

*CHARLES  
WILLIAMS*

*SEED OF ADAM*

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# **SEED OF ADAM**

*A Nativity Play*

**by Charles Williams**

**CHARACTERS**

THE TSAR OF CAUCASIA (*King of Gold*)

HIS CHORUS

THE SULTAN OF BAGDAD (*King of  
Frankincense*)

HIS CHORUS

ADAM

EVE

JOSEPH

MARY

THE ARCHANGEL

TWO ROMAN SOLDIERS

THE THIRD KING (*King of Myrrh*), a Negro

MOTHER MYRRH (*Hell*), a Negress

*The scene is before the house of Adam; to  
the right of it are the stables; on the left,  
at the front, the stump of a tree or a high  
stone*





# SEED OF ADAM

*The TSAR enters with some of the CHORUS*

CERTAIN VOICES. Juggle, sir; throw up the golden slivers.

OTHER VOICES. Sir, no; show rather the rivers,  
molten and golden streams; fertilizing,  
barricading,  
cities and nations, from stations of earth-  
edging Esquimaux  
to the hanging gardens of tropical sense:  
and there the high ships sailing, the deep  
ships unlading.

FIRST VOICES. Necklaces, bracelets, ear-  
rings; gaudies and gewgaws!

OTHER VOICES. Purse rather and pocket of  
outer commerce; mind  
finding after kind, and all traffic its own.

THE TSAR. I am Gaspar, Tsar of Caucasia;  
I sprang from our father Adam's loins  
in a bright emission of coins; Eve's need  
of gilded adornment nourished me to dig and  
dive.

Pearls I brought up; springs I let forth: who  
will be beautiful now? who profitable then?  
Men thrive and I take my fee.  
Tricked out in riches half the world follow  
me;  
who fall, crawl or are kicked into dry ditches.

*The SULTAN enters, with the rest of the*  
CHORUS

CERTAIN VOICES. Sir, play; throw up the  
notes of gold,  
or stir into silver smoke the rich incense.

OTHER VOICES. Sir, no; our old throats are  
tired.  
Show rather the philosophical plan,  
chess-playing, brick-laying, sooth-saying;  
the design of line, point, and curve.

FIRST VOICES. Titillate the brain by ear and eye!

OTHER VOICES. Build the austere academies to show why.

THE SULTAN. I am Melchior, Sultan of Bagdad.

Adam my father and Eve my mother construed me aloof from sister and brother through a post-paradise afternoon.

I build my mosques under a philosophical moon;

I ride on the body's curves through spirals of air

to the bare and rare domes of Bagdad my see.

I give to whoever serves with me gnomonic patterns of diagrammatic thrills.

Half the world live in my train;

who refrain, bereft of brain, are left to common ills.

SEMI-CHORUS. Give us the golden matter,

SEMI-CHORUS. and the golden chatter,

THE CHORUS. for to-morrow everything  
begins again.

*[They gather about the KINGS, some sitting  
or lying]*

ADAM *[coming out of the house]*.  
Dullards of darkness, light's lazybones,  
poor primitives of our natural bareness,  
where's your awareness? will moans and  
groans  
for gold of brawn or brain regain  
the way to the entry of Paradise? up!  
shut your eyes, will you? or make a play  
for your leisure, and a treasure of your  
idleness? You,  
have you nothing better to do  
in our world but play hide and seek with  
oblivion?  
Say, say something, say  
*who are you?* I will tell you, tell you what  
you knew,  
I am Adam.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Father Adam, the pasture is thin,  
the sheep and the hogs are thin, our coats  
button thinly about our throats  
thrown with wind and thirsty for wine.  
Exchanges—his and mine—help us  
to bear with the bitterness of having nothing.  
What should we do, feeling for Paradise?  
Better to suck at the heel of the Tsar.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Father Adam, if we go looking and snooping  
round corners,  
we see terrible shapes trooping,  
things eagle-beaked, giants with scimitars.  
In Eden you found them friendly; here  
what should we do but hide while they stride  
and deride  
the bitterness of our having nothing?  
Have you seen us slinking from those  
neighbourly taunts?  
Better to go drinking the rhythms of the  
Sultan.

ADAM. If you found Paradise, you would

find everything.

THE CHORUS. Call with the old bluster to  
muster by masses, and seek!

SOLO. Speak civilly, father!

Where  
shall we go? climb invisible cords into the  
air?  
for road, river, and lane  
are searched; it is not to be found.

THE CHORUS. And to-morrow everything  
begins again!

SOLO. What is this way? behind what sight  
or sound?

SOLO. He lost it, and he cannot say.

SOLO. There is not any.

