

Screwtape Letter #17 – Questions

Screwtape's recommended attacks on the patient take a dramatic turn here.

The previous letter was about trying to change the patient's attitude about going to church. Apparently that wasn't working out so well, since he now turns to issues of vice.



My dear Wormwood,

The contemptuous way in which you spoke of gluttony as a means of catching souls, in your last letter, only shows your ignorance. ... She would be astonished—one day, I hope, will be—to learn that her whole life is enslaved to this kind of sensuality, which is quite concealed from her by the fact that the quantities involved are small. ... If challenged, she would say she was doing this to avoid waste; in reality she does it because the particular shade of delicacy to which we have enslaved her is offended by the sight of more food than she happens to want.

17.1) Gluttony is defined simply as excessive eating and drinking these days. Going back a little in history, it comes from a French word – “gourmand” – which was to indicate a person who is fond of good eating, often indiscriminately and to excess.

Temperance is habitual moderation in the indulgence of a natural appetite or passion, while intemperance is a lack of moderation or due restraint, as in action or speech.

Talk about how changing the way we view words over time can affect the way we view our actions – and how trying to avoid doing something (even for a good reason) can cause us to miss that fact that we're doing something else that we wouldn't want to be doing if we were aware of it.

The real value of the quiet, unobtrusive work which Glubose has been doing for years on this old woman can be gauged by the way in which her belly now dominates her whole life. The woman is in what may be called the 'All-I-want' state of mind. ... In fact, of course, her greed has been one of the chief sources of his domestic discomfort for many years.

17.2) Now we see that beyond merely missing the fact that the patient's mother's attempts at temperance in one area of her life have actually led to intemperance in a different way – there are also unintended consequences which are even worse.

Talk about the unintended consequences either to the mother – or in regards to answers to question #1. Also, talk about how Glubose manages to cause the woman to transfer her actual desires for herself to something that she thinks she is doing for her son.



Now your patient is his mother's son. ... But, however you approach it, the great thing is to bring him into the state in which the denial of any one indulgence—it matters not which, champagne or tea, sole col-bert or cigarettes—'puts him out', for then his charity, justice, and obedience are all at your mercy.

17.3) This is an interesting list of indulgences – champagne, tea (a staple for the English), a very rich French entrée, and cigarettes.

Where do you think the line is between enjoying God's gift of food to us (at least as far as the wine and food) and going overboard into gluttony? And, maybe more importantly – how can we avoid falling into Screwtape's intended trap?

Mere excess in food is much less valuable than delicacy. Its chief use is as a kind of artillery preparation for attacks on chastity. ... But this whole business is too large to deal with at the tail-end of a letter,
Your affectionate uncle
SCREWTAPE

17.4) Just when we thought food was a major issue, Screwtape says it's just something to use in preparation for the "real" attack.

What did he just say? Gluttony is a preparation for an attack on chastity? Maybe this is too large to deal with at the end of a letter.
Maybe.

What do gluttony and chastity have in common as far as self-control? And where does the tactic of false spirituality fit in?

Screwtape Letter #18 – Questions

Screwtape is now going to get into marriage
– no doubt to corrupt it.



My dear Wormwood,
Even under Slubgob you must have learned at college the routine technique of sexual temptation, and since, for us spirits, this whole subject is one of considerable tedium (though necessary as part of our training) I will pass it over. ... by persuading the humans that a curious, and usually shortlived, experience which they call 'being in love' is the only respectable ground for marriage; that marriage can, and ought to, render this excitement permanent; and that a marriage which does not do so is no longer binding.

18.1) Consider these two “versions” of what marriage is about. Compare God’s original intent to what C. S. Lewis wrote about 60 years ago to what’s happened since C. S. Lewis wrote Screwtape Letters.

possible outcomes for him – and why?

This idea (the previous paragraph) is our parody of an idea that came from the Enemy. The whole philosophy of Hell rests on recognition of the axiom that one thing is not another thing, and, specially, that one self is not another self. ... 'To be' means 'to be in competition'. 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 good of another. This 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. ... At the other end of the scale, He introduces into matter that obscene invention the organism, in which the parts are perverted from their natural destiny of competition and made to cooperate.

18.2) Screwtape's philosophy in this letter comes down to believing that a person is the same as an inanimate object.

