Vocabulary

1. Their nearest approach to **constancy**, therefore, is **undulation**—the repeated return to a level from which they repeatedly fall back, a series of troughs and peaks
   
   Constancy: the quality of being unchanging as in purpose, love, or loyalty; firmness of mind; faithfulness
   
   Undulation: any wave or wavelike form, line

2. For His **ignoble** idea is to eat the cake and have it; the creatures are to be one with Him, but yet themselves; merely to cancel them, or assimilate them, will not serve
   
   Ignoble: of low grade or quality; inferior

3. You are much more likely to make your man a sound drunkard by pressing drink on him as an **anodyne** when he is dull and weary than by encouraging him to use it as a means of merriment among his friends when he is happy and expansive. Never forget that when we are dealing with any pleasure in its healthy and normal and satisfying form, we are, in a sense, on the Enemy's ground.
   
   Anodyne: a medicine that relieves or allays pain

4. You see the idea? Keep his mind off the plain **antithesis** between True and False. Nice shadowy expressions—'It was a phase'—'I've been through all that'—and don't forget the blessed word 'Adolescent'
   
   Antithesis: the direct opposite
Questions for Letters 8

General discussion - talk about the law of undulation – (from letter #8, second paragraph)

Humans are amphibians—half spirit and half animal. (The Enemy’s determination to produce such a revolting hybrid was one of the things that determined Our Father to withdraw his support from Him.) As spirits they belong to the eternal world, but as animals they inhabit time. This means that while their spirit can be directed to an eternal object, their bodies, passions, and imaginations are in continual change, for to be in time means to change. Their nearest approach to constancy, therefore, is undulation—the repeated return to a level from which they repeatedly fall back, a series of troughs and peaks. If you had watched your patient carefully you would have seen this undulation in every department of his life—his interest in his work, his affection for his friends, his physical appetites, all go up and down. As long as he lives on earth periods of emotional and bodily richness and liveliness will alternate with periods of numbness and poverty. The dryness and dullness through which your patient is now going are not, as you fondly suppose, your workmanship; they are merely a natural phenomenon which will do us no good unless you make a good use of it.

1. In Letter 8, Screwtape plainly lays out the opposing war efforts of God and Satan. What is Satan’s ultimate aim regarding humanity? In contrast, what is God’s?

How do Genesis 1:27, John 12:27—32, 17:20—24, and Ephesians1:3—14 support Screwtape’s understanding of God’s goal?

To us a human is primarily food; our aim is the absorption of its will into ours, the increase of our own area of selfhood at its expense. But the obedience which the Enemy demands of men is quite a different thing. One must face the fact that all the talk about His love for men, and His service being perfect freedom, is not (as one would gladly believe) mere propaganda, but an appalling truth. He really does want to fill the universe with a lot of loathsome little replicas of Himself—creatures whose life, on its miniature scale, will be qualitatively like His own, not because He has absorbed them but because their wills freely conform to His. We want cattle who can finally become food; He wants servants who can finally become sons. We want to suck in, He wants to give out. We are empty and would be filled; He is full and flows over. Our war aim is a world in which Our Father Below has drawn all other beings into himself; the Enemy wants a world full of beings united to Him but still distinct.
2. Why do the “troughs” of the Christian life encourage more growth than the “peaks”?

Merely to override a human will (as His felt presence in any but the faintest and most mitigated degree would certainly do) would be for Him useless. He cannot ravish. He can only woo. For His ignoble idea is to eat the cake and have it; the creatures are to be one with Him, but yet themselves; merely to cancel them, or assimilate them, will not serve. He is prepared to do a little overriding at the beginning. He will set them off with communications of His presence which, though faint, seem great to them, with emotional sweetness, and easy conquest over temptation. But He never allows this state of affairs to last long. Sooner or later He withdraws, if not in fact, at least from their conscious experience, all those supports and incentives. He leaves the creature to stand up on its own legs—to carry out from the will alone duties which have lost all relish. It is during such trough periods, much more than during the peak periods, that it is growing into the sort of creature He wants it to be. Hence the prayers offered in the state of dryness are those which please Him best. We can drag our patients along by continual tempting, because we design them only for the table, and the more their will is interfered with the better. He cannot ‘tempt’ to virtue as we do to vice. He wants them to learn to walk and must therefore take away His hand; and if only the will to walk is really there He is pleased even with their stumbles.

But of course the troughs afford opportunities to our side also. Next week I will give you some hints on how to exploit them.
Questions for Letters 9

1. Do you think Screwtape’s statement, “To get the man’s soul and give him nothing in return—that is what really gladdens Our Father’s heart,” true or false?

Never forget that when we are dealing with any pleasure in its healthy and normal and satisfying form, we are, in a sense, on the Enemy’s ground. I know we have won many a soul through pleasure. All the same, it is His invention, not ours. He made the pleasures: all our research so far has not enabled us to produce one. All we can do is to encourage the humans to take the pleasures which our Enemy has produced, at times, or in ways, or in degrees, which He has forbidden. Hence we always try to work away from the natural condition of any pleasure to that in which it is least natural, least redolent of its Maker, and least pleasurable. An ever increasing craving for an ever diminishing pleasure is the formula. It is more certain; and it’s better style. To get the man’s soul and give him nothing in return—that is what really gladdens Our Father’s heart. And the troughs are the time for beginning the process.

2. Exploiting the trough

But there is an even better way of exploiting the trough; I mean through the patient’s own thoughts about it. As always, the first step is to keep knowledge out of his mind. Do not let him suspect the law of undulation. Let him assume that the first ardours of his conversion might have been expected to last, and ought to have lasted, forever, and that his present dryness is an equally permanent condition. Having once got this misconception well fixed in his head, you may then proceed in various ways. It all depends on whether your man is of the desponding type who can be tempted to despair, or of the wishful-thinking type who can be assured that all is well.
a. In Letter 9, Screwtape tells Wormwood that, during his patient’s dry spell, he must keep his inexperienced patient away from more experienced Christians. Why?

The former type is getting rare among the humans. If your patient should happen to belong to it, everything is easy. You have only got to keep him out of the way of experienced Christians (an easy task now-adays), to direct his attention to the appropriate passages in scripture, and then to set him to work on the desperate design of recovering his old feelings by sheer will-power, and the game is ours.

b. What does Lewis mean with the statement, “A moderated religion is as good for us as no religion at all—and more amusing”?

If he is of the more hopeful type your job is to make him acquiesce in the present low temperature of his spirit and gradually become content with it, persuading himself that it is not so low after all. In a week or two you will be making him doubt whether the first days of his Christianity were not, perhaps, a little excessive. Talk to him about ‘moderation in all things’. If you can once get him to the point of thinking that ‘religion is all very well up to a point’, you can feel quite happy about his soul. A moderated religion is as good for us as no religion at all—and more amusing.