C. S. Lewis on Gender

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Introduction

Cautious though one must be in thinking that one can entirely understand someone in terms of their circumstances, C. S. Lewis (CSL) virtually invites us to pay attention to his by the publication of his Surprised by Joy (1955). This text, which we can now read as a classic of “textual male intimacy” in religion, is one of those resources particularly important when we try to grasp what CSL meant and could not mean by “masculinity,” as will become clear in the last part of this article. In addition, we need to attend to a whole range of his publications when we attempt to assess his understanding of “femininity” and its relation to “masculinity.” One can hardly be understood without the other: “Gender” is not simply a matter of problematizing what it may be to be female/feminine. In addition, quite apart from what CSL reveals about himself in his publications, it is helpful to juxtapose with his self-presentation perspectives on his context in a way not possible in his own times, alert though he himself was to political, social, and economic change.

The tail end of the nineteenth century, at the very end of which CSL was born, saw some thoughtful reassessments of the effects of industrialization, and on women in particular. For instance, Henry Scott Holland, one of the most perceptive Church of England clerics of his time, insisted that the strain of the situation was such that “[w]e have got to secure for women an entirely new value and significance.” The point was that, while “he,” “his,” and “him” were humanly inclusive in criminal law, they were not so in civil law, though there had been marked improvements in legislation concerned with married women especially. The particular issue that concerned Scott Holland was that of votes for the women whose lives, like those of men, had been so dramatically changed by industrialization. Women simply had to be in a position where they could voice their concerns themselves. Sometimes these would coincide with those of men, but sometimes not. The UK was years behind, for example, New York State’s Married Women’s Property Act of 1848, bringing in a comparable act in 1885, which secured to women property and earnings acquired after marriage. The well-to-do had been able to make legal provision for women on the verge of marriage, since families obviously did not wish to see resources for their daughters squandered by feckless sons-in-law, given that they carried the burden of financial wellbeing for a whole family group. Less well-provided women could not tolerate intimidation by men fueled by alcohol paid for out of women’s earnings.

Neither these acts nor those affecting marriage in other ways were trivial in their impact, and the issue of their voting rights focused attention on the point that women had minds and wills of their own. The Western philosophical and religious tradition had come to understand “reason” by the exclusion of the “feminine,” with bodily difference from the male symbolizing lesser intellectual functioning, and appropriate “feelings” deemed to be of little significance—producing what CSL was to call “men without chests.” The result was to deem women incapable of a whole range of undertakings. Apart from industrialization in peacetime, the First World War found women working in armament factories as well as continuing to work on farms. They worked in transports and at the front, as well as at home as nurses and ambulance drivers, in addition to all the other tasks they performed. It was not until February 6, 1918, that some women (those over thirty years old, householders or wives thereof, occupiers of property worth at least five pounds per year, and university graduates) secured the vote. Men simply had to be nineteen years or older and able to supply an address. The age restriction for women dropped to twenty-one in 1928. The time had come when women, married or not, could no longer be regarded as legal nonentities, deprived of adequate education and economic resources, though much remained to be achieved in the twentieth century.

Postwar deprivation could be acute for the survivors of the appalling battlefields of the First World War, which marked CSL’s life so deeply, with many men on the dole and then facing a “means test” when already they and their families were near starvation, with women’s pittances from earnings crucial to survival. Indisputable evidence of systematic mass murder, not only in Europe, was to emerge. Male-dominated societies were clearly ripe for reevaluation; however much women had colluded in situations, they were powerless to do more than palliate at best. There were problems as always, not about women as “workers” (usually low-paid), but about their entry into the professional worlds hitherto the province of males. Those men prosperous enough to have the women of their households free from back-breaking drudgery, paid or not, could well be rendered uneasy by continued longstanding criticism of the plight of women from the days of John Stuart Mill onward, and the criticism continued in a variety of genres. The aspirations of the middle class might well have seemed to be those of everyone. Yet, Olive Schreiner’s The Story of an African Farm, Henrik Ibsen’s A Doll’s House, Virginia Woolf’s A Room of One’s Own, followed by The Years and then Three Guineas, sustained criticism of women’s lot, not least during the first half of the twentieth century and the period in which CSL made his distinctive contribution to radio broadcasting about religion. Far more of the population were likely to listen to radio than they were to read printed material, let alone books, so a successful broadcaster had significant responsibilities.