SOLO. Yes; it is bought for a penny  
and slept off.

SOLO. No; wise men have recognized  
it is only our mothers' forms rationalized.

SOLO. The Tsar declares it is hope learning  
to grope.

SOLO. The Sultan says it is sensation living  
in negation.

SOLO. It is the loss of the one thing prized  
masochistically advertized;

SOLO. or adolescence flushed with immature  
sense.

ADAM. Babies!

THE CHORUS. Who lost it?

ADAM. I. What do you know,  
children, of what living on this earth is like  
then?

THE SULTAN. Father, you must not think  
you are everyone.

THE TSAR. Your children are men and women, and not you.

THE SULTAN. Individualized essence of you, perhaps;

THE TSAR. with each his particular Paradise in a nutshell.

THE SULTAN [*touching his lyre*]. Nuts! nuts!

THE TSAR [*throwing gold pieces*]. Nuts! nuts!

BOTH. Nuts for the men-monkeys!  
Monkey-nuts! follow, follow, monkey-nuts!  
scratch and snatch for a portion of monkey-nuts!  
grab and grizzle for a ration of monkey-nuts!  
houp-la!

[*The CHORUS, chattering and fighting, run about like monkeys. They gradually*



*become involved in a general fierce battle  
and drift off, following the KINGS, with  
high shrieks]*

ADAM. I must set my law upon them; one  
thing first.

*[He turns, meeting EVE, who has come out of  
the house at the noise]*

EVE. Are they fighting again?

ADAM. What else?

They have not the pain that in us stops us  
fighting.

EVE. Have they found anything?

ADAM. Nothing, my Eve.

They cannot find the centre, the core of the  
fruit

where the root of return is. I dropped it; it is  
gone.

Where is Mary?

EVE. Mary has gone to the fair.

ADAM. Under the Mercy!... what is she doing there?

EVE. Watching mountebanks, laughing at clowns,  
applauding jugglers and tightrope walkers,  
listening to talkers, admiring lovers,  
riding with children on the roundabout,  
everywhere in the middle of the rout,  
being, by her nature, all things to all men.

ADAM. Will she never discover any preference? any partial liking for this where or that when? Will she never care to marshal phenomena? Cows, clowns, and crowns are alike to her—has she not a trick of nursing the sick, and as agile through all as the honey-plucking bee, catching as much sweet there as from booths at the fair? She must follow now another mind than mine.

I am set. Call Joseph; they shall be married.

EVE. Married! Mary? but why? and why Joseph?

ADAM. Lest I should die. She shall be wedded  
lest our youngest born should be a prey  
in her simplicity to her sisters and brothers.  
I will not have her a scullion and a scorn  
in the huts of Caucasia or the harems of Bagdad.  
Joseph is a warlike and dutiful lad.  
Call him.

EVE. What is he, where is he, now?

ADAM. Lieutenant-general of the Sultan's horse,  
an Islamite, a genius in cavalry tactics!  
To see swung whole squadrons in the charge,  
and—in a wild clatter of words breaking—  
flung  
down the speaking of a poem, when the  
matter is sprung

to the flashing and slashing of a steel line  
at the throat's blood. Hafiz taught him  
and Omar; he outgenerals them; call him.

EVE. Will Mary have him?

ADAM. As soon as any.  
O pest on her for a zany of goodwill!

EVE. Husband!

ADAM. Be easy. I am petulant. My want  
worries at my throat, while she wants  
nothing,  
nor ever sighs for nor even denies Paradise.

EVE. Paradise perhaps is hers and here.

ADAM. Among the sick or at the fair?—  
Look, there she comes: call Joseph, I say.  
He is in Bagdad's train. I must go again  
to quieten their brawls. I will give them  
peace.  
I will show them if I am Adam for nothing.

JOSEPH *and* MARY *enter*

ADAM. Joseph, am I your lord?

JOSEPH. In all things, sir,  
under the justice of God.

ADAM. Your father, Mary?

MARY. Sir, by the Direction.

ADAM. It is well; hear me.  
I do and undo; I am Adam. Paradise  
shuts its last mouth upon us, and I am afraid.  
It may be, after I have conquered yonder  
apes,  
and shaped them to placabilities, that I shall  
find  
by counting them some form unguessed,  
some archangel disguised, some person or  
place  
where is the grace of the Return. If, well;  
if not, the thing this world must soon become  
catches us up. Whether this be or not  
I am determined you two shall be married.

A heart of purity and a mind of justice  
to be integrity. What say you?

JOSEPH. Sir,  
I am of no more worth to the princess Mary  
than the fly-flick of her mule's tail.

