

Spring 2016



CHRISTIAN LIBRARIAN

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LCF/CLIS ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE***
- ***FOR THE LOVE OF GOOD BOOKS***
- ***PRECIOUS TO GOD***
- ***FROM COMMUNIST TO CHRISTIAN***
- ***HOLDING UP A MIRROR TO NATURE***

EVENTS AT A GLANCE

●SATURDAY 23 APRIL 2016: FORTY YEARS AND COUNTING CONFERENCE

Regent Hall, 275 Oxford Street,
London, W1C 2DJ, from 10.30.
a.m. Speakers: **Nick Spencer**
(*Theos*), Rev. **William Morris**
(*St. Martin-in-the-Fields*). Details:
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●FRIDAY 20 MAY 2016: VISIT TO THE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP, OXFORD.

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●THURSDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 2016: VISIT TO THE LIBRARY, LONDON SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY.

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●SATURDAY 15 OCTOBER 2016: ANNUAL PUBLIC LECTURE

Methodist Central Hall,
Warwick Lane, Coventry, CV1
2HA, from 2.30.p.m. Speaker:
Nick Page, author of *A Nearly
Infallible History of Christianity*.
Details p.13.

PRAYER NOTES FOR SPRING 2016

PLEASE PRAY FOR

●This year's LCF/CLIS 40th
Anniversary Conference in
London and our annual lecture in
Coventry.

●The work of our forthcoming
speakers: **Nick Spencer**,
William Morris and **Nick Page**
and the organisations that they
represent.

●Suitable candidates to come
forward to fill vacancies at our
2016 Annual General Meeting.

●The work of the *Christian Book
Promotion Trust* as it prepares for
its fiftieth anniversary in 2017.
Pray for the *Speaking Volumes*
library scheme and the
forthcoming *UK Christian Book
Awards*.

● The work of the *Universities'
and Colleges' Christian
Fellowship* and the *London
School of Theology*.

● The work of the various
Christian professional and sector
groups associated with *Transform
Work UK*.

●Give thanks for the life and work
of Dr. **Donald J. Drew**, and the
ministry of *L'Abri Fellowship*.



FOUNDED IN 1976 AS THE LIBRARIANS' CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

*An organisation 'in liaison' with the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals.
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Work UK; Universities' & Colleges' Christian Fellowship. Web Site: www.christianlis.org.uk*

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on Literary Criticism and the Purpose of Literature**

THE FIRST WORD

EDDIE OLLIFFE suggests that current trends in the bookselling sector may be relevant to CLIS members who work in a library context

FOR THE LOVE OF GOOD BOOKS



I love what I do. More and more, I find myself back at the coalface, reading and reviewing the avalanche of titles that continue to pour from the presses. I've reluctantly concluded that it's simply impossible to do justice to the many, many books that appear each month. Booksellers (and librarians) simply cannot buy all the books that we are shown each cycle. More and more books pass into oblivion ever more quickly. Good judgement is required plus the ability to say 'no' even more frequently. In some ways, this has been true for a number of years, but the pace is quickening.

Successful bookselling depends on creativity and care in the curation of range. Gone are the days when you could sell anything and everything. Lazy stock buying leads to disaster. Selectivity is key. Many Christian bookshops are doing

increasingly well solely with Bibles and Children's books. This is where the action is. Are we seeing the return of the '*Bible Bookshop*'? I am persuaded that it may be so.

Waterstones were recently reported to be bringing non-fiction back to front-of-store. I'm quite a fan of the re-invented *Waterstones* brand, and always visit a branch of *Waterstones* whenever I'm in another town. I take the view that we have much to learn from other professionals. You can be sure that when *Waterstones* announce a change to their retailing practice, it's worth taking notice.

The active curation of range and effective hand-selling pays dividends. Get rid of stock that is clogging up your shelves and build a range that reflects where you are and, more importantly, where you know your customers to be. I am not arguing here for a narrowness in stock nor one predicated along tight theological lines, but of the serendipity of any good bookshop stock, revealing to the casual browser books they never knew existed. Hand-recommendation is both easy and enjoyable, but only works if you have read the books, know the authors and are confident that the title is worth the investment in time to read it.

Is this comment relevant to those CLIS members who work within the library context? I believe it is, as stock curation skills are one and the same, whether in a bookshop or a library. You love what you do? So do I. For the love of good books

CLIS President **Eddie Olliffe** is Consulting Editor for ***Together*** Magazine, and is Interim General Manager at *CLC International (UK)*. Eddie blogs at eddieolliffe.wordpress.com

THE SECOND WORD

ROBERT FOSTER suggests that our daily work matters even though we may not be able to see the final outcome of particular tasks

PRECIOUS TO GOD

Whilst changing trains at Edgware Road recently, I saw the following notice on one of the dry-wipe boards used for service updates: “*Thought for the day. Better days are coming – they are called Saturday and Sunday*”. I couldn’t help feeling that, if put up by a member of the Transport for London staff, this was a generous thing to write, seeing as TfL work weekends. After chuckling for a moment, I realised for a good many people that their weekend or days off are just that – better days. Some thrive on their day job, look forward to it, and are even excited by it, but not everyone.

As Librarians it is possible for us to feel remote from the outcomes of our work, perhaps more so than in other professions. If you’ve ever been asked to come up with key performance indicators, you will know what I mean. Important as they are for justifying funding our key indicators are usually at best an indicator of an indicator. Book loans statistics don’t tell you how many books are being read, still less how much is learned, their virtue is in what they suggest is happening, what they point to.

The remoteness can be a source of stress, particularly if you have to juggle different roles, or manage budgets. We might search in vain to see the fruits of our labour. The buyer of reference material or the periodicals will have to make a judgement call as to whether a particular title is worth having. That resource could receive precious little attention from a general readership, but for the few people who consult it, it could be invaluable. But how could that be recorded or even noticed? A cataloguer may devote precious time to assigning subject headings or building

a thesaurus, without knowing who will find it useful. Ultimately we have to believe it is worth our time and trouble, but it might seem rather thankless too. As someone who has worked on enquiry desks, I've found it rewarding when you'd helped someone to progress their research. And you might well get a thank you. One has often wondered what happened next, though – did it turn out to be a helpful suggestion ultimately?

Yet it is also one of the fascinations of this line of work, that in amongst all the material had which seems useless will be a piece of information which can alter the line of enquiry, or set it going again. We might remember that for all the entries in an index which aren't consulted there is the one that turns out to be absolutely crucial, unbeknownst to anyone at the time of indexing. This is particularly the case with correspondence, I suspect. Cataloguing letters has the potential to be thankless, but who knows? To a historian, the discovery of a letter can open a door to a world which complements the official records. I believe it is no coincidence that a substantial part of the New Testament is made up of letters. One wonders what the early church scribes must have thought, copying out lists of greetings at the end of epistles. Did they think it was worthwhile? Yet those personal details give the letter a sense of time and place, and may still turn out to be significant.

Having that distance between ourselves and the possible outcomes of our work can be frustrating, but it's also a reminder that we are all to some extent part of a bigger picture, which we can't always stand back from. More importantly, as we go about our business, whether it be a documenting job of cataloguing, indexing or scanning; or one involving searching for others; or sorting or filing – even if you are not in this area of work by choice – you and I are precious to God.

Robert Foster, BA, DipIM, MCLIP, was elected as Chair of the Executive Committee of *Christians in Library and Information Services* at the AGM/Conference held in Leicester on Saturday 19 April 2015.

NEWS

LCF/CLIS ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

FORTY YEARS AND COUNTING

**CHRISTIAN LIBRARIANS CELEBRATE FORTY
YEARS**



SATURDAY 23 APRIL 2016, from 10.30. a.m.

***FIRST FLOOR, REGENT HALL, 275
OXFORD STREET, LONDON, W1C 2DJ***

Speakers:

NICK SPENCER
Research director, Theos

Rev. WILLIAM MORRIS
St. Martin-in-the-Fields Church

CONFERENCE DETAILS

Members of **Christians in Library and Information Services** (established in 1976 as the *Librarians' Christian Fellowship*) will be holding their fortieth anniversary celebrations this year. The highlight of the celebrations will be a special anniversary Conference to be held on **Saturday 23 April 2016** on the **First Floor** at the Salvation Army's **Regent Hall, 275 Oxford Street, London, W1C 2DJ, from 10.30. a.m. – 4.45.p.m..** The Conference is entitled **Forty Years and Counting** and the guest speakers will be **Nick Spencer**, Research Director of the think tank *Theos*, and the **Rev. William Morris**, of the *Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields*, London.

SPEAKERS & THEMES

Theos will be celebrating its own tenth anniversary in 2016 having been launched in November 2006, a month after Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion* was published. **Nick Spencer** will be giving a talk entitled "*Doing God: Ten Years and Counting*" and will speak about how the landscape has changed in that time, what

Theos has learned, and what are the challenges and chances for Christianity in public life today.

Nick has written books on a number of subjects relating to religion and public life, most recently ***Atheists: The Origin of the Species*** (Bloomsbury Continuum, £16.99, ISBN 978-1472902962) and the forthcoming ***The Evolution of the West: How Christianity Has Shaped Our Values***. He has written for the *Telegraph* and the *Guardian* and various Christian publications, and has been named as one of the UK's hundred 'top' Christians for his work for *Theos*.

. **William Morris**, author of ***Where is God at Work?*** (Monarch, £8.99, ISBN 978-0857216281) will be answering the question "*What Does it really Mean to Be a Christian in the Workplace?*" He will tackle such questions as: Is it enough to be a "*silent Christian*"?; Is being a Christian in the workplace just about personal honesty? Can we -and should we - try to change our workplace? Does God care about work anyway?

In addition to being a member of the clergy team of *St. Martin-in-the Fields*, William is currently Director, Global Tax Policy, in *General Electric's* corporate tax department. He also chairs the CBI and BIAC Tax Committees.

