

**The Charles Williams Society**

**Newsletter**

CW

**No. 83**

## **MEETINGS OF THE CHARLES WILLIAMS SOCIETY**

**31 May 1997:** The Society will hold its Annual General Meeting, commencing at 12.00 noon, in the Church Room of St Matthew's Church, St Petersburg Place, Bayswater (nearest Underground stations Queensway and Bayswater), starting at 2.30 pm. This will be followed after an interval for lunch by an address given by Charles A. Huttar at 2.30 pm.

**N.B.** There is not much heating in the Church Room - if the weather is cold, dress warmly.

**8 November 1997:** The Hon Secretary Gillian Lunn will speak on a subject to be announced. The meeting will start at 2.30 pm in St Matthew's Church Room.

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## **OFFICERS OF THE CHARLES WILLIAMS SOCIETY**

**Chairman:** Mrs Eileen Mable, 28 Wroxham Way, Harpenden, Herts AL5 4PP (tel: 01582-713641)

**Secretary:** Mrs Gillian Lunn, 26 Village Road, Finchley, London N3 1TL (tel: 0181-346-6025)

**Treasurer:** Richard Jeffery, Lothlorien, Harcourt Hill, Oxford OX2 9AS (tel: 01865-248922)

**Membership Secretary:** Mrs Lepel Kornicka, 15 Kings Avenue, Ealing, London W5 2SJ (tel: 0181-991-0321)

**Librarian:** Dr Brian Horne, Flat 8, 65 Cadogan Gardens, London SW3 2RA (tel: 0171-581-9917)

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### **THE EDITOR WRITES**

ONCE again, I have to apologise for the late appearance of this Newsletter (how late may be gauged from the fact that the review by CW at the end was intended to be topical). I fear that increased commitments elsewhere now make it difficult to produce the Newsletter to anything resembling a fixed schedule. Is there anyone out there among the members who would be interested in taking over the Editorship?

### **NEW MEMBERS**

A warm welcome is extended to the following:

Ian Blakemore, PO Box 300, Kingstown Broadway, Carlisle, Cumbria. CA3 0QS.

Mark Brend, 43 Streatham Close, Leigham Court Road, Streatham, London SW16 2NH.

The Rev. Mrs. Jenny Hills, 140 Harlaxton Drive, Lenton Sands, Notts. NG 7 1JE.

### **A CHARLES WILLIAMS SEMINAR IN COLCHESTER**

THE Revd. Huw Mordecai will be giving an Open Seminar at the Centre for the Study of Theology, University of Essex, Colchester, on Wednesday, 14 May at 1 p.m. His title will be 'Baptizing the Occult - the Theology of the Novels of Charles Williams'.

The cost of the seminar is £2.50, payable on entrance. Further information may be obtained on 01206 824050.

### **CHARLES HADFIELD**

John Hibbs writes:

May I add to the memorials of Charles Hadfield my own appreciation of the encouragement he gave me when he and his partner David St John Thomas commissioned my first hardback, *The History of British Bus Services*.

And, lest readers may see the two sides of his work to have been separate, let me recommend *Waterways to Stratford*, which seems to me to bring together the Theology of Romantic Love and the Hadfields' love of canals in an altogether remarkable combination.

### **BOOKS BY ALICE MARY AND CHARLES HADFIELD**

AS members may know, after the death of his wife Alice Mary, Charles Hadfield set up a small company to produce and sell facsimiles of certain

unpublished or out-of-print books written or influenced by her. They were produced in photocopy, bound in card covers with plastic comb bindings. The following are now available from M. & M. Baldwin, 24 High Street, Cleobury Mortimer, Kidderminster, Worcs. DY14 8BY (tel/fax: 01299 270110), at £5 for any one, £8 for any two, and £3 each for any three or more (post-free in the UK):

*What Happens Next*, a novel by Alice Mary, originally published by Falcon Press in 1950: 162pp.

*Strange Fidelity: Discoveries in Romantic Love*, by Charles, unpublished: 160pp. Expounds CW's views and was read and approved by CW.

*Soren Kierkegaard: A Play in Three Acts*, by Alice Mary, unpublished: iv + 83pp.

