

A New Screwtape Letter  
By David Naugle

My Dear Wormwood:

I have just returned from our weekly meeting of the Infernal Lowerarchy\* where before my peers I was utterly humiliated to report that that educator 'patient' of yours has registered for a conference on Christian education. For hell's sake, how could you let that happen? He was supposed to go on a cruise holiday that week. You are on the verge of letting that man slip through your scaly fingers. At that gathering, they plan on addressing things we have been working assiduously to establish in Western consciousness for centuries, things like privatization, compartmentalization, and various Endarkenment — excuse me, I mean Enlightenment — assumptions. Even worse, they plan on discussing worldview thinking and teaching! They want to show the connections between the central elements of the — uh, ugh — I can barely make myself say it — “biblical” story and their stupid little educational responsibilities. They may, hell forbid, discover how the Enemy's word establishes a lucid vision for teaching and learning, not to mention student change and cultural transformation. This cannot happen!

As you might imagine, our Father below\* is not pleased with these developments. He fears that the fragmented version of faith and life that we have successfully imparted to them through multiple avenues, including their own well-deceived seminaries and churches, may be undermined, not only in your patient, but also in others who attend this gathering. Consequently, he has told me to take immediate action, else the consequences will be unusually severe for both you and me.

You know very well that from the time of our cosmic takeover, our fiendish Father has inspired us with a shrewd vision of disintegration. The Enemy, who has a slight advantage over us as the Creator of the universe, has stamped His triune nature on the world He has made. All things reflect the unity and diversity of His own miserable character, and He wants those loathsome little replicas of Himself\* to apprehend His creation as a “uni-verse” with its proper distinctions and overarching integrity. Our goal, however, has been to undermine this coherent vision of reality, pitchfork and tail. We have aspired in all things everywhere to put asunder that which the Enemy has joined together, to halve the whole, to fragment and divide, to exacerbate the diversity and destroy the unity.

Various unconscious human recruits have served us admirably in promoting our lies. Slubgob\* is famous throughout our kingdom for prompting both Plato's forms/world distinction and the dualism of the Gnostics and Manicheans, not to mention his success in adequately infecting the thought of that sexually repressed, neurotic bishop of Hippo with a residual neo-platonism. Triptweeze\* caused these wonderful divisions to endure throughout the middle ages, with only a slight scare when that Dumb Ox Dominican synthesized Aristotle's philosophy with theology and reintegrated nature and grace.

Fortunately William of Ockham's nominalism restored the separation which we have successfully used to "bedevil" Catholic thought and life ever since. Descartes and Kant contributed unwittingly to our covert cause to divide and conquer through their respective mind/matter and noumena/phenomena distinctions. The rise of idolized science (how we love to twist the Adversary's gifts!), especially in its evolutionary form (Zozezas' work on Darwin should be noted here), has undermined the notion of creation itself (next to redemption there is no more important doctrine for us to destroy), and made it certain that facts and values are forever severed. Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche, who by then required very little coaxing from us, took things the rest of the way home. How excited we were when the latter of this triumvirate — our favorite infidel — announced to the world that God was dead!

But our crowning achievement has been in the churches. Under the well-intended influence of their hoodwinked leaders, they actually believe our lies are the truth! They think they come out of the Bible. The silly little Christians have confused creation with sin, and now they can hardly wait to evacuate the planet and head off to heaven where they think they really belong! How joyfully they sing, "This world is not my home, I'm just a passin' through." They promote heaven over earth, the spiritual over the physical, grace over nature, the soul over the body, the eternal over the temporal, faith over reason and so on. They see everything as essentially sacred or secular. They think that Christianity is its own distinct realm of life rather than a way of life for every realm. They separate their faith from the bulk of their lives, and oppose Christ to their cultures. How proud they are of their resulting superspirituality, nicely ensconced in their cozy, well-fortified Christian ghettos! They have bought into our vision of disintegration! They are compartmentalists, *par excellence!*

As a result — and how delicious this is! — they put down all vocations except church-related vocations. They have denied the goodness and value of the Enemy's creation. They either idolize or despise their own bodies in two wonderfully opposite, yet equal errors. They have abandoned cultural life and essentially turned it over to our control. They have seriously diminished the scope of human experience. Their mental framework enables them to find all the support they need for these false perspectives in the way they *misread* the Bible. How we have caused them to twist various passages like Matthew 6: 33, 2 Corinthians 4: 16-18, and Colossians 3: 1-2 to serve our deceptive ends! In short, we have been able to enthrone a good, solid resounding lie at the center of their lives!\*

To be sure, my dear Wormwood, we must maintain this compartmentalization, not only in the Christians' churches, but most certainly in their schools. After all, next to the church and also the family — our prime targets of subversion — their educational institutions are most influential in shaping their young. Here we got off to a slow start and took some early losses when many of their schools first began — cursed be Luther, Calvin and those damn Puritans! But thanks to our Department of Miseducation — Chairman Glubose\* in particular — we have successfully recaptured them and are effectively using them for our own purposes. We have rendered these believers *bona fide* anti-

intellectuals and pragmatists. We have convinced them of the alleged uselessness of academics. They are utterly blind to the reality that *ideas* are fleshed out in real life and have serious consequences. They never suspected that something as abstruse as “post-structuralism” could have any social influence, much less through such an unlikely outlet as MTV. We have also convinced them, like most of the world, that education is an objective, scientific, worldview-neutral enterprise. Hopefully their aversion to the life of the mind will keep them from recognizing that all aspects of scholarship, teaching and learning are grounded in a diversity of metaphysical assumptions, especially nowadays in the prejudices of naturalism. This kind of blindness makes education one of our most powerful weapons in destroying the tender faith of unsuspecting students. We already have their teachers in bondage to this falsehood.

Above all, we must keep the Christian convictions of students and teachers alike quarantined — compartmentalized if you will — from the real business of education. We will allow our Christian patients to be students and teachers, but we must not and cannot allow them to be *truly* Christian students or *truly* Christian teachers. They must pursue their respective tasks of learning and teaching just like their non-Christian counterparts. They must remain oblivious to the fact that their educational work is proceeding on the basis of non-Christian presuppositions and performed in service to the idols of the age. We must never let them recognize their essential spiritual infidelity in their academic work. We must never let them develop an integrated Christian perspective on their studies. Their Christianity and their educational pursuits must be kept in two separate spheres. Dualism must rule their lives. They must function daily as practical agnostics and atheists. Otherwise, our victories in this domain may soon end.

This is why I am so shocked that you, Wormwood, of all tempters, would allow your patient to attend this ridiculous conference. You know good and well that what they are teaching is diametrically opposed to what you and I believe in. They will be constantly quoting that nuisance from the Netherlands and that funny looking fellow who wore knickers and sported a goatee, and others like them because they believed that Christianity embraced the whole of life and was educationally relevant. They are right, of course, and you will remember that though we hurled our fiercest attacks at these perpetual irritants, somehow they escaped our evil traps. Now we must seek to suppress their malevolent influence as effectively as possible.

So, regarding your patient, I suggest you employ weapons of mass distraction to trip him up, say with the beauty of his surroundings, or with anxieties about matters back home, or with sexual preoccupations, or with silly things, like shoes that squeak, or double chins, or odd clothes, or funny hair, or voices out of tune.\* That should keep him from profiting from this meeting, the one thing we can't allow. In any case, report back to me when the conference ends, and I expect to hear of significant success. Or else.

Your affectionate uncle,  
Screwtape

\*Indicates words or phrases original with Lewis