HOW TO BOOK

site www.christianlis.org.uk

The booking fee for the Conference, including lunch and refreshments, is £30.00 with a reduced rate of £25.00 for unwaged delegates. Non-members are welcome. Cheques should be made payable to **Christians in Library and Information Services**

Travel directions and a conference programme will be sent to registered delegates nearer the time but please note that access to the First Floor at *Regent's Hall* is via Princes Street, a turning off Regent Street.

Delegate numbers this year are limited to forty (to match our fortieth anniversary!) so please book early to avoid disappointment.

The *Regent Hall* ("the only church on Oxford Street") should prove a convenient venue, located as it is in the heart of London's West End and close to Oxford Circus underground station (Bakerloo, Central and Victoria Lines).

Please send your conference bookings, and enquiries about the Conference to me: The Secretary, Graham Hedges, 34 Thurlestone Avenue, Ilford, Essex, IG3 9DU. Tel. 020 8599 1310. E mail secretary@christianlis.org.uk Web

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our April conference will include our **Annual General Meeting**, beginning at 11.00.a.m., during which we will elect, or re-elect, members to the CLIS executive committee. The present writer is planning to '*retire*' from the main Secretary's role and we are proposing to split the job into three separate offices: Committee Secretary, Publications Editor, and Events Manager.

Other committee positions due for election are: Membership Secretary, Prayer Secretary, Scottish Secretary, Members Without Portfolio (two positions) and Recruitment Secretary. We have candidates in mind for *some* of these roles, but others need to be filled.

In particular we still need to find someone willing to serve as Events Manager and take responsibility for the CLIS programme of meetings, visits and other activities. Could that be you?

If you would like to nominate someone for any of these roles, please indicate this in writing to me not later than **Saturday 26**

March 2016. I will also need written confirmation from a seconder and a note from the candidate confirming that he or she is willing to serve. Motions to be discussed at the meeting also need to reach me by the March deadline.

SEE YOU AT THE REGENT HALL?

Our fortieth anniversary is an important milestone in the history of LCF/CLIS and we are hoping for a good attendance. It would be good to see members who were involved in the early days of the Fellowship, but we will be equally pleased to see newer members and those who do not usually manage to attend meetings.

Please join us for a day of inspiring speakers, worship, and opportunities to meet and enjoy fellowship with other Christians from a library and information background.

The anniversary also provides an opportunity to bring the existence of CLIS to library and information colleagues who are not yet members. Please help us to publicise the organisation and conference to your contacts.

MORE ABOUT THEOS

Theos (“clear thinking about religion and society”) is the UK’s leading religion and society think tank. Their ideas and content are said to have reached media outlets with a combined circulation of one hundred and sixty million over the last five years, helping to shape the hearts and minds of opinion formers about the role of faith in contemporary society. They sponsor high quality research, events, and media commentary and aim to provide “a credible, informed and gracious Christian voice in our mainstream public conversations”.

The Economist describes *Theos* as “an organisation that commands attention”, while the influential atheist philosopher, Julian Baggini, has said “*Theos* provides rare proof that theology can be interesting and relevant even – and perhaps especially – for those who do not believe.”

In the twenty-first century our increasingly religiously diverse society demands that we grapple with religion as a significant force in public life.

Details are available from *Theos*, 77 Great Peter Street, London, SW1P 2EZ. Web site www.theosthinktank.co.uk

CLIS

Christians in
Library and
Information
Services



NEWSLETTER

From The Secretary:

Graham Hedges, Hon.

FCLIP, MCLIP, 34

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mail

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UCCF: THE CHRISTIAN UNIONS

On **Friday 20 May 2016**, from 2.30.p.m., we have arranged for a group of CLIS members and friends to visit the offices of the *Universities' and Colleges' Christian Fellowship* at **Blue Boar House, 5 Blue Boar Street, Oxford, OX1 4EE.**

This will provide an opportunity to meet some of the UCCF staff and hear about their work supporting students in colleges and universities. Long standing readers will know that the *Librarians' Christian Fellowship* (as we were) has had a long standing relationship with UCCF. Along with other Christian professional groups we have

traditionally enjoyed the status of one of their affiliated societies.

UCCF began in 1928 as the *Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions*. Although higher and further education have changed significantly over the years, the vision of UCCF has remained constant. For over seventy five years UCCF – students, staff and supporters – has sought to live and speak for Jesus in universities and colleges.

Working in partnership with local churches, Christian Unions are led by students and supported by UCCF staff workers. They are non-denominational, welcoming students from different backgrounds and church traditions, and exist to give every student on campus an opportunity to hear about Jesus. Evangelistic lunch bars, carol services, special events and missions provide a focus for personal evangelism and nearly 40,000 students are said to attend these events each year.

Please let me know if you would like to book a place or places on this visit. It is hoped that, those who can get to Oxford in time will be able to have lunch together beforehand in a local restaurant, from about 12.15 p.m. Please let me know if you would like to join us for lunch,

LONDON SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

We are also planning a visit of CLIS members and friends to the Library of the *London School of Theology*, at Northwood, London, to be held on **Thursday 8 September 2016**. Please watch this space for further details.

The LST library is also looking for volunteers who can attend for a day at a time and undertake such tasks as cataloguing and classifying hymn books, adding donations to stock, and checking journals and adding them to stock. Can you help? For more information, please contact Keith Lang, Librarian, *London School of Theology*, Green Lane, Northwood, HA6 2UW. E mail Keith.lang@lst.ac.uk

ANNUAL LECTURE

Plans have been made for this year's Annual Lecture to be held on **Saturday afternoon 15 October 2016** at the **Methodist Central Hall, Warwick Lane, Coventry, CV1 2HA**. **Nick Page**, "*unlicensed historian*" and author of ***Dark Night of the Shed, A Nearly Infallible History of Christianity and Revelation Road***, will be our guest speaker.

MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

Our Summer/Autumn 2015 issue of ***Christian Librarian*** presented the results of a survey of CLIS members carried out earlier in the year. This reveals that the publications are the most important reason for belonging to CLIS. Meeting together with other members seems to be a low priority although some members favour more regional activities.

Members felt that CLIS activities should be focussed on workplace issues and promoting Christian values in libraries. Some respondents wanted a stronger campaigning role for CLIS and a stronger engagement with social media. The mentoring of young professionals was also suggested as a possibility.

There was some discussion on these replies at our committee meeting on 14 November 2015 although it was pointed out that regional activities have not always been well attended in the past. It is difficult to adopt a stronger campaigning role when members seem reluctant to provide their views on current controversial issues. Only a small number of members are currently contributing to the existing *Facebook* page and more participants will be gratefully received.

We will be pleased to hear

further from members who would like to comment on the issues raised by the survey.

PRAYER REMINDER

Readers are reminded that we have a small team of volunteers who are willing to pray for members and friends of CLIS with particular needs. These might arise from working life or from other areas of life. If you would like to submit a prayer request, anonymously if necessary, you can use a special form on our web site at www.christianlis.org.uk/get-involved/ask-for-prayer or, alternatively, you can write to our Prayer Secretary, Karen Hans, 14 Callendar Road, London, SE6 2QD.

BACK TO COPENHAGEN STREET

After a long absence due to illness the present writer was able to return to the London premises of the *Evangelical Alliance*, at 176 Copenhagen Street, London, on Monday 18 January 2016.

Along with our webmaster, John Wickenden I attended a meeting of the professional and sector groups associated with

Transform Work UK. This meeting had a special focus on marketing, web sites and social media and included input from members of staff from *redPepper Marketing*, a Christian owned company based in Colchester.

Groups represented at the meeting ranged from the *Lawyers' Christian Fellowship* to *Christians in Motorsport* and from the *Arts Centre Group* to the *Christian Medical Fellowship*.

You can obtain more information about *Transform Work UK*, which supports Christian workplace and professional groups, from 1 Christie Drive, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE29 6JD.

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL NEWS

- Our Dublin member **Louis Hemmings** has published ***A Sunny Saturday Kicks Off***, a volume of his poetry with attractive colour photographs by **Dora Kazmierak**.

I especially enjoyed the closing poem *I'm a Pussy-Footing Protestant*, a satire on lukewarm and nominal Christianity in the mainline Protestant denominations in Ireland (and elsewhere?)

You can obtain more

information from Louis Hemmings, *Samovar Books*, 'Avonberg', Newtownpark Avenue, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, Ireland. E mail samovarbooks@googlemail.com

- We were sorry to hear of the death of the evangelical biblical scholar **I. Howard Marshall** on 12 December 2015, aged eighty-one.

Howard Marshall was Professor Emeritus of New Testament Exegesis at the *University of Aberdeen* and served as a member of the *Evangelical Alliance* Council from 1999 – 2011.

His many books included *I Believe in the Historical Jesus* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1977) and *A Concise New Testament Theology* (IVP, £17.99. ISBN 978-1844742899).

Dr. Marshall was a speaker at our 1984 Scottish Conference, held at the *University of Aberdeen*, where he spoke about Christian writing and publishing, and urged publishers to be more adventurous in their publishing policies, allowing writers "*the right to be wrong*".

- CLIS President **Eddie Olliffe** continues to make regular contributions to the Christian book trade magazine ***Together***. The January/February 2016 issue

includes Eddie's article *Christian Sector Distribution – what went wrong?* (p. 40) plus a feature in which four well known figures (including our past speaker **Tony Collins** and future speaker **Nick Page**) nominate their *Best Books of 2015* (pp. 38-39). The magazine also includes a regular feature by **Paula Renouf**, Director of the *Speaking Volumes* library scheme.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT SUNDAY

What will your church be doing on **Sunday 3 April 2016**? This has been designated as **Arts and Entertainments Sunday** when it is hoped that local congregations will be able to commemorate the role played by the arts and entertainment in our national life.

Some churches may be able to invite practitioners in the arts and entertainment to take part in their services and talk about their work. Others may simply include a prayer for Christian and other professionals in these fields as part of the day's intercessions.

