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The
**Charles
Williams**
Quarterly



No. 117

Winter 2005

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The Charles Williams Society

The Society was founded in 1975, thirty years after Charles Williams's sudden death at the end of the Second World War. It exists to celebrate Charles Williams and to provide a forum for the exchange of views and information about his life and work.

Members of the Society receive a quarterly magazine and may attend the Society's meetings which are held twice a year. Facilities for members also include a postal lending library and a reference library housed at The Centre for Medieval Studies in Oxford.

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Reading groups

For information about the **Oxford** reading group please contact Brenda Boughton, tel: 01865 515589.



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From the Editor

Eagle eyed readers will note that, as well as its customary tardiness at this time of year, the magazine has altered in name and, to a degree, appearance.

I confess that I had never been entirely happy with it being called a newsletter, especially as it didn't really conform to that format, nor with the fact that (aside from "Newsletter" – which is a description) it didn't have a name. So, at Stephen Medcalf's suggestion, we have decided to go forward as The Charles Williams Quarterly. As the Society progresses, with the possibility that future conferences will be preceded by calls for papers, it was felt that the renamed magazine might be a more attractive publication for academics and students trying to raise their profiles. There is a possibility that parts of future issues may be academically peer-reviewed thus qualifying contributors for whatever brownie points are on offer. Other parts (such as my ramblings of course – they'd never pass) would not be subject to such rigorous examination. But this is all in the future still; we are, as ever, open to suggestions for improvements.

As is the world. Last night I saw a short symposium on TV about humanity's post oil future. One suggestion was that everything would have to become local again – no globe trotting or commuting except for the very rich. I had the feeling, without having checked, that Williams would favour such a reversion to community living, though probably regret that it was forced upon us by circumstances we could have mitigated by earlier action. Any thoughts?

Edward Gauntlett

Society News & Notes

Republications

1. This is a brief note to let you know of our publishing company, Apocryphile Press, and the newly available editions of four of Williams' books:

The Figure of Beatrice (ISBN 0-9764025-4-8)

He Came Down From Heaven & The Forgiveness of Sins (ISBN 0-9764025-6-4)

Outlines of Romantic Theology (ISBN 0-9764025-8-0)

Witchcraft (ISBN 0-9764025-7-2)

They are part of our Inklings Heritage Series, which we hope will offer more out-of-print writings from Williams and the other Inklings, and also reprint books on Inklings-related subjects. If you know of other books that might fit in well with this series (but don't currently have a publisher), won't you please let us know?

We don't expect to make a great deal of money from this venture; it is borne out of our love for the Inklings and mythopoetic literature

in general. Please feel free to take a look at our catalog:

www.apocryphile.org

All the best,

John R. Mabry, PhD

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2. Amazon [et al.] are now listing the following:

Collected Plays of Charles Williams

Charles Williams (December 2005)

Paperback

Regent College Pub ISBN: 157383366

Dark Side Conference

Announcing the first conference of the Research Centre for Religion, Film and Contemporary Culture, University of Chester, UK:

The Lure of the Dark Side-Satan and Western Demonology in Popular Culture .

St Deiniols Library, Hawarden, Nr Chester

10-12 March 2006

Personifications of evil in the form of demons, devils, spirits, vampires, and other malign entities can be found across the popular cultural spectrum.

One only has to peruse the rows of CDs in music shops and shelves of book-stores or view the content of some of the most successful films and television series to discover evidence for the phenomenal popular fascination with the demonic other. The aim of this conference is to examine the demonic foil within popular culture.

Further details and a call for papers can be found at:

<http://trpc.org.uk/dark.html>.

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The 2006 Frances White Ewbank C.S.Lewis and Friends Colloquium

June 1-4, 2006

The Colloquium will include featured speakers, discussion sessions, music, drama and more.

Featured speakers include Thomas Howard, author of "The Novels of Charles Williams".

CALL FOR PAPERS

Papers are invited on any topic that includes C. S. Lewis and/or his friends, including Charles Williams.

They should be no longer than ten pages, including bibliography. Please send submissions as an e-mail attachment in Microsoft Word format to Dr Richard Hill at rhill@ptloma.edu.

Include name, contact information, and a brief biography in the body of your e-mail.

Deadline for submission is February 1st, 2006.

Gillian Lunn Looks Back 20 Years On

In 2006 it will be 20 years since the Charles Williams Society celebrated the Centenary of his birth. Looking back at the Newsletters of the time (and planning began in 1983) brings back many memories.

