

# The Charles Williams Society

NEWSLETTER

NO. 14, SUMMER 1979

## MEETINGS OF THE CHARLES WILLIAMS SOCIETY 1979

7 & 8 September 1979: Oxford Summer Conference. See below for details.

24 November 1979: Cancn Donald Nicholson. Subject: 'Charles Williams and the Art of Historical Biography'. This talk was postponed from 17 February because of bad weather.

Society meetings are held at 2.30 pm at Liddon House, 24 South Audley Street, London W1. (North Audley Street is the second turning to the right, south, off Oxford Street, going from Marble Arch towards Oxford Circus). After Grosvenor Square it becomes South Audley Street. Another convenient access is from Park Lane.

Each meeting is followed by discussion and tea. Please bring copies of any books which might be referred to at a meeting. There is no fee for members, but 50p must be paid for a guest (each member may bring one guest) and this should be handed to the person in charge of the meeting.

The Society's Lending Librarian brings a selection of library books which may be borrowed by members.

## MEETINGS OF THE S.W. LONDON GROUP OF THE SOCIETY

Alice Mary Hadfield gave a most interesting address to the Group on 15 June. For information on further meetings please contact Martin Moynihan, 5 The Green, Wimbledon, London SW19; telephone 01 946 7964.

### LONDON READING GROUP

5 August, Sunday, at 1pm, at Richard and Joan Wallis' flat, 6 Matlock Court, Kensington Park Road, London W11 (nearest station Notting Hill Gate). Please bring sandwiches.

13 October, Saturday, at 7.30pm, at Charles and Alice Mary Hadfield's house, The White Cottage, 21 Randolph Road, London W9 (nearest station Warwick Avenue).

4 November, Sunday, at 1pm, at David and Dulcie Caro's house, 3 Hasker Street, Chelsea, London SW3 (nearest stations South Kensington or Knightsbridge). Please note the change of address.

26 January 1980, Saturday, at 7.30pm, at Richard and Joan Wallis' flat, 6 Matlock Court, Kensington Park Road, London W11 (nearest station, Notting Hill Gate).

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

### OXFORD SUMMER CONFERENCE (Friday and Saturday 7 and 8 September)

The two fixed points of the Conference are, that on the Friday we meet at the entrance to the Oxford University Press in Walton Street at 3.25pm prompt (see below) and that on Saturday we meet in the Curator's room in the Bodleian Library at 2pm for the Society meeting that will end at 5pm.

Either on the Friday or the Saturday we suggest that members, in their own time, see:

- a. the Charles Williams Exhibition. This is in the Divinity School. It immediately faces one upon entering the main door of the Bodleian Library behind the statue of Sir Thomas Bodley. It will be open from 9am to 5pm on Friday, and 9am to 12.30pm on Saturday. The Dorothy Sayers Exhibition is in the same room.
- b. the Sheldonian Theatre, where CW was given his honorary MA degree. This is open from 10am to 12.45pm and 2pm to 4.45pm. Admission 10p.
- c. the Church of St Mary the Virgin, the University Church in which CW had been invited to preach on the Sunday after he died.

On the Friday, September 7, the party will assemble outside the door of the Bodleian Library at 2.45pm and walk (slowly) to the Taylorian Institution to see the hall where

CW lectured, then past the pub, the Eagle & Child where the Inklings used to meet, to the Oxford University Press in Walton Street, arriving at 3.25pm. There we shall be received by the London Publisher, Sir John Brown, and some of his staff. In the Printer's Library we shall see a display of CW's books, formerly published by O.U.P.; meet several of his contemporaries, who are being invited specially for the occasion: hear a short talk; and be given tea. The visit should end about 5pm. Afterwards, some members can walk to the station (15-20 mins) though we will try to arrange for one or two cars to ferry the elderly. Others may wish to go back into Oxford.

On the Saturday, September 8, for those who wish, a walk will start from the main door of the Bodleian Library at 12.50pm to walk to St. Cross, to see the church in which CW worshipped, and his grave in the churchyard. We shall be back by 1.40pm in time for the meeting in the Curator's room, in the Bodleian, at 2pm. To find this room, stand with your back to the main door behind the statue of Sir Thomas Bodley, look half right across the quadrangle to the door in the corner headed "School of Astronomy and Rhetoric". Walk straight in. There will be a man on duty.

This meeting will last until 5pm. We shall read a shortened version of Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury (by arrangement with Ruth Spalding). Martin Browne, the Skeleton in the original production, will again read that part. A few other parts have been allotted in advance, though the remainder will be read in rotation by those present as on previous occasions. Reading texts will be provided. The play reading will be preceded by a short talk by Martin Browne, who is President of Radius, the Religious Drama Society, on CW's religious drama with special reference to Cranmer.

General Information

1. Convenient trains from London (Paddington) to and from Oxford are as follows. Those returning the same day should ask for day return tickets.