As Christian librarians we may have a particular reason for celebrating the people who write the books, perform the music, and

make the films stocked in our libraries. Can you encourage your own church to get involved?

You can obtain more information from *Christians in Entertainment*, P.O. Box 223, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex, TN40 9DF. Web site www.cieweb.org.uk

CHRISTIAN BOOK AWARDS

Members of the public have an opportunity to vote for their favourite recent Christian books for adults and children. The *Christian Book Promotion Trust*, sponsors of the *Speaking Volumes* library scheme, are organising the *Christian Book Awards* for 2016. Voting commenced on their web site late in December and remains open until 31 March 2016. To cast your vote, please visit the web site <http://christianbookawards.org> Each winning author will receive a cash prize of £1000 and each voter will be invited to enter a prize draw to win one of five sets of books worth £100 to place somewhere they can be borrowed and enjoyed. The winning authors and books will be announced at a public ceremony on **Tuesday 17 May 2016**, from 12.00. noon, at this year's *Christian Resources*

Exhibition International.

The shortlisted books in the adult category include ***The Shed that Fed a Million Children***, by Magnus Macfarlane-Barrow (Monarch), ***Filthy Rich***, by Manoj Raithatha (Monarch), and ***Joy***, by Abigail Santamaria (SPCK).

Children's shortlisted titles include ***Bible Baddies***, by Bob Hartman (Lion), ***The One O'Clock Miracle***, by Alison Mitchell (Good Book for Children), and ***God Knows All About Me***, by Claire Page (Authentic).

The awards are to be presented by TV Vicar the Rev. **Kate Bottley**, a regular participant in Channel Four's ***Gogglebox*** programme and who also appears with Chris Evans on Radio Two.

You can find more information on the *Speaking Volumes* library scheme, which assists churches to donate Christian books to public, school and other libraries, at www.speakingvolumes.org.uk

CHRISTIAN RESOURCES EXHIBITION

Our friends from *Speaking Volumes* will be one of many

Christian organisations exhibiting at this year's *Christian Resources Exhibition International* to be held from **Tuesday 17 – Friday 20 May 2016** at the **ExCel Centre**, in London Docklands. If you visit the exhibition please make a point of visiting the SV stand.

CRE International provides a worthwhile day out for Christian librarians and others interested in keeping up to date with the latest Christian book and magazine publishing, music, audio-visual materials, and media, not to mention other resources for the Christian church. You can obtain more information from CRE, Trinity Business Centre, Stonehill Green, Westlea, Swindon, SN5 7DG. Web site <https://www.creonline.co.uk>

THE THIRD INKLING

The legacy of novelist and theologian **Charles Williams** was recalled in episodes of ITV's crime series **Lewis**, broadcast on 20 and 27 October 2015. In this two-part story Inspector Lewis and his colleagues investigated the murders of members of a secret society inspired by the writings of Williams.

Although less well known than his contemporaries C.S.

Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, towards the end of his life Charles Williams became an active member of the *Inklings*, the informal group of Oxford based Christian writers, when his employers, the London office of the *Oxford University Press*, re-located to Oxford during the Second World War. He wrote theology, poetry, plays and literary criticism and is still remembered today by a small but devoted following.

This was the second story in the **Lewis** series to feature an *Inklings* theme. An earlier episode took the title *The Allegory of Love*, one of Lewis' works of literary scholarship, and included scenes in *The Eagle and Child*, the Oxford pub frequented by members of the group.

The story of Charles Williams is told in the recent biography **Charles Williams: the Third Inkling**, by Grevel Lindop (OUP Oxford, £19.99. ISBN 978-0199284153) Relevant material is also provided in **The Fellowship: the Literary Lives of the Inklings**, by Philip Zaleslin and Carol Zaleski (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, £20.00, ISBN 978-0374154097)

LAMBETH PALACE LIBRARY

According to recent reports in the **Church Times** and **CILIP Update**, the Library of *Lambeth Palace*, the London home of the Archbishop of Canterbury,, is to move its twelve hundred year old collection into a new building to be built in the Palace grounds.

The *Church of England* announced plans for a new multi-million pound building after it was found that the existing library could not be adapted to preserve and protect the vast collection to modern standards.

The Library houses 200,000 books, many dating back before 1700, and five thousand manuscripts and is the second largest religious library in Europe after the *Vatican*.

A WRINKLE IN TIME

A never before seen extract from the original manuscript of the science fiction classic ***A Wrinkle in Time*** has recently been posted on the Internet by the **Wall Street Journal** following its discovery by the author's grand-daughter.

A Wrinkle in Time, by Christian novelist the late **Madeleine L'Engle**, follows thirteen year old Meg Murray and

her five year old brother Charles Wallace as they travel between planets in search of their missing scientist father. A 2003 television version was not well received in certain quarters but hopes are higher for a forthcoming big screen version, to be scripted by Jennifer Lee, who co-directed ***Frozen***, for the *Disney* organisation.

LITERARY CENTENARIES

2016 marks the hundredth anniversaries of two very different but equally distinguished Christian literary figures.

Described by the **Sunday Times** as "one of the most original writers of our time" **Jack Clemo** (11 March 1916 – 25 July 1994) is probably still best known for his early poetry which combined an uncompromising Calvinist faith with word pictures of the stark industrial landscape of the Cornish clay mining district.

These early volumes of poetry included ***The Clay Verge*** (Chatto and Windus, 1951) and ***The Map of Clay*** (Methuen, 1961).

In later years Clemo found inspiration for his poetry in other sources. ***The Cured Arno*** (Bloodaxe, 1995), for example, was inspired by a visit to a part of

Italy associated with the poet Robert Browning, one of Clemo's literary heroes.

Although remembered as a poet, Clemo's initial literary success came with his novel **Wilding Graft** (Chatto and Windus, 1948), a story of Cornish village life, which won him a prestigious literary award.

Clemon's earlier attempts at fiction had been rejected by publishers, although two of his early novels were eventually published in later years.

Clemon's early life in Cornwall is described in his autobiography **Confession of a Rebel** (Chatto and Windus, 1948). A second volume, **Marriage of a Rebel** (Gollancz, 1980), recalls how he finally fulfilled his lifelong ambition to marry.

Clemon's distinctive approach to the Christian faith was outlined in **The Invading Gospel** (Bles, 1958)

Clemon's literary and personal successes were all the more remarkable in that for many years he was both deaf and blind.

Many of Clemon's early works are now out of print, but a selection of verse is available in **Selected Poems**, edited by Luke Thompson, Enitharmon Press, £9.99, ISBN 978-910392065.

Harry Blamires (6 November 1916 -) was a student and friend of C.S. Lewis

and spent many years on the teaching staff of the former *King Alfred's College* in Winchester. His literary output mirrored that of his mentor and included works of popular theology, fiction, and literary criticism.

Blamires' explicitly religious works include **The Christian Mind** (SPCK, 1963) and **Where Do We Stand?** (SPCK, 1980).

His fantasy trilogy **The Devil's Hunting Ground, Cold War in Hell**, and **Blessings Unbounded** (Longmans, 1954-1955) followed one man's progress through the afterlife, and was reminiscent of C.S. Lewis' **The Great Divorce**.

Blamires' output as a literary critic can be found in such works as **The Bloomsday Book** (Methuen, 1981) on James Joyce, and **Word Unheard** (Methuen, 1969), on T.S. Eliot.

CLEMO ANNIVERSARY

The *Arts Centre Group* will be celebrating the Clemon anniversary by running the *Jack Clemon Centenary Poetry Competition* and hosting a special event. This will consist of the poetry competition awards ceremony, the showing of Norman Stone's TV film about Jack Clemon, and a lecture by

Luke Thompson who is writing a biography about the poet.

You can get more information from the competition administrator, Tony Jasper, Milsrof, Eglos Road, Ludgvan, Churchtown, Penzance, TR20 8HG. E mail tony.jasper@btinternet.com

Information about the Arts Centre Group is available from Colin Burns, c/o *Paintings in Hospitals*, 1st Floor, 51 Southwark Street, London, SE1 1RU. E mail info@artscentregroup.org.uk

CURRENT AWARENESS

- “*The right to offend is what free speech looks like in practice*”, argues James Mumford in *Hear No Evil: The Right Not to Be Offended*.

Mumford questions a recent trend to silence people whose views are thought to be controversial and likely to be ‘offensive’.

He cites recent examples such as a campaign to exclude feminist writer Germaine Greer from the *University of Cardiff* for expressing unacceptable views on the transgender issue.

Christians have also suffered from this recent move to enforce censorship. He mentions the case of a Northern Ireland

pastor who was taken to court for describing Islam as ‘*satanic*’. There was also the instance of the *Church of England* advertisement based on the Lord’s Prayer which was refused on behalf of the leading cinema chains because some people might have been offended by it.

The Rev. Giles Fraser has suggested: “*secularists have for years told religious people to stop being so easily offended when their faith is challenged, but secularists have to stop being offended too*”.

Although the gospel is not intended to be ‘*insulting*’ some people are likely to be ‘*offended*’ by the Christian message. The author concludes that “*the loss of a right to offend would endanger Christian mission*”.

The article appears in **Premier Christianity**, February 2016, pp. 22-23, 25-26.

- Forthcoming CLIS speaker Nick Page makes a similar appeal for freedom of expression in his article *Ideas: Get Them Before They’re Banned*.

The author was impressed by a recent visit to the *Birmingham Central Library* but notes that the local authority has reduced opening hours and sacked staff.

Nick’s visit took place the day after the terrorist attacks in

Paris. He believes there is a war against writing, against bloggers, poets, journalists and anyone who offers a different opinion. This war is taking place in Britain as well as in Iraq and Syria.

Publishers, booksellers and writers have a duty to bring new ideas before their readers. We need to hear both voices of certainty and voices of doubt. It is heartening that the Bible includes Ecclesiastes, vitriolic, angry Psalms, and songs of lament.

