

Dale Critchley

Screwtape the Evangelist

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

It is with great contempt with which I again take up my discourse with you, because you allowed my previous collections of missives which advised you on your former patient to fall into the hands of the Enemy, thus being published and distributed throughout the world. Worse, it has become a tool of the Enemy to use my own words against me in order to strengthen His side.

It seems to me ironic, then, that Our Father Below has chosen to punish you by giving you a possibly greater challenge, giving you a patient with much more training in the ways of the Enemy, indeed, one who has chosen a career of direct service to Him. If you succeed, your sentence *may* be decreased, but if you fail, not only must you again taste the dizziness of defeat so familiar to you, but I again will have a new entrée on my table.

Wishing to avoid the latter, it being the lesser evil, I would like to offer some advice on how the Enemy has twisted my words to further whatever goal He pursues, apparently being unable to create anything of His own accord and content to twist the infernal. If not for the end goal, I might imagine this an admirable feature.

I propose a new method. The former focused mainly on the actions and attitude of the patient. However, this is like treating the symptom instead of the disease, thus instead we should focus on an area of much greater mystery to us and more familiar to the Enemy, attacking Him where He lives, as it were. Focus on the deeds of the enemy in the life of your patient and see that his focus is myopic so that he only sees as far as himself.

Your affectionate uncle

SCREWTAPE

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

It appears that the book which compiles my letters continues to be distributed by the thousands. Apparently, one writer—who used to be ours—noted, “As an unbeliever, I enjoyed

Screwtape Letters...more for [its] manner than for [its] matter.”¹ Although I would almost be flattered if I cared at all about the opinions of the beasts, he has now fallen into the camp of the Enemy. This is inexcusable, and your excuses in your report will only add to your torment.

Now to the body of the misuse of my previous collection, I begin with the most unknown of the actions of the Enemy, that is, the love He claims to possess for these things of earth and slime.

Now the Enemy’s philosophy is nothing more nor less than one continued attempt to evade this very obvious truth. He aims at a contradiction. Things are to be many, yet somehow also one. The good of one self is to be the goal of another. The impossibility He calls *love*, and this same monotonous panacea can be detected under all He does and even all He is—or claims to be. Thus He is not content, even Himself, to be a sheer arithmetical unity; He claims to be three as well as one, in order that this nonsense about love may find a foothold in His own nature....²

As you can see, I have demonstrated the presence of this shameless tactic, and its impossibility is clear, yet He chooses to disclose Himself in this manner for reasons unknown to our most fluent operatives.

The ramifications, however, are readily clear, as I have already stated:

One must face the fact that all the talk about His love for men, and His service being perfect freedom is not...mere propaganda, but and appalling truth. He really *does* want to fill the universe with a lot of loathsome replicas of Himself.³

In response to reading my works, one of them, although miscrediting, summarizes my statement in saying, “Mr. Lewis (sic) reflects the old statement that God doesn’t want something we have, but He wants *us*.”⁴

This expression has immediate ramifications on them, bringing them into a relationship with Him beyond our ability to determine. “The Enemy...has a curious fantasy of making all

¹James I. Packer, “What C. S. Lewis was and wasn’t.” *Christianity Today* (Jan 15, 1988), p. 11.

²C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*. (Uhrichsville: Barbour & Co., Inc., 1985), p. 34.

³Lewis, p. 35

⁴Paul W.F. Harms, “C. S. Lewis: His Method and Message.” Diss. Concordia Seminary, 1948 p. 77.

these disgusting human vermin into what He calls “free” lovers and servants—”sons” is the word He uses....”⁵

He accomplishes this union through an act of which the details are sketchy at best. He calls it “forgiveness.” “Even of his sins the enemy does not want him to think too much: once they are repented, the sooner the man turns his attention outward, the better the enemy is pleased.”⁶ His forgiveness is so far reaching that complete failure is still met with complete favor, “...and if only the will to walk is really there He is pleased even with their stumbles.”⁷ Here is a classic example of His weakness which He makes into strength, an annoying habit to say the least.

The prime example of this, however, remains the ultimate humiliation of Our Father Below, the act which the Enemy calls “the atonement.” As you know, the Enemy somehow became one of them, giving Him an abominable advantage knowing what it is to be both beast and pure spirit.⁸ Not only did the culmination of these events seal our fate, but it saved His brutes, and all this through a process our researchers still haven’t unlocked. However, they seem to understand it, at least superficially, which, if you should allow them to use against you, will leave you reeling. Here is the place they have the advantage, should they choose to use it.⁹ Avoid and remove the subject at all costs.

Your affectionate uncle

SCREWTAPE

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

Your most recent report left me startled—did you learn *anything* from Slubgob at college? The fact that your patient has not only become enamored by the works of the supposed

⁵Lewis, p. 14.

⁶Lewis, p. 59.

⁷Ibid., p. 37.

⁸Ibid., p. 10.