Friday trains:

<u>Down</u>	B	B	B	B
Paddington	09.55	10.50	11.50	12.50
Oxford	10.57	11.51	12.50	13.52

<u>Up</u>	B			
Oxford	17.06	18.06	19.15	
Paddington	18.10	19.14	20.27	

Saturday trains:

<u>Down</u>	B		B	B
Paddington	09.55	10.50	11.50	12.50
Oxford	10.57	11.51	12.50	13.52

<u>Up</u>				
Oxford	18.06	18.28	18.55	
Paddington	19.14	oh. Reading 19.58	ch. Reading 20.19	Reading

B= buffet car on train

(Please check these train times before leaving)

On leaving the station, turn right for the taxi rank, or left for buses 501 and 502. These buses run down High Street - ask for the Queen's Lane stop. There, walk back on the same side to Catte Street and turn right into it. St Mary's is the first building on your left, the Radcliffe Camera, the second, the Bodleian, the third, and the Sheldonian Theatre the fourth, though behind the Clarendon Building. From the Radcliffe Camera side, you will see the main entrance to the Bodleian Library, with glass doors, to your left once you enter the quadrangle. Just inside the entrance is the Divinity School.

2. We are making no residential arrangements.

3. No meals are being provided, except tea on Friday, at O.U.P. A straightforward pub, the King's Arms, is on the corner of Catte Street and Holywell, just diagonally across from the Clarendon Building. This provides drinks, snacks and coffee, in several bars.
4. Members and guests will be asked to pay 50p per day each as an attendance fee to cover expenses. Money will be collected at the time and should not be sent in advance.
5. It will not be necessary formally to book places, but the Secretary (Dr Brian Horne, 11b Roland Gardens, London SW7) will be glad of informal notification of those intending to come to the OUP visit, in order that we can tell our hosts how many to expect for tea.
6. As soon as you reach a meeting place, please introduce yourself to one of the Society's officers. They will be wearing badges.

Any enquiries regarding the weekend should be addressed to the Secretary, or to the Chairman (Mr Richard Wallis, 6 Matlock Court, Kensington Park Road, London W113BS).

#### GIFT

Miss Ursula Grundy has most kindly given the Society a small collection of original Charles Williams material. In accordance with decisions previously made by the Council, manuscripts, holograph or typed, are being deposited in the Charles Williams collection at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and printed material, original or xeroxed, in the Society's reference collection in King's College, London, Library. The Council are most grateful to Miss Grundy for her gift.

#### SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members are reminded that the 1979-80 subscriptions are due from 1 March 1979. The sums are £2 for single members, £3 for couples. Please send the appropriate amount to the Treasurer.

#### NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome is extended to:

Conrad and Shanese Gempf, 193 Kelton Street, Apartment 14, Allston, Mass., USA.  
 Rev. Francis A R Minay, The Vicarage, Alders Road, Tudeley, Nr. Towbridge, Kent.  
 Robert Peckham, 3644 Balfour, Detroit, Michigan, USA 48224.

#### 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

Membership

Secretaries: Jenet and Philip Bovey

) While Philip and Jenet Bovey change their  
 ) address, please send all communications for  
 ) them to the CWS Secretary, Rev Dr Brian Horne.

Lending

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

Editor: Mrs Molly Switek, 8 Crossley Street, London N7 8PD (607 7919)

THE MYTH OF BACON

Newsletter 13 explained that the programme for the original Downe House performance has been found, as well as the missing Part II. Both are reproduced in this Newsletter, the programme first, dated 25 June 1932.

'A MYTH OF FRANCIS BACON

by

CHARLES WILLIAMS

(Characters in order of speaking)

First Episode - The Beginning.

A Court in the Palace.

The Father of Salomon's House .....	Carol Stewart
Francis Bacon .....	Susan Lamert
William Cecil, Lord Burleigh .....	Elizabeth Pym
Sir Robert Cecil, Burleigh's Son .....	Nancy Joy
Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex .....	Biddy Grant

INTERLUDE - The Rebellion of Essex.

Second Episode - The Fall of Essex.

A Courtyard near the Palace.

Augustine Phillips .....	Diana Keane
William Shakespeare .....	Joan Clark
Francis Bacon .....	Susan Lamert
A Secretary .....	Patsy Schofield
Sir Robert Cecil .....	Nancy Joy
The Earl of Essex .....	Biddy Grant
Two Guards .....	P. Godman & P. Patterson

INTERLUDE - The Procession of the Lord Chancellor.

Third Episode - The Accusation.

A Room in York House.

Francis Bacon .....	Susan Lamert
A Steward .....	Barbara Roffey
Thomas Hobbes, Bacon's Secretary .....	Rosemary Hughes
Audley .....	Wendy Rathbone
A Gentleman .....	Jay Horne
A Servant .....	Hilary Stebbing
The Earl of Arundel .....	Marjorie Boyd
The Earl of Shrewsbury .....	A. Monier Williams

Epilogue - The Last Experiment.

Highgate Hill.

