

The Screwtape Letters Character List

Screwtape

A devil and the fictional author of *The Screwtape Letters*. Screwtape is an experienced tempter. He has been assigned, or perhaps, to give his nephew Wormwood advice about how to win the soul of an unnamed British man the Patient into Hell. Screwtape often refers to Wormwood, his nephew, with terms of endearment. By his own account, Screwtape has won many souls for Hell. He seems to be a mid-level bureaucrat within Hell's corporate structure. Sometimes, the reader learns, Screwtape undergoes a sudden transformation into a giant millipede. There are far higher-ranking devils than Screwtape but Screwtape is apparently important enough to have his own secretary, Toadpipe, who takes dictation when Screwtape is in millipede form. Despite Screwtape's successes, he is angry and embittered, critical of Hell's bureaucracy and of Wormwood. He often reprimands Wormwood for making mistakes with the Patient, and, after Wormwood fails to win the Patient for Hell, Screwtape is eager to eat a piece of him as punishment for failure.

Wormwood

Screwtape's nephew and the devil assigned to tempt the Patient. Many Christians are familiar with the idea of a guardian angel assigned by God to watch over a person and help him or her through life's difficulties. Wormwood is the opposite, a kind of "guardian" devil, assigned to work on a particular human, the Patient, to tempt him into sin and, eventually, eternal damnation. Wormwood is excitable and, according to Screwtape, incompetent. He is distracted from his assignment by the excitement and horror of World War II. Because the war is violent and destructive, Wormwood thinks it is a good thing for Hell, but the more experienced Screwtape warns him that World War II is only marginally relevant to Wormwood's work. Wormwood is malicious, and reports Screwtape to Hell's authorities because Screwtape says that God really loves humans, which, in Hell, is heresy. He fails to win the Patient soul and is condemned to be eaten.

The Patient

A British man tempted by a devil named Wormwood. Many of the facts of the Patient's life are vague. He has an elderly, difficult mother. He eventually falls in love with a Christian woman. The Patient's age is never specified, but he is unsure whether he will be called to serve during World War II, meaning he is probably in his mid-thirties. He is a convert to Christianity who is seeking to become closer to God. He enjoys reading, walks by an old mill, and other simple pleasures. He is deeply moral and concerned with doing good. His job, like his age, is never specified, but his unspecified duties place him in danger once the Germans begin to drop bombs on his English town. He eventually dies in an air raid, and is taken into the Enemy's camp the kingdom of Heaven.

The Patient's Mother

A difficult person and a picky eater. The Patient's mother is one of the main sources of temptation in the Patient's life. The Patient finds her temperament to be overbearing. The demands the Patient's Mother makes on his time and energy are a source of irritation. Screwtape uses the Patient's Mother as an example of gluttony. This contradicts expectations, because the Patient's Mother does not eat a lot. Instead, she obsesses over and insists on only eating toast and drinking tea. This unreasonable and obsessive relationship to food, in Screwtape's view, is no better than binge eating.

The Woman

A Christian and the Patient's love interest. The Woman introduces the Patient to her family. The Woman's family's good spirits and Christian lifestyle are a positive influence on the Patient. Screwtape detests the Woman. He sees her as the kind of human who would laugh at his existence and find him funny. The Woman has had a privileged life. She has only known Christianity. Screwtape sees this as her one weakness. She is described as being virtuous, but not prudish. She knows how to take delight in both earthly and spiritual pleasures.

The Enemy

The Christian God. God is the "Enemy" only from devils' perspectives. Screwtape only refers to God as the Enemy, and he seems to be represented mostly as an immaterial being. He is never physically described, but he is—as according to most Christian sects—one God in three Persons, the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. In Screwtape's account of events, the Enemy claims to unconditionally love mankind, but this love is a lie. The Enemy's claim for unconditional love is, according to Screwtape, what made flee the Enemy's presence and established the Kingdom of Hell.

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Our Father

Satan, the ruler of Hell. Screwtape refers to Satan mostly as "Our Father," a title that, within ordinary Christian tradition, is reserved only for God. In The Screwtape Letters, Screwtape depicts Our Father (Satan) as just and correct, whereas the Enemy (God) is described as false and deceitful.

The Patient's Worldly

Friends A group of artists or artistic people who are skeptical of Christianity. The Patient's Worldly Friends are never named, but, early on in The Screwtape Letters, Wormwood to tempt the Patient away from God. They are skeptical, not just of God and Christianity, but of everything.

Toadpipe

A devil and Screwtape's secretary. The reader learns nothing of Toadpipe except that he takes dictation from Screwtape in the twenty-second letter, after Screwtape transforms into a giant millipede.

Slubgob

A devil and the director of the tempters' training college. Screwtape complains that the training college has gone to pieces since Sbgob took over as its director. Later, when Screwtape fears Wormwood will report him to Hell's secret police, Screwtape tries to take back, or retract, his negative statements about Slubgob.

Slumtrimpet

A devil assigned to the Woman. Slumtrimpet gives Screwtape information on the Woman. He describes how the Woman has only ever known Christianity and, in Screwtape's view, this makes the Woman privileged.