What is the contradiction between (a) love and the difference between cooperation & competition and (b) the belief that humans share characteristics with inanimate objects? How can we use this conflict to begin to show non-Christians the fallacy of Screwtape's twisted logic?



His real motive for fixing on sex as the method of reproduction among humans is only too apparent from the use He has made of it. Sex might have been, from our point of view, quite innocent. ... The whole thing, in fact, turns out to be simply one more device for dragging in Love.

18.3) Screwtape continues to misunderstand love.

Take a look at the definition of rape – the unlawful compelling of a person through physical force or duress to have sexual intercourse.

How does this compare with the views held by Screwtape and those of God?

What would happen to the family “organism” if we reproduced like spiders? Can you see what would happen if Screwtape actually got his wish on this one?

Now comes the joke. The Enemy described a married couple as 'one flesh'. He did not say 'a happily married couple' or 'a couple who married because they were in love', but you can make the humans ignore that. You can also make them forget that the man they call Paul did not confine it to married couples. Mere copulation, for him, makes 'one flesh'. You can thus get the humans to accept as rhetorical eulogies of 'being in love' what were in fact plain descriptions of the real significance of sexual intercourse. The truth is that wherever a man lies with a woman, there, whether they like it or not, a transcendental relation is set up between them which must be eternally enjoyed or eternally endured. From the true statement that this transcendental relation was intended to produce, and, if obediently entered into, too often will produce, affection and the family, humans can be made to infer the false belief that the blend of affection, fear, and desire which they call 'being in love' is the only thing that makes marriage either happy or holy. The error is easy to produce because 'being in love' does very often, in Western Europe, precede marriages which are made in obedience to the Enemy's designs, that is, with the intention of fidelity, fertility and good will; just as religious emotion very often, but not always, attends conversion. In other words, the humans are to be encouraged to regard as the basis for marriage a highly-coloured and distorted version of something the Enemy really promises as its result.

18.4) Uh Oh. Screwtape's quoting scripture again. Does he get it twisted (again)?

Here's what Paul really said – in context:

1Co 6:12 "Everything is permissible for me"—but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"—but I will not be mastered by anything. 13 "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food"—but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! 16 Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." 17 But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

1Co 6:18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. 19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

And

Eph 5:22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— 30 for we are members of his body. 31 “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” 32 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Looking back at the first question in this letter on what Satan has done to the word marriage – and now looking at what Paul actually had in mind when he talked about “the two will become one flesh” – how far has the corruption really gone?



Two advantages follow. In the first place, humans who have not the gift of continence can be deterred from seeking marriage as a solution because they do not find themselves ‘in love’, and, thanks to us, the idea of marrying with any other motive seems to them low and cynical.

... But more of this in my next,

Your affectionate uncle

SCREWTAPE

18.5) Screwtape ends this letter with another “To be continued” type of closing.

Continence (as used by C. S. Lewis) isn’t the opposite of incontinence (like what we see on commercials). It does have something to do with self-control though. Why is Screwtape unable to tell the difference between “love” and “being in love”. If Wormwood can succeed in getting his patient to feel the same way, what are the possible outcomes for him – and why?

Screwtape Letter #19 – Questions

Screwtape seems to be losing it.
Again.



My dear Wormwood,
I have been thinking very hard about the question in your last letter.
... I hope, my dear boy, you have not shown my letters to anyone. ... And, of course, some things I said about not shielding you from the authorities were not seriously meant. You can trust me to look after your interests. But do keep everything under lock and key.

19.1) Before, when we talked about Screwtape losing it, it was in terms of his tirade against God in Letter #14. That had to do with “The Enemy’s” love for us:



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.

Now we see Screwtape trying to “take care of” the issue.

Compare the way he responds to (a) the way we often respond and (b) the way God would like us to respond.

The truth is I slipped by mere carelessness into saying that the Enemy really loves the humans. That, of course, is an impossibility. ... And there lies the great task. ... Yet we must never lose hope; more and more complicated theories, fuller and fuller collections of data, richer rewards for researchers who make progress, more and more terrible punishments for those who fail—all this, pursued and accelerated to the very end of time, cannot, surely, fail to succeed.

19.2) Screwtape's logic now begins to reveal much about us.

While much has been “revealed”, will it be understood?

Relate this to when Jesus says -“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”



You complain that my last letter does not make it clear whether I regard being in love as a desirable state for a human or not. But really, Wormwood, that is the sort of question one expects them to ask! ... This belief is not much help, I grant you, in producing casual unchastity; but it is an incomparable recipe for prolonged, ‘noble’, romantic, tragic adulteries, ending, if all goes well, in murders and suicides.