Francis Bacon .....	Susan Lamert
Thomas Hobbes .....	Rosemary Hughes
A Woman .....	Dauphine Bosanquet
The Father of Salomon's House .....	Carol Stewart

'This Myth of Francis Bacon has two themes. The first is the life of Bacon, presented in its four chief episodes; the second is the purification of his interior being which proceeded simultaneously. That very great mind proposed to itself, it seems, two objects (1) the service of the State (2) the organisation of all knowledge and its expansion to the widest possible limits. He shaped an image of this second concern in the description of Salomon's House, or the College of the Six Days' Work of God, which closes the New Atlantis (published after his death). The motives of his actions were no doubt often mixed; his self-interest and his duty sometimes pointed in the same direction. Lesser minds have therefore found it easy to blame him.

The Myth opens with the supposed appearance to Bacon of one of his own imagined pontiffs of Salomon's House, who defines for him his work and darkly threatens him with the pain which the making pure of his devotion to wisdom will bring on him. The First Episode then presents his rejection by his uncle Burtleigh and his friendship with the Earl of Essex, the beginning of his political career. The Interlude which follows is the noise of the rebellion of Essex, and contains a momentary echo of the presentation of Richard II by the Chamberlain's men at that time. Augustine Phillipps, the manager of their company, was examined by the Privy Council upon this performance; and it is not too extreme a fancy that Shakespeare, the writer of the play, was ordered to be in attendance also. The quite possible meeting of Shakespeare and Bacon in 1601 (Bacon had published the first edition of the essays in 1597; Shakespeare in 1601 was at the Hamlet-Troilus period) surrounds the encounter of Bacon and the fallen Essex with the renewed sense of Bacon's prime duties, as Cecil touches his immediate profit in the matter. Shakespeare's prophecy precedes the Second Interlude - Bacon's procession as Chancellor (1618). The Third Episode presents his own fall, and the triumph of his passion for reality.

Beyond this there is shown in the Epilogue his last experiment, the appearance of the Father of Salomon's House, and his approaching death, struck into him at once by the cold of winter and by that of an immortal purity. The song of the young generations to whom he commended himself accompanies him as he is carried out.'

. . . . .

## II

### Augustine Phillipps and Shakespeare enter.

Phillipps: This is the blessedest day of all my life!  
I hardly thought to see the sun again.

Shakespeare: Richard's own dungeon won't be half as deep  
as the pit I'll hide that play in: all because  
my lord of Essex must be picturesque,  
but I'm not made for such benevolence  
to the poor thrifty boat-in-floodtime world.

Phillipps: All's safe: we've slipped the danger.

Shakespeare: Have we so?  
It makes me mad to think we ran so near;  
to think you let yourselves be gulled and bribed  
by his jerrymaking Gerry Merricks.

Phillipps: Will,  
he offered us twice our pay, and -

Shakespeare: Easy fools,  
to let his Merricks thumb-and-finger you.  
Whenever I'm out of the theatre ~~things~~ go wrong.

Phillipps: You'd have stood out; you'd have refused.

Shakespeare:

I am

as good a gentleman as Gollykins,  
and Gellykins should jelly in Little Ease  
before he took my coat of arms to wag  
over his lusty bombast. Bombast's place  
is on the stage, my friend; let's keep it there.

Phillipps:

At least our stage is ours; our verse is yours;  
we are the Chamberlain's men; but there be men,  
whom the Earl made, who now not merely slip  
as we do from his fall, but push him down.

Shakespeare:

Close tongue: ware slitting!

Phillipps:

Nay, but all men know

that Bacon will denounce him at the Trial.  
Why, the Earl set him on his stage.

Shakespeare:

Aye, aye!

I am something weary of being helped by the world  
with so much picturesque generosity.

Phillipps:

You? but I talk of Bacon.

Shakespeare:

So you do.

I dream myself am Bacon at this pinch  
Did you feel his Essays?

Phillipps:

Feel his - ?

Shakespeare:

Read them then?

But "feel"'s the word. I couldn't think like that,  
twining and thrusting, measuring in and out  
with the very footrule of man's mind that God  
once plotted all earth's base with. The slow words -  
its only that that stops me envying him.

Phillipps:

What stops you? Envyng him? what do you mean?

Shakespeare:

It's .. it's all but .. only it isn't quite ...  
That's what I mean. He's all but the perfect whole -  
nay, he's a whole that I shall never be.  
To have his power, his learning, his grand style -  
I'd give up everything except my own.  
Not that we are such perfect opposites  
we must be somewhere a strange unity.  
Well - I suppose I'd rather be my half.  
And - hist! it's Bacon.

(Bacon enters, with a Secretary)

Bacon:

These to the copying clerks.

This to the Secretary: this I'll keep.  
The examinations press him hard.

The Secretary:

He's dead,

If he can make no better at his trial. (He goes out.)

Bacon:

Ha, sirs! at Court still? Well, you're going free.  
Take heed to what you play another time -  
or what you write, you poet. (Phillipps bows and goes)

Shakespeare: Truth, but verse  
teaches its maker more of its will than prose;  
that's why the greater minds choose prose. They know  
before they write it more of what they mean  
than we poor poetasters.

Bacon: Oracles  
dancing the inspiration!

Shakespeare: Neither so.  
But - don't your Essays teach you how to act -

Bacon: How now!

Shakespeare: May not a paltry poet have read  
and contemplated study's horizon?

