are capable of repentance, conscious of guilt, and able to defy social norms for God, just as they have been doing for Satan. Even those who we might label as extremely evil people are not too far gone for God to reach.

- **Romans 3:23:** “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”
- **2 Peter 3:9:** “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”
- **Mark 2:17:** “And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.’”

The Good of the Nation Versus the Individual: Demons can preoccupy humans with their nation’s cause so that they forget the sanctity of each individual life. When humans adhere to this wrong worldview of seeing people as members of either an enemy or ally nation rather than simply seeing people as individuals, they can feel much less morally unable to hurt others. Wars, slave trades, and internment camps are a few examples of the evil consequence of this group-priority mindset. While God did originally love the Israelites, His love was for the people of Israel, and His desire was for their salvation, which he later extended to the rest of the world

through Jesus Christ. May we see all people as individuals who have an eternal destiny in torture or paradise awaiting each of them.

- **John 11:51b-52:** “Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.”
- **Luke 12:7:** “Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.”
- **Psalms 22:28:** “For kingship belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations.”

Modern Pharisees: Screwtape mentions that there are still dozens of pharisees in hell, which suggests that pharisees still exist in Christian religion today, or at least have existed pretty recently. We can also be sure that said pharisees are younger than ancient because they are described with traditions from the 19th and 20th centuries: “some were all rules and relics and rosaries; others were all drab clothes, long faces, and petty traditional abstinences...” The first group are commonly labelled religious legalists, and the latter are called ascetics, which means religious sufferers. These pharisees never saw, because they were blinded by their pride, that their personal practices and beliefs were so far from anything that God actually commanded in scripture. Screwtape says that the existence of the word “religion” and the flawed meaning that many humans hold of it helps demons tempt better. They do some of their most aggressive deceiving in religious circles, using things like spiritual pride (boastful attitude because of one’s faith or outward faith rituals), legalism (dependence on rules more than relationship with God), syncretism (the mixing of religions), and criticism of fellow believers to quietly nudge at least partially well-meaning Christians toward Hell.

- **James 1:26:** “If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless.”
- **James 2:19:** “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe- and shudder!”
- **Luke 20:46-47:** “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

Application

1. Be aware of your sinfulness and constant need of a savior. The personal practice of confession is a great way to do this. Take a portion of your prayer time to confess your sins to God and ask Him for forgiveness regularly. This practice will help you have an accurate view of your need for God and help you protect yourself from Satan when he tempts you to rely on yourself or distracts you from the reality of an eternal destiny to come.
2. How do you view your country and people of other countries? In either yours or other’s, you likely struggle with viewing a nation as a topic, entity, or issue rather than a group of people created by God. To combat this, travel to witness other cultures when you are able. It is also great to pray for countries around the world by name each day, praying for specific needs of the people in that country; you can learn about their needs with a quick internet search.

Afterword

I cannot thank you enough for your patient endurance in working through this book. I know this kind of honest self-reflection can be daunting and reading *The Screwtape Letters* can be draining at times. I am praying for you, reader, that this intellectual feat would benefit your spiritual health in a significant way. This was a daunting undertaking for my first attempt at a book, but I'm hopeful that God has miraculously used my words to train you for victory in the good fight against spiritual temptation. From the bottom of my heart, God bless you.

Bibliography

Besso, Michael. "Thomas Hooker and His May 1638 Sermon." *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 10, no. 1 (2012): 194–225. <https://doi.org/10.1353/eam.2012.0002>.

Blackson, Thomas A. "The Sophistic Movement," 2011.

Bratcher, Dennis. "'Low Church' and 'High Church.'" *The Difference Between Low Church and High Church*, 2018. <http://www.crivoice.org/lowhighchurch.html>.

Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Church of England." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, February 28, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Church-of-England>.

Foord, Martin. "Richard Hooker's Doctrine of Justification." *churchsociety.org*, February 25, 2000. https://churchsociety.org/docs/churchman/114/Cman_114_4_Foord.pdf.

Lewis, C. S. *The Screwtape Letters with Screwtape Proposes a Toast*. 1942. New York: HarperOne, 2015.

Lewis, C. S. *The Screwtape Letters: The Annotated Edition*. HarperOne, 2013.

LitCharts. "The Screwtape Letters Characters." LitCharts. Accessed April 9, 2021. <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-screwtape-letters/characters>.

Smilde, Arend. "Quotations and Allusions in C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*." *lewisiana.nl*, October 29, 2010. <http://lewisiana.nl/screwtapequotes/>.

“St. Thomas Aquinas on Assurance of Salvation: Called to Communion.” Called to Communion
| Reformation meets Rome, June 19, 2014.

<https://www.calledtocommunion.com/2009/08/st-thomas-aquinas-on-assurance-of-salvation/>.

“Tyranny, Democracy, and the Polity: Aristotle's Politics.” Farnam Street, February 19, 2017.

<https://fs.blog/2017/02/aristotles-politics/>.