

Reflections

MAY 2019

Christianity And Politics

One of the topics C.S. Lewis explored in *The Screwtape Letters* was the connection between Christianity and politics, and how it can be a point of temptation. (In this book, Lewis is writing from the devil's perspective — showing us his temptation playbook.) In one letter, senior devil Screwtape writes to his nephew Wormwood:

Through this girl and her disgusting family the patient is now getting to know more Christians every day, and very intelligent Christians, too. For a long time it will be quite impossible to *remove* spirituality from his life. Very well then; we must *corrupt* it. No doubt you have often practiced transforming yourself into an angel of light as a parade-ground exercise. Now is the time to do it in the face of the Enemy. The World and the Flesh have failed us; a third Power remains. And success of this third kind is the most glorious of all. A spoiled saint, a Pharisee, an inquisitor, or a magician, makes better sport in Hell than a mere common tyrant or debauchee.

Looking round your patient's new friends I find that the best point of attack would be the border-line between theology and politics. Several of his new friends are very much alive to the social implications of their religion. That, in itself, is a bad thing; but good can be made out of it...

About the general connection between Christianity and politics, our position is more delicate. Certainly we do not want men to allow

their Christianity to flow over into their political life, for the establishment of anything like a really just society would be a major disaster. On the other hand we do want, and want very much, to make men treat Christianity as a means; preferably, of course, as a means to their own advancement, but, failing that, as a means to anything — even to social justice. The thing to do is to get a man at first to value social justice as a thing which the Enemy demands, and then work him on to the stage at which he values Christianity because it may produce social justice. For the Enemy will not be used as a convenience. Men or nations who think they can revive the Faith in order to make a good society might just as well think they can use the stairs of Heaven as a short cut to the nearest chemist's shop. Fortunately it is quite easy to coax humans round this little corner. Only today I have found a passage in a Christian writer where he recommends his own version of Christianity on the ground that 'only such a faith can outlast the death of old cultures and the birth of new civilisations'. You see the little rift? 'Believe this, not because it is true, but for some other reason.' That's the game...¹

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In the world in which we live, we will inevitably encounter tensions between our faith and other areas of our life, including politics. Let us prayerfully ask God to show us any areas in our life where we are not putting Jesus Christ first.



"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

GALATIANS 2:20 (ESV)

¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, HarperOne, 2001, pp. 123, 126-126.