CSL was not alone in becoming a distinguished lay theologian. For instance, Evelyn Underhill, Helen Waddell, and Charles Williams were prominent in the first half of the century, but they were writers rather than broadcasters. Formidable competition in shaping perceptions of what was and was not proper for women, whether or not they were of CSL’s educational and social class, came from another successful broadcaster, Dorothy

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L. Sayers, whose writing he much admired. She was as great a writer of letters as he was and had the advantage of having been born and bred in a clerical household, whereas CSL was in effect a convert to Christianity. She was a published poet, a playwright, novelist, lecturer, and profoundly orthodox Christian apologist, having been reared on the tough intellectual diet of the Church of England Book of Common Prayer Matins and Evensong, and formidably well read in Western Christian theology. She had contributed to the revival of Christian drama for performance in cathedrals and had followed this up with radio plays from 1938 onward, most notably the set of plays The Man Born to be King (1941), which CSL much admired. He did not take to her detective fiction, though her Gaudy Night (1935) is particularly interesting in its portrayal of academic women as much devoted to the pursuit of truth for its own sake as he was himself, and with a clear understanding of the kind of freedom that may develop when intellect and emotion are integrated with one another, and aware of the damage to women and men alike when they are not.

Ten years on, and CSL’s That Hideous Strength yielded only the character of Jane, who, on marriage, had, as he puts it, left the world of work and comradeship and innumerable things to do, only to find herself in something like solitary confinement. That confinement was, in a sense, accidental to her marriage, with an ambitious husband obsessed with making his way, but the very fact that CSL describes her as he does indicates one of the problems women faced. For him, it seems, Jane has many merits, but her principal flaw is that of mistaking her vocation, which is not to write a doctorate on the work of Donne, but to have children. CSL, of course, does not point out that she had to choose in a way men did not, between intellectual work, or work of any kind, and domestic commitments, which might include childrearing.

Moreover, in her writing on Christian aesthetics of the 1940s, Dorothy L. Sayers defended the disinterested integrity of artists of all kinds, relating their work to divine creativity, and, by implication, associating the work of women with that creativity—women, so to speak, bearing the “image of God” in their own right, insofar as everyone does. This was important, since, like others, she was denying that women derived their talents and intellectual creativity from a man, or under the “veil” of a man, as interpretations of 1 Corinthians 11 proposed, and which had had such damaging consequences for them. She tackled some of those consequences in civil society in her 1938 address “Are Women Human?,” in which she pointed out (as CSL would have to agree on the basis of his own experience as a young man) that it was simply intolerable to have to resist the assumption that all one’s preferences had to be conditioned by the class to which one belonged. In a 1941 address, she went on to tackle the Church of England directly in “The Human-not-Quite-Human,” arguing that women had interests directly immediate to God and his universe without the need of any male intermediary. And she cut through appeals to “Pauline” Christianity by appealing to the example of Christ himself. Nobody could possibly guess from reading about his words and deeds that women were “funny” in any way, but it was all too easy to deduce it not only from his contemporaries, but from the church itself.

