

## The Screwtape Letters

### *Introduction and Letter 1*

C. S. Lewis: English professor, Christian writer

*Preface to the first edition July 5, 1941:*

- 2 errors we can fall into about the devils.
- The devil is a lair.
- The letters don't seem to be in chronological order.

*Preface to the paperback edition, 1961(not included in many editions)*

- The book was well received by critics and sold prodigiously (by Lewis's standard in the late 1930s and early 1940s)
- Questions he was asked as author of the book: Does he 'believe in the Devil?'
- Not as the opposite of God, but of the archangel Michael.
- Fallen angels
- Not as they are depicted in literature and art
  - Fra Angelico, Raphael, Dante, Milton, Mephistopheles
- What is Hell like?
  - Everyone is concerned about his own dignity and advancement, has a grievance, lives the deadly serious passions of envy, self-importance, and resentment.
  - Hell is something like the bureaucracy of a police state or the offices of a thoroughly nasty business concern.
  - On the surface manners are suave but are not genuine.
  - "Dog eat dog" is the principle of the whole organization.
  - Devils have two motives for their behavior: 1) fear of punishment and 2) a kind of hunger for human souls and demonic ones.
- Where did he learn all this about temptation? Studying moral and ascetic theology? No. "My own heart 'showeth me the wickedness of the ungodly.'"
- He wishes he could have written an angel's advice on overcoming temptation.

### **Questions**

- How often do you think about the Devil?
- What is the Devil like in your imagination? Why?
- What do you hope to get out of this study?

## ***Letter 1***

Screwtape, a senior devil, gives advice to Wormwood, a junior devil, on how to effectively tempt Wormwood's 'patient.' The patient is a young, non-Christian Englishman. Screwtape advises Wormwood not to argue with the man, but to use propaganda to keep the man out of the enemy's [God's] camp.

## ***Listening to Letter 1***

### ***Strategies of the devil***

- Don't use argument, jargon is your best tool.
- Don't worry if his beliefs are incompatible with each other.
- Fix his attention on the stream: real life (and don't let him ask what he means by 'real').
- Keep him away from real science.
- Your job is to fuddle him.

### ***Questions***

- Are there things that you believe, but don't act on? Any that you are willing to share?
- Do you believe in some things, not because they are true, but seem helpful, or comforting, or strong? Why?
- How does the pressure of the ordinary or 'real life' keep you back from a deeper walk with God?
- How can we counter the effects of 'real life'?