### **LITERARY SOCIETY NEWS**

AS a member of the Alliance of Literary Societies, we have been asked to publicise the following:

The David Jones Society, together with the Dylan Thomas Society, will visit Capel-y-ffin on 19 July. Details of the former society may be obtained from Anne Price-Owen, 48 Sylvan Way, Sketty, Swansea SA2 9JB (tel: 01792 206144).

The Historical Novel Society, recently formed to promote all aspects of historical fiction, may be reached by writing to Richard Lee, Marine Cottage, The Strand, Starcross, Devon EX6 8NY. The society, among other activities, sponsors four short-story competitions for first-time authors each year.

### **MICHAL WILLIAMS' AS I REMEMBER: CHARLES WILLIAMS**

THE text of this, given in Newsletter No.78 (Summer 1995), was given as printed by *Episcopal Church News*. However, Glen Cavaliero writes to say that, whereas this version ended very abruptly and negatively, he possesses a typescript which Michal gave him herself, and this follows the sentence 'I did not go to the crossroads,' with another single one, italicised: *Pledge we to meet anew by Sarras gate*. This, he is sure, is how she would have wished the article to end.

### **L'ANGLETERRE ET LES LÉGENDES ARTHURIENNES**

MEMBERS of the Society may be glad to know that a book with the



above title, by Josseline Bidard and Arlette Sancery, has been issued by the Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne at a price of 70 FF (ISBN 2-84050-075-2). The book seeks to cover the origins, proliferation and survival of the Arthurian mythos from its distant beginnings to the present day. Some two-fifths of the book are (rightly) devoted to Malory, but it also addresses the 19th-century transformation of the legends and the consequences thereof in the 20th. The book may be ordered direct from the publishers at 18, rue de la Sorbonne - 75230 Paris Cédex 05, FRANCE (p&p 13 FF for Europe, 14 FF or North America - cheques in FF if at all possible).

### **BRIEF REPORT OF A COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 9/11/96**

AMONG matters discussed were: the possibility of CW's inclusion in the forthcoming new edition of the Dictionary of National Biography; hopes for fuller information about the Society to appear on the Internet; the cover and contents of the Newsletters, Council approving the Editor's coverage of discussions following talks at Society meetings; difficulties in getting members to pay subscriptions promptly when due.

The Society has joined the Alliance of Literary Societies.

Help has been kindly offered, and accepted, with cataloguing the Society's libraries.

It now seems certain that CW will not be among those commemorated in the newly-revised Anglican Liturgical Calendar; those included are almost all from earlier ages.

Council recorded great pleasure in the notable achievement of Society member Richard Sturch in earning the title BBC TV MASTERMIND 1996. His first (of three broadcast) chosen special subject in the contest was "The Life, Novels and Plays of Charles Williams" and the questions were commissioned from the Society.



### **BOOK REVIEWS**

*The Rhetoric of Vision: Essays on Charles Williams.* Edited by Charles A. Huttar and Peter J. Schakel, with a foreword by John Heath-Stubbs. Lewisburg, Bucknell University Press, and London, Associated University Presses. 356pp.

THIS is a collection of some eighteen essays, mostly but not all American in origin. In general they deal, not with Williams's life, or except

indirectly, his thought, but with the way he expressed that thought - what many of the authors call his "rhetoric" (a word, ironically, which Williams himself seems only to have used in a pejorative sense). As it is his style that has put off a good many would-be readers of Williams, and puzzled a good many actual ones, this is a book that was needed.

Some essays are devoted to individual books, especially the novels, but most range more widely, *e.g.* over the novels as a whole, the plays, or the poetry. Some will be of interest to members of the Society because they deal with works that are not readily accessible. Glen Cavaliero, for instance, writes on Williams's one short story, *Et In Sempiternum Pereant*, setting it in the context of the English ghost story in general. Jared Lodbell looks at Williams's work as a reviewer of detective stories and thrillers; this essay reads at times like something from Frederick Crews' *The Pooh Perplex*, but gives a fascinating account of an aspect of Williams most readers will only have heard vaguely about, if that. And Diane Tolomeo Edwards looks at Williams as critic - an aspect which has come more to the fore recently, but is still relatively unfamiliar because it is so hard to get hold of the books in which it appeared. There is not very much on the historical books. Robert McColley does give a short chapter on *Witchcraft* and *The Descent of the Dove*, perceptive though not particularly innovative. There is nothing at all on the biographies, except a few incidental references.