MARY. But as much, Joseph, indeed.

JOSEPH. You hear, my lord?

ADAM. Never mind her.  
Since she loves all, she loves you. What of  
you?

JOSEPH. She is the manifest measurement of  
God's glory  
correcting time.

ADAM [*motioning them before him*].  
You are both my best of children.

[JOSEPH *and* MARY *kneel*; ADAM  
*raises his right arm*]

By the single indecipherable Name  
I swear you, Joseph and Mary, to betrothal.

*[JOSEPH and MARY rise and face each other. The upraised palms of their right hands touch. They turn to face ADAM]*

When I return from conquering the world, be  
ready,  
as then shall be, in time and space,  
convenient.  
Come, Eve.

*[ADAM and EVE go out]*

JOSEPH. Am I appointed for your  
husband?...  
Answer, princess ... no? no then, do not  
speak,  
do not break through such an outgoing stress  
of light,  
as is the sovereign blessedness of the world,  
there indivisible, all ways else divisible.  
Do not with descent, O altitude, even of  
mercy,

sweeten the enhanced glance of those still  
eyes  
which to my lord's house, and to me the least,  
illumine earth with heaven, our only mortal  
imagination of eternity,  
and the glory of the protonotary Gabriel.

[MARY *stretches out her hand to him; he  
kneels and kisses it*]

MARY [*murmuring the name*].  
Gabriel, Gabriel: well spoken is the name.  
As I came from the fair I looked back; there  
I saw it all in a sheath and a shape of flame,  
having an eagle's head that turned each way  
as if it were guarding something and looking  
for something.  
Its eyes burned at me; the noise  
of the hurly-burlies and the hurdy-gurdies,  
the ball-spinners, the silk-sellers, the rum-  
peddlers,  
the swings, and the songs, rose to a whirring  
voice,  
the air was a hum of sound; I heard it come  
as if the fair all rose in the air and flew



on eagle's wings after me; I ran  
through the fear and the laughter and the  
great joys.

I came by the vineyards to my father's roof;  
there it held aloof a little.

I saw you; I gave you my hand, Joseph,  
at my father's will. It has still power,  
this hand of Adam's daughter, on all creatures  
of heaven.

JOSEPH [*as he kneels*]. O princess,  
your hand is the fact of God's compact of  
light.

MARY. I have heard such talk among the  
lovers at the fair.  
Bless you for telling me, Joseph.

*[He releases her hand. The  
ARCHANGEL appears at the back, as it  
were casting sleep towards JOSEPH, who  
sinks slowly forward, and lies still]*

MARY. Joseph! [*A pause*]  
Joseph! [*She sees him lying*]

THE ANGELIC CHORUS [*without*]. Adonai  
Elohim! Adonai Elohim!

THE ARCHANGEL [*standing behind*  
MARY]. Adonai hu ha-elohim!

THE CHORUS [*as the angelic army*  
*without*].

Shalom lach eschet-chen, Adonai immach  
beruchah at bannashim.

Al-tiri Miryam ki-matsat chen lifne ha-  
elohim.

Vehinnach harah veyoladt ben vekaret et-  
shemo Yeshua.

MARY. How shall these things be, seeing I  
know not a man?

THE CHORUS. Ruach hakkodesh tavo  
alayieh ugevurat elyon tatsel  
alayich: al ken Kadosh yeamer layyillod ben-  
ha-elohim.

MARY. Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be

it unto me  
according to thy word.

*[The ARCHANGEL passes round and enters the stables. MARY remains rapt]*

JOSEPH *[he rises to his knees, as before, and wakes]*.

Under the Protection! Mary ... Mary....

MARY. Yes, Joseph?

JOSEPH. Mary, you are changed; you are in love.

MARY. Yes, Joseph.

JOSEPH *[starting up]*. Ah, ah! but who...?

MARY. No one, Joseph.  
Only in love.

JOSEPH. It must be then with someone.

MARY. Dearest, you did not hear: we said *in*

*love.*

Why must, how can, one be in love with someone?

JOSEPH. Because ... but that is what *in love* means;  
one is, and can only be, in love with someone.

MARY. Dearest, to be in love is to be in love, no more, no less. Love is only itself, everywhere, at all times, and to all objects. My soul has magnified that lord; my spirit rejoiced in God my saviour; he has regarded the nothingness of his handmaid. He has thrust  
into this matter his pattern of bones, as Eve's towers of cheeks and arrogant torches of eyes edify red earth into a pattern of manhood.

JOSEPH. But it must be at some time and in some place.

MARY. When you look at me, dear Joseph, do you think so?