Bacon: You -  
What, sir! you flatter!

Shakespeare: Can I flatter you  
or what your mind discerns or what it - serves?

Bacon: What then?

Shakespeare: Less than perfected knowledge?

Bacon: Known!  
All known - all knowledgeable wonder brought  
into the edifice of the mortal mind.  
The vault of worms, the skiey spire of stars,  
and all the involuting laws of each -  
the operation of the secret forms -  
man, man shall hold it soon.

Shakespeare: Sooner for you.

Bacon: You are the playwright Shakespeare, are you not?

Shakespeare: For business' sake; somewhat for pleasure too.

Bacon: Because the actions and events of man  
are less by much than his desires, less great,  
heroical and potent, you draw up  
tales to delight his fiction of himself.  
You must reduce the shows of things to be  
subordinate to man's longing: reason bows  
man's mind to things in their own nature, what,  
my master-mummer, can knowledge mean to you?

Shakespeare: Upon the shore, say - look, you there, I here!  
you judge the waves, you measure currents, plot  
the palpitating air in calm or storm:  
your exquisite pattern! your strong government. I  
build up a cameleopard from the sand  
wet from the ebb, blowing soft wind through it  
till the small image stretches, rises, talks,  
looms terribly leviathan, and therewith  
goes crunching from the pebbles such a sound  
as is your very pattern come to song.



Shakespeare: Shall you mock me or I mock you? Brave hearts,  
(cont.) at least we both whistled the wind; it came,  
and the same salt is clustered on our beards.  
We are strangely separate and as strangely one.

Bacon: What, fictitious\* and witty prattle with that deep  
excellency of learning, whereby man  
all pleasures else surpasses, and ascends  
into the heavens, making their motions bare  
as his hand's palm to study: the supreme,  
immortal, incorruptible reason! Out!

Shakespeare: I could say that! I could say that! but you -  
O Master Bacon, could you take my word?  
You cannot; I am you; you are not I.  
You are the intellect that cannot love.

(Cecil. Essex between his guards.)

Cecil: My lord, I dare not sound the Queen.

Essex: One word;  
Cecil, be wise: if I ride out this storm -  
you know the Queen - men that have slipped have stood  
as firm again. But give me speech with her.

Cecil: My lord, I dare not name you to the Queen  
except her Highness open.

Essex: Why, by chance -  
have me by chance somewhere when she goes by -  
She loved me.

Cecil: That is it. I think she thinks  
you never loved her back. Give you farewell.

(Essex, stepping back, sees Bacon)

Essex: Ha, Master Francis Bacon: save you now!  
You are another limb of this fair Court  
or are you other than the Francis back  
I talked great things with? you are he I plucked  
out of the gutter, fought with princes for,  
set on my right hand, would have dared to trust  
with my soul's honour?

Bacon: Did you?

Essex: Were we friends?  
You are among the dogs that bay me round  
against the granite wall that is the Queen

Cecil: My lord, you do your cause no good -

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\* fictitious - Shorter Oxford English Dictionary gives under Fiction - hence Fictitious, obsolete, ante 1641.

Essex:

No good:

all the good that I ever meant is turned  
to the cold faces that look down on me:  
look, the Queen laughs and Francis Bacon sneers.

Bacon:

My lord, I would not press a falling man  
But by your honour and God's truth, I charge  
your truth with this remembrance - that I swore  
always and always I was first the Queen's.

Essex:

Aye - pretty, pretty. Then 'twas 'save the Queen'  
with an exceeding low and mincing voice;  
now 'save the Queen' with a great sounding roar  
that blows you right up o'er my head to sup  
- for all I know - in the Privy Chamber. Ha,  
this is your gratitude: you owe me naught,  
do you?

Bacon:

I owe you -

Essex:

fame and lands and place:  
your life, your very mind -

Bacon:

No, by God's life.  
I that was born for the service of mankind -  
I that have sought to serve the commonwealth  
as a man serves his mother, on his knees,  
with what poor art he can; and serving so  
might hope to win his mother's listening thoughts  
to let him on a voyage of great skill  
to - where? some lost Atlantis.

Essex:

Lost! you lie.  
The Queen shall hear, shall see, shall relish me.

Cecil: (signing to the Guards): Farewell, my lord. God send your lordship good.

(He is carried off)

Cecil: (To Bacon) : Cousin, the Queen's Grace bid me send for you.  
Sir Edward Coke will lead against the Earl;  
she chooses you to second.

Bacon:

Second the Earl!

Cecil:

You are merry, coz: second Sir Edward Coke  
in the prosecution. Come to me to-night.  
I shall show you certain secret things. Meanwhile,  
your answer?

Bacon:

I am her Highness' creature; ever hers.

Cecil:

You do well; you were somewhat thought to be -  
what shall I say? - intimate with his thought -  
this readiness will purge you: you may look  
for recognition. Give you joy, good coz. (He goes out)

Bacon:

I warned - a score of times I warned him. God  
knows I am free of all blood-guiltiness.  
I bade him keep from Ireland; I besought,  
nay, wrestled with him. I was never his  
but while - no longer - while he was the Queen's.

