The Charles Williams Society

NEWSLETTER

No. 29. Spring 1983

MEETINGS OF THE CHARLES WILLIAMS SOCIETY

11 June 1983: Annual General Meeting. Professor Barbara Reynolds will speak on 'Charles Williams, Dorothy L. Sayers and Dante'. See inserted page for full details of the meeting.

10 September 1983: We will hold our annual day conference in the church of St Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe, London EC4. Professor de Mello Moser will speak on the theme of his book 'Charles Williams, A Quest, Vision and Myth'; Brian Horne will lead the discussion following, and after lunch we will read from the Taliessin poems. We will gather for coffee at about 10.30am, start the meeting at 11am and expect to finish at about 5pm.

19 November 1983) on one of these dates we will be having an outside
) speaker and on the other will be reading from
25 February 1984) Many Dimensions.

All meetings (except the conference) will be held at Liddon House, 24 South Audley Street, London W.1. starting at 2.30pm.

LONDON READING GROUP

Sunday 31 July 1983 at 1pm at St Basil's House, 52 Ladbroke Grove, London W.11. Coffee and tea are provided but sandwiches should be brought. As we make a donation of £5 to the House funds for the use of the room, each member will be asked for a contribution on the day. We will continue to read Arthurian Torso.

OXFORD READING GROUP

For details contact either Brenda Boughton (Oxford 55589) or Anne Scott (53897).

LAKE MICHIGAN AREA READING GROUP

For details contact Charles Huttar, 188 W.11th St., Holland, Michigan,49423, USA. Telephone (616) 396 2260.

PERFORMANCES OF CRANMER

Performances of David Dodds' production of Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury scheduled for May have regrettably had to be cancelled. He hopes to be able to have a production ready for the autumn.

NEW BOOK ON C.W.

The Novels of Charles Williams by Thomas Howard has now been published by Oxford University Press, New York at £14 or $18.95. Mrs Helen Hobbs, one of our American members writes of the book: 'Members of the Charles Williams Society will welcome Thomas T. Howard's new book The Novels of Charles Williams. Howard wrote the book to help those readers who find Charles Williams difficult to understand, and also to locate Williams' novels in the tradition of English fiction. He accomplishes both ends. His book also stands on its own as a credit to the art of literary criticism. Literary criticism is foremost in Howard's discussion of Shadows of Ecstasy and War in Heaven. For this reason, reading Howard first would not attract newcomers to these two books. This would be a loss, since the ideas in both novels outweigh any literary shortcomings of the prose. However, Howard makes up for this "faint praise" in his brilliant interpretations of All Hallows' Eve and Descent into Hell. Howard also does the much needed job of placing Williams' use of the occult in true perspective. Charles Williams Society members

know that every reading of or about Williams' works brings enriched understanding. Howard's book is a valuable contribution.'

MEETING AT CHURCH HOUSE

Members may be interested to know of a meeting being arranged by the Church House Bookshop at Church House, Great Smith Street, London SWI on Wednesday 29 June, at 7pm. There will be two speakers - Glen Cavaliero talking about his new book Charles Williams - Poet of Theology and Professor Rolland Hein talking about George MacDonald. All enquiries to the Church House Bookshop.

CURATOR AT WHEATON COLLEGE

Wheaton College, Illinois, USA, tells us that Dr Lyle Dorsett has been appointed curator of the Marion E. Wade collection from June I5, succeeding Dr Peter Veltman. This collection includes the works of C.S. Lewis, Owen Barfield, G.K. Chesterton, George MacDonald, Dorothy L. Sayers, J.R.R. Tolkien and Charles Williams.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members are reminded that I983 subscriptions are now due.

NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome is extended to:
Mrs E. R. Mussell, I5 Hatcliffe Close, Blackheath, London SE3 9VE.
Larry J. Nyberg, 218 Laurel Avenue, Highland Park, Illinois 60035, USA.

SUPPLEMENT

There is no supplement with this Newsletter.

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On 26 February I983 Richard Sturch was welcomed to a meeting of the Society to talk on 'Common Themes Among Inklings'. We are pleased to be able to reproduce his talk in this Newsletter.