JOSEPH. Babylonia and Britain are only  
boroughs of you.  
Your look dimensions the world. I took once  
a northward journey to find fables for the  
Sultan  
and heard a lad on the hill of Faesulae  
syllabbling  
a girl of Faesulae who nodded good-morning  
at him,  
and that her form timed the untimed light.  
Place must be because grace must be,  
and you because of glory. O blessing,  
the light in you is more than you in the light.

MARY. The glory is eternal, and not I,  
and I am only one diagram of the glory:  
will you believe in me or in the glory?

JOSEPH. It is the vision of the Mercy.

MARY. Hold to that.  
But for salvation—even of those who believe  
that time and place and the one are the whole  
of love—

Love—O the Mercy! the Protection!—  
shall make his flesh as one in time and place.  
It shall come in the time of Augustus Caesar,  
in the place of Bethlehem of the Holy Ghost,  
in the coast of Judaea: not quite Jerusalem,  
but not far from Jerusalem, not far but not  
quite.

O Thou Mercy, is this the secret of Thy  
might?

When Thou showest Thyself, that Thou art  
not there  
to be found? we find Thee where Thou art not  
shown.

Thou art flown all ways from Thyself to  
Thyself,  
and Thy ways are our days, and the moment  
is Thou.

O Thou Mercy, is this the thing to know?  
Joseph, come, take me to Bethlehem;  
there the apparition and the presence are one,  
and Adam's children are one in them;  
there is the way of Paradise begun.

*[They move round the stage to the stone.  
As they go, the CHORUS re-enter on all*

*sides]*

THE CHORUS. In Thule, in Britain, in Gaul,  
in Rome,  
among the slim pillars of Bagdad, in round  
mounds of Caucasia,  
we heard the maxim that rules the schools of  
prophets:  
*this also is Thou; neither is this Thou.*

With double hands and single tongues  
the prophets climb the rungs of heaven,  
in the might of a maxim gained and given:  
*this also is Thou; neither is this Thou.*

But we who wander outside the rules and  
schools  
compromise and complain,  
before the clot in the blood has shot to the  
heart or brain:  
*this is not quite Thou and not quite not.*

Sister, sister, did you dream?

What did you see on the banks of the body's

stream,  
in Thule, in Britain, in Gaul, in Rome,  
under Bagdad's dome, by the mounds of  
Caucasia?

SOLO. One came walking over the sand,  
one and a shadow from a desert land;  
I saw a knife flash in a black hand.

At daybreak a child is born to the woman;  
he grows through the noon to his full stature;  
she devours him under the moon; then at  
morn—

THE CHORUS. Save us, Father Adam, or we  
perish!—

SOLO. or in a mirage of morn the child is  
reborn.  
And to-morrow everything begins again.

THE CHORUS. From bone, from brain, from  
breasts, from hands,  
from the mind's pillars and the body's  
mounds,



the skies rise and roll in black shadows  
inward over the imperial soul:  
over our sighs in the moon of dusty sorrow—  
*O, O, could everything begin before to-  
morrow;*  
over the creak of rusty grief—  
*to-morrow will be soon enough for belief;*  
over the kitchens of a pot neither cold nor  
hot,  
and the thin broth, and the forming of the clot  
—  
*not quite Thou and not quite not.*

Father Adam, save us or we perish.

[*MARY sits on the stone, JOSEPH stands  
behind her. From opposite sides two  
ROMAN SOLDIERS run in, turn to the  
front, and come to the salute*]

FIRST SOLDIER. Octavianus Caesar  
Augustus,

SECOND SOLDIER. filius Julii divi  
Augustus,

BOTH SOLDIERS. orders the world in the orbit of Rome.

FIRST SOLDIER. Oaths and service to the lord Augustus;

SECOND SOLDIER. incense and glory to the god Augustus:

BOTH SOLDIERS. to the god Augustus and the Fortune of Rome.

*[They wheel inwards, and fall back on either side. ADAM re-enters as AUGUSTUS, accompanied by EVE and the two KINGS]*

ADAM. I was Julius, and I am Octavianus, Augustus, Adam, the first citizen, the power in the world, from brow to anus, in commerce of the bones and bowels of men; sinews' pull, blood's circulation, Britain to Bagdad. I in brawn and brain set knot by knot and station by station.

I drive on the morrow all things to begin  
again.

Look, children, I bring you peace;  
I bring you good luck; I am the State; I am  
Caesar.

Now your wars cease; what will you say?

THE TSAR. Hail, Caesar; I am your  
occupation for the days.

THE SULTAN. I am your sleeping-draught  
for the nights: hail,  
Caesar.

THE CHORUS. Hail, Caesar; we who are  
about to die salute you!