Then, during the war, Dorothy L. Sayers had the great good fortune to translate and comment on Dante’s Divine Comedy, finding publication in the new Penguin Classics series. Present in this fourteenth-century text and its portrayal of the hierarchical universe, so beloved by CSL, was the figure of Beatrice, once a living woman, mistress not only of philosophy and the science of Dante’s day, but the perfect integration of intellectual, emotional, and bodily beauty and his personal mediator of grace. In particular, in Canto xxx of “Purgatory,” in the Pageant of the Sacrament (the Eucharist), she appeared with three dancing graces—faith, hope, and charity—at one wheel of her chariot, and with the four cardinal (“hinge”) virtues of justice, courage, temperance, and prudence dancing at the other. It is worth noticing at this point that in CSL’s discussion of the cardinal virtue of prudence (think what you are doing and what is likely to become of it), he argues that the proper motto for a Christian is not “Be good, sweet maid, and let who can be clever,” but “Be good, sweet maid, and don’t forget that this involves being as clever as you can.” He points out both that God is no fonder of intellectual slackers than of any other kind, and that Christian faith not only requires the whole of a person, brains and all, but sharpens them too. He could be remarkably even-handed in his illustrations, at least sometimes. That said, it was inevitable that he would part company with someone like Dorothy L. Sayers on a number of issues, as we shall see, but there is plenty of evidence that he behaved with perfect courtesy to female colleagues, pupils, relatives, and friends, and enjoyed the company of talented women, as one might expect, given his eventual marriage to Joy Davidman.

Responding to change

CSL was undoubtedly alert to the huge changes going on around him, though he was no social historian and unprepared to learn from new fields of study. He found some illumination in the works of Freud and Jung, but notoriously resisted the arrival of sociology on the academic scene. In reading him, however, we need to be alert to the best of his shrewd insights into human behavior, “gendered” though much of these are. That is to say, his examples of women’s behavior are largely drawn from the domestic realm, and his examples of men’s from the non-domestic, as one might expect. But the value he places on domestic and family life for human wellbeing can hardly be underestimated, however much elements in it may need to be reconstrued.

We also need to note that he finds a variety of ways to get his points across. For example, Screwtape, proposing a toast, can review some of the movements of the last century or so, mentioning increased liberty, the abolition of slavery, the advancement of religious toleration on the one side, and the rejection of faith, the growth of materialism, secularism, and hatred on the other. On the one hand, there had been Christian socialism (with which Scott Holland was so closely associated) and the evidence of the rich obeying their consciences, the poor becoming cleaner, more orderly, thrifty, better educated, and virtuous, alongside some matters very dear to CSL’s heart—hatred of personal freedom, for instance. Screwtape also expresses CSL’s lament for the destruction of the middle classes who produced the educated men, from scientists through to administrators, who had made so much change for the better possible. This is closely connected with one of CSL’s deepest concerns: his horror of contempt for individuality in a democracy, if, that is, democracy means not a
prudential pattern of government, but the stifling of excellence. As Screwtape concludes, “All is summed up in the prayer which a young female human is said to have uttered recently: ‘Oh God, make me a normal, twentieth-century girl!’ Thanks to our labours, this will mean increasingly, “Make me a minx, a moron, and a parasite.” One must ask why the example is female here, and why being “a normal, twentieth-century girl” is to mean what Screwtape suggests it must mean. It is unclear why a girl rather than a boy, as it were, expresses CSL’s dislike of some of the inappropriate impact of democracy, but at least the point he is making about the importance of achievement and excellence stands.

So do some of his other perspectives. We may well think it fair to say that he rightly disliked and distrusted the manipulation of the way we look at bodies, guiding people away from those with whom “spiritually helpful, happy and fertile marriages are most likely”—or so he thought. Screwtape (CSL again) commented that, from an era when men had chosen women of one type—“the most arrogant and prodigal women”—through an era of choosing “an arrogant and prodigal women” associated with “folly and cowardice, falseness, and lilliteness of mind, the present fashion was for men to choose women whose bodies were scarcely distinguishable from those of boys, aggravating the female horror of growing old and rendering her less willing and less able to bear children,” or so CSL supposed. If we need alerting to the female preoccupation with body image, CSL provides it.

Sometimes, CSL relies on a sort of anthropological fantasy about men cooperating as hunters or fighters, liking what they were doing, and enjoying talking about it even more away from women and children. In this, he claimed, was to be found the root of the kinds of friendships men enjoyed, “an affair of disentangled, or stripped minds” focused on some pursuit or other and paying no attention, at least initially, to anything else except a shared object or interest of concern. It seems to be an extraordinary view of any human being that one could be thought of in this way, but it is unsurprising to discover just what it is from which they are disentangled or stripped. His view emerges again in the context of reflections on changing circumstances.