"I should perhaps make it clear before beginning that I am only proposing to talk about what might be called the three quintessential Inklings, Charles Williams, C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien (with perhaps a few shy allusions to George MacDonald as a kind of I9th century proto-Inkling). My excuse for treating them together is certain themes which seem to appear quite often in all or most of them, but are not so prominent in all Christian writers or thinkers. The most conspicuous is what for lack of a better word I shall call 'moralism'.

No-one here will suppose that this implies asceticism or a neglect of pleasant things. All four were in fact rather fond of stressing the goodness of the senses. 'It is a good thing to eat your breakfast', says the old princess to Curdie: 'The thing is good - not you'. And 'water hot is a noble thing' according to one of Bilbo Baggins' bath-songs. Sybil Coningsby would have agreed: 'Drinks and baths and changes were exquisite delights in themselves; part of an existence in which one beauty was always providing a reason and a place for an entirely opposite beauty'. Nor by 'moralism' do I mean some sort of theology of 'justification by works', nor an ethical legalism. They do of course present their characters with situations that demand decisions, moral decisions if you like, but they do not see these simply as the application of law. It might be simplest to say that they were concerned more with the goodness of the agent than with that of the act. In the Screwtape Letters the tempters do not discuss whether pacifism or patriotism is objectively right for

the 'patient'; their interest lies in making him adopt either of them for the wrong reasons, or in using it to subvert him in his other choices. (It is perhaps significant that Williams, also during the 2nd World War, described pacifism as a 'vocation'). And repentance tends to be for the faults of one's character rather than for past sins. (Tolkien is probably the exception here.)

'Moralism', then, as I am using the word, is a passionate interest in human goodness - and indeed in all goodness. It is interesting that the 'Conversation of Damaris Tighe' in The Place of the Lion turns (like the conversations of Eustace and Edmund in Lewis' 'Narnia' books) on a good that is not strictly speaking a moral good at all - ordinary human love. At the last extremity of her terror, when the Eagle of intellect is appearing to her, who has been 'degrading intellect and spirit', in 'old, huge and violent shape', she calls on her lover. And the same principle of salvation comes again near the end of the same book, when for a moment the old Damaris reasserts itself. 'The years of selfish toil had had at any rate this good - they had been years of toil; she had not easily abandoned any search because of difficulty, and that habit of intention, by its own power of good, offered her salvation then.' You will even find something of this in Tolkien; in Leaf by Niggle at least part of Niggle's salvation lies in devotion to something outside himself (which, as the Skeleton in Cranmer remarks, is more than most of us do): 'He took a great deal of pains with leaves, just for their own sake. But he never thought that made him important.'

There is a natural tendency to suppose that great stress on morals by a Christian is likely to go with a light stress on dogma, and even on faith: a tendency to set St James against St Paul, as it were. This is perhaps true to a certain extent of MacDonald, who usually avoided theology; when he did not, it was usually based on moral principles. 'Understanding is the reward of obedience' - John 7:17 is a constant theme with him. It is taken up at times by Lewis (notably in The Magician's Nephew and The Silver Chair) and referred to with evident approval by Williams in Flecker of Dean Close. It was on moral grounds that MacDonald tended to an Abailardian approach to the Atonement. Lewis has, I gather, been accused of doing the same, but surely wrongly: though he avoided adherence to any theory of the Atonement ('The thing itself is infinitely more important than any explanations'), the death of Aslan in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe is straight substitution (though of course it may well be that he wanted a fairly close echo of the best-known picture of the Atonement, for the sake of his readers.)