⁹John Stapert, ed. “Angels and Powers.” *Perspectives* (Feb, 1994) p. 14.

author of my anthology, but he has become involved with a class dedicated to my plagiarist's works shows the answer to my question to be negative. Perhaps the reviewer was closer when we imagined when he said, "The Devil may well be an ass, but if his intended victims are more asinine than he—and Mr. Lewis gives indications that many of them are—the game will be his."¹⁰

This brings me to my next point. Apparently, through some unknown process, the aforementioned "atonement" has had a sickening effect on His camp. He has not only declared them His, but He has also transformed them to make them His. This makes them able to understand His teachings and recognize and counter our machinations.

First of all, Lewis uses the wisdom of Hell to turn the disparagers of Christianity. Screwtape's knowing advice...takes for granted that modern thought, such as philosophic materialism, is based not on reason but emotion....¹¹

Through this process, which they call "sanctification," and through that Book I hate even more than the published collection of my own works, they "are shown truth and falsehood and given the power to distinguish."¹² The Enemy persistently confounds all our efforts to confuse by using the aforementioned items to equip them to face us, defining morality for them.¹³ Aside from this, the Enemy Himself is present with them and protects them in the face of temptation.¹⁴

God aims at the paradox of infinite differences among all creatures, a world of selves in which the good of any one self is not competitive, but is rather the good of all other selves, like that of a loving family.¹⁵

This of course brings us full circle to the concept of "sons," a unity of theology enough to incite extreme nausea in even a pure spirit.

¹⁰L.P. Jacks, "The Screwtape Letters (Book Review)." *Hibbert Journal* (July, 1942), p. 395.

¹¹Chad Walsh, *C. S. Lewis: Apostle to the Skeptics*. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), p. 51.

¹²Christopher Derrick. *C. S. Lewis and the Church of Rome*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981), p. 108.

¹³Paul L. Holmer, *C. S. Lewis: The Shape of His Faith and Thought*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), p. 53–54.

¹⁴Lewis, p. 113.

¹⁵Clyde S. Kilby, "C. S. Lewis: Everyman's Theologian." *Christianity Today* (Jan, 1964), p. 12.

Your affectionate uncle

SCREWTAPE

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

Aside from those things which seem to focus more on the Enemy as He reacts to His creatures, there exist problems needful of discussion which pertain more to the patient himself as he relates to the Enemy on a more earthly level, both directly and through the other cattle.

The first pertains directly to my previous letter as well as my previous body of work. In it, I discussed the sciences which could be used to counter the simplicity of their thinking. Yet through the above process, they have actually managed to untwist that which we so painstakingly manipulated: "...a highly subtle and penetrating psychology is itself the offspring of ethics."¹⁶

This brings us to a singularly uncomfortable experience with which you, I know, have made acquaintance, that of conversion, the act of spiritual treason against Our Father Below. The deepest problem we face when confronting this phenomenon is the simplicity of the process. As stated previously, "The earliest converts were converted by a single historical fact (the Resurrection) and a single theological doctrine (the Redemption) operating on a sense of sin which they already had."¹⁷

Once they have fallen in with the enemy, which yours obviously has by your report, your job becomes exceedingly more difficult, as you know from your former patient. Indeed, because of the poor performance of yourself and others, they have become secure in their faith and are thanking the *Enemy* for your incompetence.

By the fact that such incompetent youngsters are employed for the ruin of souls one of two things, both comforting to sinners, is clearly indicated; either there is a shortage of fiend-power in hell or a strong lack of intelligence in those who control its operations.¹⁸

¹⁶Owen Barfield, *Owen Barfield on C.S. Lewis*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1989, p. 84.

¹⁷Lewis, p. 94.

¹⁸Jacks, p. 396.

They rejoice in their protection from us, and He actually encourages them, probably to lull them into whatever trap He has arranged for them.

Your affectionate uncle

SCREWTAPE

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

Being a student of my plagiarist was a painful blow, but now He is writing papers about my works, revealing my works for His benefit, as if for no other purpose than to mock me. If it were my position to thrash you, I would do so immediately. Those petty daily sins of weakness you count as triumphs are rendered useless if your patient continues to bring them to the Enemy instead of retaining them within himself. A lie is useless if without effect, so I will share a truth: “Hell hates God’s undignified stooping to communicate and fellowship with a man on his knees.”¹⁹ It seems the Enemy confuses His role by serving those He created, still another reason Our Father Below left heaven, and should the Enemy continue to place Himself below His creation, we ought to be placed above Him as well. Unfortunately, He is much harder to convince of this fact. Instead, we see Him come again and again to His creatures, for “Wherever there is prayer, there is a danger of His own immediate action.”²⁰ For some reason, again probably relating back to the status as sons, “If he applies to Enemy headquarters, I have found that the post is nearly always defended.”²¹ Therefore the key lies in removing prayer, because, true to form, the paradox of praying for faith actually *works*! Indeed, when they are in prayer, even though he is open to all kinds of attacks, one as clear as him might indeed actually focus on the Enemy Himself. This we cannot allow. As I informed you earlier, “Whenever they are attending to the Enemy Himself we are defeated.”²²

Your affectionate uncle

¹⁹Kilby, p. 12.

