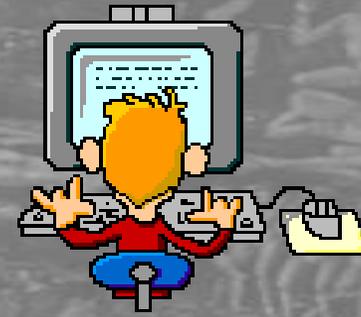




Temptation & Vocation



A Study Guide for CS Lewis's Screwtape Letters
With Special Emphasis on Calling and Vocation Issues
for Daily Living

A Lilly Grant Project
Calvin College



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Tallahassee



Dry Run 1 (July 9, 2006)



**Clive
Staples
Lewis**

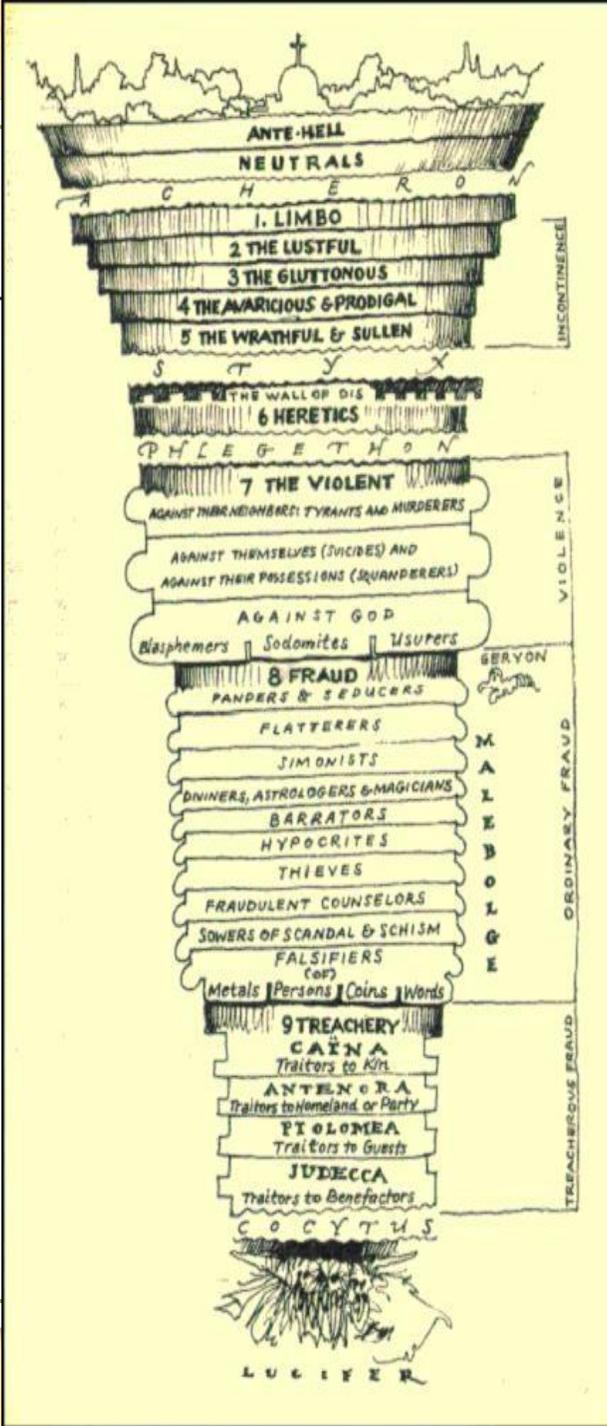
C.S. Lewis' Portrayal of Truth in Fiction

- “For in their hearts doth Nature stir them so\ Then people long on pilgrimage to go\ And palmers to be seeking foreign strands\ To distant shrines renowned in sundry lands” (*The Canterbury Tales*)
- Idea that Christians have conveyed for hundreds of years, the idea that all men need God and innately come to this understanding, undergoing a “pilgrimage” in their growth towards him

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. I Peter 5:8-9

Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth ...