The article appears in ***Together***, January/February 2016, p. 50.

- Clem Jackson's 2015 ... *A Great Success* reports on the *Christian Resources Together* retreat which attracted a record three hundred and thirty plus booksellers and publishers to *The Hayes Conference Centre*, Swanwick, in September 2015.

The programme included talks by guest speakers including the Rt. Rev. John Pritchard, former Bishop of Oxford, and Rob Parsons, of *Care for the Family*. Tony Collins, (who gave the CLIS annual lecture in 2014), hosted a session on Fiction Books.

A highlight of the retreat was the awards evening to acknowledge outstanding contributions to the Christian book trade. The Community Impact Award, sponsored by *Speaking Volumes*, went to the

proprietors of the *Words Aflame* Christian bookshop in Gibraltar. The bookshop recently attracted media attention in Gibraltar when staff managed, with the help of *Speaking Volumes*, to give away £12,000 worth of Christian children's books to local schools.

A Lifetime Achievement Award went to Bob and Ada Hiley, of *Book Aid*, for almost sixty years of service to Christian literature. The Outstanding Contribution to Christian Publishing Award, sponsored by the *Association of Christian Writers*, went to the popular author Adrian Plass.

This year's Retailers' and Suppliers' retreat is to be held at Swanwick from **15-16 September 2016** and details are available from the web site www.christianresourcestogether.co.uk

The article appears in the book trade magazine ***Together***, November/December 2015, pp. 30-31.

- ***Bulletin of the Association of British Theological and Philosophical Libraries***, Volume 23, No. 3, November 2015 includes Diana Guthrie's report of the CLIS annual lecture given by Kevin Carey in Salisbury last October. Other articles in this issue include *The Future of Academic Publishing* (Michael Gale) and *Looking After Salisbury's Magna Carta* (Emily Naish).

- Peter Street's article *The Name's Dee – Doctor Dee* charts the controversial life and career of Dr. John Dee, described as "magician, scholar and courtier", one time Catholic priest, and adviser to Queen Elizabeth I.

Although accused of being a practitioner of the "dark arts", Dee also made a significant contribution to astronomy, mathematics and medicine.

The article highlights Dee's contribution to librarianship. During the reign of Queen Mary he recommended the establishment of a national library of books and manuscripts. This advice was not acted upon, but Dee's own private library was one of the greatest in England exceeding those found in bishops' palaces and Oxbridge colleges.

Dee's visits to continental Europe may have included spying for Queen Elizabeth and he is said to have used the code number "007" in communications with the Queen. Ian Fleming is reported to have been reading a biography of Dee when writing the first James Bond novel.

Dee may also have been the inspiration for Marlowe's Dr. Faustus and Shakespeare's Prospero.

A free exhibition *Scholar, Courtier, Magician: The Lost Library of John Dee* is available at the *Royal College of Physicians* in London until 29 July 2016.

The article appears in the **Church Times** for 15 January 2016, p. 25.

- Malcolm Doney's article *Spark That Lit the Fuse of Radicalism* reports on an interview with writer and broadcaster Melvyn Bragg.

Bragg's three historical novels are each set at turning points in English history. His 1996 novel, **Credo** (Sceptre, £9.99. ISBN 978-0340667064), for example, was set in the seventh century and dealt with the clashes between Celtic Christianity, paganism and Catholicism coming to a head at the Council of Whitby in 664 A.D.

Bragg's latest novel is **Now Is the Time** (Sceptre, £18.99, ISBN 978-1473614529) which re-tells the story of the Peasant's Revolt of 1381. A key figure in the narrative is the radical Lollard priest, John Ball, whose preaching helped inspire the revolt.

Although the Peasants' Revolt ultimately failed to achieve its aims it helped to inspire later radical movements in English politics including the Chartists and the Suffragettes.

Melvyn Bragg has a 'tribal' commitment to Christianity, though he has difficulty in accepting some Christian doctrines, and he is a keen enthusiast for the King James

translation of the Bible.

The article appears in the **Church Times** for 27 November 2015, Christmas Books Supplement, p. 3.

- *St. Mugg: Prophet For All His Faults* marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the death of Malcolm Muggeridge who died on 14 November 1990.

Muggeridge was well known as a writer, broadcaster and Christian apologist, and spent his early career in teaching and journalism in Egypt, Russia, and India. He witnessed political oppression, affliction and poverty at first hand and became conscious of the social undercurrents of the 1930s.

Later he served as a wartime intelligence officer, deputy editor of the **Daily Telegraph** and editor of **Punch** in the 1950s. Radio and television celebrity followed.

When Muggeridge re-discovered his faith in Christ, he resolved to put his personal life in better order and adopted a lifestyle based on abstemiousness and asceticism.

Muggeridge was often dismissive of the *Church of England* and might have been surprised to find it still flourishing

in some areas in 2016. He was received into the *Catholic Church* in 1982, aged seventy-nine.

Jesus Rediscovered was a best-seller in 1969 and was followed by ***Jesus: the Man Who Lives*** in 1975. For Muggeridge, embracing Christianity was always going to be a matter of faith rather than rational proof.

Sally Muggeridge's article appears in the **Church Times** for 13 November 2015, p. 17.

EBSCO PUBLISHING

Christians in Library and Information Services (formerly the *Librarians' Christian Fellowship*) has an electronic licensing relationship with **EBSCO Publishing**, "the world's most prolific aggregator of full text journals, magazines and other sources". The full texts of our two main publications - the **E-Newsletter** and **Christian Librarian** - are available on **EBSCO Publishing's** databases. Subscribers are able to retrieve articles from our publications and CLIS will receive a small commission for each article.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

***News from the Membership Secretary:
Janice Paine, MCLIP, 22 Queensgate Gardens,
396 Upper Richmond Road, Putney, London,
SW15 6JN. Tel. 020 8785 2174
e-mail members@christianlis.org.uk***

A warm welcome to one new member. Also listed below are those who have renewed their membership since October.

We would like remind current members that subscription renewals are now due for 2016. It would be greatly appreciated if payment could be sent **before the end of April**. Minimum subscription rates for 2016 are: £30.00. (full rate), £20.00 (retired, unemployed and students), £20.00 each for two members at the same address; overseas (outside Europe) please add £5 for postage.

If you have ***changed address, job, etc.***, please let us know as soon as possible.

NEW MEMBER

LATE RENEWALS

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

REVIEW

FROM COMMUNIST TO CHRISTIAN

***JOY: POET, SEEKER AND THE WOMAN WHO
CAPTIVATED C.S. LEWIS***

Abigail Santamaria

SPCK, 2015, £19.99, Hardback, 413p., ISBN 978-0281074273.

The story of Joy Davidman Gresham, the woman with terminal cancer who married C.S. Lewis, is already well known from biographies of Lewis and from the various stage and screen versions of ***Shadowlands***. This new biography, however, draws on recently discovered letters and papers and tells Joy's story in much greater detail than before.

Born in 1915 to a non-practising Jewish family, Joy experienced a troubled relationship with her parents before embarking on academic studies in New York educational establishments. The realities of the 1930s Depression era caused Joy to embrace Communism at an early stage. After a brief career as a school teacher she became a writer and activist with left wing organisations. For a brief period she left New York to work as an apprentice screenwriter in Hollywood but enjoyed little success.

Joy's disillusionment with the Marxist creed began when Stalin signed a pact with Hitler, but some years were to pass before her final departure from the Communist Party. Her eventual conversion to Christianity arose partly from reading books by C.S. Lewis, and partly from a spiritual experience during a time

of personal crisis.

The biography yields a number of facts that may not be familiar to readers of earlier accounts of Joy's life. Joy's first husband, Bill Gresham, worked variously as a writer, stage magician and Greenwich Village folk singer who met the young Pete Seeger and shared a concert stage with Woody Guthrie. For some years after her conversion Joy was a practitioner of Dianetics, a pseudo-scientific technique pioneered by the founder of the Scientology movement, but eventually abandoned the practice.

The biography documents Joy's difficult first marriage to an alcoholic husband and the financial difficulties that often plagued their relationship. The author does not hesitate to highlight some of the morally questionable aspects of Joy's story. There is clear evidence that she became infatuated with Lewis after reading his books, and that she made her first visit to England with the intention of winning his affections, even though she was still married to Gresham at the time.

Joy's outspoken nature and abrasive personality did not always endear her to Lewis' friends, and J.R.R. Tolkien is said to have been "*almost disgusted*" when first meeting her.

Joy will make fascinating reading for Lewis enthusiasts and deserves its place on the shortlist for the 2016 *UK Christian Book Awards*. Less committed readers may feel that the book provides more information about Joy's life than they really want to know, but the book repays a careful reading.

Graham Hedges, *Hon. FCLIP, MCLIP*, is Secretary of *Christians in Library and Information Services*.

ARTICLE

Is the essence of literature simply “self-expression” or should we look for a wider significance in the novels, poems and plays that we read? Dr. DONALD DREW offers some still relevant reflections in this classic but previously unpublished public lecture from thirty-five years ago

HOLDING UP A MIRROR TO NATURE

SOME THOUGHTS ON LITERARY CRITICISM AND THE PURPOSE OF LITERATURE



The Librarians' Christian Fellowship Annual Public Lecture held on Saturday 10 October 1981 at the Library Association, 7 Ridgmount Street, London, WC1E 7AE.

I'd like to speak first about **literature and the arts as self-expression**.