Williams's use of language, and his ideas about it, are naturally prominent. Brian Horne's essay on *The Forgiveness of Sins*, Alice Davidson's on language in the novels, and Judith Kollmann's detailed study of sentences in *Descent into Hell* are examples: perhaps the most interesting is Bernadette Bosky's essay on the mechanisms used to convey the inner states of his characters.

Not all the essays are devoted to stylistic matters. Clifford Davidson is good on *Cranmer*, Verlyn Flieger, I think, misguided on *Many Dimensions*; Roma A. King, whom readers may remember as the incredibly careless author of *The Pattern in the Web*, has pulled himself together and given an interesting study of Williams's use of the occult.

It is, of course, difficult to say "Good" or "Bad" about a collection like this. There is something in it for everyone who wants to study Williams in detail; there are probably few to whom every essay will be equally illuminating. And many of the essays require concentration and careful reading. But the reader is likely to emerge with a good deal better

understanding of what Williams was up to.

Richard Sturch.

*Galileo's Salad: Poems by John Heath-Stubbs.* Carcanet, £7.95.

THE publisher describes these poems as 'elegiac', and it is true that the mood is prevailingly bleak - to use the poet's own word. It is summed up in one of the most effective poems in the book, 'The Dark Birds', about crows which were once his favourites, but now seem to fly 'on devil's wings

Out of the void, to scoff  
The dried up seeds of faith and hope,  
Among the dust that strews  
The too much trampled highway of my life.'

But as this bleakness is part of the common lot we share, its truthful expression performs a catharsis for us. Moreover, the poems are invariably interesting, drawing as they do on all kinds of knowledge - knowledge of books, of language, of the natural world. You would expect someone who has lost his sight to be especially alert to the sounds of Nature, but the poems are also vividly descriptive, whether they are dealing (for instance) with an obscure insect, the shield-bug, or a portrait by Reynolds. Heath-Stubbs has forgotten nothing that he saw when his eyes had their function, and nothing that he has read or heard described.

The form in which most of the poems are composed is a seemingly-casual free verse, deployed with an ease that disguises the skill that shaped them. I prefer this to the rhymed couplets he has often used, where the wit sometimes seemed heavy-handed. Emotion is rarely expressed, but is poignant in such poems as 'The Ascent', which remembers a dead friend, or in the two poems that touch on unsatisfied homosexual love. Also, there are plenty of poems which are pleasant rather than bleak, such as the delightful 'Collared Dove', whose opening reminds me that Virginia Woolf too thought that the birds were speaking in Greek, and which points out that none of our English poets would ever have heard this bird, which exploded out of Eastern Europe

Some four decades since or more, and now  
The collared dove has crossed the Atlantic Ocean.

Above all, the poems are intellectually stimulating, the true opposite of the slack, unmemorable non-poems of so much contemporary writing ('the

fashion for writing drivel' was his own forthright description in his autobiography).

Why did the choice of a poet laureate not fall on John Heath-Stubbs? We should have fared far better than with any of those we have had lately. He would have been able to write 'for an occasion' without cliché or glibness, producing something memorable that would also have added to our stock of knowledge, and would have addressed the subject with total honesty. Charles Williams was fond of quoting Dr Johnson's admonition: 'Clear your mind of cant'. He would have hailed the achievement of this poetry.

Anne Ridler.



At the Society meeting in November, John Hibbs gave a presentation entitled "The 'Schizogenic Moment' in *Troilus and Cressida*", combining scenes from the play with his own comments upon them. We are pleased to be able to present the text of his commentary here.

IN this 'dramatic presentation' we ask you to consider the heart of the play, removed, as it were, from the framework within which Shakespeare explores the 'conflict of sensations without name' that Charles Williams saw to be at the centre of the canon and at the centre of human tragedy; the term properly used. I shall introduce the excerpts, make comments both long and short, but for the most part ask you to listen to the words with heightened understanding and deepened emotion. At the end I invite you to discuss the interpretation I have to offer, and to carry the theme forward as you will.