In May 1986 a Commemorative Eucharist was held in St Albans Abbey with beautiful music and a sermon by the then Bishop of London; the great Abbey was a very important part of CW's young life. A lunch reception followed in the (then) new Chapter House. The Headmaster of St Albans school then showed us round the school, in the ancient Abbey Gatehouse, where CW's formal education effectively happened. He was presented with a specially bound copy of CW's *Bacon*, Sir Francis having been a patrician citizen of St Albans.

On CW's birth-date, 20 September, a service was held in the University Church in Oxford, where CW was due to preach in 1945 but his death intervened. This was followed by a visit to Holy Cross Churchyard and CW's grave. An exhibition of his life and works was held in The Divinity Schools and ran for six weeks. Another CW exhibition was mounted at St Albans Library and later moved to Islington Library just around the corner from CW's birthplace, 3 Caedmon Road, Holloway where a commemorative blue plaque, sponsored by the Society, was ceremonially unveiled in July.

In December a second blue plaque, also bought by the Society, was unveiled in St Albans on the redeveloped site of 36 Victoria St where the Williams family lived and had the artists' materials shop. Also in St Albans, a production of *Cranmer* was put on in the Abbey Theatre by a gifted amateur company, running for six days. The Society published a commemorative selection of 8 of CW's poems, selected and introduced by Anne Ridler and beautifully printed by her husband's private press.

Various events happened at Wheaton College, Illinois and an International Symposium was held in Mulheim, West Germany. It was quite a year! Have I left anything out? It only remains to add that lots of interesting things have happened since – stories for another day perhaps.....

Charles Williams Society Meetings

- ◆ **Saturday 25 March 2006**
Centre for Medieval Studies, Oxford. Commencing at 10.30 (for 11.00) on the Arthurian poems. The morning will be devoted to introducing these (possibly with two contributions: one on Arthurian material in general and one on Williams's work; or David Jones's review of "Arthurian Torso" might be used); and the afternoon to reading and discussion.

- ◆ **Saturday 14 October 2006** (London)

CHARLES WILLIAMS AND THE SACRAMENTS
By Suzanne Bray

**This paper was read to the Society at the meeting on 8 October
2005.**

All Charles Williams' admirers have to admit, even if they regret it, the fact that Williams was never a best-selling author during his lifetime. His importance is not to be found in his reception by the general public, nor in the number of his readers, but rather in the influence he exerted over the small group of writers and thinkers of his generation who admired his work and took it seriously. In general, even this enthusiastic group did not see in him a literary model to follow, but rather perceived him as a man with a wholly original philosophy, capable of introducing his readers and friends to spiritual dimensions which had previously escaped them.

One well-known example of such admirers was the poet T. S. Eliot, a personal friend of Williams' as well as the publisher of some of his later works at Faber & Faber. For Eliot, Charles Williams was:

... a man who was always able to live in the material and spiritual world at once, a man to whom the two worlds were equally real because they are one world.¹

W. H. Auden, a generation younger than Eliot, was also impressed by Williams and his writings, and particularly by his work of church history *The Descent of the Dove*. For Auden, Williams had "a divine gift"². He thanked Williams, claiming that the older man had been the spiritual father of his own work *New Year Letter*. In Auden's eyes Williams had a rare kind of holiness, which meant that when he met and talked to him he was "transformed into a person who

was incapable of doing or thinking anything base or unloving”³.

Dorothy L. Sayers also acknowledged her debt to Williams. His contribution to Dante studies, *The Figure of Beatrice*, together with his encouraging letters inspired her English translation of *The Divine Comedy*. After Williams’ death, Sayers described him as “a source from which others received the waters of truth”⁴ and dedicated her Dante translations to him. Sayers also discerned numerous traces of Williams’ personal philosophy in “the young generation of writers and clergy”⁵ who had known him at Oxford during the war years.

Williams’ originality, as Eliot had observed, lay in the way he managed to live in two different worlds at the same time : the everyday, material world and the spiritual world. According to Humphrey Carpenter, whose parents had met Williams⁶, the writer “never fully accepted the distinction between natural and supernatural”⁷. In the same way, the American professor Chad Walsh considered that Williams lived in a world “in which the Nicene Creed operated as surely in human affairs as the law of gravitation”⁸. Williams himself admitted that one of his main aims in writing was to re-establish “supernatural Grace as the main-spring of all activity”⁹.

Williams sought out the supernatural in two main contexts which, at first sight, may appear contradictory : the Church of England and an esoteric fraternity known as The Fellowship of the Rosy Cross. This community, led by Williams’ friend, the writer A. E. Waite, had broken away from the larger and better known hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Williams became a member of the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross in September 1917. According to Waite, who was himself both a practising Catholic and a freemason, the members neither believed nor practised anything that could offend the Church. Unlike some of the members of the Golden Dawn, those who belonged to the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross were not practising magicians and refused to take part in any occult activity themselves, although they did study such phenomena. For Williams, the study of

Waite's esoteric spirituality, based on the Holy Grail, was particularly attractive. Williams finally left the fraternity in June 1927 without giving any reason for his withdrawal, but the images and mythology he had assimilated there could be found in his writings to the end of his life.