“Where men are educated and women not, when one sex works and the other is idle, or where they do totally different work, they will usually have nothing to be Friends about.” In principle, obviously, they could be “Friends” in the right circumstances. The problem as he saw it was that, in his day, society was falling between two stools, where, on the one hand, as in the past, the lives of the two sexes were lived largely separately in such a way as to suit both (we might say, suiting men primarily) and, on the other, as in his time, where women were trying to make their way into what had been male worlds without really being up to it, thereby disrupting those worlds. The women who disrupt existing arrangements are, of course, “sily women.” “The sensible women, who, if they wanted, would certainly be able to qualify themselves for the world of discussion and ideas, are precisely those who, if they are not qualified, never try to enter it or to destroy it.” Quite how they were to qualify for it is presumably someone else’s concern, and they are not to learn from joining in the company of men, it seems.

CSL, at this juncture at least, is uncritical of a whole tradition of thought about how rationality is to be construed and the issues it raises about what it is to be fully human as both women and men. He is rightly vulnerable to reappraisal here. Therefore, Janet Martin Soskice appropriately questions how we can be friends with someone, let alone a man with a woman, stripped of all distinctiveness, there being something “sterile and self-regarding” here, though she adds that hopefully Lewis’s practice was better than his theory, as indeed there is evidence that it was.

Not all, male or female, however, as colleague and friend, might understand themselves in friendship to be a stripped and disentangled mind. CSL might think them behaving inappropriately unless they did; and, in any event, such an understanding must at the very least raise questions about the possible relationship of friendship to marriage. To the contrary, as in her own reassessment of Lewis at this point, Helen Oppenheimer proposes that, in friendship, it is precisely partiality, attentiveness, “looking to see what the special individuality of the other person really is and attending positively to it,” that matters. That special individuality will be more than intellectual if fully human.

CSL’s examples and illustrations include the woman who is a complete slave to gluttony of the “All-I-Want” variety, as well as the man who thinks himself knowledgeable about food, easily put out by the denial of some indulgence, and the woman who spoils her child to the detriment of that child’s later happiness. There is a whining female, a “little waspish woman,” and some more developed examples in The Great Divorce. These move from “dear, kind Mummie coming up to your bedroom and getting all she wants to know out of you” (being on the same side as Father really), to the woman who cannot stop thinking about herself even when a herd of splendid unicorns thunders past her. There is a “silly garrulous old woman who has got into the habit of grumbling” and feels that a little kindness, rest, and change would help (as well it might, we may add) and who might be brought back to life if there is still a real woman distinguishable from her grumbles to be found. There is an analysis of how a woman ruined her relationship with her husband, driving him finally to a nervous breakdown. There is a woman whose love for her son (dead a decade earlier) had been “uncontrolled and fierce and monomaniac,” indifferent to her own mother, with her daughter and husband (both of whom had loved him dearly) revolting against her obsession with the past.

Before turning to CSL’s understanding of the “masculine,” it is important to recall how perceptive he was about the courtesies required for a flourishing family, as well as the qualities required for sustaining lifelong marriages. And we might well think, in the light of what he has to offer in these respects, that he makes a fundamental mistake in not reevaluating his inherited tradition about the relationship between men and women necessarily being one of superior to inferior. Had he done so, he would have aligned himself with such men as his friend, philosopher, theologian, and Church of England clergyman Austin Farrer, who wrote that “of course the most conservative of us do and must rethink the theology of the saints if we are to use it or live by it. . . . [T]he Christian conscience has acquired certain sensitivities to which the First Century was a stranger. We are not going to feel with St. Paul about the sovereignty of husbands over wives or about the ethics of punishment.” Farrer would have found much to approve of in CSL’s observations on how the family may or may
not “become the channel of particular blessings and graces,” and many of his examples exhibit the problems, one of which is the way in which a father may totally fail to attend to the conversa-
tion of others. Home life “has its own rule of courtesy—a code more intimate, more subtle, more sensitive, and, therefore, in some ways more difficult, than that of the outer world.”22 What we need to know at this point, however, is what we can make of CSL on masculinity, and we turn first to *Surprised by Joy*,23 but with a reading of it informed by insight precisely from some of the social sciences of which CSL was suspicious.