The scenes extracted here stand on their own, irrespective of the 'political' plot. A few small speeches have been cut, but in general this is the standard text.

Charles Williams, in *The English Poetic Mind*, (OUP, 1932), pp58 ff, says (passages in brackets are my own addition):

... this play, full of abandoned action and arguments, yet contains one of the very greatest achieving lines in all Shakespeare, and one of the most splendid and complex speeches. It contains one of those moments where the poetry of human experience is as sublimely itself as ever before or after. Speech and line both occur in v.ii, after Troilus has become aware of Cressida's mutability. He is changed; and that change is not only in him, it

is paralleled and expressed by a change in Shakespeare's own manner. Troilus, like Wordsworth (when the British government declared war on revolutionary France), undergoes an entire subversion of his whole experience - he is given up to 'a conflict of sensations without name'.

To that conflict, Shakespeare devoted a speech; but he expressed it also in a line. And that line is no longer an intellectual statement (such as CW has been examining from the earlier part of the play), however thrilling, or a beautiful reverie, however moving - it is a synthesis of experience, an achievement of a style, the style for which *Troilus and Cressida* has been looking.

The crisis which Troilus endured is one common to all men; it is in a sense the only interior crisis worth talking about. It is that in which every nerve of the body, every consciousness of the mind, shrieks that something cannot be. Only it is.

Cressida *cannot* be playing with Diomed. But she is. The Queen *cannot* have married Claudius. But she has. Desdemona *cannot* love Cassio. But she does. Daughters *cannot* hate their father and benefactor. But they do. The British Government *cannot* have declared war on the Revolution. But it has. The whole being of the victim denies the fact; the fact outrages his whole being. This is indeed change, and it was this change with which Shakespeare's genius was concerned.

This she? no this is Diomed's Cressida:  
If beauty have a soul, this is not she;  
If souls guide vows, if vows be sanctimonies,  
If sanctimony be the gods' delight,  
If there be rule in unity itself,  
This is not she. O madness of discourse,  
That cause sets up with and against itself!  
Bi-fold authority! where reason can revolt  
Without perdition, and loss assume all reason  
Without revolt: this is, and is not, Cressid!  
Within my soul there doth conduce a fight  
Of this strange nature, that a thing inseparate  
Divides more wider than the sky and earth;  
And yet the spacious breadth of this division  
Admits no orifex for a point as subtle  
As Ariachne's broken woof to enter.  
Instance, O instance! strong as Pluto's gates;



Cressid is mine, tied with the bonds of heaven:  
Instance, O instance! strong as heaven itself,  
The bonds of heaven are slipp'd, dissolved and loosed;  
And with another knot, five-finger-tied,  
The fractions of her faith, orts of her love,  
The fragments, scraps, the bits and greasy relics  
Of her o'ereaten faith, are bound to Diomed.

Troilus sways between two worlds. His reason, without ceasing to be reason, tells him that this appearance of Cressida is not true; yet his loss is reasonable and cannot protest because this is the nature of things. Entire union and absolute division are experienced at once: heaven and the the bonds of heaven are at odds. All this is in his speech, but it is also in one line. There is a world in which our mothers are unsoiled and Cressida is his; there is a world in which our mothers are soiled and Cressida is given to Diomed. What connection have these two worlds?

Nothing at all, unless that this were she.

Charles Williams argues that *Troilus* is central to the Shakespeare plays; that here he finally puts his finger on the 'intolerable' in human experience, and then in the great tragedies goes on to explore it in its various forms, and then, in the pastorals, presents us with the resolution: just 'being'. This I take to parallel closely the development of the schizogenic impulses and compulsions that have been examined by Laing and Watts. Watts in particular draws our attention to the 'double bind' situation in which the individual is faced with irreconcilable pressures to action. The classic example is the command 'be spontaneous', with its intolerable internal contradiction, but we all know the situation in which we feel we must do something that we feel with equal strength we must not. (On all this, see Watts: *Psychotherapy East and West*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1961; and *The Book on the Taboo Against Knowing Who you Are*, Cape, 1969.) He points out the impossibility of living in certain situations, in which the individual is pressured in opposite directions; a subject upon which Laing is still more valuable (*The Divided Self*, Penguin, 1965). When the opposing pressures are in balance, the personality may well become split in the attempt to reconcile them, especially when they originate from the same source. Faced with such a pressure, Troilus speaks the poetry that I have quoted, but it is only in the late plays that Shakespeare attempts a reconciliation. As Charles Williams observes, it is Imogen who identifies herself with the intolerable, and overcomes it. There, it is enough that she

is Imogen.