Shakespeare: You cannot move except against the Earl.  
And can you cease to move?

Bacon: I cease? withdraw,  
leave the State service? leave the greater thing  
whereto the State may serve?

Shakespeare: It cannot be.  
The incorruption and the corruption drive  
your feet at once; impurity - purity.

Bacon: He rose not in his service, and he took  
order to make his service fall with him.

Shakespeare: It is a dreadful thing - this purity  
that works within us; this most pregnant cold  
wherein the sense of all our senses lives.  
yet is repugnant to all outer sense,  
and overthrows it; happy if we still  
find that, losing the outer. But the men  
who love us, living in our outward sense,  
find us grown treacherous to them where they live.  
Witness the poor wretch babbling in the Tower.

Bacon: The State is more than any score of Earls.

Shakespeare: Reason - good reason; the true reason lacks.  
There's something in you never cared for him.

Bacon: I loved him.

Shakespeare: Aye, the incorruption loves.  
'Tis the incorruption hath you: wait awhile -  
The incorruption shall have you nearer yet;  
it shall divide you - sharp; flesh from bone,  
giving you but yourself to be your food.  
The skeleton shall feed on living flesh  
when the day comes,  
(He moves off)  
the day that does not end.

(He goes out. Bacon also departs)

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C.W.S. A.G.M.

The Charles Williams Society Annual General Meeting was held on 9 June 1979, and followed by a very interesting talk from Mrs Anne Scott. It is reproduced here for the benefit of members unable to attend the meeting.

THE BACKGROUND OF THOUGHT TO THE TALIESSIN POEMS by Anne Scott

I remember very vividly my first encounter with Taliessin Through Logres. It was the term after I had met Charles Williams, when he had given a talk to the Oxford University English Club, and I had been so totally enthralled by the novelty of what he said and of his way of saying it that I had managed to scrape an acquaintance with him in order to have the opportunity of listening to him again. At that time I was a particularly penniless undergraduate, and had to rely on the lending library for all books except essential text books, but I was able to borrow, and devour with excitement and relish, Descent into Hell, He Came Down from Heaven,

and Descent of the Dove. So when in that second term I acquired a small sum of money, I went straight to the Oxford University Press shop to "buy some more Charles Williams". Taliessin Through Logres had been mentioned in the introduction to The Descent of the Dove, so I pulled it off the shelf, turned to the first poem, and read:

'Prelude.  
Recalcitrant tribes heard;  
orthodox wisdom sprang in Caucasia and Thule;  
the glory of the Emperor stretched to the ends of the world.

In the season of midmost Sophia  
the word of the Emperor established a kingdom in Britain;  
they sang in Sophia the immaculate conception of wisdom.

Carbonek, Camelot, Caucasia,  
were gates and containers, intermediations of light;  
geography breathing geometry, the double-fledged Logos.'

I felt as if I had run my face against a brick wall. I could make absolutely nothing of the verses: as far as I was concerned they had neither meaning nor beauty. I looked at one or two more pages of the book, despaired, put it back in its place, and bought The English Poetic Mind instead.

Of course that was not the end of the story. It was not long before I had come to the certainty that the Taliessin poems were the culmination of all Charles Williams' writings. But I know that many people who are enthusiastic readers of his prose have either never read his poetry, or looked at it and decided that it was difficult and unattractive. To these people I want to say some of the things that would have helped me through that first baffled reading. Those who love the poetry already will have their chance at the end of the talk to point out how inadequately I have dealt with it, and to fill in the most serious gaps.

I am tempted to make a huge generalisation and say that everything that Charles Williams wrote was either an enquiry into the nature of reality, an exploration and exhibition of the nature of reality, or an entranced admiration of the nature of reality. But it seems to me that he had a quite extra ordinary ability to hold in his mind a great number of levels or facets of reality - even ones which appear contradictory - simultaneously and with equal attention. This was one of the many applications of his beloved saying: "This also is Thou: neither is this - Thou." For him the true and central reality is God, who at one and the same time lends a little of his own reality to whatever exists, so that there is nothing that does not reflect some glimmer of his light, and is so unimaginably greater and other than everything else, which is all his creation, that it is impossible to form any idea of him which is not inaccurate and inadequate. But remembering the second half of that equation makes it safer to explore the first half, which it is a duty as well as a delight to do, since the Godhead itself has willed the multiplicity of creation. The poem The Vision of the Empire, which depicts the entire world in which the story of Arthur and Logres is to be enacted, begins in Byzantium, which is As-much-of-Heaven-as-can-be-imagined-on-earth, and there the enactments of the Emperor, who is As-much-of-God-as-can-be-imagined-on-earth, are translated into language that his subjects can understand, and carried by his messengers to every province of the Empire, that is, to every part both of the creation as a whole, and of its self-consciousness which is human nature. All that men see, all that men do, all that men are, the poet sees as so many categories of the one identity which is God, and Taliessin, in the poem The Coming of Galahad says that: "the clerks of the Emperor's house study the redaction of categories into identity: so we."

