

(With apologies to C.S. Lewis)

## MY DEAR WORMWOOD....

I have spoken with our father Satan and I write you to tell you how pleased he is with the mischief you are working in the Episcopal Church. I also take some pride in the advice I have given you in previous correspondences.

As I have advised you before, it is vital to keep them arguing and bickering with one another. Remember, we really don't care what side of this argument they take...we must simply convince them that if their side does not win, the Church will flounder and die. The point of controversy isn't really important either...prayer book edition, gay clergy, women as priests. Remember, we care about the argument, not the cause. It is our object to sow hate and rancor into this body of Christ.

In your recent letter you asked me why this way of dissension works for us so well. It is quite simple: it starves the Christians and cuts them off from their source of life. Christianity, you see, is a hard religion that looks easy on the surface. It demands a life of prayer, service and sacrifice. It asks its followers to seek to serve God, and not themselves each day. This seems simple at first, but it is hard work for the body and the spirit. We followers of Satan merely substitute something that is easy for something that is hard. Real heart-searching prayer is hard, but arguing is easy. Serving God and God's creation is hard, but finding fault with your fellow human is easy. Discerning God's will for you is hard, but focusing on one single subject (women's ordination, gay folks, prayer books) and saying that all of God's purpose rests on that one item is easy.

And as we get them to focus on these easy tasks, they more and more neglect the harder tasks of prayer, mission, service and worship. So it is that so many of the people that we are winning over complain that their spiritual life has become dry. The church becomes such a place of contention for them that they soon seek peace for their souls away from Church, and not within it. Then we have them.

So, dear Wormwood, keep them arguing...keep them fighting. As a senior demon I look over my past triumphs. I have torn apart whole churches for the silliest and most mundane of reasons. But I was always able to convince the people I influenced that the cause they were fighting for concerned the very essence of the Christian faith. They honestly felt that the whole of the Christian world depended on the choice of grape juice or wine, vestments or civilian attire, or the way Easter day was figured from the calendar. As I told you: prayer is hard, but getting them to argue is easy.

In your letter to me, you say you are worried about the future. Both sides in the various arguments say they look forward to the time when the battle will be over and they can return to serving and proclaiming the Gospel. Do not worry! We can always find new battles and new arguments for them to bicker over. You see, once they desert their spirituality, it is very hard for them to return. Once they can hate their fellow men within the church, it is very difficult to go back to loving those same creatures. My dear Wormwood, I know it sounds like a beautiful dream, but I can see them so incensed with

their arguments and their resentment for one another that they are ready to do physical harm to each other. Do you think that impossible? In my own career over the centuries I have been responsible for at least two religious wars and more riots and fistfights than I can remember.

Keep up the good work. Keep whispering in their ear. Tell them division and schism is wrong, except when the very essence of the gospel demands it. They will all assume that that is a reference to their particular cause. Keep them from praying when they meet...make the agenda too pressing. Remind them that they will return to the service of the gospel...one day.

Remember that these tactics have worked well for the past 2000 years. If our opponent, God the Holy Spirit, would leave the church alone for only a few years, we would be victorious. As it is the Spirit is present, and it has been remarkably successful in calling the church back to its true task. But we must not let that discourage us. Remember, we have also been remarkably successful in getting people to completely ignore that same Spirit.

Your Mentor,

Screwtape