But I want to show how, at the heart of Shakespeare's plays, we have this example of poetry being used to express the central crisis of the personality, as only poetry can. Poetry too that is not the rather forced and artificial verse of the rest of the play, but 'heightened speech'. I(n these Cextracts from the play, we are omitting the irrelevant scenes so as to try to show something of the nature of the lovers and of their relationship, and then we go straight on to the scene in which Troilus watches Cressida's meeting with Diomed, leading up to the central speech.

[Here the readers presented an edited version of Act IV, Scene ii, concluding with Troilus's lines:

Fear not my truth: the moral of my wit  
Is 'plain and true'; there's all the end of it.]

And he hands her over to Diomed, himself. What is the girl to make of it all - we can see her asking, as any woman would, what all this talk is about. And then to be pressed on the one thing young lovers should take for granted. He is very young (Pandarus tells Cressida earlier on 'he never saw three-and-twenty'), and so is she - but her instinct is sounder than his. Actually, the impossible situation is present already: Cressida must be asking why he puts his status as a Trojan officer above their love, and does not defy the truce and keep her in Troy. Troilus, I suspect, is half aware that this is the logic of his love, but will not face it, and so takes refuge in high-minded speeches, in puns (at *this* moment!), and in turning the screw with all this business about being true. He has never openly admitted their love - indeed, when Aeneas comes to find him, he makes him promise not to tell anyone where he has spent the night, and while I don't think this casts doubt upon his sincerity, it does indicate his muddle-headed attitude: the girl's single-minded devotion to love and her lover is contrasted with the boy's intolerable choice between love and the 'manly emotions'; ambition, patriotism and the like. We are already at the heart of the human condition. (And there is another possibility, not conflicting with the foregoing - maybe he had expected it to be a 'one night stand', and is now thoroughly confused by an emotion that he could not expect to handle. In any event, we must remember that he came to Cressida by stealth).

Shakespeare now brings in the Trojan and Greek lords, so that the lovers part in public. Recalling that Cressida had entered the situation the previous night as a virgin (although long attracted to Troilus), we can see something of the bitterness with which she leaves 'Troilus and Troy'.



Next (Act IV, Scene v), we see Cressid brought by Diomed into the Greek camp, where she is presented to the Greek lords, and there is a good deal of teasing and flirting, in which she gives as good as she gets. When she has gone off again with Diomed, Nestor remarks that she is 'A woman of quick sense', but Ulysses, the least romantic character in the play (Thersites not excepted) sees something else, in his speech:

Fie, fie upon her!

There's language in her eye, her cheek, her lip,  
Nay, her foot speaks; her wanton spirits look out  
At every joint and motive of her body.  
O, these encounterers, so glib of tongue,  
That give accosting welcome ere it comes,  
And wide unclasp the tables of their thoughts  
To every ticklish reader! set them down  
For sluttish spoils of opportunity,  
And daughters of the game.

Ulysses has virtually called her a whore - what are we to make of this in contrast with the virgin of the night before, and of the depth of feeling displayed in the final scenes with Troilus? I am quite sure Shakespeare knew perfectly what he was doing, and that he is saying, look what shock, intolerable shock, can do. In the boy, the intolerable reality produces high poetry; in the girl, a febrile and destructive flirting with the second best.

The final scene, for our purpose, takes place in the Greek camp. The Trojan lords have been entertained by the Greeks, and now Diomed is off to find Cressid, and Ulysses has undertaken to take Troilus there too. Throughout this scene we must remember that Ulysses and Troilus are in the background, and their remarks are for us, not for Diomed and Cressida to hear.

[Here the readers presented an edited version of Act V Scene ii, concluding with Troilus's speech quoted by Charles Williams in the extract given above.]

And here we leave it, for what more is there left to say? This is, and is not, Cressid.