For Williams, of course, substitution and exchange were absolutely central ideas, and in this company I need hardly expand on this; to him the Cross was 'a central substitution (whereby) He became everywhere the centre of, and everywhere He energized and reaffirmed, all our substitutions and exchanges'. 'What happened there the Church itself has never seen, except that in the last reaches of that living death to which we are exposed He substituted Himself for us. He submitted in our stead to the full results of that Law which is He.' This does not affect Williams' novels directly very much, though it is alluded to in Descent into Hell; the most direct appearance of the Cross is, I suppose, in All Hallows' Eve, where Lester Furnivall is receiving the force of the spell meant for Betty: 'She was no longer standing. She was leaning back on something, some frame which from her buttocks to her head supported her; indeed, she could have believed, but she was not sure, that her arms, flung out on each side held onto a part of the frame, as along a beam of wood ... The endurance had been short and the restoration soon, so quickly had the Name which is the City sprung to the rescue of its own'.

The central substitution, then, does not itself figure largely in Williams' fantastic writings; but the doctrines that it exemplifies do. When Williams is moralistic, it is with a morality of coinherence and exchange; it is the refusal of these that damns and the acceptance of them that blesses. 'Bear ye one another's burdens' and 'He saved others; himself he cannot save' are key texts; and they imply that we must let others bear our burdens at times. That was what saved Damaris - that she was willing to let someone else save her - as even Christ was saved from Herod the Great, by those who

died in his place, the Holy Innocents. 'The chastisement of His peace was upon them' (The Image of the City, p. 133), 'they suffered unknowingly in direct substitution for Christ' (Witchcraft, Meridian Books p/b, p. 118).

It is also possible to deny the coinherence, whether by refusing to give or refusing to take. The former is the more obvious. Simon the Clerk is depicted as a 'second climax' of the Jewish nation, yet in the long run he is also like any other sinner: 'It was fame and domination that he desired', not exchange; he would only take, and any giving he did would be merely incidental and comtemptuous. There is also the opposite peril, that of refusing to take. It is not so prominent in Williams' writings (it is perhaps rarer in actual life), but it exists, and he knew it. It was the first sin of Milton's Satan; it would have been the last sin of Damaris Tighe if she had not been converted. It was the sin, too, in Williams' pleasing 'Apologue on the Parable of the Wedding Garment'(The Image of the City, pp. 166-8), where the gentleman of quality, invited to Immanuel's fancy-dress ball, felt that would be beneath his dignity, and was turned away: 'He had his own; his own was all
but that permitted at the Ball'.
Now central to any moralism whatever must be the notion of choice; and over and over again the books of our four turn upon some character's choice. This is most conspicuous, maybe, in The Lord of the Rings, which moves to its climax through a series of such - beginning, indeed, back in The Hobbit, when Bilbo has the opportunity to kill his enemy Gollum and does not do so. The main adventure of the later book begins when Bilbo succeeds in choosing to abandon the Ring, and continues with Frodo's choosing to try and destroy it. Much later, in Lórien, each of the Company is offered the possibility of giving up their task in favour of some other good, for themselves or for others; and one of them, Boromir, eventually succumbs to the temptation, trying to seize the Ring for his own glory and his city's needs, though he repents before his death. Also in Lórien, Galadriel, who had set the Company these tests, is herself offered the Ring and the power that it commands. Then there is the choice of Faramir, who passes the test his brother failed, and what the chapter-heading itself calls 'The Choice of Master Samwise'. Finally, in the heart of Mount Doom, Frodo, who has come through such perils to destroy the Ring, declares 'I do not choosenow to do what I came to do' and claims the Ring as his own - upon which the first of our series becomes important again, for it is Gollum who seizes the Ring and falls with it into the fire.

Side by side with all this run other choices, hardly less vital to the story. Denethor exemplifies the refusal to take and the refusal to give at one and the same time. If the war is lost, he and Gondor will be utterly destroyed; but if it is won, he, as Steward, will become subordinate to the newly restored King, Aragorn. He is not willing either to give up his power or to receive it from another; he refuses the choice and commits suicide (thereby that much the more weakening the cause he has fought for). Saruman has earlier chosen the way of treason; his armies are defeated and his plans brought to nothing, but when he is offered the chance to repent and rejoin the fight against Sauron in a lesser capacity, he will not. 'Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven' - but his 'reign' is only a venting of malice in petty evils among the hobbits until, defeated even there, he is murdered by one of his own followers. In the Silmarillion, which is far more densely packed with sheer incident than The Lord of the Rings, and has as a result less exploration of its many characters, choice is less prominent; but it is there, and important. It is the choice of Feanor, first not to give the Simarils to restore light to the world, and then not to receive the warnings of Mandos, that gives rise to the whole theme of the book, and the choice of Lúthien that is the climax to the main subsidiary story.