19.3) Screwtape's going to say there is no answer – but why should that stop him from giving one?

It would seem that Screwtape does have an answer for the unanswerable question. It also seems that Wormwood is possibly beginning to see that his mentor, Uncle Screwtape, isn't really as helpful as he would have liked. Wormwood has also at least been exposed to the inconsistencies from his “affectionate” uncle. But that doesn't mean Wormwood is following through the logic (or lack if) and the inconsistencies presented to him. What about us humans?

Keeping in mind our previous discussion of the passage below from Isaiah, how can some of these things we are learning be used as reasoning against their Father Below?

Isa 1:18 "Come now, let us reason together,"
says the LORD.

"Though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red as crimson,
they shall be like wool.

Isa 1:19 If you are willing and obedient,
you will eat the best from the land;

Isa 1:20 but if you resist and rebel,
you will be devoured by the sword."
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.



Failing that, it can be used to steer the patient into a useful marriage. For marriage, though the Enemy's invention, has its uses. ... Like most of the other things which humans are excited about, such as health and sickness, age and youth, or war and peace, it is, from the point of view of the spiritual life, mainly raw material,
Your affectionate uncle
SCREWTAPE

19.4) Screwtape continues to answer the question that has no answer.

We see more indication that Wormwood isn't quite convinced of the things Screwtape is telling him. Even to this little devil in training – things aren't seeming to sink in quite as well as hoped. Guess that's why mentoring – even for the devils – is important.

Sounds like another life lesson for us. What can we learn from this and how can we use it to God's advantage?

Screwtape Letter #20 – Questions

More bad news
– for Wormwood.



My dear Wormwood,

I note with great displeasure that the Enemy has, for the time being, put a forcible end to your direct attacks on the patient's chastity. You ought to have known that He always does in the end, ... I suppose you've tried persuading him that chastity is unhealthy?

I haven't yet got a report from you on young women in the neighbourhood. ... which he should be encouraged to fall in love with if 'falling in love' is the best we can manage.

20.1) It seems that all parties have now figured out that the attacks won't continue – that The Enemy will put an end to them at some point – at least that what Screwtape tell Wormwood. But is that what really happened? Have the attacks really stopped – or is it just the impact? What's the difference? What's the importance of us (the patients) realizing this?



In a rough and ready way, of course, this question is decided for us by spirits far deeper down in the Lowerarchy than you and I. It is the business of these great masters to produce in every age a general misdirection of what may be called sexual 'taste'. ... It is all a fake, of course; ... What follows you can easily forecast!

20.2) Since the attacks aren't going to stop – a discussion on their background is forthcoming. **It's all fake, of course.** There's a simple little one word question that might help to make this more obvious: "why?"

Jesus says we should be like children. Here are just 3 examples:

Mt 11:25 At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. 26 Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure."

Mt 18:2 He called a little child and had him stand among them. 3 And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Mt 19:14 Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." 15 When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.

Children love to ask questions. According to an article in Science News a couple years ago (<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/11/091113083254.htm>) they also want not just answers, but explanations. What would happen if we asked "why" more often – and kept asking until we got a good explanation?



That is the general strategy of the moment. But inside the framework you will still find it possible to encourage your patient's desires in one of two directions. ... In the face, it is the visible animality, or sulkiness, or craft, or cruelty which he likes, and in the body, something quite different from what he ordinarily calls Beauty, something he may even, in a sane hour, describe as ugliness, but which, by our art, can be made to play on the raw nerve of his private obsession.

The real use of the infernal Venus is, no doubt, as prostitute or mistress. But if your man is a Christian, and if he has been well trained in nonsense about irresistible and all-excusing 'Love', he can often be induced to marry her. ... And, by the way, they are not only efficient, but delightful; the unhappiness produced is of a very lasting and exquisite kind,

Your affectionate uncle

SCREWTAPE

20.3) Screwtape continues to go on planning for more attacks – even though "The Enemy" has put a forcible stop to them. It seems that Screwtape doesn't even believe himself that "The Enemy" has put an end to the attacks, as he said at the beginning. In any case – they will continue. Is this wasting time – or is there still an opportunity? Looking at famous people in the news who "should" have known better – what can we learn?