The Charles Williams Society

NEWSLETTER

No. 26, SUMMER 1982

MEETINGS OF THE CHARLES WILLIAMS SOCIETY

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IS September 1982: The Society will hold a one day conference at St Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe church in Queen Victoria Street, London EC4, starting at IOam and continuing until about 5pm. In the morning Joan Wallis will talk to us about the history and architecture of the church of St Magnus the Martyr referred to by T.S. Eliot in The Wasteland, to be followed by Stephen Medcalf speaking on 'The novels of Charles Williams and the Four Quartets of T.S. Eliot'. This will be followed by discussion and lunch (bring your own food - coffee and tea will be provided). To aid the digestion, those who wish to can then visit St Magnus the Martyr nearby in Lower Thames Street. After lunch and the walk we will read the first Masque - The Perusal' - and Thelma Shuttleworth will talk on her recollections of Charles Williams. The Committee hope that this programme will be of interest to members and friends and that as many as possible will be able to attend.

13 November 1982: David Llewellyn Dodds will speak on: "I Am A Wonder Whose Origin Is Not Known" - some thoughts on Taliesin and Taliessin.!

26 February 1983: Richard Sturch will talk on 'Common Themes among Inklings'.

II June 1983: Annual General Meeting. Professor Barbara Reynolds will speak on 'Charles Williams, Dorothy L. Sayers and Dante'.

Except for the September Conference, all the meetings will be at Liddon House, 24 South Audley Street, London W.I.

LONDON READING GROUP

Sunday 3I October 1982: The Group will start reading Arthurian Torso and will meet at 'St Basil's House', 52 Ladbroke Grove, London WII at Ipm. Please bring coffee, sandwiches and copies of the book.

OXFORD READING GROUP

This Group meets fortnightly to read alternately a play and a novel by Charles Williams For details contact either Brenda Boughton (Oxford 55589) or Anne Scott (Oxford 53897).

LAKE MICHIGAN AREA READING GROUP

We are delighted to have news from this Group sent by Charles Huttar. The Group has completed a successful first year with monthly meetings from October to May (except December) reading Descent into Hell. The attendance was generally IO - I5, some driving as much as 90 - IOO miles each way to attend meetings in Holland, Michigan. The next meetings of the Group will be on Sundays I9 September, I7 October and 2I November, all at 2pm. Generally the location will be Holland, but there will be some variation to encourage attendance by those farther away - we are thinking especially of several we know to be interested who live near South Bend, Indiana (Notre Dame University). Readers who would like information should phone Charles Huttar -(616) 396 2260 - or write to him at I88 W. IIth St., Holland, Michigan, 49423, USA. For the autumn meetings we plan to begin Descent of the Dove.

1982 A.G.M.

The Society's 6th AGM was held on 22 May at Liddon House. Some points of general interest were that the Chairman reported on the year's activities, thanking all those who contributed to the Society's work and in particular the speakers who had addressed our meetings. The centenary of Charles Williams' birth will fall in 1986 - a subcommittee will be formed to consider how this should be honoured and any suggestions would be welcomed. The sale of books was going well under the guidance of Gillian

Lunn and Adrian Thomas, and the Society's finances were healthy, thanks to the payment of subscriptions and donations from members. The previous Committee were all re-elected but one vacancy exists.

C.W. BOOKS FOR SALE

The following books are for sale from Mrs Gillian Lunn, 26 Village Road, Finchley, London N3 ITL:

Descent of the Dove 2 copies £4.50p each Figure of Beatrice Forgiveness of Sins Ist Ed. Letters of Evelyn Underhill (intro by C.W.) \$2.50p Victorian Narrative Verse (Ed. by CW) £0.75p £5 each House of Octopus 2 copies Seed of Adam £5 All Hallows Eve £2.50p Place of the Lion 2 copies £2.50p Paperbacks - 50p each: War in Heaven (Faber) War in Heaven (Eerdmans) 2 copies Shadows of Ecstasy (Faber) 2 copies Many Dimensions (Penguin)

Please send no money when ordering. On receipt of the book(s) add the cost of postage to the price of the book(s) and make out a cheque to Gillian Lunn a/c no. 51053922. Overseas members are asked, please, to pay in sterling for otherwise the Society Ioses a considerable proportion of the money through the exchange and bank-charges.

