The Screwtape Letters.   Lesson 5.

Letter 9: On the Abuse of Both Pleasure and Contentment

In this letter, Screwtape explains how Wormwood might make the best use of the "trough" in which the patient finds his spiritual life. This will consist in two opposed emphases.

Read the second paragraph.
How do "the trough periods of the human undulation provide excellent opportunity for all sensual temptations"? How might this seem at first counter-intuitive? "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," Screwtape writes. How is this so? What is the formula for working around this problem?

Read the third paragraph.
"But there is an even better way of exploiting the trough." What is it? What is the goal of making the patient "acquiesce in the present low temperature of his spirit"?

Read the marked portions of the fourth paragraph.
"Another possibility is that of direct attack on his faith." How does cultivation of talk of "phases" work to the devil's advantage here? Why do we feel "superior and patronizing" to the phases we have emerged from?

Letter 10: On Unhealthy Friendships and Double Lives

In this letter, Screwtape is delighted to learn of the patient's new friendship with a couple that is "rich, smart, superficially intellectual, and brightly skeptical about everything in the world" and who have "an ingrained habit of belittling anything that concerns the great mass of their fellow men."

Read the marked portion of the first and the second paragraph.
What is "kind of betrayal" that Wormwood should specifically encourage? "All mortals tend to turn into the thing they are pretending to be," Screwtape writes. What does this mean, and is it true?

Read the fourth paragraph.
How does it work to the devil's advantage to get us to persist in living "two parallel lives"? And if this fails, how can the devil work to ensure that we will remain "permanently treacherous"? And what is the third strategy in the event that all else fails?