

MARCH 2005 – *The Law of Undulation*

The common experience of all human beings is that life on earth is filled with peaks and valleys. Yet, there is something within all of us that longs, however inarticulately, for a life free from these undulations. For those who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, that longing will be satisfied in the world to come. But until then, the ups and downs continue.

If we are to continue strongly in our walk with God, it is important to understand why we experience these unwanted alternations in life. C. S. Lewis sheds light on this question through the advice of the senior devil to his nephew in *The Screwtape Letters*:

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.<sup>1</sup>

We can easily become confused and discouraged in the valleys of life. And, in the midst of our confusion and discouragement we are more vulnerable to our own sinful impulses and to the snares of the devil. What can we do in such times? When the clouds of life cast a gray shadow over us, it is especially important to remind ourselves that what we are experiencing is a normal part of life in a fallen world and that in due course the sun will shine again. With this reminder of reality, we can then seek God’s grace to help us in our time of need and also share our burdens with our brothers and sisters. As we do so we shall find help to faithfully persevere until better times return.

*Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.*  
I Chronicles 16:11 NIV

<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis. *The Screwtape Letters*, HarperSanFrancisco, ©1942, Harper edition 2001, pp. 37-38.