NEW BOOKS

Members may be interested to know that Vol. 3 of 'VII', the Anglo-American Literary Review devoted to study of the works of George MacDonald, G.K.Chesterton, C.S.Lewis, J.R.R.Tolkien, Charles Williams, Dorothy L. Sayers and Owen Earfield is now available. It contains an article: 'Known in a Different Kind: A Comment on the Literary Criticism of Charles Williams' by the Society's Librarian, Brian Horne. 'VII' is available in England from Mrs P. Andrews, c/o Heffers Printers Ltd, Kings Hedges Road, Cambridge CB4 2PQ at £5 plus 50p postage; and is available in the USA from The English Department, Wheaton College, Illinois 60187 at \$ 10 plus postage.

In August Collins is publishing a new C.S.Lewis book Of This and Other Worlds, which contains the 'Panegyric' C.S.L. wrote for Dorothy L. Sayers' memorial service in 1958. In it he talks about Charles Williams' considerable influence on Miss Sayers. The book will also contain Lewis' BBC talk on 'The Novels by Charles Williams' which members may recall was read to us at our meeting in Oxford by Walter Hooper.

C.W.'S HOUSE IN ST ALBANS

The house that C.W. lived in in his youth, 36 Victoria Street, St Albans, will shortly be demolished and the site re-developed. At present the house is used as a Sue Ryder Charity shop and the manageress says they expect demolition to begin very soon. The building is very delapidated indeed, the upper floor unsafe and ivy coming through the walls at the back of the shop. So any members wishing to pay their respects are advised to go soon! The shop is open between IO - 5, Monday to Saturday.

EXHIBITION IN ST ALBANS

If anyone has any recollections or - even better - anything suitable for a visual display - relating to C.W.'s life in St Albans we would be most grateful and interested as there is a possibility of some sort of exhibition being planned in St Albans. Please let Gillian Lunn know if you can help in this way.

NEW MEMBERS

Following the Society's AGM on 22 May, we were delighted be be able to welcome John Heath-Stubbs who talked to us on the subject of Charles Williams and the 20th Century Literary Tradition, We are pleased to transcribe this for those not able to attend.

I want to suggest that CW may be less of an eccentric in relation to the main-stream of 20th century literature, at least in England, than might be supposed. He is not generally included in poetry anthologies or surveys of English literature or recommended for study in many University Departments of Literature. The fact that we have a Society devoted to the study of his work reflects this.

I would be sorry if he were to be regarded merely as a cult figure. In terms of influence on others he can be seen as important in relation to English literature in the 20th century. I shall have more to say on his mature poetry than on his novels and rest my claim mainly on his poetry.

I want to look first at the novels and where they belong. They belong to a genre of writing which was developing in the late 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th century - novels dealing with the supernatural. This was different from the Gothick novels of earlier times and was linked with a revival of interest in the occult and in spiritualist ideas. This was largely non-serious, escapist literature Into which some of the Victorian neuroses entered fully. The present-day resistance to CW springs from this. His subject-matter is suspect as is that of Denis Wheatley for example. But more serious writers have operated in this field. The occult can be given a philosophical framework especially in the hands of writers who were Christians and it is with them that CW belongs. Among Victorian novels, Margaret Oliphant's A Releaguered City (1880) concerns a city occupied by the returning spirits of the dead. It is a remarkable book in terms of insights and techniques, using a multiplicity of narrators representing different degrees of belief and disbelief. It was in the Edwardian period that this genre most flourished - Arthur Macken, John Meade Falkner - both writing from a Christian point of view but with some suspect strains. CW was associated, I am almost certain, with the Isis-Urania Temple. This was a Christian group whose members also included Evelyn Underhill and A.E. Waite. It was one of the sections into which the Society of the Golden Dawn fragmented after its disruption about 1914. The Golden Dawn itself was a Society of Rosicrucians who were particularly interested in ritual magic. Not all its members, who included Macgregor Mathers (its founder), W. B. Yeats, Arthur Macken and Algernon Blackwood, were orthodox Christians.