MacDonald does not deal with choice so often. Foolish choices are found all right. Anodos in Phantastes makes more than one, in the best fairy-tale tradition of falling into the trap you have just been warned against, like Bluebeard's wife or the one-eyed prince in the Arabian Nights; Vane in Lilith behaves in a similar way, though out os self-will rather than folly. But MacDonald stresses most the choice that gives an opportunity for obedient trust, the sort of choice that faced Abraham when he was told to leave his father's house. This is found more than once in the 'Curdie' books, for example.

The most conspicuous examples of choice in Williams are I suppose to be found in Many Dimensions and Descent into Hell, but there are others in plenty. The House by the Stable, for instance, turns on one. The moment of choice that forms the climax of Many Dimensions is rather a special case; it is not a facing of temptation but a deliberate judgement among possible goods, entrusted to the Lord Chief Justice. 'It is a very dreadful thing to refuse health to the sick - but it is more tragic still to loose upon earth that which does not belong to the earth'.

In Descent into Hell the crucial choices are those of the military historian Wentworth; there are three, and each time he chooses the worse. A rival historian is knighted. A momentary pang of envy or resentment would perhaps be natural; but Wentworth likes and cherishes it, instead of (say) regarding the knighthood as an honour to his profession generally or as a chance to 'rejoice with those that rejoice'. Then the girl he is in love with prefers someone else, and he cannot accept this either, preferring a succubus fashioned out of his daydreams, a ghastly parody which is in no danger of showing the independence of the real girl. Finally, he is offered a chance for professional integrity, akin to the 'repentance through non-moral goodness' mentioned earlier. His knighted rival is, we are told, a 'holy and beautiful soul who would have sacrificed reputation, income and life, if necessary, for the discovery of one fact'. Wentworth had already begun to lose that sort of integrity; but he is given a chance to regain it. The uniforms for a play are historically incorrect. He could point this out. He is actually asked to say whether they are all right or not. But he cannot be bothered; he prefers his fantasies. And steadily he loses touch with reality and slides into a mindless damnation.

But it is Lewis most of all who is fascinated by what we might call the mechanisms of choice. Repentance through non-moral goodness is only one such. There is also, for instance, one which was for a time rather a favourite of Lewis's, that of the 'Inner Ring', which appears in an address at King's College, London, in an essay on Kipling, in the novel That Hideous Strength. There the main character, the sociologist Mark Studdock, has begun even at school to feel the lure of the charmed circle, the 'people who really matter', and the first part of the book is largely about how this is used by the leaders of the NICE (a kind of hell-born political conspiracy masquerading as a scientific institute) to lure him into their conspiracy. (The Inner Ring can of course be used for good purpose as well, but not in this instance; and it is not perhaps of much moral significance when it works for good.) He is brought into the fringes of one Ring after another until the idea of being left out in the cold - very cold, as the Rings would then be working against him - is utterly appalling, the idea of being 'in' utterly absorbing. And so, when first he is asked to do something for the NICE which he knows to be definitely dishonest, 'the moment of his consent almost escaped his notice; .... it all slipped past in a chatter of laughter, of that intimate laughter between fellow professionals, which of all earthly powers is strongest to make men do very bad things before they are yet, individually, very bad men'. He does in the end break with the NICE and repent: partly through love of his wife, when he realises that they wish to use her (she has clairvoyant powers); partly through revulsion at what is going on, for 'his toughness was only of the will, not of the nerves, and the virtues he had almost succeeded in banishing from his mind still lived, if only negatively and as weaknesses, in his body'. Also partly because of their efforts to implicate him completely: 'the knowledge that his own assumptions led to Frost's position, combined with what he saw in Frost's face and what he had experienced ... effected a complete conversion'. He is rescued largely by lingering traces of moral goodness, not only in weak nerves, but in his ability to see that the NICE is evil, at least when seen side by side with his wife, though he had failed to see it with himself.

