

5-29-2014

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Recommended Citation

Sauders, Paulette (2014) "Through the Lens of The Four Loves: The Idea of Love in The Screwtape Letters," *Inklings Forever*: Vol. 9 , Article 15.

Available at: https://pillars.taylor.edu/inklings_forever/vol9/iss1/15

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INKLINGS FOREVER, Volume IX

A Collection of Essays Presented at the Ninth
FRANCES WHITE EW BANK COLLOQUIUM
on
C.S. LEWIS & FRIENDS

Taylor University 2014
Upland, Indiana

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It is my contention that when C.S. Lewis wrote his non-fiction book *The Four Loves* and published it in 1960, he had not been thinking about love in all of its manifestations for just a short time before it was written. Instead, all of the fictional works he wrote over the years, beginning in at least 1938, have some focus on love and reflect his definitions and descriptions of the various kinds of love and their perversions that he systematically describes so well in *The Four Loves*. In fact, Corbin Scott Carnell wrote, “To awaken a desire for love and goodness—this was Lewis’ purpose in almost everything he wrote. . .” (161). He does this in his fiction through his various characters and their actions.

This is most clear in his plotted novels like *Till We Have Faces*. But he also includes characters and actions that reflect *The Four Loves* in such fantasy novels as *The Great Divorce* and *The Screwtape Letters*. Evan Gibson calls these two novels: stories “in which the ideas overshadow the form” (102). So far as purpose is concerned, Gibson wrote that *The Great Divorce* presents “the reason for hell” and *The Screwtape Letters* presents “the strategy of hell” (110).

However, in the Preface to *The Screwtape Letters*, Lewis states that his purpose in writing the book is “not to speculate about diabolical life but to throw light from a new angle on the life of men”

(xii). He does this by having Screwtape, a devil in a high position of authority in hell, write letters of advice to his nephew Wormwood, a novice tempter from hell, on how best to keep the human in his charge from knowing and serving God.

In *The Screwtape Letters*, written in 1941, the characters are seen only through the eyes of the demon Screwtape and his nephew Wormwood, so they are sometimes distorted and not well developed. They appear as Screwtape wants them to be. Nevertheless, Lewis works through Screwtape’s pen to repeat his ideas about love that were first revealed in his essays, “The Weight of Glory” and “Equality” and were later summarized in *The Four Loves*.

In the Preface to *The Screwtape Letters*, Lewis discusses the perverted Need-love that he has personified in all of his novels, and he writes, “Even in human life we have seen the passion to dominate, almost to digest one’s fellow; to make his whole intellectual and emotional life merely an extension of one’s own. . . .” The other fellow’s “little store of passion must of course be suppressed to make room for ours. If he resists this suppression he is being very selfish.” Lewis adds, “On Earth this desire is often called ‘love’” (xi).

Additionally, just as Lewis wrote in his sermon “The Weight of Glory” in 1941 that the word *unselfishness* has been

substituted for *Charity* and *Agape* love, he has Screwtape tell his nephew that the devils and their “Philological Arm” have substituted in most men’s minds “the negative ‘unselfishness’ for the Enemy’s (by whom he means God’s) positive charity.” Because of this change, the devils “can, from the very outset, teach a man to surrender benefits, not that others may be happy in having them, but that he may be unselfish in forgoing them” (*Screwtape Letters* 121).

Screwtape urges Wormwood to try this on his “patient”: Make him feel he has to be unselfish rather than full of Gift-love or Charity toward others. Screwtape explains that for a time, practicing unselfishness will result in self-smugness for being so good and self-sacrificing, but after awhile will result in frustration--and ultimately selfishness and possessiveness. To illustrate this, Screwtape points to the example of “the sort of woman who lives for others--you can always tell the others by their haunted expression” (123).

In the section on perverted Affection in *The Four Loves*, Lewis uses the same kind of example when he discusses the woman, Mrs. Fidget, who “lived for her family.” Her family members were to have “no worries, no responsibility...”; she would do everything for them (75). In that book, he also writes that perverted Affection or Need-love can become selfish, greedy, and possessive when one feels the need to have others dependent on him or her (178).