Literature like speech exhibits the personal use of language. One author will use language quite differently from another. There's not only a stylistic difference as we know, one author's hallmark being distinct from another, but personality difference. D.H. Lawrence felt this when he wrote: "*I think a man put everything he is into a book, a real book*", and up to a point this is proper and inevitable in any art form. One thinks of Thomas Hardy's

fatalism that permeates his writing as much as Bruckner's Catholicism does his composing; as the personality of Amos coils round his Hebrew, as the person of Luke appears in his Greek, and that of Paul shines through his letters. When you and I write a letter we employ a distinctive style that is as much an expression of ourselves as well as a disclosure of an individualistic style. The necessity to find an association between what words mean and what they convey is the heart of the struggle for style, and the great writers refine their rational insights and emotional experiences into a sort of apprehension and then an expression of life as a whole. They discern the universal in a particular, and set out to show the particular is always a symbol of the universal. Nonetheless unless we're careful we fall into a pit dug for the unwary at this point. R.G. Collingwood wrote that "*subject without style is barbarism; style without subject is dilettantism*".

Content, "*high seriousness*" as Keats called it, there must be, but it needs to be clothed in royal power. But that relationship is different from the proposition that literature is only a form of self-expression, a heresy comparable with the statement that history, like a treadmill, is only cyclical. Here we have reductionism, nothing-but-ism, whereby in literature one reads the writing through the writer. Granted this I sometimes find it difficult to avoid Hemingway as a case in point – where a synergetic symbiotic relationship appears to exist between what he wrote and who he was. But just as a sensitive pianist accompanying a singer will maintain partnership but not insist on dominance, so will a fine writer try to keep that same balance. Of Henry James I think his florid style so obtrudes that he becomes obsessively self expressionistic. Of John Steinbeck I personally would not say this. So I'd maintain that literature is not primarily a form of self expression; its an exhibition of creativity but not primarily a form of self expression. This modern idea is found in other areas as well as the arts and it's unsatisfactory for several reasons, one of which I regard as paramount. It presupposes that man is an original creator. That personal heresy underlines much of the gorgeous and reflective writing of the English romantic poets, as it does that of the French symbolists like Mallarmé and Valéry, whose writings consist mostly of reflections and questionings about themselves, but these characteristics can be found in a a great number of contemporary writers who are heirs of symbolism, a number of whom believe that literature may be entirely separated from the world in which we live and that originality is virtuous and obscurity is laudable.

I think it's necessary to remember what so many contemporary authors appear to have forgotten, that great literature as opposed to second or third rate literature can be written by writers who know that there is something greater even than literature. There's no agreed definition for great literature, however there are certain requirements for it: aesthetic, didactic and moral. You think of those qualities in ***Hamlet, Paradise Lost, War and Peace***. A good book is easier to define; I would define it as a book that's been very much enjoyed by a great many people for a very long time, which might also be the definition of a classic – but great literature can only be written by writers who know there is something greater even than literature. C.S. Lewis has a word here: "*The final frivolity,*" he writes "*the ultimate vacuity, is art for art's sake, self sufficient, self-authenticating, to be valued only because it exists*"; and as a corollary he adds that "*the first demand any work of art makes of us is surrender, look, listen, receive, get yourself out of the way; it's no good asking first whether the work before you deserves such a surrender, for until you have surrendered you cannot possibly find out.*"

Then quickly one begins to ask questions: what are the author's presuppositions? What view of man does he hold? What is his criterion of humanness? What understandings of Truth emerge? What moral or intellectual somersaults has the author performed? To what extent may I identify with the characters? If not wholly, at what point do I withdraw? Why? Particularly with contemporary literature is it vital to ponder these matters and to resist the enticing appeals to sip the poison of subjectivity, much of which is bottled by nihilistic writers. Moreover when we speak of literature as self-expression, which "*self*" is being expressed? Apart from the self-assurance, there is also some subtlety in this concept of the author or painter or composer as an original creator, as the implication of some self-generating force, an explosive power that can hardly be contained, and this force is frequently referred to as creative, genius, spontaneity, freedom – these words keep on ringing the changes. Usually the idea of form and structure is unacceptable and writers who have such a position would deride Chesterton's dictum that art is imitation; the essence of every picture is the frame. Now that particular trend may be traceable to the aftermath of the French Revolution, to the nineteenth century Romantic movement, where the debit side of Romanticism stresses the primacy of a writer's subjective vision and sensation. As Byron argued, "*the great object of life is sensation – to feel that we exist even though in pain*"; a statement endorsed by Keats: "*oh for a life of sensation rather than of thoughts*". The true Romantic X-rays himself as it were, not so much for our benefit as for his. He seems driven to wash his

dirty and perhaps some of his clean linen in public. The eternal role is but a self-expressionistic mirror, an echo of self-awareness. The Romantic really is Narcissus in exalted pursuit and affirmation of his unique identity.

There is a natural progression from Romanticism to the late nineteenth century “*Art for art’s sake*” movement, then a further advance in the twentieth century to the views held by F.R. Leavis concerning the centrality of literature as the fount of human values, and culture as the basis of a humane society. Axiomatic in Leavis’s splendid influential work is nevertheless this erroneous belief that there is an inseparable connexion between a man’s capacity to respond to art and his general fitness for decent living; a varnishing of Arnold’s view that morality is to be taught by a nurture of one’s feelings. It is my conviction that there is no evidence, from the Greek philosopher-kings to the modern state, for such a belief. Indeed literature as a form of self-expression is not only inimical to a clear understanding of it as an art form, but is also subversive of objective values. Prof. Sir Hugo Dyson has remarked that “*man without art is eyeless; man with art and nothing else would see little but the reflections of his own fears and desires*”. The Greeks regarded a poet as a learned man and, in debt to and inspired by the muse, a maker as much as any craftsman; while Plato enunciated the doctrine of transcendent form simulated on earth, Aquinas later wrote that man is a co-creator. It’s difficult to escape the conclusion that man is more an imitator, less an originator. He is incapable of causing beauty and truth to exist if they are not there in the first place.

The contemporary Welsh poet David Jones has written: “*For men can but proceed from what they know, nor is it for the mind of this flesh to practise poiesis ex nihilo*”. “*The human mind*” (writes C.S. Lewis again) “*has no more power of inventing a new value than of planting a new sun in the sky*”. God but not man can create by divine fiat ex nihilo. Put it another way: man never discovers anything; he constantly uncovers **what is already there**. From ancient times the writer’s responsibility was in Milton’s phrase “*to assert eternal providence and justify the ways of God to men*”, and this gift in man of creativity, man as a finite innovator, is a reflection of the creativity of God. Philip Sidney spoke of the poet as one who “*lifted up with the vigour of his own invention doth grow in effect into another nature in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature; freely ranging within the zodiac of his own wit*”. Thus man’s creativity reflects honour on God because he was the (Sidney again) “*heavenly maker of that maker*”. Now

this position is not only biblical but also a re-statement of the classical view of the novel or of the purpose of any art form. Stendhal referred to the novel as “*a mirror carried along a roadway*”.

There are of course other views on the purpose of art. Keats thought that beauty was tantamount to truth and that art was essentially a search for truth. Walter Pater regarded the artist to be a liberator of his raw materials. Henry James conceived art to be all discrimination and selection. In our own day I.A. Richards has spoken of it as the supreme form of communicative activity and Herbert Read considers art as “*emotion cultivating good form*” that will eventually lead to harmony. Those recent views bring us a long way from miracle and morality plays performed on carts in medieval days in yards where the art was confined to the carts but influenced the life. Art imitated life. Today art forms tend not only to reflect and promote thought forms and life styles, but Byron-like tend to become life itself, and then a definition of art becomes very difficult. Yet the coinage that has had the widest currency at least until the twentieth century is that art reproduces, imitates and interprets life and thus more clearly reveals to us the intrinsic nature of some things than we would otherwise see, and we therefore understand the possibility of human life more fully. It is also worth remembering that it is through the novel and drama primarily that one realises how complicated human beings are. One can seldom feel genuine compassion for people unless one is aware of how mixed up they are. According to Shakespeare, the purpose of drama is “*to hold the mirror up to nature, to show the very age and body of the time his form and character*”.

Throughout the centuries, therefore, until the twentieth century, man has seen himself as fulfilling one aspect of being made in the image of God, acting as a vice-regent or sub-creator. It's only in the twentieth century that the assumption has been made, in Edmund Leach's words, “*since man has come of age, he should behave like a god*”. The Bible speaks of the creator as a potter, sculptor, architect and builder. Man is a creature but he is also in Tolkien's phrase, a sub-creator, insofar as he is under God reflecting some aspect of truth by indicating truths. A poem that J.R.R Tolkien wrote for C.S. Lewis seals the position I have been stating in ten short lines

Man, Subcreator, the refracted light
through whom is splintered from a single white
to many hues, and endlessly combined
in living shapes that move from mind to mind.

Though all the crannies of the world we filled
with elves and goblins, though we dared to build
Gods and their houses out of dark and light,
and sowed the seeds of dragons, 'twas our right
(used or misused). The right has not decayed.
We make still by the law in which we're made.

Now literature is greater than self-expression; if it isn't then it becomes autonomous, an end in itself, another means of identifying one's impulses – a far cry from the writer Owen Barfield's thought that when we study great poetry our mortality catches for a moment the music of the turning spheres. It should be understood that self-expression in any of the arts is the equivalent of gazing at one's own reflection in admiration – but also in disgust, the effect on the reader frequently being that of observing the writer not gazing into a clear pool but perhaps into a cesspool. Oscar Wilde's '***The Picture of Dorian Gray***' makes precisely this point as does Norman Mailer's pronouncement "*The first artwork in an artist is the shaping of his own personality*". Such self-consciousness and self-analysis obfuscates the external world and also impedes the imagination from soaring and pouring from its full heart profuse strains of unpremeditated art. Christopher Lasch in the U.S. in his book ***The Culture of Narcissism*** has written that "*when art, religion and finally even sex lose their power to provide an imaginative release from everyday reality, the banality of pseudo-self-awareness becomes so overwhelming that men finally lose the capacity to envisage any release at all except in total nothingness, blankness*".