That Hideous Strength also includes an instance of another kind of choice which is to be found in all four writers - the deliberately perverse choice. We have seen examples of this already, with Saruman and Denethor in Tolkien and with Wentworth in Williams. It is less conspicuous in MacDonald. There is something of it in the episode (already mentioned) of Anodos in the ogre's house; but its clearest appearance is in the 'Unspoken Sermon' on Freedom: 'The slave in heart would immediately,

with Milton's Satan, reply that the furthest from Him who made him must be the freest, thus acknowledging his very existence a slavery ... Being itself must, for what they call liberty, be repudiated ... The liberty of the God that would have His creature free is in contrast with the slavery of the creature who would cut his own stem from his root that he might call it his own and love it'.

The normal sinner prefers a lesser good (probably a selfish one) to a greater (probably an unselfish one on the face of it). Perversity has gone beyond this; it rejects known good for something that can hardly even be called a 'lesser good'. Saruman had sought more greatness for himself than he already had by right; but the thing he sought was good, for him at least, and had he come by it honestly might have been used for others' good too. But in the end he chooses a state which resembles his old goal only in its lack of subordination. It is not good for him or for others, and he knows this; but it is the only course left him that is opposed to the course he deserted, and therefore he chooses it. Better be damned than change one's mind. Frost, in That Hideous Strength, is similarly placed. The NICE is collapsing round him. He has been a determinist, disbelieving in free choice altogether; and now his theories actually become true in a way, and his mind is a mere spectator with no control over his body, which is now a puppet of hell, of no further use to it and about to be destroyed. But just before he dies he is given an opportunity. 'He became able to know (and simultaneously refused the knowledge) that he had been wrong from the beginning, that souls and personal responsibility existed. He half saw: he wholly hated ... With one supreme effort he flung himself back into his illusion'. If his beliefs had been true, they would have had value; even if not, there would have been value in the intelligence used in coming to them, or the integrity with which they were held. But none of these now apply. The beliefs are false; it is stupid and intellectually dishonest to cling to them: but the idea of abandoning them is intolerable. Saruman will not change his will; Frost will not change his opinions; the result in both cases is damnation.

Instances could be multiplied. Much of Lewis's The Great Divorce is a series of 'perverse choices'. But the most extended portrayal of perversity is perhaps Lavrodopoulos in Williams' War in Heaven. His original choice is not described, but the result is: 'No mortal mind could conceive a desire which was not based on a natural and right desire ... But of every conceivable and inconceivable desire this was the negation. This was desire itself sick, but not unto death; rejection which tore all things asunder and swept them with it in its fall through the abyss'.

The perverse choice is typically an act of pride (though Lavrodopoulos is now beyond even that); and our four take that sin very seriously. 'Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere fleabites in comparison' wrote Lewis: '... Pride leads to every other vice; it is the complete anti-God state of mind'. The Silmarillion is about little else. Pride first rots Melkor; pride ruins Feanor, 'the proudest and most self-willed of the Eldar, and sends him out into exile and death; as the story goes on pride strikes down one of the heroes after another. Tolkien is merciful; pride brings disaster and death, but not necessarily total corruption, for often the disaster and death follow it too swiftly. Fingolfin, 'the most proud and valiant' of the Elven-kings, challenges Morgoth to a single combat he knows he cannot win, in an act of both pride and despair; but he falls before more harm can be done(except by his loss!). The theme is worked out at greatest length in the story of Turin. He does indeed lead a life darkened by sorrows and malice that are not of his making; but these would not have wrecked him in the way they do but for the folly of his pride. Pride will not let him return to Doriath to face judgement after the death of Saeros - even when he knows that he has been acquitted. It makes him break the concealment of Nargothrond and prevent the destruction of its bridge (despite warning); and it is this that leads to the destruction of the city and sets in train the events that culminate in his own despair and suicide. Perverse pride is not analysed in the way it is in The Lord of the Rings, but its evil and stupidity are clear.