Besides the woman in *The Four Loves*, this idea of self-sacrifice posing as a kind of love and turning into possessiveness is found in Pam (Michael’s mother) in *The Great Divorce*, who says, “I gave up my whole life” for Michael (92), and in Robert’s wife in *The Great Divorce*, who tells how she “sacrificed (her) whole life to him!” out of what she calls love (85), we well as in Orual in *Till We Have Faces*, who could not believe that Psyche would not want to stay with her after all she had done for her. In nearly all of his fiction, Lewis dwells on this tendency of man (or woman, since most of his characters who possess this attitude are women) to

substitute self-sacrifice for real love, which Lewis calls *Charity*.

Likewise, in *The Screwtape Letters*, when “the patient falls in love with a fine Christian woman,” Screwtape and Wormwood consider ways to turn this relationship to their own advantage. Screwtape writes that, in order to discourage true romantic love (Eros), Wormwood should encourage them “to ‘live for each other’ in such a twisted manner as to result in constant irritation and hidden grudges . . . and what they call self-sacrifice . . .” (Kilby 71).

In addition to self-sacrifice, which is really possessive Need-love or perverted Affection, according to Lewis, Screwtape discusses Eros and Venus with Wormwood, and once again Lewis’s consistent views about love can clearly be seen.

Screwtape recognizes that true Eros or romantic love “produces a mutual complaisance in which each is really pleased to give in to the wishes of the other” (121). He knows that God also asks of lovers “charity which, if attained, would result” similarly in giving to each other and giving in to each other (121). But Screwtape tells Wormwood not to let the humans know that God desires Charity, too—that Eros “is not enough, that charity is needed” also (124). Clyde Kilby paraphrases Screwtape’s words to Wormwood about their plans to keep charity from “the patient” thusly: “the patient is fervently in love now and supposes that it will always continue thus, not knowing that another and deeper permanent love will follow, provided he and his beloved practice the Enemy’s [God’s] intentions of sacraments and charity” (71).

This idea is also clearly stated in *The Four Loves* when Lewis writes that Eros cannot last except with charity (160). God wants “mutual self-sacrifice” between lovers, but not the kind that results in a self-righteous feeling of having given in to the other (*Screwtape* 122). Instead, Screwtape encourages Wormwood to use romantic love in his patient’s life either “to distract his mind from the Enemy [God]” (125) or to make him feel he can marry, without bad consequences,

any heathen, fool, or wanton he wishes so long as he thinks he's "in love" (84).

He also urges him to make the humans think that "loyalty to a partnership for mutual help, for the preservation of chastity, and for the transmission of life [is] something lower than a storm of emotion" (83-84). In other words, he pushes what Lewis believes to be the mistaken but modern belief that the emotion of being in love itself is all important, rather than the stability and trust of a good marriage.

Even Screwtape knows that God intended that affection and "being in love" would be the result of a good marriage, but Satan's goal is to make humans think that marriage must consist of "a storm of emotion" with no commitment of will and a worshipping of "being in love."

Lewis discusses the worship of "being in love"—the worship of Eros—in *The Four Loves* when he writes, "It is in the grandeur of Eros that the seeds of danger are concealed. He has spoken like a god. His total commitment, . . . his transcendence of self-regard, sound like a message from the eternal world (151). And, about Eros, Lewis adds, "Of all loves, he is, at his height, most god-like; therefore most prone to demand our worship. Of himself he always tends to turn 'being in love' into a sort of religion" (154), and "The real danger seems to me not that the lovers will idolize each other but that they will idolize Eros himself" (*Four Loves* 155). Thus, *The Screwtape Letters* clearly reflects the ideas found in *The Four Loves* about Eros and its danger—worshipping "being in love."

Associated with Eros is Venus, which Lewis defines in *The Four Loves* as "sexuality" (132) and as "sexual desire without Eros" which "wants it, the thing in itself" while, in contrast, "Eros wants the Beloved" (*Four Loves* 134).

Screwtape advises Wormwood to turn "being in love" into thoughts of sexual intercourse or Venus (83). In his discussion of Venus, Screwtape calls her "infernal Venus," and "visible animality," as well as "prostitute or mistress" (93). Screwtape tells

Wormwood that he should draw his "patient" toward desiring Venus so that he "desires to desire brutally" and that this desire can be used "to draw him away from marriage . . ." (93).

