

My dear Wormwood,

So! Your man is in love—

and in the worst kind he could possibly have fallen into—

and with a girl who does not even appear in the report you sent me. [\(Why do you think Wormwood did not mention her?\)](#)

You may be interested to learn that the little misunderstanding with the Secret Police which you tried to raise about some unguarded expressions in one of my letters has been tided over.

If you were reckoning on that to secure my good offices, you will find yourself mistaken.

You shall pay for that as well as for your other blunders.

Meanwhile I enclose a little booklet, just issued, on the new House of Correction for Incompetent Tempters.

It is profusely illustrated and you will not find a dull page in it.

THE GIRL

I have looked up this girl's dossier and am horrified at what I find.

Not only a Christian but such a Christian—

a vile,

sneaking,

simpering,

demure,

monosyllabic,

mouselike,

watery,

insignificant,

virginal,

bread-and-butter miss.

The little brute. She makes me vomit.

She stinks and scalds through the very pages of the dossier.

It drives me mad, the way the world has worsened.

We'd have had her to the arena in the old days. [To what is this referencing?]

That's what her sort is made for.

Not that she'd do much good there, either.

A two-faced little cheat (I know the sort) who looks as if she'd faint at the sight of blood and then dies with a smile.

A cheat every way.

Looks as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth and yet has a satirical wit.

The sort of creature who'd find ME funny!

Filthy insipid (def. tasteless, uninteresting) little prude—and yet ready to fall into this booby's arms like any other breeding animal.

GOD

Why doesn't the Enemy blast her for it,

if He's so moonstruck by virginity—instead of looking on there, grinning?

He's a hedonist at heart. (Hedonism: philosophy that says the goal in life is to experience pleasure)

All those fasts and vigils and stakes and crosses are only a façade. (What do these represent to the Christian?)

Or only like foam on the sea shore.

Out at sea, out in His sea, there is pleasure, and more pleasure.

He makes no secret of it; at His right hand are “pleasures for evermore”.

[quoting from Psalm 16:11]... ¹¹ You make known to me the path of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence,
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

What is the purpose of Christian discipline? What is the end goal?

Ugh! I don't think He has the least inkling of that high and austere (def. severe, strict) mystery to which we rise in the Miserific Vision.

He's vulgar, Wormwood.

He has a bourgeois mind. (Def. Bourgeois—“middle class”)

He has filled His world full of pleasures.

There are things for humans to do all day long without His minding in the least—

sleeping, washing, eating, drinking, making love, playing, praying, working.

Everything has to be twisted before it's any use to us.

We fight under cruel disadvantages.

Nothing is naturally on our side.

(Not that that excuses you. I'll settle with you presently.

You have always hated me and been insolent when you dared.)

Then, of course, he gets to know this woman's family and whole circle.

THE HOUSEHOLD/FAMILY

Could you not see that the very house she lives in is one that he ought never to have entered?

The whole place reeks of that deadly odour.

The very gardener, though he has only been there five years, is beginning to acquire it.

Even guests, after a week-end visit, carry some of the smell away with them.

The dog and the cat are tainted with it. (What do you think this "odor" refers to and what is going on with the mentioning of the gardener, guests, and even the pets?)

And a house full of the impenetrable mystery.

We are certain (it is a matter of first principles) that each member of the family must in some way be making capital out of the others—but we can't find out how.

They guard as jealously as the Enemy Himself the secret of what really lies behind this pretence of disinterested love.

The whole house and garden is one vast obscenity.

THE COMPARISON TO HEAVEN

It bears a sickening resemblance to the description one human writer made of Heaven; "the regions where there is only life and therefore all that is not music is silence". (A reference to one of CS Lewis' mentors, George MacDonald, pastor, theologian, poet)

Music and silence—how I detest them both! Why do you think music and silence are detestable to Screwtape?

How thankful we should be that ever since our Father entered Hell—

though longer ago than humans,
reckoning in billions, could express—
no square inch of infernal space and no moment of infernal time has
been surrendered to either of those abominable forces,

but all has been occupied by Noise—

Noise, the grand dynamism,
the audible expression of all that is exultant,
ruthless, and virile—

Noise which alone defends us from silly qualms, (def. qualm, an
uneasy feeling about one's conduct)

despairing scruples and impossible desires.

