

The Charles Williams Society

NEWSLETTER

NO. 11, AUTUMN 1978

INKLINGS : PAST AND PRESENT

This was the title of a special event for Christian Book Week 1978 at Church House, Westminster, on Friday, October 20th 1978 at which Alice Mary Hadfield had been invited to speak on the importance of Charles Williams as an 'Inkling'.

Members will recall from the report in the Summer Newsletter that the final lecture at the Pinner Conference was given by Humphrey Carpenter under the title of 'The Inklings' - the group which included C S Lewis, J R R Tolkien, C W and others who used to meet during the war in C S Lewis' rooms at Magdalen College, Oxford. Humphrey Carpenter spoke first about the members of the group, academic and non-academic, and introduced and interviewed Dr R E Havard, one of the original Inklings, who had been C S Lewis' doctor and close friend. Dr Havard described the group as being very articulate and enjoying each others company. At most meetings C S Lewis would ask if anyone had brought anything to read to the group and this would be criticized pretty freely. Dr Havard spoke of C S Lewis' readiness of friendship with a wide group of people and expresses his appreciation of the way in which Humphrey Carpenter had succeeded in his book in creating the atmosphere of the meetings of the group. Humphrey Carpenter then read an extract from a chapter of his book and this was followed by a tape-recorded extract from one of C S Lewis' radio talks on friendship.

Alice Mary Hadfield began by saying how we should all have liked to have been at such an evening with the Inklings, and went on "Humphrey has said in his book that Charles Williams was the member least integral with the group, or with Oxford and university life. This is true. C W was an explorer, not a teacher; an exile from the city of London, not an Oxford man; an Anglican astronaut, not an interpreter of religion as Lewis was, nor a devoted Roman Catholic like Tolkien. Above all, he was a man of original thought, underived and not accountable, renovating the subjects of which he spoke and bringing out fresh discoveries in his hearers. It was this prophetic quality inspiring his genius and his wit that Lewis deeply recognised, so that he said a meeting without C W had not the value of one with him...Although not an academic, he was well equipped to talk with them..... The war took him to Oxford, losing all but a few of his professional circle, losing his home, the companionship of his wife, his metropolitan background, his familiar church, almost everyone he knew except Lewis. Lewis gave him things he valued, loan of a room by himself at weekends, university recognition so that he was accorded an honorary MA and invited to give courses of lectures in the English Literature School, to take tutorials which brought in money, and to join the Inklings' evenings of talk, which soon became regular, and have in our time become widely known. Certainly Charles enjoyed these, and enjoyed as always the company of men of conversation. Humphrey has said that the Inklings meant less to Charles than to others. I think he is right, though Charles dedicated a book to them in 1941. Perhaps after Lewis, Dr Havard 'felt' him most. When Charles' article on 'The Index of the Body' came out in the Dublin Review in 1942, Dr Havard wrote to him that it should be read by every medical student. Charles was the unicorn among them all, the one who, like in old tapestries, brought change to the scene he came into, and Lewis was the greater for seeing it. I lived near Oxford at this time, and could get over to see him, to meet and talk in a lunch hour.... and in those last Oxford years I could see how pressed he was. As well as the work I have mentioned, he was in demand to

MEETING OF THE S.W. LONDON GROUP OF THE SOCIETY

12 January 1979, Friday, at St Mary's Church Study Centre, Arthur Road, Wimbledon, at 8 pm to read Seed of Adam.

LONDON READING GROUP

13 January 1979, Saturday, at 7.30 pm, at David and Dulcie Caro's house, 50 Drayton Gardens, London SW10 (nearest station, Gloucester Road).

14 February 1979, Sunday, at 1 pm at Charles and Alice Mary Hadfield's house, The White Cottage, 21 Randolph Road, London W9 (nearest station, Warwick Avenue). Please bring sandwiches.

At Saturday meetings we read The Figure of Beatrice with Dante's Purgatorio and Paradiso; at Sunday meetings War in Heaven.

ADVANCE NOTICE CHARLES WILLIAMS SOCIETY CONFERENCE 1979

Arrangements are in hand for a Society Conference in Oxford on Friday 7th September and Saturday 8th September 1979. No overnight accommodation will be arranged but events will be timed to fit with trains to and from London or the 1½ hour drive London-Oxford. Sightseeing will include the Sheldonian where C W received his Honorary MA, the Divinity Schools where he lectured first, on Comus, St Mary the Virgin his usual church, the Taylorian Institute where he gave his University lectures and St Cross Church for his grave.

It is also hoped to arrange a visit to the Oxford University Press and to the Bodleian to see the C W material there and to have a lecture during the afternoon of each day. Members are asked to make a note of the dates and further details will be given in the 1979 Newsletters.

NEW MEMBERS

Mr Elling Aannestad, RFD2, Union, Maine 04862, U.S.A.

Mrs Louise Davies, 17 Reid Close, Banbury, Oxon

Rev Donald Goodness, Church of the Ascension, 12 West 11th Street,
New York, NY 10011, U.S.A.

Dr and Mrs C Huttar, 188 West 11th Street, Holland, Michigan 49423, U.S.A.

Mr J C P Lansley, 59 Broadwalk Court, 79 Palace Gardens Terrace, London W8

Mr G Ralph, Department of Theatre, Hope College, Holland,
Michigan 49423, U.S.A.