On the other hand, Williams' attachment to the Church of England, and particularly to the anglo-catholic wing of the Church, was lifelong. During his childhood his parents took him to church every Sunday and sent him to a Church of England primary school. From 1894 onwards, when the family moved to St Albans, Charles's imagination, like the town itself, was dominated by the vast, beautiful, medieval abbey. Charles's school, which was just next to the abbey in the former cloisters, retained something of the medieval atmosphere. The pupils had a daily routine punctuated by the sound of the abbey bells. They studied in cool, vaulted classrooms linked by long corridors and imposing stonework staircases. Although Charles was always aware of some religious doubt, while he was at school he accepted Pascal's famous wager and deliberately chose to believe. He was confirmed in 1901, thus starting his spiritual pilgrimage as a communicant member of the Church, which he would remain until his death.

Williams took communion nearly every Sunday. According to Alice Mary Hadfield, the Eucharist was "the centre of his thought and so of his life"¹⁰. He meditated unceasingly on the exact significance of the rite and, towards the end of his life, planned to write a book about it. Unfortunately, the very few published, theological comments on the Holy Communion to be found scattered throughout Williams' writings are rather obscure :

In the Eucharist he withdraws all into his resurrection.¹¹

I think the sacraments are more than images ; how and after what mode is another matter. I think the elements are drawn into Him at the moment of the flesh-death-resurrection.¹²

Despite his liking for mystical rituals, whether they took the form of Christian sacraments or the ceremonies of the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross, where Williams used to learn the liturgy of the various rites off by heart and declaim them enthusiastically, he never allowed himself to take part in a rite which appeared to contradict the professed faith of the Church. Heresies, like those which sprang up during the first centuries of the Church's existence, and in particular the gnostic movements, could, in his opinion, only bring death. Equally, magical rites or witchcraft in its various forms should be firmly rejected because they "had not, as their single ... aim, the creation of a new will towards love", while "the ... Christian rites had no other essential aim"¹³.

Although he personally rejected occult or heretical sacraments, Williams did not deny that they could be effective. As he saw it, their effectiveness, like that of the Christian sacraments, was rooted in God's promise to mankind. God had wanted to implicate Man in his divine mission, and in the sacraments, He had taken a risk, promising "to commit himself to the hands of men and to fulfil his agreement at their command"¹⁴. Therefore, any sacrament, Christian, satanist or whatever, becomes the present realisation of the spiritual event evoked by the rite. For Williams, by his Incarnation, God has given a supreme dignity to his creation. Through the sacraments, he works in the same way, agreeing to use created things to attain spiritual goals. This way of understanding the sacraments may also explain why Williams was unhappy with the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, although he may not have completely understood it – if the bread and wine are no longer substantially present after the consecration, the absence of created matter meant that, for Williams, "there is hardly a sacrament"¹⁵. God's commitment to his creation, expressed in the sacraments, and the power thus given to men were essential parts of Williams' personal creed. For this reason, he saw no point in magic and avoided occult practices, although he never

underestimated their power. According to his young friend and disciple Lois Lang-Sims :

Charles was no dabbler in the occult. He understood the dangers ; and confronted them with that orthodoxy that secretes itself within all mysteries and all knowledge.¹⁶

Charles Williams' profound convictions about the sacraments and their God-given power are more easily apprehended in his novels than in his theological writings. In four of his seven spiritual thrillers at least one sacrament is essential to the plot. In each case, the sacrament is a weapon used by the characters in the fight between good and evil. Sometimes the characters are aware of the nature of the battle in which they are fighting, but at other times, the sacrament works without those who partake of it being aware of its significance.

In *Shadows of Ecstasy*, the first novel Williams wrote, although not the first to be published, most of his characters are a mixture of good and evil in varying proportions. All react strongly to the spiritual reality which has unexpectedly invaded their daily routine. The most enigmatic character, Nigel Considine, has learnt to harness spiritual power for his own ends and, in particular, to overcome ageing and death : at the beginning of the novel he is already two hundred years old, although he looks like a man in his fifties. The other characters are fascinated by Considine, a fascination which increases when they learn that he is using his knowledge of the spiritual world to provoke an African rebellion against the western, colonial powers. Considine is, in fact, exploiting the Africans' legitimate desire for self-determination and the right to develop their own cultural identity, in order to create a revolution in the colonies and further his own schemes for world domination.