Evelyn Underhill's novels such as <u>A Fillar of Dust</u> indicate sources of the type of fiction that CW wrote. The heroine, abandoned with her child, evokes a spirit of a quasi-angelical but neutral nature. She is then able to see the world we experience from the spirit's other-worldly perspective. For the most part the things of our world seem totally lacking in glory and significance to this spirit. When the heroine goes to see a State procession - that of the "Emperor of Poland" who is visiting England - she believes that the spirit will be utterly contemptuous of this empty pagentry, a procession at whose centre is "an old man whom all Europe knows to be dying". But to her surprise, almost for the first time, the spirit recognises a faint reflection of that world of order and glory out of which her spell has drawn it down. This is surely akin to CW's attitude. CW once reviewed a book in

Time & Tide containing the phrase: "There is something of Hollywood in Dante's Heaven". His comment was: "It would be truer to say that there was something of Dante's Heaven in Hollywood".

CW differed from most of the authors I have indicated in having a clear and lucid way of thinking about such matters, and a fundamental orthodoxy. But the use of such occult symbolism always carries with it the danger that the author may be tempted into gnosticism. W.B.Yeats is certainly affected in this way, as is John Cowper Powys. For some modern critics, the orthodoxy present in CW's novels is more disturbing than the heterodoxy in Powys or Yeats. The novel of the supernatural is not a genre that is really a living one today. However, one book written in the I960s - Kingsley Amis' The Green Man - is, I think, a deliberate exercise in the manner of CW, a supernatural thriller with surprising traces of theological orthodoxy in it.

CW's early poetry, such as that in The Silver Stair(1912), Poems of Conformity (1917), and Divorce (1920), shows a capacity to imitate other poets. These include the lyrists of the I7th century as well as Swinburne, Kipling and G.K. Chesterton. One must remember that in the early 20th century Swinburne had a great influence on poetry in spite of being concerned with a narrow range of subject matter. In CW's poem "On a Poet Going to Rome" from Divorce, the pilgrim is admonished by the spirits of Shelley and Keats who ask who their successors are and they obtain a surprising answer - Rosetti is seen as Shelley's successor, Coventry Patmore as Keats'. Among contempories, Walter de la Mare and Lascelles Abercrombie are named as being "most renowned". De la Mare, especially in his prose, plays with ideas of the supernatural similar to those of CW. Lascelles Abercrombie is not much read today but deserves re-examination. He had a hard struggle to earn his living as a writer until late in life. With regard to his later life, two factors have worked against him - his best poems are lengthy and dramatic, not lending themselves to anthologisation, and his plays, although interesting, have a turgid style which led to his being rejected by the early modernist movement, for example Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot and Herbert Read. Key dates in this modernist movement were the foundation of the Imagist Group in 1910 and the publication of Eliot's "The Wasteland" in 1922 - a "shift of sensibility" was taking place. According to F.W.Bateson in his English Poetry - A Critical History, such shifts are linked with transfers of social power. Each new movement is preceded by its fore-runners, for example in the 18th century Chatterton and Blake are the fore-runners of the Romantic movement, Gerard Manley Hopkins is the fore-number of the Modernist movement in the 20th century. One of the effects of these shifts is that many poets and poems valued in the previous generation are rejected and disappear from currency. Some poets are caught between these shifts and both CW and Yeats are examples. To suit the new Modern, they needed to re-form their style. Some of CW's earlier poems on Arthurian themes in Chestertonian metres, for example those included in Three Plays, were later re-written and included in Taliessin Through Logres. The work of Gerard Manley Hopkins (whom CW edited for 0.U.P.) doubtless taught CW the importance of freedom of rhythm and the use of internal rhyme.