**Becoming masculine**

We know, to begin with, that CSL’s mother was a formidably intel-
ligent and well-educated woman, graduating from Queen’s Col-
lege, Belfast, with first-class honors in mathematics and logic, and able to introduce her sons (born in 1895 and 1898, respectively) to French and Latin in their schoolroom at home, where CSL’s par-
ents were also able to afford an excellent governess as well as a most kind, cheerful, and sensible nurse for CSL and Warnie, his senior. Through circumstances no one could have predicted, loy-
alty between the two brothers became their primary emotional bond. One of the most significant things Warnie ever did for CSL was one day to bring him in a little garden he had made, the garden which, for CSL, remained part of his imagination of paradise.24

Their mother’s death from cancer in 1908 would have been traumatic in any case, but it precipitated the two boys not only into a situation of emotional alienation from their father, strug-
gling with his own grief for her and for other members of his family, but into what turned out to be an atrociously threatening situation. With no doubt the best will in the world, he dispatched the boys not only away to boarding school, but also to school in England, far from everything they had known in northern Ire-
land and from the women who had cared for them, to a school whose “Head” had already been the defendant in a court action taken by parents for his brutality to their son (with another to follow in 1910), a man eventually declared insane. Apart from the loss of their mother, the source of so much happiness in their lives, school meant witnessing the humiliation of the Head’s wife and daughters—“three tragic figures,” whose lives he did not even begin to imagine. Its most significant feature, however, was the cruelty of wholly irrational and unpredictable beatings of the boys, and of some boys in particular, which constituted unmis-
takable evidence of physical abuse had anyone been prepared to listen. It was only witnessed by other boys with grey faces and in deathlike stillness, so as not to draw attention to themselves.25

This school was remembered as a “Belsen,” and although Warnie voiced their need to be removed from it, perhaps their father as well as the boys themselves supposed the miseries to be unavoidable at a school, as indeed to some extent they were. The very fact that he continued to send them there, together with his unpredictable temperament, did nothing to encourage them to trust him. From this world of caning, “disgusting food, stinking sanitation and cold beds,”26 their respite was the holi-
days and the hospitality of relatives, including an aunt able to make everything as cheerful and comfortable as circumstances allowed; a young relative, one of three daughters who had “what the vanity of my own sex calls a ‘masculine’ honesty, a true friend; and one real beauty.”27 At another institution, he also found a godsend of a matron to turn to: skilled, comforting, cheerful, and companionable. His next destination was to be another school, rife not only with physical bullying and including “fagging” (doing exhausting menial chores), but also the sexual abuse of younger boys by the older ones, and, perhaps inevitably, the prospect of physical punishment (whipping) by teachers for ill-
done work.28 While the sexual abuse of the younger by the older was an introduction to the character of “public life” of flattery and favors, it was, he thought, at least some counterpoint to the social struggle and competitiveness that marked school life. The sheer struggle to survive, to endure compulsory games, to escape fagging and bullying in order to get his academic work done, left him exhausted, but in retrospect he wrote, “Peace to them all. A worse fate awaited them than the most vindictive fag among us could have wished. Ypres and the Somme ate up most of them. They were happy while their good days lasted.”29

CSL was very fortunate to be sent at last to a private tutor who understood him and made him work, just as Warnie was turned into someone who could earn a cadet’s place at Sandhurst, the military academy. By the time he himself became a Christian, sustained as he had been by Warnie’s companionship when he was not away in the Royal Army Service Corps, CSL regarded himself as “a zoo of lusts, a bedlam of ambitions, a nursery of fears, a harem of fondled hatreds. My name was legion.”30 It might have been astonishing had it been otherwise.