Ian Caithness, an Anglican clergyman, meets a young African from the Zulu royal family, Inkamasi, who wants to escape from Considine's domination.

Caithness learns that the Zulu is a Christian, having been baptised as a baby. For this reason, when Considine uses his supernatural powers to put Inkamasi to sleep in a kind of coma, Caithness calls on the Archbishop of Canterbury and all the sacramental power of the Church of England to free the young African. Chapter six of the novel, "The Mass at Lambeth", is entirely devoted to this sacramental rite of deliverance.

Williams manages to maintain a certain objectivity in his narrative by presenting the events to the reader through the eyes of an agnostic observer, Philip Travers. From the beginning, Philip, who is usually unimpressed by the supernatural, is aware of the presence of "a different world"¹⁷. At the consecration he obtains "a glimpse of a certainty beyond all pledges and promises"¹⁸ and "an immense stillness around him". Then, the Archbishop places his hands on Inkamasi's head and prays for him. The prayer, which is principally made up of biblical quotations, reminds the Almighty that, in the sacrament, Christ's power is "committed unto us". The Archbishop continues, speaking not to God, but directly to Inkamasi's spirit, ordering the young man to wake up. Immediately Inkamasi puts his hands together, inclines his head and starts to pray. The chapter ends with the participants feeding on the eucharistic bread and wine. The only explanation for these events given by Williams to the reader can be found in a relatively obscure sentence describing the eucharistic liturgy as "the formula by which Christendom has defined, commanded and assisted the resurrection of man in God"¹⁹. The description of the ceremony fills four whole pages.

In this key chapter, the reader becomes aware of the importance of the sacraments in Williams' world view. Inkamasi can be delivered from the forces of evil because he has been baptised. He therefore belongs to God and, as he has never renounced his Christian identity, rests under the divine protection. In the communion service, Caithness and the Archbishop make that protection real and present by, to quote Williams, "recall[ing] all the powers in [Inkamasi] to their

natural obedience”²⁰. This is possible only because God has chosen to pour his grace and help onto earth “through the operations of the Church militant”²¹.

If, in *Shadows of Ecstasy*, baptism is merely mentioned and plays a minor role compared with the dramatic impact of the mass at Lambeth, in Williams’ final novel, *All Hallows’ Eve*, it is of the greatest importance. Simon, a magician of Jewish origin²², who uses occult powers in his plan for world domination, is much more dangerous and sinister than Considine. During the period of political uncertainty which followed the Second World War, he becomes the political adviser to many foreign governments. The British Foreign Office becomes convinced that they too need to consult him. Although, on the surface, Simon appears as simple and spiritual as Gandhi, his heart is completely evil and egotistical. In order to see the future and, at the same time, dominate both the world of the living and that of the dead, Simon requires one of his disciples, the devoted Lady Wallingford, to bear him a child. This child, Betty, is destined to be Simon’s intermediary between the two worlds. A gentle, docile young woman, Betty lives with her mother, who illtreats her, and seems to be completely in Simon’s power. However, her parents are astonished when Betty falls in love with the artist, Jonathan, and, little by little, manages to escape from Simon’s spiritual domination. Williams gradually reveals the secret of Betty’s spiritual freedom : her baptism. When Betty was only a baby her nurse, scandalised to discover that Lady Wallingford did not intend to christen the child, took the initiative and baptised her herself. Later on Betty, who knew nothing about this, starts to dream about the sacrament she had received. She dreams of being immersed in a lake while a woman watches her. In this dream Betty is surrounded by fish, which symbolise the Christian community, and the biggest fish of all (Christ) swims beneath her and lifts her out of the water. Betty relives her baptism in this dream and, as she herself says : “ it always seems as if I’d just floated up through the lake”²³.

Thanks to her baptism, Betty manages to break free from Simon and, at the end of the novel, becomes a source of healing, through the sacramental laying on of hands, for all those who had been bound by his evil power. Williams explains that “this child of magic had been after birth saved from magic by a mystery, beyond magic”²⁴. He continues, defining baptism, with his customary obscurity, as “a state of being of which water was the material identity, a life rippling and translucent with joy”²⁵.

