

Screwtape Letters

Intro

What is your take on the spiritual world?

Is it real?

Are there really angels and demons?

A battle between good and evil, darkness and light?

The world would tell us one thing – a definitive no, or at best relate a narrative that no one would want to participate in.

The Church has clear teachings on these things, our Church has the clearest of the Christian Traditions because it has dealt with these matters for 2 millenia +.

It has educated its people through many means, the most obvious of which is its saints.

Those who, following the example of Christ have defeated the forces of darkness within themselves.

The model shown by those saints who, dwelling in and amongst the world or altogether choosing to be apart from it and dwell alone in the desert, have defeated the demons of lust and the forgetfulness of God.

We see this very example in the life of Christ who immediately after being baptized – an event at which angels were present, which we clearly see in icons – immediately engages in spiritual battle.

He did nothing without a purpose, not a word or action of His life was wasted.

He did these things to show us that this is the reality of the Christian life.

If we decide to follow Him in our lives then this will be our way of life – spiritual battle, spiritual struggle.

Times of victory, times of defeat.

From the beginning of the Christian Faith countless amounts of people have followed this path.

A path that is difficult, even impossible apart from Christ.

Apart from the Holy Spirit given to us at our Baptism.

What soldier goes into battle without the proper gear and weapons and hopes to survive?

We are equipped for the fight from the beginning.

We are not without the means to make war against the forces of darkness in us and that come to us.

The spiritual life is more real than anything else we could encounter.

It is no less real for those unaware of it – there can be no defense of ignorance.

Throughout the bible there are instances in which God and the angels are present.

There are also instances in which the evil one and the demons are present.

Many have had encounters with one or the other in their own lives, firsthand experience.

Mother Alexandra, the former Princess Ileana and founding Abbess of the Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Ellwood City, PA had the following experience:

Read from book.

If this experience was known, certainly a positive encounter, is the opposite not also certainly true?

One example is from the life of St. Anthony the Great, the founder of monasticism.

Following the death of his parents when he was only 20 years old he was left a large inheritance and tasked with caring for his sister.

He took the Gospel to heart and gave away all his possessions, made sure his sister was taken care of by leaving her to the care of pious women who loved God greatly, and fled to the desert to live a life of solitude.

It was here that St. Anthony endured tremendous temptations from the evil one who sent his demons to try and cause him to fall away from God.

After many different attempts of varying strength against Anthony there was an instance in which a multitude of demons beat him so severely that he lay as if dead.

These encounters are real and make the spiritual world obvious.

How then could we also not believe that God still interacts with His people today and throughout all time?

Perhaps the problem is that these encounters aren't so common.

Since most believe the spiritual world is 'unseen' for some there is less of an inclination to believe it is a reality.

This book brings this reality to light in a creative way.

In a way that may make us more continuously aware of the fight we are engaged in and that wars around us.

Yet we should be encouraged by knowing that the evil one, the devil and his demons have already been defeated along with their ability to overcome us.

As Christ showed in His own life – the evil one cannot overcome us.

The angels ministered to Him and strengthened Him.

I hope this study will help us come to realize more fully the strength that we have available to us in Christ, the Holy Spirit, the angels.

This book, the Screwtape Letters, provides insight into the spiritual world in a unique and accessible way.

The story is told through an exchange of letters between Screwtape, a demon in Hell, and Wormwood, his can't-do-right nephew.

Wormwood is a junior devil trying to make his way up the ranks and has just been given his first human assignment.

The young man is referred to as 'the patient' and Wormwood's goal is to corrupt him and secure him for eternity.

The story itself is set in England during the difficult years of World War II and with this young man contemplating the Christian faith.

While there's a war taking place outside of him there is another taking place inside him – a war for his soul.

In the exchange of letters we see a very detailed plan and precise directions from Screwtape to Wormwood on how to best infiltrate this man's thoughts, influence his decisions and inch him closer to darkness and hell.

It is this exchange that we enter into, inserting ourselves as if we were the patients.

He's just an ordinary young man who, from the time he begins thinking on his faith until his death, begins to be the subject of these spiritual attacks.

He struggles under the influence of media, culture and materialism.

Struggles that are common to us.

But let's insert ourselves in this battle – knowing/not our own struggles.

Learn, with God's help, to identify our own struggles in life.

Whatever they are they can be obstacles that keep us from Christ or lead us closer to Him – there's no in between.

Indifference to the spiritual life is rejection of the spiritual life.

I'll now read an introduction and character summary.

Next time we'll have read and review the first 3 chapters of the book.

I don't want to do very much talking at all next time, almost none.

This is only going to work if you all read the readings from week to week.

It's a great book, one of the best I've read and most interesting.

I hope you'll enjoy it and find it helpful in your life.