Mr N Sustins, 8 Willow Bank, Ham, Richmond, Surrey

Rev W Woodhams, Via Napoli 58, Rome, Italy 00184

A MYTH OF BACON

Charles Williams wrote this short verse play for the Downe House School, a girls' private school in Berkshire, England. The headmistress, Miss Olive Willis, had invited him to lecture on English Literature to the senior classes. This led to an invitation to write and produce the Summer Play for the annual Seniors' Weekend, in 1932. The play was acted out of doors in a modern Greek theatre; costumes came from school properties or handiwork; the audience was the whole school, parents and old girls, and invited visitors. Charles came down from London occasionally for rehearsals, and to produce the play on the evening. As he states in a note at the beginning of the book, he was led to write Bacon (1933) by his work on the Myth.

A Myth of Bacon has not previously been published, as the typescript was lost until recently. The Editor intends to print it in full in this and probably the three following Newsletters.

Copyright resides with Michael Williams, and no part may be reproduced in any form whatever, including xerox, without his consent. He may be addressed c/o the Editor.

A Myth of Bacon

Characters

Introducer
The Father of Salomon's House
Francis Bacon
Lord Burleigh, the Lord Treasurer
Sir Robert Cecil, Burleigh's son
Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex
Bacon's Steward
Thomas Hobbes
Rawley, Bacon's Chaplin
A Gentleman
Earl of Arundel
Earl of Shrewsbury
A Woman
The guilds

I

(Introducer)

Master of the house of knowledge
whom men's seeking minds adore,
keep thine own immortal college
evermore as heretofore.

Through our deep imaginations
send the vision now as then;
lift in us the invocations,
let us now praise famous men.

Each, our master and our neighbour,
at the sacred temple builds;
follow, follow them to labour
in the charter of the guilds.

Weigh the stars and plot the ocean,
make new engines of new might,
Still desiring in each motion
God's first creature, which is light.

II

The Father of Salomon's House*

Gentles, greeting! I am one
of that house of Salomon
which a great way off is set
on the ocean's parapet;
where the folk of Bensalem
live most perfectly; with them
is great knowledge of all kinds;
yea, and allwhere in their minds
God's first creature, which is light,
doth dispose itself full bright -
to reveal the lasting laws
and the name of secret cause
which is God's creative style.
Therefore once in a great while
cast they horoscopes to see
by divine astrology
what new child among you hath
power to take that sea-borne path
to the hostels of our land
where the helmed pontiffs stand.
Him we subtly purge and clear,
feed, indoctrinate, and rear
through his childhood and his youth
for the lucid joy of truth.

Wherefore thus it is that now
we are well content to show
how a certain man was made
pure and fragrant for our trade,
doing you to wit that ye
praise his good integrity,

*Bacon wrote a treatise of political philosophy, The New Atlantis, which, unfinished, was published in 1626, the year he died. 'It is an account of a visit to an imaginary island of Bensalem in the Pacific and of the social conditions prevailing there; and also of "Solomon's House", a college of natural philosophy "dedicated to the study of the works and creatures of God"'. (Harvey, Oxford Companion to English Literature).

watching how we shaped his mind
in the mode that we designed,
so that he through good and ill
toiled for our Atlantis, till
came conclusion to his skill
in the snow on Highgate Hill.

(He draws back. Bacon enters.)

Bacon: I will beseech my uncle yet again
Cannot the Earl of Burleigh do me good?
Can he? nay, will he? Virtue in great place
is calm; his calm is virtue's, and to aid
a destitute nephew - that is virtue too.
I will accost him when he - soft, who's here?
Some foreign monster sent to please the Queen
by Raleigh's bidding. Fellow there, give way.

(As the Father turns.)

Why, pardon: but... I know you..? I have seen
your face in... Cambridge? no; abroad? or, where?

The Father: Francis, thou know'st me not, but thou shalt know.

Bacon: Do not let go mine eyes. I will know.

The Father: Aye.
I will sear thine eyes in gazing: keep them fixed.
What think'st thou of my face?

Bacon: As of a map
strangely marked out with cities long since drowned.
Drowned, but not dead: most wholly, wholly, wise:
living as if all ocean were up piled
to show a rarer world beneath its waves.

The Father: I have marked a path beneath the waves for thee,
into a new Atlantis beyond hope.

Bacon: Do not go from me. I will follow it.
Where goes it?

The Father: Into knowledge.

Bacon: Knowledge! speak.

The Father: Of nature, man, and all things else that are.*

Bacon: Aye... aye...

*It was Bacon's ambition to create a new system of philosophy, based on a right interpretation of nature, to replace that of Aristotle' (Harvey)

The Father: ... all things below and over earth,
and how man's empire judges them and rules.
See'st thou?

Bacon: I see. (He kneels) Bless me, O father of
truth

The Father: Thou art a doorkeeper in Salomon's house,
and shalt be pontiff when thy day is come.
Feel'st thou? (laying his hand on Bacon's forehead)

Bacon: Cold: cold.

The Father: Aye; go, and be alone.
Thou shalt behold me when thou art alone.

© Michael Williams, 1978

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

Chairman: Richard Wallis, 6 Matlock Court, Kensington Park Road,
London W11 3BS (221 0057)

Secretary: Rev Dr Brian Horne, 11b Roland Gardens, London SW7
(373 5579)

Treasurer: Philip Bovey, 32 Maple Street, London W1 (637 0449)

Membership Secretaries: Jenet and Philip Bovey, 32 Maple Street, London W1
(637 0449)

Lending Library: Mrs Anne Scott, 25 Corfton Road, London W5 2HP
(997 2667)

Editor: Vacant - Pending the appointment of a new editor by
the Council, letters and contributions should be sent
to the Secretary, Rev Dr Brian Horne, 11b Roland
Gardens, London SW7.

COPYRIGHT

Everything in this newsletter is the copyright of the Charles Williams
Society unless otherwise stated.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without
the prior permission of the Editor.