Looked at from another ~~angle~~ this is the principle, or web, or pattern of co-inherence. Each one of the categories is related to, and dependant on, and

deriving from, and exchanging its good with, all of the others, so that together they all make up a greater whole. When, in the poem Taliessin in the School of the Poets, the king's poet sings of Byzantium, he says: "Each moment there is the mid-most Of the whole massive load; Impulse a grace and wonder a will, Love desert, and sight direction, Whence the Acts of Identity issue In the Pandects and the Code." This is the state of beatitude, when the co-inherence of all the categories is willed and experienced, but the opposite state, when it is denied and rejected, is also possible. In the poem The Prayers of the Pope, Deodatus the Pope enters into that state in order to offer it to God. (See the quotation from:

"He felt within him the themes divide" .....to "so the Pope died in a foretasting."

This is the view of the universe which led Charles Williams to include some elements of the Arthurian story in his poems, to exclude others, and to invent new ones. It led him to make the Grail story the centre of his Arthuriad: according to his version the kingdom of Logres and Arthur as its king were established by the Emperor for the purpose of becoming a fit home for the Holy Grail when it should be brought from its secret hiding place into men's sight and the Holy Trinity itself should be made manifest to redeemed and sanctified humanity. Merlin came to prepare Logres to become "the house of the Hallows in the Empire" and Arthur to be its king and the guardian and servant of the visible Grail. But all men have free-will: therefore, freedom of choice. In He Came Down from Heaven Charles Williams gives one definition of sin as "the preference of an immediately satisfying experience to the believed pattern of the universe: one may even say to the pattern of the glory." And this is what Arthur does: he responds to the call of Merlin, he builds Camelot, he fights and defeats the savage barbarian pirates, but when he is crowned and his throne is secure he sees it as his crown, his throne, his kingdom. In the poem The Crowning of Arthur we are told how he "stood to look on his city: the king made for the kingdom, or the kingdom made for the king? Thwart drove his current against the current of Merlin: in beleaguered Sophia they sang of the dolorous blow."

The poems telling of the Dolorous Blow were, alas, never to be written but the prose of Charles Williams' unfinished book The Figure of Arthur tells us how Arthur's self-love and the wounding of the royal guardian of the Grail together bring about the destruction of Logres. "It might be supposed" he writes, "that the King Pelles, the Keeper of the Hallows, was at the proper time, when Merlin had brought Arthur into his royalty and Logres had been cleared and established, to emerge from Carbonek into Logres, directing the processions of the Grail and the prelude of the Second Coming. Logres was to be blessed thus, and he who said Mass in Sarras would say it in Caerleon and Camelot as he had done in Jerusalem. (That is Christ, because Sarras is the Land of the Trinity, the place of God-as-he-really-is)... The Dolorous Blow consisted in the wounding of the royal Keeper of the Hallows with the Sacred Spear. The Spear was that which had wounded the side of Christ, and it bled continually at the point. It was then aimed at the central Heart. But when Balin le Sauvage used it, he used it for his own self-preservation. It is this turning of the most sacred mysteries to the immediate security of the self that is the catastrophic thing. It is indeed, morally, precisely the wounding of the Keeper of the Hallows which then takes place. Man wounds himself. It is an image of the Fall: it is also an image of every individual and deliberate act of malice ... The ever-bleeding wound of the Keeper is exactly symbolical, and so is the ruin that falls on Logres. A new darkness and sterility begin to creep through the land from which the pagans have been expelled. The outer conquests are not the inner. Victory is still being celebrated in Camelot when defeat issues from Carbonek... Balin the Savage, who struck the Dolorous Blow, in ignorance kills his own brother Balan, and Balan him. The natural pieties begin to be lost, and there is incivility in the blood ... The queen Morgause of Orkney, the wife of King Lot, was Arthur's sister. But he does not know this when she comes to his court, and he tempts her to lie with him. The offspring of that incestuous union is Mordred, and the fate of the Round Table comes into the world almost before the Table has been established: say, at the very feast of the crowning of Arthur and the founding of the Table. The seed of its destroyer lies in the womb of Morgause while she watches the ceremonies. This is not irony; it is something beyond irony. No doubt the wise young Merlin knows, but it is not for him to speak, or only in riddles. He knows that the egress of the Grail from Carbonek has now been prevented, but also he

prepares the Perilous Seat (where only Galahad, the Achiever of the Grail, can sit, years later). He sets that empty chair among all the chairs; he promises an achievement, and a restoration from a destruction which is known then to him alone." As C.S.Lewis said: "In these pages we have been allowed to see the Arthurian story re-shaping itself in Williams' mind. Nominally he is writing criticism or literary history, but in reality creation is going on." This creation is the result of the meeting of the events of the Arthurian story with the preoccupations of Charles Williams' mind, and this is shown with particular clarity in his development and conjoining of the incidents of the unwitting killing of each other by the brothers Balin and Balan, and the equally unwitting incest of Arthur with his sister the queen Morgause of Orkney.