In his short, theological work *He Came Down From Heaven*, Williams provides some further clues to his understanding of baptism. Here, Williams once again underlines the importance of substitution in Christian doctrine. At the very centre of the faith we find the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, taking the place of sinful humanity by his death on the cross. In the same way, Christians are called to take their brothers’ place in cases of suffering or distress, to bear each others’ burdens²⁶. In extreme situations, a Christian may even be required to imitate his master and give up his life for his friends. For Williams, baptism, and particularly infant baptism, is part of this process of substitution. During the baptismal rite the godparents visibly and audibly take the place of the infant and make commitments for him and in his name. As Williams saw it, the child really is bound by these commitments made on his behalf by his godparents, just as much as if he had spoken them himself. Even when the baptismal candidate is an adult, the godparents are necessary because, from Williams’ point of view :

It is simpler sometimes and easier, and no less fatal and blessed, to do it so; to surrender and be offered to destiny by another rather than oneself; it is already a little denial of the self.²⁷

Inkamasi’s unknown godparents and Betty’s nurse had made the solemn baptismal vows on their godchild’s behalf. They had taken their place. As a result of their faith and their words, their godchildren could benefit from the promises

of God to all those who confess His name.

Although Williams refers to baptism only in the two novels we have already mentioned, he includes holy communion in his writings far more frequently. Celebrating the Eucharist is always a supernatural, and sometimes a disturbing, experience, even if it occurs at a poorly frequented service in a “small, old, rather ugly”²⁸ Wesleyan chapel. A “pure and high ... ardour burned”²⁹ in the souls of the pious, elderly couple Richardson meets on his way through town. In the second novel Williams wrote, *War in Heaven*, such manifestations of the mystery of divine love are central to the plot.

As one might expect in a novel which recounts the adventures of the Holy Grail, *War in Heaven* has a lot to say about the Eucharist. The hero of the novel, Julian Davenant, the Archdeacon of Fardles, is an Anglican priest and also a very humble and holy man. He celebrates the holy mysteries every morning at seven o'clock in his parish church and, as he does so, “radiate[s] from that centre” and has a “sense of instrumentality”³⁰ with regard to the divine power. When circumstances force him, with two of his friends, to defend and guard the Grail from evil men who seek to steal it and are prepared to use black magic to this end, the Archdeacon is forced to fight a spiritual battle to save it using the weapons of his calling: prayer and the sacraments. In his eyes the Grail has no real importance in itself, but it represents “the chalice offered at every altar”³¹, and therefore Christ's sacrifice. As he looks at the Grail, he thinks of the Eucharist and...

... in accord with the desire of the Church expressed in the ritual of the Church, the Sacred Elements seemed to him to open upon the Divine Nature, upon Bethlehem and Calvary and Olivet ...³²

For the Archdeacon, the vision of the Grail is all one with his own voca-

tion, that of “a thousand dutifully celebrated Mysteries in his priestly life”³³. As a servant of God and of the Church he felt that “so and not otherwise all things return to God”³⁴.

Later on, when the evil Gregory Persimmons and his allies attempt to steal or destroy the Grail by means of black magic, the Archdeacon picks the chalice up and prays, with his friends, for its preservation. During this moment of prayer and intense concentration, the three men become aware of a presence and the Archdeacon perceives one “greater than the Graal”³⁵ with them in the room, “an invisible celebrant” who communicated silence and knowledge to him and enabled him to touch “that which was itself at once the Mystery and the Master of the Mystery”³⁶. For the guardians of the Grail, the experience makes them think of a communion service where Christ himself is the celebrant. The reader concludes that the friends’ prayers and the presence of the Grail in the priest’s hands have made possible a spiritual communion which protects the Grail from Gregory’s evil intentions.

The final Eucharist in the novel, which is also the most dramatic, takes place at the moment of climax for the plot. Gregory is in police custody, by his own admission guilty of murder. The Grail and all the good characters, except the martyred Kenneth, have gathered together at Fardles and go to the parish church for the Archdeacon’s daily morning communion service. On the way there, Prester John, the legendary keeper of the Grail, explains that the Eucharist is “a means ... one of the means. But perhaps the best for most, and for some almost the only one”³⁷. Prester John himself is the celebrant at this unusual service; the Archdeacon remains in his stall. Someone seems to notice shadowy figures up in the gallery who strongly resemble former inhabitants of the area. This cloud of witnesses from the Church throughout the ages disappears as soon as the liturgy starts.

During the liturgy, all the people in the church receive some word or sign for their future lives, but the experience is most powerful for the Archdeacon :

He distinguished no longer word from act; he was in the presence, he was part of the Act which far away issued in those faint words, 'Let us make man'.³⁸

When Prester John lifts the Grail for the consecration, the supernatural world becomes visible to all. They see beyond the celebrant to :

... the moving universe of stars, and then one flying planet, and then fields and rooms and a thousand remembered places, and all in light and darkness and peace.³⁹

Then, suddenly, Prester John calls the archdeacon who starts to move towards the altar, slides gently to the ground and dies on the steps. At the same moment Prester John and the Grail disappear. The Eucharist has become the meeting place of heaven and earth, of Christ and the Archdeacon who, his earthly mission being now finished, is taken into glory. The sacrament also sees the conversion of Lionel, a most pessimistic character who can at last say that it is "meet and right"⁴⁰ to worship God.