What do you think are other names for Noise in this context? How does Noise further Satan's wishes for mankind?

We will make the whole universe a noise in the end.

We have already made great strides in this direction as regards the Earth.
(Can you think of examples of how Noise has increased in this world?)

The melodies and silences of Heaven will be shouted down in the
end.

But I admit we are not yet loud enough, or anything like it.

Research is in progress.

Meanwhile you, disgusting little— [Here the MS. breaks off and is
resumed in a different hand.]

In the heat of composition I find that I have inadvertently allowed myself
to assume the form of a large centipede. I am accordingly dictating the
rest to my secretary.

Now that the transformation is complete I recognise it as a periodical
phenomenon.

Some rumour of it has reached the humans and a distorted
account of it appears in the poet Milton,

with the ridiculous addition that such changes of shape are a
“punishment” imposed on us by the Enemy. (In John Milton's Paradise
Lost, Satan goes through various downward transformations from
powerful angel to slithering snake)

A more modern writer—someone with a name like Pshaw—has, however, grasped the truth. (this is a reference to George Bernard Shaw, famous poet and playwright of the time...Shaw often mocked Christianity)

Transformation proceeds from within and is a glorious manifestation of that Life Force which Our Father would worship if he worshipped anything but himself.

In my present form I feel even more anxious to see you, to unite you to myself in an indissoluble embrace, (signed)

Letter 23

My dear 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 practised 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.

You will find that a good many Christian-political writers think
that Christianity began going wrong
and departing from the doctrine of its Founder,
at a very early stage.

Now this idea must be used by us to encourage once again
the conception of a “historical Jesus”

to be found by clearing away later “accretions and perversions”
and then to be contrasted with the whole Christian tradition.

In the last generation we promoted the construction of such a “historical Jesus”
on liberal and humanitarian lines;

we are now putting forward a new “historical Jesus”

on Marxian,
catastrophic,
and revolutionary lines.

The advantages of these constructions, which we intend to change every thirty years or so,
are manifold.

In the first place they all tend to direct men’s devotion to something which does not
exist, for each “historical Jesus” is unhistorical.

The documents say what they say and cannot be added to;
each new “historical Jesus” therefore has to be got out of them by
suppression at one point
and exaggeration at another,

and by that sort of guessing (brilliant is the adjective we teach humans to apply
to it) on which no one would risk ten shillings in ordinary life, but which is enough to
produce a crop of new Napoleons, new Shakespeares, and new Swifts, in every
publisher’s autumn list.

In the second place, all such constructions place the importance of their Historical
Jesus in some peculiar theory He is supposed to have promulgated.

He has to be a “great man” in the modern sense of the word—
one standing at the terminus of some centrifugal and unbalanced line of
thought—a crank vending a panacea.

We thus distract men's minds from

Who He is,

and what He did.

We first make Him solely a teacher,

and then conceal the very substantial agreement between His teachings

and those of all other great moral teachers.

For humans must not be allowed to notice

that all great moralists are sent by the Enemy

not to inform men but to remind them,

to restate the primeval moral platitudes against our continual concealment of them.

We make the Sophists: He raises up a Socrates to answer them.

And fourthly, besides being unhistorical in the Jesus it depicts, religion of this kind is false to history in another sense.

No nation, and few individuals, are really brought into the Enemy's camp by the historical study of the biography of Jesus, simply as biography.

Indeed materials for a full biography have been withheld from men.

The earliest converts were converted by

a single historical fact (the Resurrection)

and a single theological doctrine (the Redemption)

operating on a sense of sin which they already had—and sin,

not against some new fancy-dress law produced as a novelty by a "great man",

but against the old, platitudinous, universal moral law which they had been taught by their nurses and mothers.

The "Gospels" come later and were written not to make Christians but to edify Christians already made.

The "Historical Jesus" then, however dangerous he may seem to be to us at some particular point, is always to be encouraged.

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, Your affectionate uncle

Letter 24

My dear Wormwood,

**I have been in correspondence with Slumtrimpet who is in charge of your patient's young woman,
and begin to see the chink in her armour.**

It is an unobtrusive little vice

which she shares with nearly all women

who have grown up in an intelligent circle

united by a clearly defined belief;

and it consists in a quite untroubled assumption

**that the outsiders who do not share this belief are really too stupid and
ridiculous.**

The males, who habitually meet these outsiders,

do not feel that way;

their confidence, if they are confident,

is of a different kind.