However, Screwtape and Wormwood fail in their endeavors to pervert the romantic love or Eros that "the patient" feels for his fiancée. Instead, their romantic love grows, and his girlfriend frequently invites him to her home where he gets to know her family members. The family grows to love him with family Affection or *storge*. The patient is a new Christian, but his fiancée and her family are "far advanced in His service," so they are different from him in many ways (112). But her family has accepted him "because they are charitable and made the best of this because he is now one of the family" (112).

The patient's fiancée, additionally, has a good sense of humor and laughs often with the patient, illustrating the comment in *The Four Loves* that "lovers are always laughing at each other" (151). Lewis writes that people must not take themselves and Eros and Venus too seriously. Instead, Lewis says, jokes and laughter are good for promoting all kinds of love (142-145). So the reader can understand why Screwtape encourages Wormwood to try to undermine the patient's fiancée's sense of humor and her "sense of the ridiculous" (*Screwtape Letters* 124).

While it is hard for Screwtape to write anything good about the fiancée's family, he does admit that the family is full of "disinterested love," and he is curious about it (102). He cannot understand why they do not merely pretend to love for some ulterior motive, but rather love honestly out of charity and concern for others.

Their charity or Gift-love, Screwtape says, is like God's disinterested love. So we see in the family a personification or example of the highest kind of love according to *The Four Loves*. In that book, Lewis says that "Divine Gift-love—Love Himself working in a man—is wholly disinterested and desires what is simply best for the beloved" (177).

Screwtape calls Charity "irresistible and all-excusing 'Love'" (*Screwtape Letters*

93) and explores its characteristics as he tries to understand God and His Gift-love. Screwtape writes to Wormwood, “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” (81).

Screwtape concludes that, though he hates to admit it, God “really loves the hairless bipeds [humans] He has created, and always gives” good things to them. He even “gives back to them with His right hand what He has taken away with His left” (65). As an example of this, Screwtape points out to Wormwood that God

wants to kill their animal self-love as soon as possible; but it is His long-term policy, I fear, to restore to them a new kind of self-love—a charity and gratitude for all selves, including their own; when they have really learned to love their neighbors as themselves,

they will be allowed to love themselves as their neighbors. (64-65)

Along the same lines, Lewis discusses in *The Four Loves* God’s pattern of taking away some of our human loves in preference to His Gift love, but then giving the human loves back again. For example, he writes, “For when God rules in a human heart, though He may sometimes have to remove certain of its native authorities altogether, He often continues others in their offices and, by subjecting their authority to His, gives it for the first time a firm basis” (166). Lewis adds, “When God arrives (and only then) the half-gods can remain.’ Left to themselves they either vanish or become demons. Only in His name can they with beauty and security ‘wield their little tridents’” (166).

In order to subvert and pervert the patient’s tendencies toward True Charity or Gift-love, Screwtape suggests to Wormwood, “When they [humans] mean to ask Him for charity, let them, instead, start trying to manufacture charitable feelings for themselves and not notice that this is what they are doing” (21).

In this discussion, it becomes clear that even Screwtape understands that true Gift-love comes from God and cannot be artificially manufactured by humans. As Lewis says in *The Four Loves*, “such a Gift-love comes by Grace and should be called Charity” (178).

Screwtape and Wormwood, in summary, discuss how to make their “patient” feel “unselfish” rather than loving toward others and especially toward his fiancée—something Lewis treats in *The Four Loves*. The two demons decide how to turn romantic love into worshipping “being in love” or into Venus—pure sexuality, and Lewis presents the two goals as dangers and perversions of Eros, true romantic love. When Screwtape mentions the fiancée’s family members, he calls their feelings for the patient “disinterested love”—the exact words Lewis uses to describe Gift-love in *The Four Loves*.

Thus, through the characters about whom Screwtape and Wormwood write, and through their discussions of human nature and ways to keep their patient from God and His Gift-love, *The Screwtape Letters* reflects Lewis’s consistent ideas about love, explained 19 years later in *The Four Loves*.

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