

Reflections

MAY 2022

May I Kill It?



In his fictional book, *The Great Divorce*, C.S. Lewis has a dream in which he visits heaven and hell. In the dream, ghosts from hell are permitted to visit heaven. One of the things Lewis sees while in heaven is a visiting ghost with a lizard on its shoulder. As explained by Walter Hooper, the ghost's "life has been ruined by lust," and "(t)hat lust, in the form of a Lizard, now sits on his shoulder..."¹ An excerpt from Lewis's book follows:

I saw coming towards us a Ghost who carried something on his shoulder... What sat on his shoulder was a little red lizard, and it was twitching its tail like a whip and whispering things in his ear. As we caught sight of him he turned his head to the reptile with a snarl of impatience. 'Shut up, I tell you!' he said. It wagged its tail and continued to whisper to him. He ceased snarling, and presently began to smile. Then he turned and started to limp westward, away from the mountains. 'Off so soon?' said a voice.

The speaker was more or less human in shape but larger than a man, and so bright that I could hardly look at him. His presence smote on my eyes and on my body too (for there was heat coming from him as well as light) like the morning sun at the beginning of a tyrannous summer day.

'Yes. I'm off,' said the Ghost. 'Thanks for all your hospitality. But it's no good, you see. I told this little chap' (here he indicated the lizard) 'that he'd have to be quiet if he came—which he insisted on doing. Of course his stuff won't do here: I realise that. But he won't stop. I shall just have to go home.'

'Would you like me to make him quiet?' said the flaming Spirit—an angel, as I now understood.

'Of course I would,' said the Ghost.

'Then I will kill him,' said the Angel, taking a step forward.

'Oh—ah—look out! You're burning me. Keep away,' said the Ghost, retreating.

'Don't you *want* him killed?'

'You didn't say anything about *killing* him at first. I hardly meant to bother you with anything so drastic as that.'

'It's the only way,' said the Angel, whose burning hands were now very close to the lizard. 'Shall I kill it?'

'Well, that's a further question. I'm quite open to consider it, but it's a new point, isn't it? I mean, for the moment I was only thinking about silencing it because up here—well, it's so damned embarrassing.'

'May I kill it?'

'Well, there's time to discuss that later.'

'There is no time. May I kill it?'

'Please, I never meant to be such a nuisance. Please—really—don't bother. Look! It's gone to sleep of its own accord. I'm sure it'll be all right now. Thanks ever so much.'

'May I kill it?'

'Honestly, I don't think there's the slightest necessity for that. I'm sure I shall be able to keep it in order now. I think the gradual process would be far better than killing it.'

'The gradual process is of no use at all.'...²

'Shut up, I tell you!' he said. It wagged its tail and continued to whisper to him.



As you reflect on this story and consider your own life, are there any sins that you are "living with"? If so, would you like to ask God to help you "kill" them?



"For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."

ROMANS 8:13 (ESV)

¹Walter Hooper, *C.S. Lewis: A Complete Guide to His Life & Works*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1996, p. 286.

²C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, HarperSanFrancisco, 2001, pp. 106-108.