One blessed feature of his life post–World War One, however, was his commitment to Mrs. Moore, as the result of the death in action of her courageous son, CSL’s war comrade. The two young men had made an agreement that, if one or the other did not sur-
vive (and a Second Lieutenant might last only six weeks from the day he landed in France), the survivor would take care of the other’s parents. Mrs. Moore was forty-eight, some ten years younger than CSL’s own mother. Given the privations of the years between the two World Wars and the aftermath of the second of these, CSL must himself have been a blessing in his continuous pres-
ence to her, his willingness to slog through the endless chores of keeping the household functioning, and their joint willingness to make a home for Warnie, notwithstanding his alcoholism. Quer-
ulous and frustrated as she apparently became in her later years as her health and capacities diminished, she was fundamentally kind, it seems, not only to her own family, but to the evacuees who came and went through the household to escape the aerial bombardment of cities.

*Surprised by Joy* is not only a classic of “textual male intimacy,” but can also be read as an example illuminated by the work of Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen. She writes of the way in which some cultures, but by no means all, employ gratuitous cruelty in the sup-
posed interests of developing “masculinity,” when boys are sepa-
rated not only from their mothers, but from their fathers, them-
selves deprived of nurturing roles for their children. Such cultures are most likely to oppress women as men struggle to find secure identities.31 In addition, although it is arguable that such mascu-
linity is that of strength, violence, powerful and persuasive speech, male bonding, and womanlessness,\(^3\) most of which we might say is evident in the CSL we read, we could say that CSL found something else in the Christian tradition that offered him a different masculinity, and this was his understanding of Christ himself.

In some respects, it is arguable that the conclusions CSL drew from his new understanding were flawed and his discussion of whether or not there could be “priestesses” in the church can be faulted in a number of ways, not least his claim that the Blessed Virgin was not present at Pentecost. Acts 1:14 has long been interpreted to mean that she was, as a long tradition of painting and iconography reveals, for what that is worth in a discussion of ordination for women as well as men.\(^3\) A most important element in his convictions has to do with his believing that the “masculine” as revealed in Christian doctrine is superior to the “feminine,” including in the “feminine” men “receptive” in relation to God. This profoundly influences his discussion of heterosexuality, in marriage only of course, the key to which is that “obedience—humility—is an erotic necessity,” that is, for women.\(^4\) Dorothy L. Sayers thought his views those of a “rather frightened bachelor”\(^3\) and, if not frightened, we might think that the matter is complicated by the way he imagined an “unfallen” Adam and Eve in *Perelandra* and wrote about the splendors of the “trans-sexual” life for both women and men in the heavenly life.\(^5\)

CSL’s examples of how actual women and men may be related to one another are not always fortunate, though any and all of which he might well think were negotiable. He can write carelessly, as if he thinks that in human reproduction a child originates from only one source, and that male.\(^7\) He appears to maintain that the family life he so much prizes does not require the acknowledged presence of a wife to make it possible,\(^8\) and he seems to think that maternal instincts are so fierce that men need to modify them in the relationships of the family with the “outside” world, never apparently supposing that a wife’s fierce concern for her children and herself might well be connected to her uncertainty as to whether her husband is unequivocally prepared to make her and their children’s perspective his own.\(^9\)

We need not follow CSL either in the ventures of his imagination or of his opinions, but his understanding of Christ offered a most significant alternative to the cruelty, violence, intimidation, self-seeking, and manipulative behavior of which he was so critical—which is not to say that we may not find it unproblematic, not least because it is anything but humbly inclusive.

For example, he employed the analogy used in Ezekiel 16, God’s love for and rescue from squalor of Israel, his pauper bride, abandoned waif, who yet betrayed him. The church in turn becomes the Lord’s bride, and “the truth which this analogy serves to emphasise is that Love, in its own nature, demands the perfecting of the beloved.”\(^4\) Then CSL asks, “When we fall in love with a woman, do we cease to care whether she is clean or dirty, fair or foul?” Love cannot cease to will the removal of infirmities. In *The Four Loves*, this linkage is given further development when CSL develops his conviction that “headship,” crowned or inflicted upon the husband, is not to be found in the husband he and others would like to be, “but in him whose marriage is most like a crucifixion; whose wife receives most and gives least, is most unworthy of him, is—in her own mere nature—least lovable.”\(^4\)

As a way of stressing the importance of self-sacrifice in human life—becoming not merely Christlike, but more “feminine” —this has something to offer, and CSL, in full knowledge of her illness, married Joy, knowing that she was not likely to survive for long. His care for her was exemplary. But CSL’s view needs to be stripped of resonance with Ezekiel 16. One might better claim that the most Christlike marriage in a church that lives from Christ’s resurrection and is nourished by the sacraments, as CSL indeed trusted to be the case, is one in which both persons give and receive. Both possess or can develop the needed human qualities that they possess in different measure so as to enhance the other. Christ’s sacrifice was “once-for-all”; Christ’s resurrection and sacramental presence abides.