The anglican communion service, although it plays an important part in the plot of *War in Heaven*, is not the only sacrament in the novel. There are also black masses and other similar rites celebrated by Gregory Persimmons. During the first satanic rite, where Persimmons calls up the power of Satan in order to gain power of the soul of the child Adrian, "the faintest of mists"⁴¹ is seen to float over the chalice and move about at critical moments in the liturgy. The mass is seen by Gregory as a tool which will enable him to obtain the power he needs to carry out his plans. The sacrament is a weapon, an effective method of fighting in a continuous struggle. However, Gregory is aware of his diabolical master; he prays and worships the lord of darkness and seeks supernatural union with him.

Moreover, even if Gregory perceives the sacrament above all as a tool which exists for his own convenience, he has no doubts as to its power and effi-

cacity and fully believes in the supernatural world he can contact through it. For him, “sacraments were living realities”⁴² and his naturally religious spirit had a wholehearted faith in the efficacy of the perverted rites. Throughout the novel Gregory and his friends use the black sacraments and the Grail : to make a woman go mad, to kill Kenneth, to try to assassinate the Archdeacon. Yet, at the end, through the Archdeacon’s prayers, the Grail returns to its former obedience and Prester John arrives just in time to save the sacrificial victim. In Williams’ novels, even if satanic rites do work, the power of God, invoked by his servants, always overcomes the powers of darkness in the end.

The only other novel to portray satanic rituals is *All Hallows’ Eve*. Like Considine in *Shadows of Ecstasy*, Simon has used occult powers to prolong his life beyond its normal span. In his plans for world domination, he uses these satanic powers to heal the sick, who become his slaves. He also, supernaturally, projects his daughter into the future so that she can bring back news of what’s happening. He intends to bring about the consummation and final realisation of his plan by evoking the name of God backwards - a relatively common practice in satanic rites which is supposed to reverse or confuse God’s own plans or the plans of his followers. Simon’s ultimate aim is to destroy God’s plans for his creation and bring the whole universe under his own domination. Williams used here his knowledge of black magic, which he had studied when a member of the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross.

On the other hand, it is important to point out that Simon bears no resemblance to A.E. Waite or any of the other people Williams knew from that period, even if he shares their interest in the supernatural. Simon is completely self-centred, much more so than Gregory Persimmons who really believes in the dark forces which he serves. For Simon, the rites are only tools. The name of God, which he perverts for his own purposes, “was to him no Name but vibrations only, which, directed as he chose, should fulfil what he chose”⁴³. By means of

occult ceremonies he creates images of himself and a body for the dead woman, Evelyn, but at no time does he worship or submit to the powers he is using. In spite of this, the sacraments remain effective in the material world. Like the baptismal waters which really do liberate Betty from Simon's murderous powers, the act of sticking a needle into the throat of a wax doll covered with Lady Wallingford's blood really does injure the unfortunate woman. Sacramental substitution is always effective in Williams' universe, for good and for evil, even if the effect achieved is not always the one intended by the celebrant.

As we have seen, Charles Williams' world in his novels is a mixture of the material, the everyday and the miraculous. Sorcerers and evil magicians want to destroy or rule the world and the task of frustrating their nefarious designs is entrusted to very ordinary people – people the reader can identify with. A retired nanny, an insignificant employee in a publishing company, an elderly priest, a young artist and a penniless Zulu, all with no political power, have, in the sacraments, powerful and effective weapons at their disposal in the fight against evil. As these ritual acts release the power of God into the world, they can neutralise black magic and save innocent victims. Their efficacy does not depend on the knowledge of the person who celebrates them, but on God's promise to mankind. Nevertheless, in the hands of people with evil intentions, they can be dangerous and injure, even kill, the servants of God.

In all Williams' novels the forces of good triumph in the end. However, the final victory is never a foregone conclusion. The Church is called to work unceasingly for "the regeneration of mankind"⁴⁴. For Williams, in order to achieve that end, divine power is available. He is convinced that "the Atonement of our Lord restored this power to man"⁴⁵ and "the Holy Ghost now, as originally, confirms, nourishes and directs it"⁴⁶. Whether the means required is the baptism of an innocent infant or the participation of believing adults in Christ's

resurrection through the Eucharist, the sacraments are one means, and perhaps one of the most effective, by which men and women can communicate salvation to their fellows.

End Notes

1 *The Listener*, 19th December 1946, p.895

2 quoted in an unpublished letter to Michal Williams on October 17 1940.