This diseased form of self-awareness occasionally speeds toward the terminus of irrationality, where the contemporary artists known as conceptualists meet. Broadly speaking, new conceptualism is old surrealism writ large. Their theory is that art itself is extraneous totally to the conception of art. Conception is all-important, but birth need never take place. Thus a few years ago Robert Barry closed his art gallery and posted a sign outside reading "*During the exhibition the gallery will be closed*". A statement has been made, and that is sufficient. At a further extreme in Los Angeles quite recently a man permitted himself to be shot, was crucified on the roof of a van and then crawled over broken glass. Why? For the benefit of cameras recording this example of conceptual art in books later to be priced at \$800. In the Sinai desert Jean Verame has so far covered about 70,000 square feet of rock with blue, black, red and yellow paint. If one is looking for the ultimate in such examples, a visit to

the fourth floor of the *Georges Pompidou Centre* in Paris will probably be sufficient. Dostoevsky was right: “*when God is dead everything is permitted*”. This is a **tremendous** statement which should never be forgotten. At a recent avant-garde festival in Germany, as an expression again of art, an artist sank a brass rod one kilometre deep into the ground. In these and other examples, we observe to adapt Robert Frost’s phrase “*something there is that doesn’t love a wall that wants it down*”. And the frontiers are pushed back further towards irrationality. The public reaction to almost any representation of contemporary art forms demonstrates today’s belief that the value of art is determined by its worth to society, a belief held by writers as far apart as Hitler, Tolstoy and Marx. Compare this with the unselfconsciousness of the medieval artisan who is just an ordinary member of the community which led to an ingenuous folk, educated in beauty without even noticing it; but with the Renaissance, scholasticism declined, art became self-conscious while the artist, upgraded now from an artisan, considered himself as occupying a unique role, that of original creator, and today the inflation of his ego threatens his sanity.

Perhaps we may be pardoned for thinking that certain examples of literary criticism are another aspect of self-expression. Not only are we inclined to believe some critics who tell us that literature enriches and stabilises moral perceptions, in a word that it makes us fully human, but because the modern writer sometimes walks the tightrope of obscurity we look up dizzily. We tend to rely on the experts and fail to realise that literary criticism can involve unprecedented opportunities for hoodwinking readers. Moreover critics are more or less accountable to no-one. Hence we are occasionally treated to the “*on the one hand, on the other hand*” approach and browbeaten with connotative language and sometimes with special pleading for the sacredness of the artistic temperament. Such critics (who it seems to me outnumber the gifted and constructive ones) are quite capable of imagining and then writing an account, let us say, of a lecture by a professor of ambiguity, of ‘*Euthanasia before the Fall*’! But it was left to somebody like T.S. Eliot to redress the balance and get things in proportion – to remind man that literary criticism should be completed by criticism from a definite ethical and theological standpoint, since the greatness of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards. Literature and morality are two separate forces; naturally they impinge, but they are not the same or even similar; yet as we shall see the view that the arts are a moral and religious force is today strongly adhered to. Frequently the literary criteria just outlined are notable by their absence,

invariably resulting in precedents being accorded to the critics' presuppositions and prejudices, and scant justice being given to the work in question.

One device employed to this end is the use of connotative words without any reference to their denotative meaning – a design intended I think to eliminate any moral judgement. Use of words like creative, genius, spontaneity and freedom I've already mentioned. But then there are more words that show a great deal of light perhaps on the users but little on the way on which the word is used – sincere, realistic, truthful, honest, beautiful, authentic, controversial, commitment, compassionate, relevant, fearless, mature, natural – you can see all of the words on the blurbs of all the books in the sex shops of Soho as well as on a number of other books too – but my point is that these are words that I use connotatively for the emotional impact the words make, not for their denotative meaning. In addition there's a small battery of words that are invariably used derisively: this novel is '*puritan*', this book is '*precious*', this novel is '*Victorian*', this play is '*bourgeois*'. Here is self-expression again at its worst – both dishonest and pernicious, where language is prostituted, parading itself as a symbol for a subject of state.

Now a competent and sensitive critic will endeavour correctly to elucidate and honourably to evaluate any given literary work. This is a most valuable service to the reader and to scholarship, focussing his random responses (that is the reader's) and enabling him to assess the merit of a given work and also appreciate other works of literature in greater depth. Now the inevitable and usually delightful sense of strangeness that affects us all when we step over the threshold of a new book becomes with sharpened vision another expedition that we ultimately relate to the map of our previous reading experience. T.S. Eliot has spoken of literature as a transmutation: on the one hand actual life is always the material, and on the other hand an abstraction from actual life is a necessary condition for the creation of a work of art. But let us note however that the critic's evaluation is not to be considered an indisputable conclusion; that is the reader's responsibility.

The reader has also to be alert to the presuppositions which the critic brings to bear on a given work. A sociologist will assess a work according to certain sociological norms. A Marxist such as the literary critic Arnold Kettle will scientifically analyse our society according to Marxist principles.

A psychologist such as the late Dr. Ernest Jones will judge (as he did ***Hamlet***) a literary work according to his psychological school. But a wise reader will not allow himself to be handcuffed by presuppositions or propaganda but at the same time will thankfully accept the insights that have been given to him. Writers of so-called fantasy such as George MacDonald challenge the realistic presupposition of much contemporary criticism insofar as modern man's definition of reality excludes anything beyond the evidence of his five senses. So when the seen world speaks symbolically for the unseen world, the alarmed critic dismisses such a proposition as nonsense – or fantasy. But he has to come to terms not only with the possibility of this concept, but with the quality of the entire story – the mood it evokes, the sensations it arouses. I have often thought that in one sense each story written by C.S. Lewis is in itself a work of criticism, because it challenges the presuppositions of most contemporary criticism, and it proposes an alternative way of viewing reality.

In passing let's remember that since the Renaissance the secular humanist temperature has risen alarmingly fast, especially in the twentieth century. Today experience replaces absolute truth, and so all-encompassing are these beliefs that it is assumed that there is no alternative view of life. Certainly the novel has developed against a rationalistic background – maybe there are so few novelists writing from a Christian perspective not only because involvement in the arts is still a suspect in the pietistic tradition of British evangelicalism, a tradition that of course has strength as well as weakness, but because God possibly wants Christian writers in other fields. C.S. Lewis pleaded for Christians not so much to write less devotional material as to write books on law, geography, mathematics etc from a biblical viewpoint; writing as T.S. Eliot put it “*unconsciously rather than defiantly Christian*” At the same time we must be not unnecessarily discouraged. In Britain, until the opening of the twentieth century, taking a broad view of novelists, of which of course there are exceptions, novelists did not write from a militant non-Christian or virulent anti-Christian perspective. They didn't like Christianity but they said it's there and has done some good things. Perhaps Hardy and Conrad didn't – they took what they wanted from the Christian system and discarded the rest. Their humanistic values were still largely impregnated with the Christian tradition. The situation is totally different today. As for poets: consider this roll call of writers: Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne, Herbert, Marvell, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Byron, Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, Hopkins, Eliot, Yeats, Masfield and Auden. Unlike much contemporary poetry,

these writers were all occupied with matters to do with the quality of life: freedom, happiness, which matters are of religious concern. But sixteen of those twenty-three were committed Christians whose Christianity was central to their art.

Purpose of literature

Now we turn to the purpose of literature. “*What is literature?*” is I suppose one of the first questions that we’ve asked when studying the subject, and to it I think there are possibly three answers. The first is to say that it is whatever is found in print and includes comics, magazines and periodicals of all types, journalism, catalogues, much else as well as books and pamphlets. A second answer is that literature is that group of works that might be listed under some such awful title as ‘*the world’s hundred best books*’. A third answer is to limit literature to imaginative literature, and this I find the most satisfactory. The first answer removes all distinctions, all criteria, and makes for massification mediocrity. The second excludes far too much and moreover makes the continuity of a literary tradition nonsensical, including the various genres within literature.

One way of ascertaining whether the third answer is in fact correct is to distinguish the different uses made of language in literature, and it seems to me there are three ways in which language is differently used. The first is the scientific use of language, which is seldom connotative and almost exclusively denotative (a word actually means this and cannot mean anything else, yet avoids ambiguity, is precise, unequivocal in its references). The second is the everyday use of language, which is colloquial and includes jargon, business language, the slang of any group or sub-culture, and occasionally crosses the frontier into literary language. The third use of language is what might be called literary, both denotative and connotative, and is abundant in ambiguities, imagery and figures of speech. Moreover its further purpose in giving pleasure is to convey the mood, tone or attitude of the speaker. Literary language has an intrinsic desire to attract and to persuade, to modify or to change – not to bludgeon a reader’s attitude.

Now the nature of literature and the use of language are clearly related to the purpose of literature. It helps for a starting point to consider literature as giving pleasure and being useful. Pleasure is given through stylistic skill and artistry, and usefulness is conveyed through affections suggested and knowledge imparted. Thus imaginative literature helps us not only to see but to perceive, and to imagine what we already cognitively know. It functions like a telescope, bringing into focus things, ideas, impressions that were vague or indistinct. Many of the things then viewed through the telescope of literature will be claimed as true – true to life in its many aspects as one might say after another sees it. It is not true in the strictly propositional use of the word true, but it is so if instead of true we substitute reflection of or tantamount to. This is the nearest we can get to an accurate definition when we say that imaginative literature is ‘*true*’. A writer expresses his experiences of life, but of course it is not the totality of life, any more than an artist depicts that, or even of his life, and his experience is influenced by society, which he also influences, his work occasionally becoming not a social commentary but an outline of social types and indeed a survey of social history.