Hers, which she supposes to be due to Faith,

is in reality largely due to the mere colour she has taken from her surroundings.

**It is not, in fact, very different from the conviction she would have felt at the age
of ten that the kind of fish-knives used in her father's house were the proper or normal
or "real" kind,**

while those of the neighbouring families were "not real fish-knives" at all.

Now the element of ignorance and naïvety in all this is so large, and the element of spiritual pride so small, that it gives us little hope of the girl herself.

But have you thought of how it can be made to influence your own patient?

It is always the novice who exaggerates.

The man who has risen in society is over-refined, the young scholar is pedantic.

In this new circle your patient is a novice.

He is there daily meeting Christian life

of a quality he never before imagined

and seeing it all through an enchanted glass

because he is in love.

He is anxious (indeed the Enemy commands him) to imitate this quality.

Can you get him to

imitate this defect in his mistress

and to exaggerate it

until what was venial in her becomes in him

the strongest and most beautiful of the vices—Spiritual Pride?

The conditions seem ideally favourable.

The new circle in which he finds himself is one of which he is tempted to be proud for many reasons other than its Christianity.

It is a better educated,

more intelligent,

more agreeable society

than any he has yet encountered.

He is also under some degree of illusion as to his own place in it.]

Under the influence of “love” he may still think himself unworthy of the girl, but he is rapidly ceasing to think himself unworthy of the others.

He has no notion how much in him is forgiven because they are charitable and made the best of because he is now one of the family.

He does not dream how much of his conversation, how many of his opinions, are recognised by them all as mere echoes of their own.

Still less does he suspect how much of the delight he takes in these people is due to the erotic enchantment which the girl, for him, spreads over all her surroundings.

He thinks that he likes their talk and way of life because of some congruity between their spiritual state and his,

when in fact they are so far beyond him that if he were not in love he would be merely puzzled and repelled by much which he now accepts.

He is like a dog which should imagine it understood fire-arms because its hunting instinct and love for its master enable it to enjoy a day's shooting!

Here is your chance. While the Enemy,

by means of sexual love and of some very agreeable people far advanced in His service,

is drawing the young barbarian up to levels he could never otherwise have reached,

you must make him feel that he is finding his own level—

that these people are “his sort”

and that, coming among them, he has come home.

When he turns from them to other society

he will find it dull;

partly because almost any society within his reach is, in fact, much less entertaining,

but still more because he will miss the enchantment of the young woman.

You must teach him to mistake this contrast between the circle that delights and the circle that bores him for the contrast between Christians and unbelievers.

He must be made to feel (he'd better not put it into words)

“how different we Christians are”;

and by “we Christians” he must really, but unknowingly, mean “my set”;

and by “my set” he must mean

not “The people who, in their charity and humility,

have accepted me”,

but “The people with whom I associate by right”.

Success here depends on confusing him.

If you try to make him explicitly and professedly proud of being a Christian, you will probably fail;

the Enemy’s warnings are too well known.

If, on the other hand, you let the idea of “we Christians” drop out altogether and merely make him complacent about “his set”, you will produce not true spiritual pride but mere social vanity which, by comparison, is a trumpery, puny little sin.

What you want is to keep a sly self-congratulation mixing with all his thoughts

and never allow him to raise the question “What, precisely, am I congratulating myself about?”

The idea of belonging to an inner ring, of being in a secret, is very sweet to him.

Play on that nerve.

Teach him, using the influence of this girl when she is silliest,

to adopt an air of amusement at the things the unbelievers say.

Some theories which he may meet in modern Christian circles may here prove helpful;

theories, I mean, that place the hope of society in some inner ring of “clerks”,

some trained minority of theocrats.

It is no affair of yours whether those theories are true or false;

the great thing is to make Christianity

a mystery religion

in which he feels himself one of the initiates.

Pray do not fill your letters with rubbish about this European War.

**Its final issue is, no doubt, important,
but that is a matter for the Lower Command.**

**I am not in the least interested in knowing how many people in England have been killed by
bombs.**

In what state of mind they died, I can learn from the office at this end.

That they were going to die sometime, I knew already.

Please keep your mind on your work,

Your affectionate uncle