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Review of *As One Devil to Another. A Fiendish Correspondence in the Tradition of C. S. Lewis' The Screwtape Letters*

David G. Clark
Vanguard University

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analysis of how Lewis integrates elements not only from the biblical Book of Revelation, but also from the Nordic legend of Ragnarök, in his Narnian apocalypse is equally enthralling, as is (in a very different context) David L. Neuhouser's brief portrait of Louisa MacDonald and her influence on George MacDonald's attitude to women.

Well-presented and competently edited, this volume is a useful addition to any Inklings scholar's library and also contains articles of interest for both students and the general reader.

SUZANNE BRAY
Lille Catholic University
Lille, France

Richard Platt, *As One Devil to Another. A Fiendish Correspondence in the Tradition of C. S. Lewis' The Screwtape Letters* (Carol Stream, IL, 2012). xi + 196 pages. \$15.99. ISBN: 9781414371665.

Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters* has become a classic; brave the soul who attempts to continue that correspondence! And yet the "fiendish correspondence" of Mr. Platt reminds us that there are still good reasons for taking up a diabolical pen à la Lewis.

Who can resist eavesdropping, er, eavesreading (?) into a correspondence that reveals "classified" plans and techniques that devils are using... on us! Their struggles, their failures, their spite against each other, and above all their inability to grasp the love of God; these all give us reason to cheer, and no cause to pity them. They deserve each other!

But the format has proved to be more than just devil names that carry an odor of brimstone, wry humor, and a failed attempt to get humans safely "below." Every infernal success – in the marketplace, the academy, churches, and of course human relationships of all kinds – provided Lewis, and now Platt, with an ideal format to speak prophetically to the authors' times and places. And both have made full use of the opportunity.

The correspondence begins at Temptation University, and Platt sees today's universities as cause for rejoicing down below over the flood of useless dissertations, continuous assessment with the real goal of praise, and, above all, an atmosphere of competition rather than mutual support.

Platt can be blunt; he holds that most people do not have what it takes to profit from a real university education (113). My own career was spent at one and I have to agree that the curriculum has been “dumbed-down” to a great extent, so as to accommodate the unqualified. Such frankness is refreshing, and characterizes much of the book.

The author also reveals diabolical successes in modern art, where the triumph of Subjectivity over Objectivity has resulted in virtually anything being regarded as “art,” even what is depraved, so that the soul is no longer broadened or uplifted. At the same time, Deconstruction has emptied literature of its authorial intent and milieu, since the only value it now has is the response of the reader.

The modern corporation, with laws that enable-profit taking without personal responsibility, comes under fire, as does the sexual revolution, which has promoted immorality in the name of liberation. Slashreap also gloats over television as one of Hell’s greatest successes since it isolates viewers from other humans, and he can hardly contain his glee over the recent success they have had using a new medium: reality shows. What a wonderful way to promote immoral lifestyles generously seasoned with competition!

These issues, and many others, are interwoven with the plot. Slashreap, uncle to Scardagger (who has just graduated from Temptation University – with Valedictorian honors, no less), has assumed the role of Mentor to his nephew. We also learn that Slashreap’s elder brother (never named but likely Screwtape), Commencement speaker, Guest of Honor, and recipient of the Golden Thorns Award, wanted Scardagger for himself, but Dr. Glitchtwist, the Chancellor, feared that his fearsome reputation might distract the young devil. And so, the uneasy relationship between Slashreap and his nephew begins to unfold.

Now that Scardagger has his diploma, he is assigned a “client” (Lewis used the word “patient”) by the Low Command. She is a postgraduate in the English Department of a prestigious university; quite intelligent, and things look bright (er, dark) for the eager young devil, since modern universities are usually a “hotbed of arrogance, spiritual erosion, and social vanity” (15). And how does it all pan out? No spoiler alert here, but readers familiar with Screwtape’s correspondence know what to expect.

All in all, Platt has accomplished what he set out to do. He has used

the infernal correspondence format effectively enough that Lewis fans will not be disappointed. They will find more than enough Lewisian phrases and “touches” to feel right at home. Is he as good as Lewis, the master? That is a judgment call best left to others. What is important (and Lewis was so proficient at this) is to choose a perspective that enables readers to see themselves and their culture from “outside.” This could be via another culture, another planet, a dream, etc. Here, the view from “below” provides the perspective and it carries real weight because it is biblical: there really are devils with plans for us!

Platt has certainly made good use of this format. He has brought Christian theology and values before us and shows where and how important institutions, modern viewpoints, lifestyles and values in America are all in need of biblical transformation. And that will only begin with the salvation of individual persons, as the author makes clear. Lewis would approve.

DAVID G. CLARK
Vanguard University
Costa Mesa, California

Alister McGrath, *C. S. Lewis: Eccentric Genius, Reluctant Prophet* (London, 2013). xvi + 431 pages. \$24.99. ISBN: 9781444745528.

It is always a pleasure to read about the life of C. S. Lewis and no less so when the biography is written by Alister McGrath, a theologian and a fellow Northern Irishman who has lived and worked in Oxford for much of his life. Who better to give some insight into Lewis the Irishman and amateur theologian?

Since it was published, McGrath’s biography has met with widespread acclaim; it is a careful and thorough work and has generally been recognised as such. Indeed, it is so careful that Lewis himself stands corrected by McGrath over apparent inaccuracies in the date which he attributes to his conversion. According to McGrath, the dates spanning the spiritual process by which Lewis passed from atheism to theism and eventually to Christianity itself was mistakenly described in *Surprised by Joy* (and repeated in every major biography of Lewis); in fact, this occurred between