3 quoted in Humphrey CARPENTER, *W. H. Auden*, George Allen & Unwin, 1981, p.223.

4 Dorothy L. SAYERS, "Charles Williams", *Time & Tide*, 2 December 1950.

5 idem.

6 His father was Bishop of Oxford and his mother studied English Literature at Oxford University.

7 Humphrey CARPENTER, *The Inklings*, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979, p.85.

8 Chad WALSH, "Charles Williams' Novels and the Contemporary Mutation of Consciousness", *Myth, Allegory & the Gospel*, Bethany Publishing, 1976, p.56

9 Charles WILLIAMS, "The Recovery of Spiritual Initiative", *Christendom: A Journal of Christian Sociology*, December 1940.

10 Alice Mary HADFIELD, *Charles Williams : An Exploration of his Life & Work*, Oxford University Press, 1983, p.27

11 "The Cross", *Essential Writings in Spirituality & Theology*, Cowley Publications, 1993, p.202

12 letter to Alice Mary Hadfield, quoted in HADFIELD, p.212

13 *The Descent of the Dove*, p.87

14 *ibid.*, p.33

15 HADFIELD, p.212

16 *Letters to Lalage*, p.18

17 *Shadows of Ecstasy*, Faber & Faber, 1965, p.102

18 *ibid.*, p.103

19 *ibid.*, p.104

20 *ibid.*, p.103

21 idem.

22 It is important not to see Simon's ethnic identity as an indication of any anti-semitism in Williams' ideology, but rather as evidence of the widely held opinion in anglo-saxon, protestant circles that, because Christ was a Jew, the Antichrist will also be one.

23 *All Hallows' Eve*, Eerdmans, 1987, p.134

24 *ibid.*, p.208

25 *idem.*

26 *Galatians 6 : 2.*

27 *He Came Down From Heaven*, Eerdmans, 1984, p.122

28 *The Place of the Lion*, Faber & Faber, 1965, p.142

29 *The Place of the Lion*, p.144

30 *War in Heaven*, Eerdmans, 1991, p.50

31 *ibid.*, p.137

32 *idem.*

33 *idem.*

34 *idem.*

35 *ibid.*, p.141

36 *idem.*

37 *ibid.*, p.249

38 *ibid.*, p.253

39 *ibid.*, p.255

40 *ibid.*, p.254

41 *ibid.*, p.92

42 *ibid.*, p.174

43 *All Hallows' Eve*, p.151

44 *The Descent of the Dove*, p.3

45 "The Church Looks Forward", *Essential Writings in Spirituality and Theology*, p.145

46 *idem.*

**CHARLES WILLIAMS SOCIETY
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
8 OCTOBER 2005
TREASURER'S REPORT**

Since the last AGM was on 20 June 2004 this report covers a period of fifteen months.

At the beginning of the last calendar year we raised subscriptions for the first time for some years. It took some time for members to respond to the request to increase their standing orders, and a certain amount of chasing had to be done. A tiny number have still not responded, and they will be followed up at the end of the financial year. We have again had problems with overseas members writing cheques in sterling on foreign banks which the British system is unable to process.

The pattern of Society expenditure is changing, with conferences replacing meetings. The accounts do not show this clearly, as the practice of holding the AGM during a conference means that some of the costs fall before and some after the AGM. So it may be worth mentioning that the net cost to the Society of last year's conference was just under £300. For this year's autumn conference it will be around £450. While the Society can afford this, it means that this year we have had to take some money from reserves, although we shall probably be able to return most of it, whereas last year we were able to contribute some money to reserves. The Council may therefore wish to consider cheaper arrangements for future conferences, or to increase the contribution from members. I would favour the first.

Otherwise the main item of expenditure is the Newsletter, which continues to provide excellent value and is the main voice of the Society to the its members and others who see it.

The category of other expenditure includes the donations which members generously gave to our outgoing chairman, Eileen Mable, and also two payments of £117.50 for the maintenance of Charles Williams's grave in Oxford.

Thanks to conference fees, subscriptions and donations going through our accounts, they have attracted a larger than normal sum of Giftaid. This is gratifying, but I should point out that we have had no Giftaid forms from new members for several years. At the next suitable opportunity we should review this.

However, the Society's financial position continues to be good, and we can support a normal programme of activities.

Stephen Barber, Treasurer.

Financial summary 2004-5

Income

Opening balance	£	615
Subscriptions	£	2,342
Conference fees	£	475
Book sales	£	7
Giftaid	£	476
Interest	£	29
Transfer from reserves	£	1,500
Total income	£	5,444

Expenditure

Newsletter	£	959
Conferences	£	2,522
Other	£	727
Total expenditure	£	4,209

Net surplus of income over expenditure	£	1,235
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Reserves

Opening balance	£	9,179
Transfer to current account	-£	1,500
Interest	£	342
Closing balance	£	8,021

COUNCIL MEETING REPORT

The Council met on October 28, 2005.