ADAM. I will take now a census of the whole  
world,  
the nations and generations of the living and  
dead,  
to find whether anywhere it has been said  
what place or person Paradise lies behind,  
even among the prophets who made a  
formula for the mind.

Each man shall answer, on or under earth,  
from Cain and Abel, who were first to  
explore  
womb and tomb; and all whom women bore,  
to the pack that died at Alexandria yesterday.  
Answer, children, and say, if you can. I know  
the thing that was threatened comes; there is  
still time.  
Go!

*[The SOLDIERS run out; there is a deep  
and confused noise. Presently they return,  
bearing papers]*

FIRST SOLDIER. All these millions dead

SECOND SOLDIER. and dying; these  
thousands  
dying or dead;

FIRST SOLDIER. these hundreds, and  
sixteen—

*[He drops his spear towards the nearest  
of the CHORUS on his side, who answers*

*as from a sepulchre]*

ONE OF THE CHORUS. and seventeen

ANOTHER. and eighteen

ANOTHER. and nineteen

*[All answer in turn, as the FIRST  
SOLDIER, and then the SECOND, pass,  
pointing their spears. The SECOND  
comes to JOSEPH]*

JOSEPH [*answering according to the number  
of the CHORUS*].  
*and thirty-six*

*[The SOLDIER points to MARY]*

JOSEPH [*answering for her*].  
and thirty-seven.  
Shall I add one more for the child that  
slumbers in your womb?

MARY. O no, Joseph; he is something

different from all numbers;  
you cannot tell how or whom. The people are  
reckoned,  
but the child that comes through me  
holds infinity in him, and hides in a split  
second.

[*The SOLDIERS return to ADAM*]

FIRST SOLDIER. Hail, Caesar; those who  
are dead

SECOND SOLDIER. and those about to die

BOTH SOLDIERS. salute you.  
Octavianus Caesar Augustus;  
filius Julii divi Augustus;  
gubernator, imperator, salvator, Augustus.

A VOICE [*off*].  
What is this difference between the dying and  
the dead?

*The THIRD KING enters, followed by a  
NEGRESS, carrying a scimitar*

ALL. [*except JOSEPH and MARY, in a general moan*]. Ah!

THIRD KING [*looking round*].

What provincial talk is this? what academic pedantic dichotomy? O la, brothers!

[*Seeing the KINGS left, right*]

THE TWO KINGS. Ah, brother, how did you find us?

THIRD KING. Indeed I might not have done; but my mother here has eyes and a nose, and with each sun recognized more strongly gold's glint and censer's smell. As the wind of infinity blows earth is always leaving clues for hell, and hell has only to follow that news of earth.

[*To the CHORUS*]

No wonder you talk so if you have them here talking of distinctions and differences, smells and savours,

sight of gold, sniff of incense, flavours  
of this or that differing degree of corruption.

[*To the* KINGS]

You left me away in a stony land,  
brothers; I was lonely without you.  
I came to find this mind of Rome,  
this concept, this Augustus, this new Adam.  
Why, father! The old Adam, after all!

ADAM. It is you, is it?

THIRD KING. I. You saw me  
when you breathlessly slid down the smooth  
threshold  
of Paradise gate? and saw the things that were  
hid  
as God warned you you would? did you know  
I was the core of the fruit you ate?  
Did you remember, ungrateful that you are,  
how you threw me away, with such a swing  
I flew over Eden wall, dropped,  
and stuck between two stones?  
You did not see; you did not look after me!



Smell and taste for you; let the core go to hell.

But God looks after the sparrows.

Presently the sun split the core,  
and out grew I, the King of the core.

I have travelled to get back to you ever since.

EVE. And who is she?

THIRD KING. Ah, she!

At the heart of the core, in the core of me,  
lived a small worm you could not see.

The sun is a generous sun; he set us both free.

She lives by me, and I by her.

I call her my little mother Myrrh,

because of her immortal embalming. We two  
have come, my other mother, to live with you

—

if you can call it living.

ADAM. What else?

THIRD KING. O well! She has her own idea  
of food.

[*He indicates the scimitar*]

The nearer the relation, the better the dish.  
But you will not *die*; no, I do not think you  
will *die*.

I did not, and I have been eaten often,  
you may imagine; it was a long way from  
here,  
and a long time ago, that we made our start,  
and angels on the way delayed us,  
with exhortations of earnest heavenly  
evangels:

but what can angels do against decaying  
matter?

Matter can only be corrected by matter,  
flesh by flesh; we came through and came on,  
and I everlastingly perishing. The worm  
of that fruit, father, has a great need to feed  
on living form. But I do not think you will  
die.