(c) John Hibbs 1997.

## DISCUSSION

Stephen Medcalf opened the discussion by querying the speaker's assertion that Cressida was a virgin before her encounter with Troilus. The speaker replied that this was implied, and that innocence was the key to understanding this part of the play. Brian Horne asked about the connexion with Watts and Laing. John Hibbs replied that Laing in particular stresses the complicated situation in families, where children are told 'you must love me'. He explores other examples and later goes over the top and blames all problems on the family. Laing looks for the intolerable moments that at worst stress the individual so that he becomes schizophrenic. Troilus lives through the crisis, whereas Cressida is broken by it. Not only the final speech of the presentation, but Cressida's earlier intolerable situation indicate this. Watts believes that behaviour is conditioned by such 'must love' statements, makes you look into these preconditions and bids you 'be yourself'. Laing was again attracting attention, with two recent books and a review in *The Economist*.

Brian Horne said that CW makes this crisis a pivot of literary criticism to such an extent that it almost becomes the key to his reading of human personality, and like the Fall an entry into the psychology of nothing. John Hibbs referred this back to Milton, mentioning particularly the end of *Samson Agonistes* (included in *The New Christian Year*). Eileen Mable asked whether CW's own experience of the impossibility caused him to explore it in Shakespeare and elsewhere, seeing it as a confirmation of his own experience - a way of making sense of it. John Hibbs agreed. Stephen Medcalf referred to CW's essay on *The Cross* and portions of *War in Heaven* for examples of CW's understanding of being overwhelmed by despair. John Hibbs said that reading John Heath-Stubbs's essay on Cressida, he was reminded of the Questing Beast. There were key points in *All Hallows Eve* where the intolerable situation is allowed to find an evil resolution - a rather startling approach.

Richard Sturch asked how, if love is spontaneous, we can love our enemies. Anne Scott quoted from 'The Prayers of the Pope' to the approval of John Hibbs, who pointed out that this was later than the critical work and carrying the central idea forward. It was time that *The English Poetic Mind* was reprinted. Brian Horne said that Anne had pointed up the diminished sentimental notion of love, a warm feeling around the heart. Love was many-faceted, and possibly involved some notion of becoming. John Hibbs said that the point might be worth

pursuing. The *Economist* review had talked of the 'empathy' required of us by Shakespeare. CW was good not at sympathy but at empathy - not 'what would I feel like?' but 'what is it like?' Hence the link with Laing. Eileen Mable said that love is sometimes spontaneous but often a choice of *will*: 'in this situation I want to love: I choose to want his/her greatest good'. It has precious little to do with feeling. The Commandment 'love thy neighbour as thyself' was cited. John Hibbs said that Troilus's speech shows what happens when we do not love ourselves: he is so split, almost a non-person. Richard Sturch pointed out that he only mentions himself in his speech, and John Hibbs replied that Troilus is trying to run away from himself, but can only make assertions. Always we find Shakespeare going forward to Imogen. A comparison with Hopkins, who moves forward through tension to the later poems and some form of resolution, was suggestive.

Richard Jeffery asked whether the speaker thought that Troilus's experience derived from an expectation that both he and Cressida would be faithful. John Hibbs replied that Troilus has suddenly had to grow up, hit by new emotions. In the earlier parts you can see it building up. Stephen Medcalf observed that the presentation had left out the bit about 'value if I marry' - Hector maintains that people have intrinsic worth. John Hibbs replied that he had left out Hector in order to keep the number of characters down and home in on one issue. It would be interesting to do it again on a larger scale. Stephen Medcalf said Ulysses's 'degree' speech is a statement from outside of what Troilus experiences from inside. John Hibbs said that Laing says you have to come to terms with divided people: effectively he has put an end to the practice of chopping out bits of the brain. Nowadays drugs are widely used, but there were signs that this is being questioned. The speaker referred to a work by Peter Wells, *People not Psychiatry*, which showed a swing back to the methods of Laing at his best.