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. II Co. 4:2-4





- These letters were supposedly **written by an experienced devil, Screwtape, to his young nephew, Wormwood.**
- When these letters first appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* during the World War II, a reader wrote as to cancel his subscription because “much of the advice given in these letters seemed to him not only erroneous but positively diabolical.” The objective is **not to wonder about the diabolical life** but to **throw light from a new perspective** on the life of man.
- The letters cover many different **situations**, which Christians are faced with on a daily basis.
- The objective is to **encourage us to reflect on these “daily life” issues**, trying to understand how they can affect our spiritual life and vocational struggles.

- Screwtape is a senior devil in the “lowerarchy of Our Father Below”
- The letters are directed to his nephew (Wormwood) on earth, working on a young Christian (“the patient”).
- The goal is to “secure his soul forever”
- To turn the patient against God (“the Enemy”)
- To the devils, we humans are “primarily food.”



- The Screwtape Letters is **fiction** and a **satire** with the Christian perspective presented in an upside down way .
- World War II serves as the backdrop for the Letters, but the war does not affect the timelessness of the instructions.
- It does not address evil on a grand scale, but **evil on a small scale**.
- It deals with **relationships** with friends and family, the church, prayer, etc.
- The letters **entertains while it instructs**.
- It is a book to be studied with **humility and prayer**.

"It does not matter how small the sins are, provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the Light and out into the Nothing. Murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick. Indeed, the safest road to Hell is the gradual one--the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts."

Word of Caution



- There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils:
 - One is to disbelieve in their existence.
 - The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.
 - They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.
- When reading the letters we should not forget that the **devil is a liar**. Not everything that Screwtape says should be assumed to be true, even from his own angle.

The Screwtape Letters



The Screwtape Letters

- C.S. Lewis relies on his use of satire and the logical progression of the demon's thoughts to convey his beliefs about prayer in the Christian life
- Lewis literally plays the Devil's advocate

 - Literary device: **satire**—Lewis' background juxtaposed with the content of the passage
- Screwtape's teachings follow set structure
 - **First method:** “The best thing, where it is possible, is to keep the patient from the serious intention of praying altogether” (Lewis 15)
 - **Second method following “if this fails”:** “fall back on a subtler misdirection of his intention” by “teaching them to estimate the value of each prayer by their success in producing the desired feeling” (Lewis 17)

Another Personal Word

This study has to do with the **devil** and the **reality of the spiritual world**.

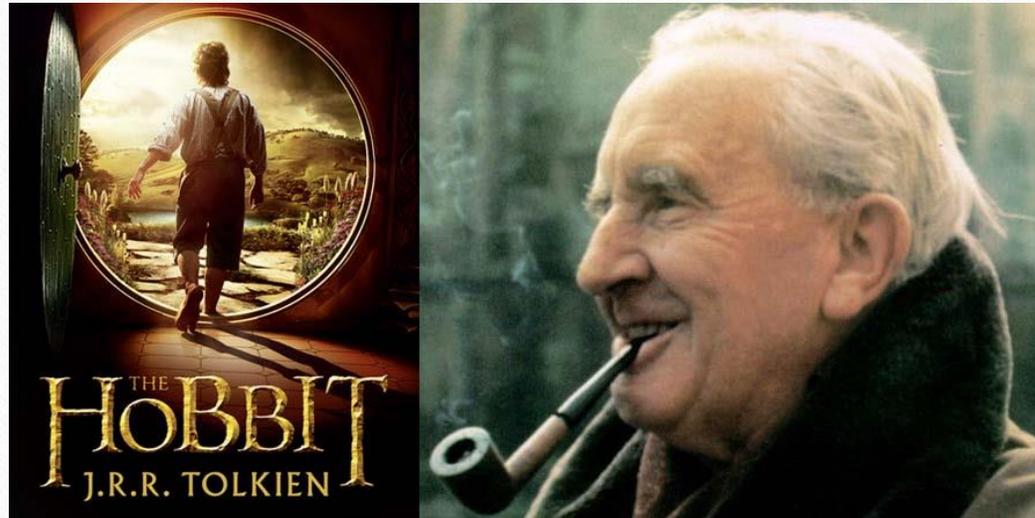
The spiritual warfare we live in takes many forms.