In <u>Poetry at Present</u> (1930) CW looks at his contempories. These are mostly the so-called Georgian poets but the volume also includes a consideration of TS Eliot. Each chapter dealing with the work of a single poet, concludes with a sonnet in the style of that poet. That on Eliot has the following sommet:

'Put out the light and then put out the light,
 quietly the faithful mind puts everything out,
 Not with a gesture, not with defiance to flout
 the lamps (the ranter called them) of heaven, nor spite,
 but wait till the theatre empties; then with the flight
 of our tangled spectres, after the last tired shout
 of applause, time ends. The attendants will go about
 the empty corridors, putting out even the night.

Emptiness and fullness wholly alike enjoyed, since enjoyment must be, even of bleakness and woid; mingled extremes and delights of poetry - attentive in both, a mind hath everywhere stirred to (0 hark, hark! all richness held in a word) to entertain divine Zenocrate.

In concluding his poem with Marlowes line from Tamberlaine, CW is here imitating Eliot's practice (for example in 'The Wasteland' of including lines from other poets, mostly the Elizabethans. But he is also suggesting - and here his insight is in advance of many of his contempories - that the apparent darkness and confusion which he found in the earlier poetry of Eliot may, after all, be a preparation for a positive and spiritual vision. CW came to terms with Eliot's poetry with difficulty, and it is also true that Eliot found CW's own later poetry extremely obscure. Nevertheless the work of the two poets did converge and in their later years I think each was receptive to influences from the other. The Four Quartets have possible echoes of The Greater Trumps in the concept of the circling dance with the still centre. In CW's novel, the figures which make up the Tarot pack are seen dancing in this way. Only Sybil, the most spiritually developed of the characters, is able to see the figure of the Fool, the highest card in the pack which symbolises God. CW incidently shows a detailed knowledge of the Tarot pack, based on the works of Mathers and Waite. T.S. Eliot, when he used the symbolism of the Tarot pack in 'The Wasteland', admitted that he had no such detailed knowledge. Eliot's play The Cocktail Party and CW's novel Descent into Hell also have links of ideas. This is not only illustrated by the fact that Shelley's lines:

" Ere Babylon was dust

The magus Zoroaster, my dead child,

Met his own image walking in the garden are quoted in both these works, but also in the way that ordinary, middle-class people are made the agents of a higher and supernatural purpose. The influence of Eliot on CW has not been so often recognised. In this connection I should like to point out the resemblance in imagery between the following two passages. The first of these is from 'Palomides Before his Christening':

" In the blank between the queen's meaning and the queen first I followed my self away from the city up a steep trail. Dinadan rode past me, calling: "Friend, the missing is often the catching."

But I climbed: I bruised my ankles on gaunt shapes, knees, wrists, thighs; I climbed up a back; my feet jarred on the repetition of shoulders; crevasses showed their polished slippery sides.

At other times I clambered over house-roofs, without doors; on their blank sides the king's knights were flat cracks, chinks, rubbed patches, their heads grey blobs.

At last, above them all, I came to a cave and a heap of twigs some traveller had left; I rubbed a fire and sat within; the beast lay at the cave's mouth; I was glad of its company.

The fire burned awhile; now I know time was petrifying without. I sat and scratched. Smoke in a greasy thickness rolled round the cave, from flames of fierce fancy, flesh-fire-coloured.

Fire of the flesh subsided to ache of the bone; the smoke rolled out, faded, died; the beast, as the smoke thinned, had disappeared; starveling, I lay in bone on the cave's floor.