ADAM [*to the SOLDIERS*]: Seize her.

[*They rush forward. She laughs at them, and  
they fall back on their knees*]

THIRD KING. Whom are you seeking?  
Are you come out with swords and staves to  
take us?  
We were often with you in your temples: now

---

Father Adam, you were always a fool,  
and it seems at the top of your Roman school  
no better; will you arrest the itch  
with your great hands? will your bands pitch  
their javelins against the diabetes of the  
damned?  
The belly is empty in hell though the mouth  
is crammed:  
a monotonous place!

THE CHORUS. Father Adam, lord  
Augustus!

THIRD KING. Among the stones and locusts  
she lived on me;  
it is your turn—this is my refrigerium.

*[He draws back. The TWO KINGS drop  
their gold and lute. EVE covers her face.  
The NEGRESS walks slowly round, the*

CHORUS *falling on their knees as she passes. At last she comes to MARY. Meanwhile the* CHORUS]

THE CHORUS. Call the kings!  
saints! poets!  
prophets! priests!  
Call the gospels and the households!  
those of Aquino and Assisi!  
Stratford! Chalfont St. Giles!  
caskets of Caucasia!  
censers of Bagdad!

ALL. Help us and save us!

THE TWO KINGS. Balthazar our brother is  
stronger than we.

THE CHORUS. Call on the households!  
harp-stringer of David!  
hewer of wood for Joseph!  
ink-maker for Virgil!  
galley-captain of Caesar!  
armour-bearer of Taliessin!

ALL. Come to your defences! all heavenly lords,  
stand about us with swords.

THIRD KING. Election is made, capital rather than coast:  
she thrives most on the dear titbits of perfection.  
Sister, you are lovelier than all the rest,  
and like the busy blest. She shall eat you alive  
for her great hunger; take pity on her appetite.

[JOSEPH, *drawing his own scimitar, thrusts himself between them*]

JOSEPH [*crying out*]. Ha, ha! to me, my household!  
There is no God but God: in the name of God!

[*The scimitars clash; the THIRD KING touches JOSEPH in the thigh; he stumbles and is beaten down*]

THIRD KING [*dragging him away*].

Little man, martyrs and confessors  
are no good here, nor are poets any good.  
They are all a part of the same venomous  
blood.

Come away, come away, and wait your turn  
quietly.

[MARY *takes a step or two forward*]

MARY. Dearest, you will find me very  
indigestible.

The stomach of the everlasting worm  
is not omnivorous; it is a poor weak thing:  
nor does the fire of Gehenna do more than  
redde  
the pure asbestos of the holy children; if  
mine,  
is for the fire and your dangerous appetite to  
find.

[*The NEGRESS attacks MARY with her  
scimitar. MARY goes back before her, at  
first slowly, moving round the stage*]

MARY. Sister, how slowly you carve your

meat!

THIRD KING. Be easy, sister; you will not get away from us.

MARY. Nor she from me, brother, which is more important.

*[The movement of the two women quickens and becomes a dance; the scimitar flashing round them in a white fire. The CHORUS sway to the movement, ADAM only remaining motionless]*

MARY *[suddenly breaking into song]*.  
Parturition is upon me: blessed be He!  
Sing, brothers; sing, sisters; sing, Father  
Adam.  
My soul magnifies the Lord.

THE CHORUS *[hesitatingly]*.  
My spirit hath rejoiced in God my saviour.

MARY *[dancing and singing]*.

For he hath regarded the low estate of his  
handmaid:

THE CHORUS [*gathering strength*].  
behold, from henceforth all generations shall  
call thee blessed.

[MARY *at the door of the stable, where  
the ARCHANGEL is seen, catches the  
uplifted wrist of the NEGRESS in her  
right hand. They stand rigid, foot to foot*]

MARY [*singing joyously through a profound  
suspense*].  
For he that is mighty hath done to me great  
things;

THE NEGRESS [*in a shriek of pain and joy*].  
and holy is his Name.

[*She faints at MARY'S feet*]

MARY [*leaning towards JOSEPH*]. Joseph!  
My son calls to his foster-father: come!  
prince of maidens, hasten to the master of



maidenhoods,  
and the pillar of maternity.

JOSEPH [*half-rising*]. O mother of the  
world's brightness,  
I sought uprightness, and yet it failed in the  
end!

MARY. Most dear friend, my lord, it delayed  
the scimitar  
but till my son took flesh under its flash:  
the heavens constrain me to glory: Joseph!

[*He springs up and to her, and takes her into  
the stable*]

ADAM [*in a strong voice*]. His mercy is on  
them that fear him from  
generation to generation.