Gillian Lunn asked whether he ever expected a production to bring out the issue so starkly. Her son (a scientist, and fond of Shakespeare and opera) went to see *Troilus and Cressida* having read the *Iliad*. He was surprised to find Shakespeare's characters so modern in comparison, but didn't particularly notice the characters of Troilus and Cressida themselves. John Hibbs agreed that their part gets lost in the rest of the play. CW was right: it isn't a good play. Shakespeare is here reaching for something that he later refines down. Once he makes the point '*cannot but does*', all the

rest follows from this part of Troilus's experience.

Gillian Lunn (not entirely seriously) encapsulated Cressida's predicament in the phrase 'What's a girl to do?' John Hibbs said it was very good feminist stuff. Eileen Mable asked why. John Hibbs asserted that the way in which she teasingly criticises men is *valid*. It's contrary to all the Enlightenment gave us, but this is true and comes out strongly. Eileen Mable said she wanted to be critical about Cressida. If she were, as she professed earlier, truly loving Troilus, she could have said no to Diomed. She did have the choice. Why is this good feminist stuff? John Hibbs said he was thinking of the earlier 'be thou true' flummery. You could see the tension rising in her and breaking over into the choice of second best.

Stephen Medcalf queried the speaker's assumption that Cressida was young and innocent, maintaining that Shakespeare's character, though not 'a tart', was in some way experienced. John Hibbs acknowledged that there were two schools of thought: his view heightened the irony. Gillian Lunn mentioned Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*, and referred to John Heath-Stubbs's essay on Cressida. John Hibbs said that he thought Shakespeare assumed Cressida was innocent, but there was a lot of ambiguity in the text, which was what made the play so difficult. The play did represent a crisis point in Shakespeare's development. Stephen Medcalf mentioned the play's performance at the Inns of Court as explaining the amount of argument in the play. He observed that Shakespeare's Cressida was tough, not soft like Chaucer's. Did Shakespeare have anywhere anyone empathising with the divided self, like CW's Stanhope? Anne Scott observed that one of the virtues of *The Descent of the Dove* was that a diversity of characters, Voltaire, Aquinas, Wesley, were all portrayed as if known personally to CW. Brian Horne pointed out that in *All Hallows Eve* Lester has to learn to empathise. John Hibbs agreed that the theme emerged in many ways in CW's work.

In proposing thanks, Brian Horne said we were enormously in debt to the speaker for the riches he had brought forth: the turns of the conversation has shown how rich. It was certainly right that the play was a pivot in Shakespeare's work. Brian Horne would like to see the 'love plays' (*Romeo and Juliet*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Antony and Cleopatra*) treated as a sequence, like the history plays. He thanked the speaker for enriching our lives.



The readers were as follows:

Troilus	Richard Sturch
Cressida	Lepel Kornicka
Diomed	Andrew Smith
Ulysses	Geoffrey Tinling
Pandarus	Richard Jeffery.

### **LENTEN MEDITATION**

**Prophets for a Day of Judgment:** A. E. Baker. *Eyre & Spottiswoode.*  
4s. 6d.

THE Archbishop of Canterbury has chosen this as a book for Lent reading this year. It has therefore a special relevance to this season, and it will be convenient to consider it so.

It is a presentation of four figures of the past - Jeremiah, Augustine, the Lady Julian, Dostoevsky. The first three lived in times of great general distress, and Dostoevsky himself endured much distress. Their writings have all had an immense influence. Augustine and the Lady Julian were Christians, Jeremiah and Dostoevsky were not. But Canon Baker shows that Jeremiah lived at the time when the old temple was destroyed, and how he looked forward to a new covenant, the strange living Temple (though he could not see it so) which was to be the body of our Lord; that is, of Man. Augustine lived after that Body had been known, but when the other old established thing, the Roman order, was failing. It was he who greatly defined the new order, the City which is called Peace. "This Peace," Canon Baker quotes from him, "which we call final is the borders and bounds of this City, of which the mystical name, Jerusalem, is interpreted *visio pacis* - vision of peace - . . . therefore the main end of this City's aim is to be called, Eternity in Peace, or Peace in Eternity." The Lady Julian lived in a time of plague and usurpation in England. She wrote of her Revelations and of more - of life and the world: "Wouldst thou learn thy Lord's meaning in this? Love was his meaning."