Bone lay loving bone it imagined near it, bone of its hardness of longing, bone of its bone, skeleton dreaming of skeleton where there was none. From the cave the greasy smoke drifted slowly outward.

Skeleton dreamed of skeleton it loved to neighbour, thigh yearning for thigh, humerus for humerus; by infinitesimal jerks on the cave's floor it thrust sideways to the shining cates it imagined.

Bones grew brittle; sinews yielded; spirit hated the air, the moving current that entered, movements in the cubical plot of the cave, when smoke emptied and bones broke; it was dull day.

Spirit spread in the cave, hating the air.
Bat-like, it hung to the roughness of rock; it lay sucking the hollow cavities, less than a bat, in bones where once it had found a nourishing marrow.

At last the bats frightened me; I left my pretties; airy currents blew my light flimsy ash to the cave's mouth. There was the track; it went over the mountain to Caerleon.

The sky had turned round; I could not think
why I should not be christened in the city of astrologers.
It was true I should look a fool before everyone;
why not look a fool before everyone?"

The next passage is from T.S. Eliot's 'The Wasteland' :

'Here is no water but only rock
Rock and no water and the sandy road
The road winding above among the mountains
Which are mountains of rock without water
If there were water we should stop and drink
Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think
Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand
If there were only water amongst the rock
Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit
Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit
There is not even silence in the mountains
But dry sterile thunder without rain
There is not even solitude in the mountains
But red sullen faces sneer and snarl
From doors of mudcracked houses ...'

The image of the dry bones also occurs in Eliot's 'Ash Wednesday'. There is, however, of course, a common source, that of Ezekiel's vision. Both poets may also have been influenced by Yeats' play The Dreaming of the Bones (1919) in which the life of the dead is seen as a kind of dream.

CW also had an influence on poets younger than himself. Taliessin Through Logres

appeared in 1938, The Region of the Summer Stars in 1944, the latter published by Nicholson & Watson for Tambimuttu's Poetry London publications. Because this firm was a leading publisher of new poets, CW's poems secured a far wider attention among younger readers than they might otherwise have done. Taliessin Through Logres was not widely read or acclaimed at the time of its publication. It did not appear to be in tune with the poetry of the 1930s but it is, in fact, more so than it might seem. 'The Calling of Arthur' with its account of the overthrow of King Cradlemas is close to the political poetry of the 1930s. King Cradlemas is seen as the representative of a decadent capitalism; Bors carries as his symbol the hammer and sickle.

Of these poets of the 1930s, by far the most influential was W.H. Auden; CW's concept of the image of the City enters prominently into Auden's later work. In a lecture I heard him deliver at Oxford, CW defined the romantic experience in terms of five images. The first of these was the religious experience itself, the second was the image of romantic love as in Dante's Beatrice, the third was the image of Nature as in Wordsworth, the fourth the image of the City, and the fifth was the image of great art (of which Keats' Ode on a Grecian Urn was a partial exploration). In regard to the Image of the City CW might have cited Virgil but instead he referred to those who 'until recently were thought of as our younger poets but are now regarded as hopelessly middle-aged'. By these he meant Auden, Day Lewis, Spender and MacNiece. CW thought that their poetry of social criticism showed an image of the Unjust City which was a partial, negative realisation of what he wished to indicate. Sometime in the late 1930s, Auden returned to the Anglican orthodoxy of his upbringing. In 1937 he had met CW in connection with the publication by the OUP of Auden's anthology The Poet's Tongue. According to Auden's own testimony this meeting was crucial.

CW was more aware of, and open to, contempory poetry than were his friends and fellow members of the Inklings group, C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. Kafka was almost the only writer in the modernist tradition that Lewis accepted, doubtless because of the allegorical nature of his novels.