* A *Grief Observed* reflects these changes in CSL’s thinking and is devoid of “headship.” Looking back on the time he and Joy had together, he seems to have been able to rethink what he had said, because, although she was grievously ill, in her courage she gave to him at least as much as he gave to her, not to mention her love and care for Warnie as well as her two boys. So CSL wrote, “For we did learn and achieve something. There is, hidden or flaunted, a sword between the sexes till an entire marriage reconciles them. It is arrogance in us to call frankness, fairness and chivalry ‘masculine’ when we see them in a woman; it is arrogance in them, to describe a man’s sensitiveness or tact or tenderness as ‘feminine.’ But also what poor warped fragments of humanity most mere men and mere women must be to make the implications of that arrogance plausible. Marriage heals this. Jointly the two become fully human. ‘In the image of God created He them.’ Thus, by a paradox, this carnival of sexuality leads us out beyond our sexes.”\(^4\)

As Scott Holland might have said, “At last.”

### Notes


4. See C. S. Lewis (hereafter CSL), *The Four Loves* (London: Bles, 1960), 75, on men embracing one another, which for him was no evidence whatsoever of homosexuality (which he regarded as a perversion of sexuality). He cited Hrothgar and Beowulf, Johnson and Boswell, “and all those hairy old toughs of centurions in Tacitus, clinging to one another and begging for last kisses when the legion was broken up . . .” CSL loathed the embrace of his own sex lifelong, unsurprisingly given his experience both at home after his mother’s death and at school. See CSL in *Letters to an American Lady*, ed. C. S. Kilby (London: Hudder & Stoughton, 1969), 25.