Literature existed long before the word ‘*literature*’; Aristotle considered that it was more specific than philosophy and more true than history, and this point of view maybe can be defended when speaking of imaginative rather than didactic literature. By imaginative is meant mythical – not mythology, the systematic study of mankind’s traditional folklore – not myth meaning fictitious as in Dickens’ ***Martin Chuzzlewit*** where Mrs. Harris was a myth invented by Mrs. Gamp. Its root is the Greek word *mythos* meaning story. From a literary point of view, myth is story without meaning separated from it. The meaning is the myth. The message is conveyed through the medium (shades of McLuhan). When we read it we do not have to struggle to comprehend its meaning because we encounter it intrinsically in story. ***Lord of the Rings*** is an example. Neither is myth necessarily allegory (myth-story). Kenneth Graham’s ***The Wind in the Willows*** is a true story in that it is a myth depicting certain aspects of reality. Myth here is true providing, as Lewis said, the author has arranged his world well, and what he describes is true in that world. In his book ***The Inklings***, Humphrey Carpenter describes an imaginary meeting of the ***Inklings***. Robert Havard has asked C.S. Lewis if he will tell him what Tolkien’s ***Lord of the Rings*** means. Lewis replies “*it doesn’t mean anything in the sense of extracting a meaning from it. Tolkien may regard it fundamentally as about the form and mortality and the machine, but that may not be how I read it. Indeed it seems to me with due respect a mistake*

to try and attach any kind of abstract meaning to a story like this. Story or at least a great story of the mythical type gives us an experience of something not as an abstraction but as a concrete reality – we don't understand the meaning when we read a myth, we actually encounter the thing itself. Once we try to grasp it with a discursive reason it fades."

And apart from the idea of story in literature generally, this is one reason why the biblical record in the account of Adam's fallenness and the account of his restoration by the second Adam rings true. Man "*East of Eden*" has always longed for that return. The pagan myths have expressed it, as has the Bible. But in the latter there is a so crucial difference. Pagan folklore knows nothing of prophecy rooted in history. Lewis again explains: "*The heart of Christianity is a myth which is a fact – the old myth of the dying God, without ceasing to be myth, comes down from the heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history. But it happens at a particular date in a particular place, followed by definable historical consequences. We pass from a Baldur or an Osiris dying nobody knows when or where, to a historical person, 'under Pontius Pilate'".* It's a tremendous statement. So the difference between the pagan myth and Christ himself is not the difference between falsehood and truth – it's the difference between a real event on the one hand and the dim dreams and premonitions of that same event on the other. Myth and Christian reality as it were then come to be one.

Now the significance of myth as story endorses what has already been observed concerning literature as a reflection of life. Hamlet's speech about the purpose of drama undergirds Aristotle's theory of *mimesis* meaning imitation. By that he means that the writer ought to represent men as they should be, not as they are. To imitate means to recreate that internal movement of all things towards their perfection, not leaving man where he is to slide further lower. And in the ***Poetics*** he related tragedy to an imitation of action, not mere mimicry but the selection, arrangement and presentation of acts that reveal the relation of art and life. He is not pleading for a total reflection or facsimile reproduction as if his whole vocation were endless imitation, but the representation of reality that is true to what is there, such as one perceives in a painting by Rembrandt or any of the old masters. And it's interesting that one goes back to the Reformation or post-Reformation to find a precise example. You think of a Renaissance painting with ladies and gentlemen in gorgeous clothes and little pet dogs with little overcoats and little bands under their chins. When Rembrandt paints a dog it's usually scratching about in the dirt or

defecating! And that is what life is about – not the bows and the ribbons. He **really** understood.

So the painter, sculptor or writer is to refresh man's sense of what is true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report, and therefore to restrain man's imaginative life from being deprived and destroyed by inner panic and emptiness and by outer pain and ennui. The purpose of myth is to strengthen in us a desire for a beautiful ideal world, externally and internally, and also put us in touch with patterns of inner yearning for Eden. The best stories have always done and always do that. They assist in renewing true life within us, both calling us back to a pre-lapsarian existence and forward to the good, the true and the beautiful. Myth seeks, however feebly, to assist in dividing the united self. Simultaneously, as Aristotle also thought, imaginative literature is to present not only an imitation or representation of human nature or human life, but such representation is to be felicitous **and to give pleasure**. The artist's gift and his use to his fellows is that by dreaming dreams and seeing visions, and by the stimulation of his senses and emotions, he refines these through rational thought into emotional rational convictions in an attempt to apprehend the quality of life as a whole. He endeavours to discern the particular as part of the universal, the universal as enshrining the particular. *"It is astonishing", the writer de Quincey said, "how large a harvest of new truths would be reaped simply through the accident of a man's feeling or being made to feel more deeply than other men."* In the writer Ernest Raymond's phrase, *"Literature makes us not only feel about more things, but feel more about them"*. Vivification is literature's greatest gift – to make us more alive. It is the opposite of an anaesthetic – its purpose is to heighten our aesthesis, our perception. Lewis writes: *"We do not want merely to see beauty; we want something which can hardly be put into words – to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to become part of it. This is why we have peopled air, earth and water with gods and goddesses, nymphs and elves."*

The greatest and the best realised literature then creates in us a desire for an ideal world, a far-off country, with a hunger to be at one with all that is in it, providing that that in it is good. It creates an urge to bridge the gulf of alienation that so haunts our consciousness. At the same time literature is also to image not only the beauty but the fierceness – not only the nobility but the cruelty of the natural man. The artist's gift and his use to his fellows is to heighten our aesthesia, our perception.

The true writer traces those first affections, those shadowy recollections, and brings them into the open, so that with new understandings our horizon and thought, our ideas are widened, our understanding and sympathy are deepened, our experiences are vicariously enlarged. De Quincey touched on this point also: *“the author who wins notice the most is he that awakens ancient lineaments of truth long slumbering in the mind although too faint to have extorted attention”*. As Raymond said, *“familiar things are made new, new things are made familiar”*. Or as the psychoanalyst C.G. Jung remarked, *“He forces the reader to greater clarity and depth of human insight by bringing fully into his consciousness what he ordinarily evades or overlooks or senses only with a feeling of dull discomfort.”* In effect that’s Plato’s doctrine of reminiscence – what appears to be new knowledge has in fact been levered out of ourselves. To the writer that comes not merely through new sights but by new seeing, by insights, so that we begin to see into the life of things. Moreover such revelations, epiphanies, perceptions are unlikely to have reached or to reach us unless enshrined in immemorial language. An unsuitable frame is likely to impair one’s appreciation of any picture. And the compelling power of memorable speech not only aids enjoyment but also completes appreciation.

To some extent then literature not only reflects reality, it refracts it, and the angle of refraction depends on the individual author’s presuppositions and intentions. Too much refraction becomes self-expression, but C.S. Lewis holds a balance here: *“One of the things we feel after reading a great work is, ‘I have got out’; or from another point of view, ‘I have got in’; and those of us who have been readers all our lives seldom realise the enormous extension of our being which we owe to authors. In reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself.”* It’s as though the work of literature is a paraphrase of experience.

There will of course be times when one does not want to read at all, yet one has parted for a time from a book as from a friend, knowing one will want him another day, meanwhile recalling him with pleasure. So all great writing not only searches the mind and heart, but is always relevant to life at all times and at most points; it is true to life, true to facts, true to experience. Indeed one of the fundamental rules in aesthetics is the proposition that a statement is not true which a change of date may make false. And the great masters in all the arts are those who enable us to see

with their keener eyes, hear with their livelier ears, think with their subtler brain, feel with their larger hearts. And when in contact with great writing past or present we are strengthened within by the powerful connection between the ability to think and the capacity to feel. In other words there is a real connection between literature and life. Dryden spoke of drama as being “*nature wrought up to a higher pitch, the plot, the characters are all exalted above the level of common converse, as high as the imagination of a poet can carry them, with proportion to verisimilitude.*”

To speak of reflection again: fine literature is like a mirror in which we face truths pleasant and unpleasant; truths it is necessary to know and comprehend which we do not or cannot face directly; and we find that literary experience sometimes heals the wounds without undermining the privilege of individuality. We're not likely to say this when reading third rate cheap fiction which hardly keeps the mind ticking over, which Coleridge might have summed up by saying as ministering to two contrary co-existing tendencies of the human mind: the dislike of idleness and the hatred of effort! This type of writing is that which ultimately makes for an inability to live in and to cope with the real world. Many people do not ask why they should read literature, let alone how they should read it. Such questions as “*what is being said?*”, “*is it true?*”, or “*how is this applied?*” are not often asked. Even fewer people ask why the author wrote what he did, they simply read and that's that. But that isn't that. If the gear of the mind is disengaged the car will run out of control. It's not the reader's job to freewheel but to move towards the destination, and this is sometimes hard on account of the shoddy gracelessness of much modern fiction with its immaturity, its triviality, and its essential wrongness to what is and to what ought to be. Good writing on the other hand comes out of courage and pain, humility and virtue.

It has been said that reading means an extension and intensification of our own lives. In print we observe the crystallization of experience; the ordered pattern of a book ensures a reasoned exposition of the apparently inexplicable. Human relationships sometimes change rapidly. We seldom comprehend them fully and their perplexity and mutability confound us. In a book however the relationships are confined within set boundaries. They're comparatively static, they become a peg of definition, a concrete reference. And we read omnivorously until we meet a phrase or passage that echoes our own experience. How very reassuring it is to know that

my chaos of feelings can be crystallized into order. They seem suddenly to possess a tangibility and sense of purpose. We've come across an expression of self better than self can express. Now that cannot be taken as a yardstick for all literature and certainly not for much contemporary literature in general which is expressive of chaos and destructive of the self. By the same token it's necessary to hold in balance the fact that it's not necessarily or always true that the thoughts and actions of imaginary people in literature directly extend our knowledge of life and of reality. What we read in novels and plays affects and influences us certainly, but this reading extends our knowledge of ourselves and others only indirectly. We read of others' knowledge and experience of life at second-hand; direct knowledge comes from our own immediate contact with reality. Moreover we know that we may find as much falsehood as truth through the written word.