In the I940s CW's poetry did make an appeal to many younger poets, including Vernon Watkins, Christopher Fry, Anne Ridler and Norman Nicholson. To these we may add a rather suprising addition - the name of Dylan Thomas who attended CT's lectures at the City Literary Institute in London. It is notable that Giorgio Melchiores in his book The Tightrope Walkers (1955) links the poetry of CW, Christopher Fry and Dylan Thomas as representations of what he calls 'mannerism' in modern poetry. Their styles are marked by a certain disturbance of and departure from colloquial spoken English, in a manner which marks them off from the style of the 1930s. Dylan Thomas' poem 'The Conversation of Prayers' in Deaths and Entrances (1946) seems to me to reflect the influence of CW's doctrine of exchange. The late G.S.Fraser has also made this point. In this poem an older man is praying in anguish and despair because his wife is dying. At the same time his child is beset by a mightmare of horror of the dark. Somewhere, it is suggested, their two prayers meet so that the child may be carrying some of the older man's (perhaps his father's) suffering:

The sound about to be said in the two prayers
For the sleep in a safe land and the love who dies

Will be the same grief flying. Thom shall they calm? Shall the child sleep unharmed or the old man be crying?

The conversation of prayers about to be said Turns on the quick and the dead, and the man on the stairs To-night shall find no dying but alive and warm

In the fire of his care his love in the high room.

And the child not caring to whom he climbs his prayer

Shall drown in a grief as deep as his true grave,

And mark the dark eyed wave, through the eyes of sleep,

Dragging him up the stairs to one who lies dead.

To sum up, I am suggesting that CW is a more integral part of the tradition of modern literature than is generally supposed. The same concerns which animate CW are not absent from other writers, both among his contempories and his successors.

Members may be interested in the following article by Professor J. McClatchey of the Department of English at Wheaton College, Illinois U.S.A.

Teaching Charles Williams to American Students - Presentation and Response

I have been asked to write a brief note on teaching Williams in an American college. Doubtless my experience is similar to others' in some ways and different in other ways, yet, perhaps, typical. I "teach Williams"(!) in a course called "Modern Mythology", along with MacDonald, Lewis, Barfield, Tolkien, and an American novelist, Malker Percy. (What an exclusive set of pupils!) The work of the course is a critical study of mythopoeia in these writers. The students have full access to the materials of the Made Collection, housed in the main library of this college, Wheaton College, which contains the books, manuscipts, and letters of Charles Williams.

The course structure allows me to devote three weeks to Williams in a semester of fifteen weeks; the class meets three days per week. I ask the students to read two of Williams' novels and his Arthurian lyric cycle. Fortunately, all of his novels are available in this country in inexpensive editions, and the poetry is published in a single volume that includes Taliessin Through Logres, The Region of the Summer Stars, The Figure of Arthur, and Williams and the Arthuriad, by Lewis. My opening lecture on Williams is biographical and critical, emphasizing his major themes and images. In my lectures on the movels I try to follow Williams' own practice of letting literature in general interpret this literature, but I do like to show a given novel in the light of his own larger canon. Of course, each work is its own reason for wonder and cause for adoring "the mystery of Love", and the imagination is always newly awakened by its peculfar image patterns and characters, not to mention its theological insights and surprises. But of course the poetry, with its irresistible Arthurian figures and themes, is the most enjoyable of all Williams' writings to teach. I ask the students to bring prepared questions and statements about Filliams and his books for open discussion during the last class period on him.

Apart from their interaction with current criticism and scholarship and their own application of critical approaches to his works, the students' questions and comments remind us of Williams' knack of arousing theological interest in his readers. Students ask about the concepts of exchange, substitution, and the Co-inherence, as one might expect, not just because these ideas bear heavily upon the interpretation of the books, but also, I think,

because they provide a fresh source of spiritual growth for the individual reader. They readily comment on Williams' presentation of love, both human and divine, and its corollary, salvation. I am surprised that students seem less intrigued by terror and the occult in Williams than they might be. Perhaps it is due to their concern for meaning in literature, and personal meaning, at that. Their reading of Williams as a writer of mythopoeia "reaches" them (to use Coleridge's term) in their souls, and they respond to its "diagrammatised web of glory" in which they happily find themselves, with joy and intellectual praise.