It was agreed that the recent conference had been very good; it was a pity not more had come,

The Secretary said that during his time in Australia he had been in contact with several Australian members, who were thinking of trying to establish an informal branch of the Society there. The Society had been a Participating Society at the Tolkien fiftieth anniversary conference in August, at which at least four papers relating to Charles Williams had been presented, three by members and one by a gentleman who had since joined.

The Acting Chairman read out a note from The Membership Secretary The membership was remarkably constant, at about 122, one third of them from overseas.

Stephen Medcalf's suggestion that the newsletter be renamed "The Charles Williams Quarterly" was agreed to.

Acting Chairman, Brian Horne, agreed to serve as Chairman of the Society for three years and was elected by acclamation.

Future developments. These had been discussed at some length at the AGM. A residential conference might be organized for two or three years hence. It should have a topic which might attract non-specialists (fantasy fiction being an obvious possibility), and should include a call for papers.

Next meeting: This was fixed for 11 am on January 21st 2006, at the same venue.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

George Eliot

Dear Editor,

It will be highly satisfactory if anyone can answer the questions set by Stephen Barber at the beginning of his very interesting letter (CW 116 pp 17-18): “Does anyone know whether Williams ever expressed an indebtedness to George Eliot?”

A good many years ago I asked Thelma Shuttleworth pretty well that same question – well, really, I thought she might know. She had been first, a young student attending CW’s evening lectures on Literature at a Brixton institute in the early 1920’s and soon thereafter became and remained a lifelong friend. I was struck by the image of the Web, so much used in *Middlemarch* – the impossibility of disentanglement from this strong web.... Could this, I wondered, have been any part of CW’s thoughts about Coinherence and his use of web imagery?

I do wish I could remember more details of Thelma’s response. She certainly knew that CW had a great admiration for George Eliot’s novels; Eliot was included in the pantheon of “the greats” on whose works CW was employed to lecture. Thelma was quite funny about the strict syllabus laid down by the Educational Institution and how he, of course, did teach what was required of him but managed to include a great deal of his own-choice material too. I doubt whether, at that early stage, he would include his own writings in the lectures, but the tea-sessions afterwards and the walking home together brought them forth.

I think Thelma was telling me that CW had – as we all know – enormous admiration and enthusiasm for many writers, of whom George Eliot was one of the acknowledged greats – along with Dickens, the Brontes and others. But that’s not the same as “expressing indebtedness” for any specific imagery or theme or idea and Thelma didn’t really respond positively to my suggestion that CW might

have said he was indebted to Eliot. The Web, the beauty of a woman's arm; perhaps other instances are awaiting our notice. But I wonder whether Stephen's question can now be answered; I do hope so.

Gillian Lunn

A Cry for Help

Dear Friends, Colleagues & other very knowledgeable people !

A colleague (expert on Narnia) and I, here in Lille, have got the possibility of finance for an international conference/symposium in 2007 on an Inklings related subject for which we would accept papers both in English and in French. We are attempting to find some inspiration for a theme so that we can get organised and send out a call for papers. Obviously we want a theme that would make it possible to talk about Lewis, Williams & Tolkien at least (any themes which would also let us include GKC or Sayers etc. would be fine too) and, if possible, one that would allow people to talk about the film adaptations of books as well as the books themselves.

Any inspiration ? Bright ideas ?

If you don't have a bright idea for a theme but have a subject on which you have always wanted to write/hear/read a paper/article, please let us know that too.

Do not hesitate to ask your equally knowledgeable friends.

Thanks in advance,

Suzanne Bray

Editorial Policy

The Charles Williams Quarterly and the Society's Website have two functions. Firstly, to publish material about the life and work of Charles Williams. Secondly, to publish details of the activities of the Society.

Contributions to the Quarterly are welcome. If you wish to submit a contribution, please take note of the following:

- ◆ Submissions should be sent to the Editor, preferably on floppy disc; otherwise by email attachment to: Edward.Gauntlett@down21.freeuk.com.
- ◆ Submissions on paper should be typed double spaced and single-sided.
- ◆ All quotations should be clearly referenced, and a list of sources included.
- ◆ Submissions of just a few hundred words may be hand written.
- ◆ The Editor reserves the right to decide whether to publish a submission. Usually the main article in any issue will be a paper previously read before the Society; in most cases such papers will be published as received, with little or no editorial input. Other submissions may be edited.

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