

jhs



OUR LADY OF GETHSEMANI
TRAPPIST, KENTUCKY

Dec. 17, 1955

Dear Hammer-

I have waited for the typescript of the Sermons to be ready before writing to you. I send it herewith. I forgot to tell the (new)typist to double-space it, and incidentally he did not even make a carbon, so this is the only copy. I hope it is satisfactory.

About the ~~the~~ Tower of Babel my agent has arranged that this will form part of a volume of poetry which will be published by New Directions in the winter of next year. If Anvil Press were to do it, (which would be a fine thing, I still think) it would have to be as a kind of special edition in conjunction with New Directions. I have no doubt Laughlin would like the idea but no doubt it complicates matters too much.

And now, thank you so much for the Fiedler. It is intensely interesting and thought provoking. As I had suspected, the arguments I tentatively put forth in my last letter had little really to do with Fiedler whom I see to be just as "anti-academic" as I am. However, I do not think I have mastered his thought well enough to discuss it, and as you say it would be far more fruitful simply to live in the light of some concrete embodiment of his doctrine put into effect. I will ask Father Abbot about the tryptich. He has just come back from a long trip. Thank you for offering it to us for a week. I shall discuss the whole project with Bro Giles and we will see if it can be done safely and reverently. Then I will let you know.

To return to Fiedler, I am very interested in all that he says about words "creating" our reality for us. I am not too good on the idealism in which he is rooted, but I find many of his intuitions very powerful and right. Actually, modern man uses words as an excuse for not entering into contact with the real (however you define it) and talking is also an excuse for not seeing. Hence again the vanity of argument about so deep a subject,

until one is first sure that his eyes are open and that he is looking at the object. I think Fedler has evidently hit upon the heart of the whole question of artistic expression. He clarifies also your characteristic division that separates artist and patron. The patron has not expressed anything and is not going to express anything: he is simply going to look at what the artist has created. But the artist, on the other hand, has a problem of expression and creation-- not only of a work of art, but in some sense of reality itself.

As for your notes of 1946 about the Catholic Artist, I entirely agree with you. But how on earth are we ever going to get anyone to see these things? It is enough to reduce one to despair. But the world is being punished for its sins-- all its sins. The depravation of human nature, even for instance of human techniques of work, is also a sin against God the Author of nature. Is it not part of the natural law that man should work humanly and taste joy in creating, and work for something else besides money?

In this season when Christ comes to us, when the Word is made flesh and God takes to Himself humanity, we can lament the fact that we have forgotten to be first of all human in our religion, and we can cry out with tears for a Redeemer Who is perhaps the only one left Who appreciates what it is to be Man and to praise God with a Man's Heart, and with a Man's tongue. And to open upon the world the eyes of human intelligence enlightened by divine wisdom.

I return the notes, and with them I send you both all my best and most fervent Christmas wishes and blessings.. God be with you, and may His light fill you, and may His grace guide you and His love possess you.

Devotedly in the Christ Child:

J. M. Lewis

PS I fully understand what you mean about cities. If I had seen more of Vienna and less of London and New York, I would have less prejudice. In fact, I sent to the Ky U. library a page or two I once wrote about Havana which shows that we agree too about the polis after all.

I will probably be returning Inell with deep gratitude after ten holidays.

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These pages (3 chapters) are not explanatory, they are descriptive as

he was idealism or by as a stepping stone to get away from it.

they are based on inner vision and only who has these inner eyes can see.