8. Both these essays, and one entitled “Living to Work,” are to be found in Dorothy L. Sayer’s collection Unpopular Opinions (London: Gollancz, 1946).
9. The volume on “Hell” was published in 1949, apparently so soon after World War Two and its unmitigated horrors; “Purgatory” was published in 1955, and the “Paradise” volume was completed after her sudden death in 1957 by Barbara Reynolds, her biographer and editor of her letters. Beatrice is for Dante his “God-bearing image,” and, together with Eve/Mary, and Lucy, who represents the grace of illumination, one of the gifts of the Spirit, forms also a possible analogue of the Trinity.
10. Dante’s Divine Comedy lies behind CSL’s The Pilgrim’s Regress and The Great Divorce.
11. CSL, “The Cardinal Virtues” in Christian Behaviour (London: Bles, 1943), 13. Unfortunately, CSL sometimes makes unwarranted comment, precisely when being evenhanded. Thus, for instance, when discussing pride, the primary and intellectual sin, and comparing the way in which a man may steal another’s girl, with a girl who surrounds herself with admirers, he adds that it is not her sexual instinct that is engaged in such behavior, and claims that “that kind of girl is often sexually frigid” (44). He does not say it of the man, and, in any case, how could anyone possibly know? And is “pride” the root of her behavior, given other possible interpretations of why she might behave as she does? He also has an example connected with the place of reason and knowledge in faith, of a man’s difficulties in coming to terms with the reality of the fact that a woman cannot be trusted with a secret, that she is a liar (55–56), but not an example the other way round at this point.
12. C. S. Lewis, Screwtape Proposes a Toast in C. S. Lewis, Selected Books (London: HarperCollins, 1999), 83–34. In That Hideous Strength, in one of her worst moments, Jane shows her contempt for a “little shop girl,” a “little, tawdry, made-up girl, sucking a peppermint,” 182. In “Membership,” CSL makes the case for democracy as a defense against cruelty, listing fathers, husbands, and priests—no one can be trusted with power.
14. CSL, The Four Loves, 75–79.
15. CSL, The Four Loves, 84.
18. CSL, Christian Behaviour, 48; The Four Loves, on a child as “living doll” for a silly woman, 16.
21. A. Farrer, A Science of God? (London: Bles, 1966), 119. Austin Farrer was anything but the faithless dean-into-bishop of The Great Divorce, 33–44; or the unbelieving vicar, or the believing Fr. Spike, in the latter’s case, motivated by dishonesty and hatred—each of these men promoting “party churches,” in The Screwtape Letters, 82–84. There is also the obviously mad Straif of That Hideous Strength, 91–94.
24. CSL, A Preface to Paradise Lost (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1942), 49; and on Jane in the garden, reflecting on Freud’s proposal that we liked gardens because they were symbols of the female body, That Hideous Strength, 71; and the same, Mark on Jane, 304; CSL, A Grief Observed (London: Faber & Faber, 1961/1966) on his wife as a garden, 53. CSL prizes “fecundity” and “fertility” in nature, gendered as “she,” notably, and worryingly, in his Miracles: A Preliminary Study (London: Bles, 1947), 81. Science is also “she.”
25. The cruelty left CSL with a lifelong battle to forgive those responsible. See CSL, Christian Behaviour, 39, 49, the latter on the way the cruel come to hate their victims, to whom they are even more cruel; Letters to an American Lady, 117, and his own experience of bullying as well as of being bullied, 43. The task of forgiving the cruel may be central to his letting-go of God as “Cosmic Sadist” in his widower’s hell of grief, A Grief Observed, 33–34; Letters to Malcolm, 134–38.
26. CSL, Surprised by Joy, 42.
28. Bullying was still prevalent when CSLs stepson, Douglas, was sent in 1954, aged eight, to a different school where, if nothing else, he learned how to defend himself by fighting savagely. He, too, had to learn some basic skills, such as writing, when freed from it six years later. D. Gresham, Lenten Lands: My Childhood with Joy Davidman and C. S. Lewis (London: Collins, 1989), 59–60.
29. CSL, Surprised by Joy, 94.
31. Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, My Brother’s Keeper: What the Social Sciences Do (and Don’t) Tell Us About Masculinity (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002).
33. CSL, “Priestesses in the Church?” in Undeceptions, 191–96. Writing on the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, however, which he must have seen on film/television, he recognized that she represented humanity called by God to be his vice-regent and high priest on earth (Letters to an American Lady, 18). The Archbishops 1956 Commission discussing the ordination of women thought that the result would be a “lowering of the spiritual tone of Christian worship,” because of the way men look at women, erroneously supposing that women did not so regard ordained males. See the quotation in M. Furlong, ed., Feminine in the Church (London: SPCK, 1984), 2. Dorothy L. Sayers pointed out to him the significance of Christ’s representation of all humanity; The Letters of Dorothy L. Sayers III 1944–1950: A Noble Daring. ed. B. Reynolds (Bury St. Edmunds: Dorothy L. Sayers Society, 1998), 387.
34. CSL, That Hideous Strength, 179. CSL also writes of the importance of reverence learned in Christian life, Undeceptions, 62; and the recognition of the sacrifices others make for us, Miracles: A Preliminary Study (London: Bles, 1947), 145, 149–50; and presents a “test-case” for men in the situation of a man grievously ill, The Four Loves, 150.
35. B. Reynolds, ed., The Letters of Dorothy L. Sayers IV 1951–1957: In the Midst of Life (Bury St. Edmunds: Dorothy L. Sayers Society, 2001), 138. See, e.g., Broadcast Talks, 47, and The Four Loves, 144–20; but she would have had to change her mind about CSL if she had lived to read A Grief Observed.
36. CSL, Miracles, 191.
37. CSL, Undeceptions, 10–11.
38. CSL, Undeceptions, 263–64.
41. CSL, The Four Loves, 121.
42. CSL, A Grief Observed 42–43.