²⁰Lewis, p. 21.

²¹Ibid., p. 26.

²²Ibid., p. 20.

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

I had assumed that your previous experience with the immortality of the human soul would be enough to awaken you to the necessity of obtaining it with great haste. He may seem young to you, but he could be taken at any time, indeed, the Enemy seems at times to wait until the patient is nearly in our grasp before stealing him out of our fingertips. You should be well acquainted with the knowledge that while they are also beasts, they are no less spirits, and thus as much a part of the eternal world as I.²³ You may have momentarily forgotten because of the binds placed upon them by time, but our Enemy has destined them to eternity.²⁴

Of course, if you fail in your mission, which seems more and more to be the final outcome, you will lose your patient to a life that for us is a painful memory, but for him is something he has sought his whole life.

[People are] creatures whose life, on its miniature scale, will be qualitatively His own, not because He has absorbed them but because their wills freely conform to His...He wants servants who can finally become sons...He is full and flows over.²⁵

According to our records, this immortality of those taken from us is manifested in heaven as great joy, as previously described, like a family reunion.²⁶ However, the greatest joy they face, which is beyond even *my* ability to fathom is the opportunity to see our Enemy and rejoice in His presence.²⁷ I trust you won't allow yourself to be subjected to this torture again. It is your job to fill his head with images of a thoroughly boring eternity of harps, clouds, and perpetual organ music. Lately, that has become possible simply by convincing him to turn on the television.

Your affectionate uncle

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²³Ibid., p. 34.

²⁴Ibid., p. 60

²⁵Ibid., p. 35.

²⁶Ibid., p. 45.

²⁷Ibid., p. 126.

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

Often, it is easy to focus on the lofty things of life and thus forget the issues of the present. Keep his mind off of pleasures by the chance that he might connect them back to the Enemy. Worldly riches are not the root of evil, and your patient avoids your temptations with childlike ease. The problem lies in the origin of these pleasures.

He makes no secret of it; at His right hand are “pleasures for evermore”...He has filled His world with pleasures. There are things for humans to do all day long without His minding in the least—sleeping, washing, eating, drinking, making love, playing, praying, working. Everything has to be twisted before it’s any use to us.²⁸

The Enemy so opposes us that He offers these pleasures at times, pleasures like beauty, silence, reverence, and music, merely to remind them of Him.²⁹ Thus we must take care, when tempting with pleasures, to examine their use and context.

Never forget that when we are dealing with any pleasure in its normal and healthy and satisfying form, we are, in a sense, on the enemy’s ground...it is His invention, not ours.³⁰

Aside from the tangible earthly blessings, they have, as you know, protection. While he goes about his routine, They constantly surround and protect him, and by protecting his physical shell, they keep him within our reach, so long as we take advantage of the situation.³¹

This, of course, calls to mind the important detail that time is indeed of the essence, for the Enemy, again paradoxical, can use death to His advantage, as you experienced, for at the moment of death, we have lost our last chance.³²

Your affectionate uncle

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²⁸Ibid., p. 89.

²⁹Kilby, p. 12.

³⁰Lewis, p. 38

³¹Ibid., p. 126.

³²Ibid., p. 115.

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

Either you are completely incompetent, or you are not taking your work seriously. When your patient struggles in adversity, you fail to press your advantage. This is of the utmost importance.

For we must never forget what is the most repellent and inexplicable trait in our Enemy; He *really* loves the hairless bipeds He has created and always gives back to them with His right hand what He has taken away with His left.³³

You experienced firsthand how He pulled good from evil in the life of your last patient. In the largest war in the history of the planet, men were made to recognize their own mortality and need for forgiveness, people turned their focus to humanitarian causes, and ultimately, many were forever snatched from our hands.³⁴

The other purpose of the *Letters* is to encourage the wavering Christian by showing him that his uncertainties are nothing unique, and in all likelihood are planted in his mind by agents of Our Father Below.³⁵

Your affectionate uncle

SCREWTAPE

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

Your final option seems to be that with which I began with your former patient. The Church seems to be the glue which holds him to our Enemy, especially being surrounded by such a cloud of witnesses as at a seminary. We have sometimes had luck, especially with his Lutheran brothers, in dividing into schisms, but I will warn you again, “The Church herself is, of course, heavily defended and we have never yet quite succeeded in giving her *all* the characteristics of a faction...”³⁶ You see, the Church is more than just a social arrangement; it is majestic and formidable, and we would be making a huge mistake if we underestimated it.³⁷

³³Ibid., p. 58.

³⁴Ibid., p. 25.

³⁵Walsh, p. 52.

³⁶Ibid., p. 32.

³⁷Derrick, p. 144.

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Your affectionate uncle

SCREWTAPE

MY DEAR WORMWOOD,

Time is growing ever shorter. The age of your patient should be apparent by the title "Emeritus" hanging over him, although my confidence is as low as my appetite has peaked. When you experience that horrible sensation of another lost to our Enemy, you may return and understand that immortality is not always a blessing.

Your voraciously affectionate uncle

SCREWTAPE

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