[*The CHORUS, singing, gather about the  
TWO KINGS, as at first*]

FIRST CHORUS. He hath showed strength  
with his arm;

SECOND CHORUS. he hath scattered the  
proud in the imagination  
of their hearts.

FIRST CHORUS. He hath put down the  
mighty from their seats;

SECOND CHORUS. and exalted them of  
low degree.

FIRST CHORUS. He hath filled the hungry  
with good things;

SECOND CHORUS. and the rich he hath  
sent empty away.

THIRD KING [*stretching out his hand  
towards the CHORUS*].  
Are you now so gay?

[*As his hand sinks down, they fall on their  
knees*]

And you, lord Adam,

do not speak too soon; you desired the boon  
of salvation—

have it! You desired twice—me and not me,  
the turn and the Return; the Return is here,  
take care that you do not now prefer me.

JOSEPH [*coming from the stable*].

Sir, send a midwife to your daughter.

All things are rigid; only Mary and I  
move, and the glory lies even between us.  
The Return is at point to issue; befriend  
salvation.

*[All the figures are rigid, except JOSEPH  
and the THIRD KING. ADAM speaks  
with difficulty and without moving]*

ADAM. Whom shall I send? whom?

THIRD KING. We, call we you father, are  
not yours;

we are the things thought of before you,  
brought

into Eden while men were not, when  
in the Days hunger was created, and lives

with a need always to feed on each other.  
This  
was felt in the first kiss of man and woman.  
Mother, there is a good cake for you now  
to take everlastingly; go, kiss her, love  
hungers: deliver her and she shall deliver you.

*[The NEGRESS leaps up and turns on him]*

The eaten are on your left hand, the uneaten  
on your right;  
go—there is no thing living so dextrous as  
you.

*[The NEGRESS and JOSEPH go into the  
stable]*

THE ARCHANGEL. Adonai hu ha-elohim!

THIRD KING. What do you see, man? but I  
see.

Flesh is become that firmament of terrible  
crystal  
your prophet saw: within it wreathed amber  
and fire sheathed in the amber; now

the fire and the amber and the crystal are  
mingled into form;  
what do you hear, man? [*He pauses*] but I  
hear  
the terrible sound of the crystal singing as it  
spins  
round the amber where the fire is hidden, and  
now the amber  
is hidden in the crystal, and the crystal  
spinning into flesh,  
twining into flesh: it slows, it stops, it sinks—  
what do you know, man? but I know—  
it drops into the stretched hands of my  
mother;  
my mother has fetched a child from the  
womb of its mother;  
my mother has taken the taste of the new  
bread.  
Adonai Elohim!

[*JOSEPH comes from the stable*]

JOSEPH. Father Adam, come in; here is your  
child,  
here is the Son of Man, here is Paradise.

To-day everything begins again.

[ADAM *goes down to the door of the stable*]

MARY [*meeting him and genuflecting*].

Bless me, father: see how to-morrow is also now.

ADAM [*making the sign of the Cross*].

Under the Protection!

peace to you, and to all; goodwill to men.

[*They go into the stable*]

JOSEPH. Our father Adam is gone in to adore.

THE TSAR. Blessed be he who is the earth's core

THE SULTAN. and splits it all ways with intelligible light.

THE CHORUS. Christ bring us all to the sight

of the pattern of glory which is only he.

THE ARCHANGEL. Yeshua!

THE TSAR. Blessed be he whose  
intelligence came to save  
man from the gripping of the grave: blessed  
be he.

THE SULTAN. Blessed be he who, because  
he does all things well,  
harries hell by his mercy: blessed be he.

THIRD KING. Blessed be he who is the only  
Necessity  
and his necessity in himself alone.

EVE. Blessed be he who is sown in our flesh,  
grown  
among us for our salvation: blessed be he.

THE CHORUS. Christ bring us, by his clean  
pact,  
into the act which is only he.

THE ARCHANGEL. Yeshua!

THIRD KING. He consumes and is consumed.

THE SULTAN. He is the womb's prophecy and the tomb's.

THE TSAR. He creates, redeems, glorifies: blessed be he.

EVE. He is all our heart finds or lacks.

JOSEPH. He frees our souls from hell's cracks.

THE CHORUS. Christ bring us, by his true birth,  
into a new heaven and earth.

JOSEPH. Blessed be he whose love is the knowledge of good  
and its motion the willing of good: blessed be he.



THE CHORUS. Adore, adore: blessed for  
evermore  
be the Lord God Sabaoth: blessed be He.