A further point to be borne in mind is that literature is a form of knowledge; it reproduces human experience in many forms, and adds to our larger understanding of life. Like any kind of knowledge, it exists only when one actively co-operates with it. It calls the whole soul of man into activity insofar as one is able, on the basis of what is really there in man and in the external universe, correctly to assess, to comprehend, to judge. And of course literature on the basis of being a form of knowledge makes an immense contribution to the sum total of the external facts about and the internal experience of man. By no means is this knowledge ever complete any more than scientific knowledge is complete, but through literature we are given some understanding about the subjective existence of man living in an objective universe. We may converse with Molière, Dostoyevsky, Henry James. We may saunter through the streets of Marrakesh or Paris. The life of the past is recreated. And if we want a change from twentieth century air we may remember Anatole France's comment: "*I never go into the country for a change of air or a holiday, I always go instead into the eighteenth century*". Moreover fine writers have occasionally invented lands of their own and peopled them from their imagination. Milton depicts Hell – he didn't invent that land but he filled it with characters of his own imagination; Tolkien a Middle Earth; Terry Brooks - Shady Vale. In a restricted and particular sense then, literature might be said to be a record of man's past by which to some extent he may interpret present knowledge and experience.

Now the satisfaction and pleasure that there is to be in “*gazing silent upon a peak in Darien*”- a peak of created achievement whether by others or from oneself – has to be experienced to be believed and appreciated. And such fulfilment is to be found in standing at the feet of Michelangelo’s David in Florence, or looking through a microscope in the Cavendish Laboratory, in listening to a Brahms quartet, or observing radio signals from space through the radio telescope at Jodrell Bank, in preparing a school lesson, in digging the garden, in making a cake. Man’s innovating through God’s Imaging is not only a gift, but a necessity, as Charles Darwin related in his autobiography: “*Up to the age of thirty or beyond it, poetry of many kinds such as the works of Milton, Gray, Byron, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley, gave me great pleasure, and even as a schoolboy I took intense delight in Shakespeare, especially in the historical plays. I have also said that formerly pictures gave me considerable, and music very great, delight. But now for many years I cannot endure to read a line of poetry. I have tried lately to read Shakespeare and found it so intolerably dull that it nauseated me. I have also lost my taste for pictures and music. My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of a large collection of facts. But why this should have caused the atrophy of that part of the brain on which the higher tastes depend I cannot conceive. If I had to live my life again I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once a week. For perhaps the parts of my brain now atrophied would thus have been kept active through use. The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness and may possibly be injurious to the intellect and more probably to the moral character by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature.*”

Now Darwin as a scientist will not be accused of prejudice in the matter of the expression of creativity as purposed in literature, and one may gently conclude not only that Darwin would deprecate over-specialisation to the scientist, but also that he believed that anyone so trained would become inferior both as a man and as a scientist through the atrophy of his imaginative powers. I find it very interesting to contrast Darwin’s words with those of Henry Martyn, an early nineteenth century English missionary to India: “*Since I have known God in a saving manner, painting, poetry and music have had charms unknown to me before. I have received what I suppose is a taste for them, but religion has refined my mind and made it susceptible to the sublime and the beautiful. My heart adores the Lord as the creator of all fair scenes, as the source of all the intellectual beauty which delights me, and as the former of the mind which can find pleasure in beauty.*” Now there is a man who has

discovered two truths: that the tree of knowledge is not the tree of life, but that the tree of life is enriched when the tree of knowledge is cultivated. Great literature creates a kind of spaciousness within us which in itself helps us to feel more at home in the universe. As Cicero phrased it, *“nothing human is actually alien to us”*. Since the turn of the twentieth century, if not earlier, we have been drilled to regard authors as the prisoners of their culture who invariably regard themselves as such, and to read them in that way. But literature records mythically, imaginatively, magically what is already there. ***The Brothers Karamazov*** and the ***Lord of the Rings*** in their respective ways do not so much depict reality as endorse it, insofar as through the characters rather than the author we become more fully human when our responses match up to what we instinctively sense to be right. That is why I consider Jane Austen and Constance Holme to be surer guides than James Joyce and Harold Pinter (not that one cannot learn from Joyce and Pinter). True writing should tell us not so much about the writer and his psyche or consciousness as about our own human nature. In other words great writing of past or present exists because there is first a world not created by the writer, rather than that which we had been led to believe: the theory that drama, poetry and fiction are only the writer’s expression of self-assertiveness, reflections of his inner state of mind. Thus as is taught in universities, when an English lecturer is talking about ***Macbeth***; is that a play about judgement, temptation, guilt, the things that we know to be true in our own experience? No says the lecturer, that is a reflection of Shakespeare’s inner state of mind at the time when he was writing, it has nothing to say on these topics. We have to give the lie to these things, those untruths, and say why.

Another theory today would have us believe that literature is part of high culture, unattainable for most, an indulgence, at most a luxury, having little to do with the warp and woof of human life. But in fact literature has very much to do with the warp and woof of human life. It gives both substance and meaning to it, in that it agrees with and answers what really is in man and in the external universe. Fiction it is thereby; false it is not. Poetry and literature strengthen common sense capacities. They give substance to the logic, the morphology, the outline, the grammar of our everyday discourse thought cannot be and thought. Lewis makes the same point: *“Logical thought cannot be subjective and irrelevant to the real universe, for unless thought is valid we have no reason to believe in a real universe.”* And I would repeat another comment of his: *“Unless all that we take to be knowledge is an illusion, we must hold that in thinking we are not reading*

rationality into an irrational universe but responding to a rationality with which the universe has always been saturated.”

So literature, the allegories, myths, fairy tales, epics, lyrics, models – literature has its limits, its rules and its proprieties. It cannot be just anything – it never is sheer creation and totally and radically new; it’s always an arrangement of what is already there. It’s sometimes a new arrangement, but literature is not blind nor fortuitous, neither is it simply a random concatenation – it fits something and it is something. People use it but to their pleasure. A work of art says something but it is also an object carefully contrived and sometimes complex; it will not make us good, but it does deliver us from mediocrity and narrow vision. It as an object, says something, but it forces us to attitudes, feelings, emotions and passions that other human beings have had, that the world itself allows and indeed requires.

Those are some of the hinges on which the door of literature swings, and also why we derive not only pleasure from reading for example the ***Ode on the intimations of immortality***, the choice, meaning, arrangement, sound and association of words, but derive nourishment and a desire for more, thus edifying and fortifying ‘*whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report*’. Thus Dr. Johnson does not parade his feelings but tells us the truth of things as they are. George Eliot does not catapult us into one emotional situation after another but when describing a situation will elicit from us an appropriate emotion, and as Lewis said, “*to read Spenser is to grow in mental health*”. Joyce’s ***Ulysses*** and Beckett’s ***Krapp’s Last Tape*** are not the criteria by which to test literature, simply because the world is not a desert of meaninglessness, nor a tundra of despair. The appeal to logic is not the end here, rather it is a lopsided view, for as Hamlet said, “*there are more things in heaven and earth Horatio than are dreamed of in your philosophy*”. Tolkien not only carries along on a crest of fantasy, but by so doing encourages us to desire, to possess, to retain truth, innocence, trust, humility, a sense of childlike wonder – childlike qualities that experience has not yet devoured of their innocence – qualities that are hiding places of man’s power. Literature shows the form of a human life without reducing it to a feature of nature, thereby assisting us to feel at home in this objective world.

All this having been said, let us remind ourselves not to make a fetish of arts in any form, if only because it is a gift, and *‘every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of lights’*. The purpose of literature is to represent man in his life, but not feebly to recall or slavishly to copy. The representation to be found in the world’s greatest literature is always endeavoured also to encourage and inspire, even at times to represent an ideal world, and we are invited to accompany one who, having dreamed a dream or seen a vision, finds a way of sharing that dream or vision with others. As I remarked, art is capable of pointing towards a firm structure for our often muddled and invariably muddled lives. Without it, life in our own personal lives would be less rich, less sacramental. Solzhenitsyn summarises the purposes of literature by saying that *“the writer’s tasks concern eternal questions, the secrets of the human heart and conscience, the clash between life and death, and the overcoming of inner sorrow. They concern the laws of mankind and its uninterrupted course, conceived in the immemorial depths of time, and ceasing only when the sun will be extinguished”*. Now this statement does justice to the writer’s craft and his influence, but it keeps him in his place as a sub-creator, and it has no room for the symbolist Rimbaud’s preposterous description of the artist as one who *“becomes beyond all other the great invalid, the great criminal, the great accursed one and the supreme knower, because he reaches the unknown”*. True, the artist is unable to perceive the springs of human conduct, and if he has the gift of being a seer (which simply means able to see a little further than his contemporaries) then he can or will perceive the springs of human conduct, but these are attributes that do not entitle him to assume godhead. Fine writing, as Keats said, is next to fine doing, and the fine writer truly reflects life as it is, but faithfully points to life as it ought to be. In effect he is albeit unconsciously endorsing the unicorn’s joyful outburst in C.S. Lewis’s ***The Last Battle***, when he and his friends arrive in Aslan’s Land. The unicorn says: *“I have come home at last! This is my real country – I belong here!”* Marvellous. True art realises the gap between what men are, what they would like to be, and what they should be. W.H. Auden considered that only God can create the perfect work of which art is only a feebly figurative sign.

None of you is just a librarian dealing with books and words. The title is in any event an honourable title, and doubly so because you are also conveyors of the Word. And I am trying to suggest that the purpose of literature is to show what men and women are and what they ought and

want to be. I think you greatly assist in this and convey the Word when maybe it is in your power to persuade some folk to read certain books – certain Christian books perhaps; when maybe it is in your power to persuade the Library Committee to obtain certain Christian books; when maybe it is in your power to persuade local booksellers to stock certain Christian books; maybe it is in your power to spot someone coming into the library who is clearly hurting or carrying some burden who you can approach; when maybe it is in your power to persuade publishers to reprint certain Christian books; when maybe it is in your power yourselves to write those certain Christian books from a biblical perspective.

May God bless and go on using you.

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