The evil one is **never happy** when we try to strengthen our resistances against his attacks.

But when we do not give up the victory makes us stronger and blessed.

The Screwtape Letters were dedicated to JRR Tolkien (instrumental in Lewis's conversion) who did not like the dedication...

Lewis became instrumental in Tolkien's publications, but Tolkien did not like the Narnia Chronicles...



Who is C.S. Lewis?



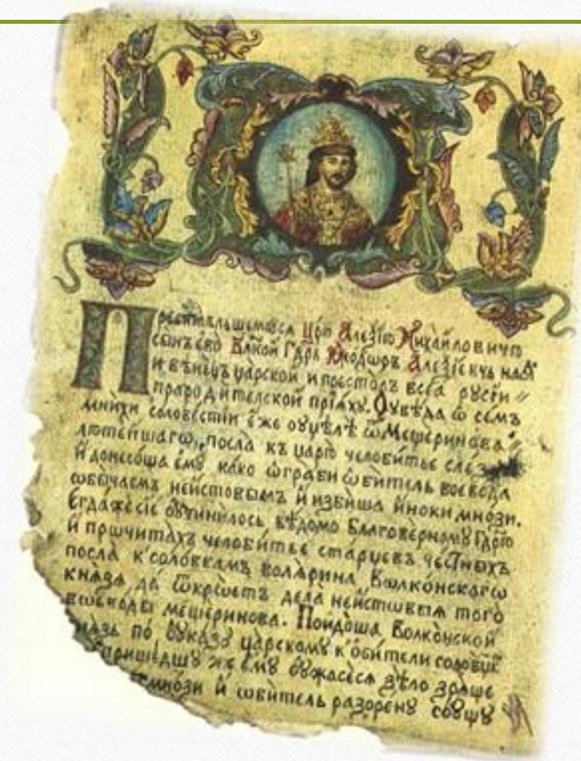
- B. November 29, 1898 in Belfast, Ireland; D. November 24, 1963
- Created a fantastical world full of imaginary animals and tales of feats and heroism as a child
- Christian turned atheist turned Christian again
- Joined a “informal collective of writers and intellectuals who counted among their members Lewis’s brother, Warren Lewis, and J.R.R. Tolkien” (“C.S. Lewis Biography”) where he reinforced Christian upbringing

- Cambridge University literature professor
- Most famous works include *Mere Christianity*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and *The Screwtape Letters*, as well as *The Great Divorce* and *The Pilgrim's Regress*

"C.S. Lewis Biography." *Bio.com*. A&E Networks Television, n.d. Web. Feb. 2013.

C.S. Lewis' Portrayal of Truth in Fiction

- What characteristics of Lewis' writing style correspond with characteristics of myths and fairytales?
 - Descriptive
 - Lengthy/complicated plot—often dark and gruesome
 - Common motifs—quests, traveler's tales, helpers/guardians
 - Archetypal characters
 - Depict morality
 - Audience—mature/adult





Thanks to Greg Balon (See Genesis 3)

12-08-2003

IT WAS A MISTAKE ... IT'S NOT LIKE THE
WHOLE WORLD HAS TO KNOW

Conclusion

C.S. Lewis' Major Point: Life is a spiritual journey like a pilgrimage filled with necessary growth. One must come to understand his need for God in his life in order to feel complete, just as John in *the Pilgrims regress*, the narrator in *The Great Divorce*, and the patient in *The Screwtape Letters* come to discover. But the spiritual journey won't be without a struggle, just as any long physical journey is arduous and strenuous.