## **APPENDIX**

### **SYNOPSIS**

This Nativity is not so much a presentation of the historic facts as of their spiritual value. The persons of the play, besides being dramatic characters, stand for some capacity or activity of man.

Adam, after leaving Paradise, is seeking the Way of Return. His many children, descendants who form all mankind, are tired of the search, and prefer the occupations offered by the Tsar of Caucasia and the Sultan of Bagdad: one calling them to outer

things such as trade, exploration, &c.; the other to inner, such as art or philosophy. All these are temporary diversions, and Adam attempts to recall them to their proper business. He fails. In order to save his youngest daughter Mary from their persecution, he determines to marry her to her young lover Joseph. Mary is characterized by a love of people and things in themselves, and has gone beyond the tiresomeness of personal preference. The Archangel appears to her, and declares the Incarnation; she talks to Joseph of the nature of Love, and they go on their journey to Bethlehem.

The Chorus meanwhile exhibit their fear of the coming of some terror upon them out of the ends of time and space.

At this point Adam (or Man) returns in the shape of Augustus Caesar. He has conquered and quietened the world, and he takes a census of all mankind, dead or living, in order to discover, if he can, any knowledge of the Way of Return. The census is completed, but

Adam-Augustus is the only known saviour. A voice interrupts, and there appears the Third King. The Third King represents the experience of man when man thinks he has gone beyond all hope of restoration to joy, and is accompanied by a negress, who is, briefly, Hell. The two are come at last to destroy and consume all mankind; they come to Mary first. The play ends with the overthrow of the destructive cannibal nature of man at the moment of the Nativity, and with the adoration of the Omnipotence.

#### NOTES

Adam and Dullards of darkness, light's lazybones ... but this did not take me far.

The shepherds and the Wise men (kings)—the poor and others. The poem on the kings—the imaginations. Original idea of the poor [*i.e. for the Shepherds*]: and in a few fragments I toyed with this notion. But it did not produce anything very interesting; and anyhow it was not a true contrast, unless I

made the kings the rich, i.e. the great capitalists, which I was very ill-disposed to do (i) because I did not wish to save the capitalists easily in view of Christ's remark about the rich—at the Crucifixion perhaps but not just at the Nativity, (ii) because then I lost my Imaginations, especially my myrrh and Third King. And then Miss Potter wanted a Chorus, and the Chorus and the Shepherds would have been too alike. So the Shepherds disappeared into the Chorus. Mr. Eliot has made choruses a little difficult. I know all about the Greeks, but they do not prevent one being told one is copying Mr. Eliot.

Well, I went on brooding, and the Kings increased. But there remained the awful difficulty of how to make the thing interesting. Which do you find most *interesting*—I don't say which do you think most important—the Nativity or the latest murder? Well, *if* you found the Nativity most interesting you would be reading theology. And do you? No. I am like you. And as I considered this my attention hung about the

Third K. I had originally intended each K. to have a female slave—partly to use up Miss Potter's females, partly to give opportunity for dress—or the opposite, partly to combine both sexes in each imagination. A K. with a dancing girl, a K. with a geometrician or a scribe, a K. with something more dangerous than himself—darker, a Negress. There was my first Negress.

Meanwhile I had, in my usual way, abolished Time and Space. I was prepared to bring in anyone. After all, the Nativity was a local event, besides being universal. Augustus and so on. How did we, if we did, bring in Augustus? How did we keep in Adam and keep out Aug.? Now remark this is a real technical difficulty. There are ways of doing it—one might make Adam unnoticeable, or one might ... I don't know. But as I saw Adam he was important; I did not wish him to get to be the Chorus Leader; the Chorus were rapidly becoming imperialistic. And then one of those admirable clicks happened, and I said to

anybody: 'Good God! Adam-Augustus, Augustus-Adam.' Admirable—if it could be done.

Well, then there was Joseph—and the Blessed Virgin. I was quite clear that the old man leading a devout girl on a donkey was not for this play. There are profound and awful possibilities in it, and one day I will do it. But there is something of it in the later plays of Shakespeare, and as a rule it is safer *not* to go trying to reap what He left. I will put S. into a novel when I want him but I will not chase after him. Besides, was there not a Mahommedan tradition that he was young? I hope there is; I thought there was—good: let us have a young Mahommedan Joseph, and let us (incidentally) make the second King a Sultan. The captain of horse I threw in as a picturesque extra, though it fitted so well with poetry that I have done it over again in my Taliessin poems.

And a just man? This theme is not much in. But it exemplifies [the] difference. The

B.V.M. and her characteristics: love of God  
—before [the] coming of God (as such) to  
her: what state? Love. The romantic pressure  
of the individual.



**SOURCE:**

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