The second chapter of He Came Down from Heaven deals with the Fall of Man and the nature of evil. (I am using here C.S.Lewis' summary of the chapter in Arthurian Torso) "The Fall was 'an alteration in Knowledge'. God from all eternity knows both good and evil: both the good which he is and has created, and the evil which he is not and has not created. He knows the latter by simple intelligence without calling it into existence; knows it as an unrealized contingency. Man's knowledge, however, is limited by experience, and Man therefore at first knew only Good: there was nothing else for him to know. To the Adam in this blissful condition came the terrible wish to 'know as God' to know more than good, to know that contrast of good with evil which God knew as a contingency though not an actuality... They were able to effect their wish. But knowledge by 'simple intelligence' was impossible to their nature. For them, to know evil was to experience evil; and since nothing but good existed this could only mean to experience good as evil. Hence the first result of the Fall was shame - which consisted precisely in experiencing as evil their own bodies which were in fact good: hence, finally, that state of mind in which the Divine Order and God Himself are experienced as evil."

There is one of Charles Williams' preoccupations: here is the opening of the 19th chapter of the Morte D'Arthur, "King Arthur rode unto Caerleon. And thither came to him King Lot's wife of Orkney in manner of a message, but she was sent thither to espy the court of King Arthur; and she came richly bisene, with her four sons Gawaine, Gaheris, Agrawaine, and Gareth, with many other knights and ladies. For she was a passing fair lady, therefore the king cast great love unto her and desired to lie by her; so they were agreed, and he begat upon her Mordred, and she was his sister on his mother's side, Igraine. So she rested <sup>her</sup> a month, and at the last departed. But all this time King Arthur knew not that King Lot's wife was his sister." The result of the meeting is to be found in the poem Lamorack and the Queen Morgause of Orkney: "The young wizard Merlin, standing by me said, 'Balin had Balan's face, and Morgause her brothers'. Did you not know the blow that darkened each from others? Balin and Balan fell by mistaken impious hate. Arthur tossed loves with a woman and split his fate. Did you not see, by the dolorous blow's might The contingent knowledge of the Emperor floating into sight? Over Camelot and Carbonek a whirling cfeature hovered As over <sup>the</sup> Adam in Eden when they found themselves uncovered, When they would know good as evil; thereon it was showed, But then they must know God also after that mode."

All through these poems Charles Williams is carrying out that which he makes his own poet Taliessin declare to be one of the functions of poetry. "Let the hazel Of verse measure the multifold levels of unity." And he sees and exhibits levels of unity, categories of identity where other people might see random collections of unconnected, or even opposed, entities. In the poem The Sister of Percivale, Taliessin is lying along the top of a wall in the sunshine composing a poem as he watches a slave girl drawing water from a well in the yard below him: as she lifts the bucket from the well, a trumpet-blast at the gate announces the arrival of Percivale and his sister Blanchefleur.

(Please see quotation from "A round plane of water .." ... to "The love of the Emperor patterned in the blast and bone."

Reading the Taliessin poems, I find myself constantly reminded of a phrase from a passage in Wordsworth's Prelude which was especially beloved by Charles Williams. Wordsworth speaks of the moments "when the light of sense Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed The invisible world". Whenever a poem speaks particularly vividly to the senses of sight or hearing there will be this flash which takes it into a world until then invisible, a world where what might have seemed until then merely dry or vague abstractions shine out with greater and more vivid and gripping reality even than the concrete details which have revealed them. I think that one could take examples from every one of these 32 poems, but The Departure of Dindrane is particularly full of them. (I must just explain, for those who do not know the poem, that the sister of Percivale is not given a name in Malory, and that took the name Blanchefleur from Chretien de Troyes' 12th century poem Perceval in which it belongs to another damsel in Percivale's story. But after the publication of Taliessin through Logres, he re-read the later French romance The High History of the Holy Grail, was reminded that there Percivale's sister was given the name Dindrane, and gave her this name in his own later poems.) This sister of Percivale had been the Beatrice to Taliessin's Dante. He had known that she could never belong to him because her vocation was to the direct service of the unimagined and unimageable God as a contemplative nun. At the end of the 3rd chapter of The Figure of Beatrice, Charles Williams writes that when the Beatrician glory is seen shining from and through some person with whom marriage is not possible "to observe and adore the glory is not sin, nor to receive the humility and charity shed from the glory... The Way of Affirmation is enlarged to include the Rejection; and how? by a preference of the principle of satisfaction to satisfaction itself." It is, in fact, necessary to reverse the definition of sin already quoted from He Came Down from Heaven, and choose to prefer "the believed pattern of the universe; one might even say the pattern of the glory" to "an immediately satisfying experience." In The Departure of Dindrane, Taliessin is in this condition as he escorts Dindrane to her convent - the condition which Charles Williams' admired Coventry Patmore summed up so succinctly when he wrote: "With all my will, but much against my heart, We two now part." The poem, however, is not written from the point of view of Taliessin, but from that of a slave-girl in Taliessin's household who forms part of the escort. It is her intense visual and aural consciousness that from time to time flashes into the revelation of the invisible world.

(Please see quotation from "The household waited in the court .." ... to "And either no less than other the doctrine of largesse."