It has been indeed the great discovery. Love itself could love and be loved - not only as God but as Man. It had been done before, but it was now asserted as dogma, as metaphysics. Love was Man as well as God. The word must be used, since all those great creatures used it; the fact that we have degraded it cannot be helped. But to that discovery there is one objection - it is that men cannot bear it and do not want it. It was this objection which Dostoevsky expressed in the legend of the Grand

Inquisitor and Christ. What men want is miracle, mystery, authority. This the Inquisitor will give them, but Christ will only offer them freedom. Men, he said, do not want freedom.

Nor do they - or only a few, and they very often peevishly. "Man," Canon Baker writes in his last chapter which is an application of these ideas to the present time, "is created for freedom. The fulfilment of his destiny is a goodness which is *free*." He goes on to discuss the meaning of this freedom in relation to the Person of our Lord and men's duties. But one might add that another part of the Christian discovery was in the account of the Temptation; it was asserted that Freedom itself was able, and indeed had had, to choose to be free. It was this that made Freedom precious, but it was also this that made it terrifying. As, more or less, Job said. He wanted to talk with his adversary in the gate. But what if one's adversary suddenly comes to the gate? If we find that He himself, in human nature, and human nature in Him, chose to be free and to love?

Certainly the Temptation is only a part of that choice, but it is an explicatory part, and in Lent the Church remembers it. There was then presented to Man something infinitely attractive, something which had once drawn unfallen man to his fall. It was delusion, and the lucid rationality of Man - of Christ - recognized it to be delusion. But it is the property of serious delusion to look true. Something in him responded to that delusion, or there would have been no temptation. What could appeal to that supreme Freedom so that it was tempted to deny itself?

Nourishment, confidence, peace: very good things. If they had not been good things, they would not have been offered. Call them miracle, mystery, authority - also good things, or at least quite certain things. All that was wrong was the taking of them to content the self; the one single implied or stated condition - "worship me." What "me"? That which was not freedom; that which had abandoned choice; that which denied rationality. It was not for nothing that the Church almost identified Christ and Reason. It assumed, of course, certain facts. Given the existence of God, then it was irrational to worship the devil. It was irrational to take for the self what the great contumelious Self offered on that condition; it was improper to make terms. One must not get food by agreeing with that kind of enemy, nor glory by adopting his suggestions, nor exhibit trust in God because he dared one to do so. Miracle, mystery, authority must be accepted only if and as consistent with perfect freedom. "The problem of freedom," says Canon Baker, "was acutely real (for the disciples), and not

easy for them from the beginning". The distinction between what our Lord would do and what He would not was the distinction which He exercised in Man, and which He left to men. He worked miracles, and refused to work them. He declared a mystery, and expected understanding. He proclaimed authority and refused to enforce it. He compelled always from his uncertain followers not only decision but definition.

This, I suppose, is the test and duty of freedom. It must not surrender itself for its own emotions, or for its own showiness, or for its own comfort. It must accept the rationality of its Lord. He was Himself an image of the Freedom he demanded. The Church could find no other way of defining His own most secret existence than to declare that the Divine Son was equal to and obedient to the Divine Paternity, the Image to the Basis. And so with us - by analogy. "We are nothing but Will," said Augustine. "Prayer," said the Lady Julian, "is a witness that the soul willeth as God willeth." Freedom must be always an act of the rational will; that is, we must will that we ourselves shall be free. Until that has happened, we can hardly manage to will that others shall be free. But that willing is inward, and the thing it wills is inward. Otherwise it is only an easy evasion of responsibility.

Canon Baker has, in fact, suggested a great subject for meditation this Lent, and the Archbishop has recommended it. It is the Temptations offered to Freedom. We might do very much worse at the present time than reflect upon them.

CHARLES WILLIAMS

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## **READING GROUPS:**

### **OXFORD**

We have just completed reading *Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury* and shall be proceeding to read other plays. For more information, please contact either Anne Scott (Oxford 553897) or Brenda Boughton (Oxford 515589).

### **CAMBRIDGE**

For information, please contact Geraldine and Richard Pinch, 5 Oxford Road, Cambridge CB4 3PH (Cambridge 311465).

### **DALLAS CATHEDRAL**

For details please contact Canon Roma King, 9823 Twin Creek Drive, Dallas, Texas 75228, USA.

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