The following was written in response to a request for short articles from members on what CW meant to them. We are very pleased to be able to print this summary from John Hibbs. The references to Dr Routley follow the latter's talk given to the Society at its I980 AGM (reproduced in Newsletter I8).

Coming to CW - John Hibbs

My copy of Taliessin Through Logres has the date 'March 1946' in the flyleaf, so that is about the start. I think I had come across some of the poems in various anthologies; I remember finding a copy of The House of the Octopus on a church bookstall, and thinking after I had bought and read it that missionary plays did not have to be as apalling as those I had suffered from: So, with the help of Mr Blackwell, I bought everything I could find, and read it all. I saw Judgement at Chelmsford, too, twice - first at the Rudolph Steiner Hall, and then at the Scala. By that time I was 22.

I think I felt obscurely that here was a consistent body of thought that I could believe in at a time of personal confusion. That feeling has grown and become more explicit over the years as I have found that one can indeed trust CW's insights to lead you through the bad patches. Oddly enough, I find less direct influence from his poetry in my own than I do from other poets (notably Yeats, Hopkins and Graves). It is the whole body of thought that sustains, and the only other author I turn to with the same certainty of sustenance is E.R. Eddison. Or, perhaps, Charles Morgan - though in that I must sound very dated:

In Eddison, one goes tack to Spinoza; with CW one goes back to so much more. I think that, for me, there are three abiding strengths: the feeling intellect, the doctrine of exchange and the schizogenic power of Cressida. The first reassures me that my preference for inducive thought is legitimate, which is a comfort to me as a slightly uncomfortable academic. The last is a constant support when things are impossible: one must affirm 'this is and is not' - or, more readily, 'This also is Thou, neither is this Thou, O Lord'. And it is, all of it, exchange.

"'Tis mystery all" (that's Wesley, and, Dr Routley, here is one member of the Society who is not a hymn-hater). The doctrine of exchange seems to me to go so much to the heart of things. Its application to economics awaits the man; its contribution to sociobiology is becoming plain, as science tries to tackle the problem of altruism. And, in the doctrine of the Trinity, it lies in the heart of the universe. Yet, for me, the best statements of it lie in <u>Descent Into Hell</u> and <u>The Ascent of the Spear</u> - "wrong not us with pride of guilt or no guilt". This is not thought: it is knowledge, as one knows in the imagination the intolerable contradiction that is Cressida, or the inescapable contradictions of the Athanasian Creed. Ultimate reality is ambiguous - is

not that the physicists' "principle of uncertainty"? Is there any branch of knowledge to which C7 does not give insight?

But to write about CW is itself ambiguous. It is like the statement "I hold up my finger - that is Zen; I say I hold it up - Zen is gone". To answer Dr Routley again, perhaps that is why he has escaped the fate of C.S. Lewis one cannot but feel a fool if self-consciousness or posturing breaks in. When I first 'discovered' the novels, I felt as I read each one that I envied those who could live in such a world. Over the years since then - and with many re-readings - as I have discovered that the world CW opens to you is the real world, with its windows open to eternity.

And the biddest of these windows is the Beatrician one. I found myself writing recently, in another context, that an instumental attitude to sex is peculiarly revolting, and that the pursuit of mutual satisfaction is no more acceptable than individual self-seeking. The paradox is only to be resolved within a higher frame of reference altogether, and, in The Figure of Beatrice, CW makes it plain that this is startlingly high. It cannot be easy to live with that insight - it requires the most delicate equilibrium of all - but, for me, it "feels right" (as a scientist would say of a hypothesis).

In a final reference to Dr Routley - yes, I too am a puritan. In my way, this means trying to find a basis for understanding life that is not contingent, and in this search I find that Charles Williams has covered the ground before me. So that is why I came to him in the first place, and why I continue to return.

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