But while Charles Williams could see so clearly the beauty and rightness of both the great Ways to God - and could illustrate so vividly his own comment in He Came Down From Heaven "Our Lord the Spirit is reluctant to allow either of the two great Ways to flourish without some courtesy to the other" - he never forgot the possibility of stopping short on the Way and giving to one of the Images that adoration which should proceed through it to its creator. Lancelot and Arthur both do this, Arthur the more dangerously. In the last verse of the poem The Star of Percivale, we are told how the king and his household attend Mass, and how "the King in the elevation beheld and loved himself crowned; Lancelot's gaze at the Host found only a ghost of the Queen." Arthur's self-love reaches the point of self-idolatry, so that when he should be preparing himself and Logres to receive and serve the Holy Grail Merlin finds him "dreaming of a red Grail in an ivory Logres Set for wonder, and himself Byzantium's rival For men's thuribled and throated worship "so that he sleeps contentedly "pleased With the Grail cooped for gustation and God for his glory. The aesthetic climax of Logres" - a passage which always reminds me of the much-publicized production, in my younger days, of a splendid volume entitled The Bible Designed to be Read as Literature. But a less frivolous and more accurate comparison is with Lawrence Wentworth's retreat from uncomfortable reality to comfortable self-love and self-satisfaction in Descent Into Hell. To Charles Williams this was the denial of the great principle of coinherence, or, the City. "What", he asks, "is the characteristic of any City? Exchange between citizens, ...What is the fundamental fact of men in their natural lives? The necessity of exchange... What is the highest level of Christian dogma? Exchange between men and God, by virtue of the union of Man and God in the single Person, who is, by virtue again of that Manhood, itself the City, the foundation and the enclosure ... This office of substitution did not need Christendom to exhibit it, nor to show of what hostility as

well as of what devotion it might be the cause. Christendom declared something more; it declared that this principle of substitution was at the root of the supernatural, of universal, life as well as of natural ... Hostility begins to exist, surely, whenever and wherever we forget that we are nourished by, that we live from - whomever; when we think that we can choose by whom we shall be nourished. If anthropos has any meaning, if the web of humanity is in any sense one, if the City exists in our blood as well as in our desires, then we most precisely must live from, and be nourished by, those whom we most wholly dislike and disapprove. Even the Church, forgetting that sacred title given to Mary, anthropotokos, has too often spoken as if it existed by its own separate life. So, no doubt, sacramentally and supernaturally, it does; but so, by the very bones and blood of its natural members, it very much does not. And where the Church has forgotten, other ideologies do not bother to try and remember, and some certainly deny. There is but one dichotomy: that between those who acknowledge that they live from the life of others, including their 'enemies', and those who do not. It is in this sense, indeed, in which we must 'forgive' our enemies. And the moment the dichotomy is admitted it immediately becomes a temptation. Whoever does not admit it is regarded as an 'enemy' and we deny that we can possibly live and be nourished by him. He at least is alien? No. Terrible humility! We derive from those we denounce: 'though they slay me, yet will I trust in them'."

This passage comes from a book review (reprinted by Anne Ridler in her selection of Charles Williams' writings The Image of the City) which was printed in the weekly periodical Time & Tide in 1938. By what I think he might have called a merciful condescension of the Omnipotence the last of the Taliessin poems as they were published in book form deals with the redemption and restoration of the lost and damaged creation through exchange and substitution between God and Man, and we find in the later poetry the compression and heightening of the thought in the earlier prose, as the Pope prays for the Empire which is being attacked by the heathen barbarians whose 'virtue is monopolized and grace prized in schism' and also for those heathen attackers. "The Pope prayed, 'Where is difference between us? What does the line along the rivers define? Causes and catapults they have and we have, And the death of a brave beauty is mutual everywhere. If there be difference, it must be in thy sense That we declare - O Blessed, pardon affirmation! - And they deny - O Blessed, pardon negation! - That we derive from them and they from us, And alive are they in us, and we in them. We know how we have sinned; we know not how they. Intend for us the double wealth of repentance; Send not, send not, the rich empty away'."

I turn to prose again: "The body and blood of Christ are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the appearance of bread and wine... so that, to make perfect the mystery of unity, we ourselves receive of that which is His what He Himself received of that which is ours." Could anyone who had read Charles Williams' other writings, but not The Descent of the Dove, have realised that this was not a quotation from him, but from the First Canon of the Fourth Lateran Council, which was held in 1215, the year of Magna Carta, and the period of the writing of the great French romances which first linked the Holy Grail with the story of King Arthur and his knights. As Merlin says to Taliessin: "In all categories holds the largesse of exchange", and it was not heedlessly that Charles Williams chose to put at the end of both the Taliessin collections a poem which culminates in that greatest of all acts of substitution, exchange and unity which is the Giving and receiving of the Holy Eucharist.

I must now, as Lending Librarian, add a useful and practical note to these remarks. Anyone who wants to read a proper and scholarly disquisition on Charles Williams' Taliessin poems can find one in Alice Mary Hadfield's Introduction to Charles Williams, in Anne Ridler's The Image of the City, and in C S Lewis' Arthurian Torso. These, and the poems themselves, are all available for borrowing here and now.

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