

Character Summary

SCREWTAPE

Screwtape is a very formidable demon and an undersecretary in the lowerarchy of Hell. He is subtle, smart, arrogant, clever, hate-filled, and vicious with no love or regard for human beings. His job is to provide guidance and direction to young tempters out in the field. He is an experienced, older demon who understands a great deal about human nature and would love nothing more than to corrupt and damn man to an eternity of Hell.

Each letter is written by Screwtape and addressed to his nephew, Wormwood. The narrative is told in his voice. At times he appears affable to Wormwood, but he can also be very condescending with little patience for this young demon and easily frustrated by his irresponsibility. He quickly lets him know who the more superior demon is when Wormwood tries to betray him.

Screwtape refers to God as the "Enemy" and Satan as "Our Father Below." He is a bureaucrat well versed in history as well as rules and regulations. He knows how to manipulate the inner workings of the departments of Hell to obtain what he needs, and he is an ardent patriot to his cause and a connoisseur of those demons who are not.

WORMWOOD

Wormwood is Screwtape's incompetent nephew serving under his tutelage. This young demon's job, to whom all the letters are written, is to condemn the patient he has been assigned to Hell.

Wormwood is irresponsible, lazy, and immature. Being portrayed as one full of youthful ignorance, Wormwood would rather put his efforts into less effective methods while allowing Uncle Screwtape to do all the heavy lifting. Even though he is constantly chided by Screwtape for his numerous blunders, he remains optimistic that everything will be all right.

He would love nothing more than to reveal himself to his patient and to spend his time enjoying the human suffering brought about by war. Screwtape believes the irresponsible Wormwood is shirking his duties of performing the necessary research about his subject and human nature for more fanciful but less damaging methods of condemning the patient.

In the end, his failure is evident, and Wormwood appeals to his Uncle Screwtape for mercy of which there is none.

THE PATIENT

The patient is an ordinary young man living in England during the tumultuous years of World War II. His contemplation of Christianity and subsequent daily actions

and thoughts are the subject of the letters between Screwtape and Wormwood.

He is thoughtful, honest, intellectual, sincere and fully aware of his weaknesses. His newfound faith and the realization of the power negative influences have on his life bring about an examination of those friends whom he enjoys spending time with. He also learns that simple, ordinary pleasures are enough to sustain him when he finds his faith drifting.

The patient finds moral strength within him as he battles a series of sexual temptations that lessen with each resistance. His courage is also put to the test as he bravely and honorably serves his country during the war. As a soldier, he eventually gives his life and is immediately ushered into presence of God.

THE PATIENT'S FIANCEE

The patient's fiancé is a kind, loving, attractive, and dedicated young Christian woman. She is a virgin, full of virtues, and portrayed as an extraordinarily good person—just the sort of human that Screwtape loathes. He sees her as vile, sneaking, mouse-like, watery, and insignificant. She is just the type that Screwtape would have loved to see fed to the lions in the early days.

The girl comes from a charitable and loving Christian family who welcomes the patient into their home. They also introduce him to a new circle of friends who all share the same values and beliefs. Her one weakness that Screwtape

desires to exploit is a narrowly defined understanding of her faith, but this is mostly due to ignorance and not spiritual pride.

THE PATIENT'S MOTHER

The patient lives with his mother who is a Christian. Having taught her son Christianity as a boy, it appears there might have been some friction between the two after his passionate conversion as a young man. The mother battles a form of gluttony that keeps her occupied with a strict diet and inevitably creates division between her family and friends.

THE ENEMY (God)

God is characterized as an ever-present, powerful being capable of loving "human vermin"—something Screwtape cannot understand. God is portrayed as participating in a spiritual battle with the Devil for the souls of men. God is distinguished by actually caring for and responding to their thoughts, needs, and concerns. However, God has left humans with the ability to choose which is where Screwtape and other demons get their foothold.

OUR FATHER BELOW (The Devil)

The Devil, worshiped by Screwtape and other demons, is unable to understand God's love for his creation. He claims to have left Heaven on his own accord and that all other stories are just rumors. He desires to damn as many souls to Hell as possible by corrupting human nature. There is no

love in his dominion of Hell, even among fellow demons, but rather a competitive nature of eat or be eaten.

SLUBGOB (The Head of the Training College)

Slubgob is the principal of the Training College for Young Tempters. Screwtape portrays him initially as inept—churning out incompetent young demons, but later he treats him very graciously at an annual dinner.

GLUBOSE (The demon in charge of the patient's mother)

Glubose, possibly a combination of "Gluttony" and "Obese", is the demon in charge of the patient's mother. Although rarely mentioned, his job is to busy himself causing discord between her and her son as well as making her constant dietary restrictions a problem with her family and friends.

SLUMTRIMPET (The demon in charge of the patient's fiancé)

Slumtrimpet is a young female devil in charge of the patient's fiancé. She has very little success tempting the young woman into any kind of serious sin.