Even our non-perverse choices (the majority!) can be catastrophic for others, especially where power is concerned; and this theme keeps turning up in the three Inklings. One is

tempted to see this as a reflection of the times they lived in- though the problem of power is as old as mankind! Thus The Lord of the Rings is chiefly about the use of power and the Ring of Power. (Tolkien himself said it was mostly about death really; but that is true more of the sub-creation as a whole and his thoughts about it than of the book as it emerged.) The Ring is a corrupted power, evil in origin and in what it effects; but there is no suggestion that power in itself has to be wicked. For the power it gives is not that of authority or leadership, such as that exercised (in very different ways) by the Stewards of Gondor or the Mayors of Michel Delving); it is the power of domination, one will overriding another. Some, such as Saruman and the Lord of the Rings himself, desire this power for its own sake or worse. Others, like Boromir, desire to use it for good ends; but since it is domination, such use would corrupt the user and pervert the ends. Gandulf tells Denethor that if Boromir had indeed taken the Ring 'you would not have known your son'; and Gandalf himself, Tolkien said in a letter, would have been a worse Ring-lord than Sauron: 'he would have remained "righteous", but self-righteous and made good detestable and seem evil'.

Most of the cases of legitimate authority in Tolkien are monarchies (there are a couple of elective offices). This is natural in the sort of culture he is describing, and they are monarchies (on the good side anyway) of service rather than domination. It is no accident that the only King of Gondor to usurp the throne turned out to be a tyrant. 'Authority' may turn into 'domination', as the history of Numenor proves; but the two are properly distinct. Writing to his son Christopher, Tolkien said that his political opinions were leaning more and more to Anarchy or 'unconstitutional' monarchy; and the Anarchist side of this comes out in his fiction as well as the Monarchist. The Shire is in effect an Anarchy, with hardly any 'government'. Though, as Tolkien remarks in the same letter, the fatal weakness of both systems is that they work 'only when all the world is messing along in the same good old inefficient way'.

In only one of Lewis's novels is power a major theme, That Hideous Strength, in writing which he had in mind what he considered a genuine danger: power, specifically over Nature, especially human nature - the power of 'hidden persuaders' and propagandists over people in the mass, and of psychological cunning over individuals. This sort of power is never likely to be used for good ends, for a good man is not likely to be willing to use it. But what Lewis feared was that it would be combined with a rejection of all ethical principles in the name of 'objectivity'. A wicked man may know he is wicked; he may repent, he may die and be succeeded by a better. But if ethical principles (what Lewis called the 'Tao') have disappeared, repentance and improvement are both impossible. There will be no reason for anyone to do anything except that he wants to; and a handful at the top will have the power to enforce what they want. In the end even these will be puppets like their subjects, because their own wants have been predetermined by earlier manipulators. This may sound a mere nightmare. When Lewis wrote it (towards the end of World War II) what he feared was (a) the 'evolutionary moralists' like C.H. Waddington and (b) philosophers of the 'linguistic' schools; but his Riddell Lectures were sparked off by finding the infection in a couple of schools English textbooks. Confined to the scientists and the philosophers, such ideas may be relatively harmless (though still false); it is when they get into the hands of administrators, journalists and politicians that the danger starts. These are the people who turn proposals into facts or prepare the public's minds for this. And it is these whom we meet in That Hideous Strength. Most of the NICE staff are administrators, propagandists, or secret police; there are few actual scientists, and there are at least two clergy, perhaps as a warning that it is as easy to take the name of God in vain in such a cause as to take that of science.

Power is a recurrent theme in Williams's novels too; it is absent only from Descent into Hell and (as a moral problem) from The Place of the Lion. In two of the others (Shadows of Ecstacy and All Hallows Eve) the central figure already has power when the story begins; it is only a question of how far that power is to extend, and also in part of the way in which power is to be rejected or met. But in the remaining

three the opportunity of power is offered, and the story hinges on the way the characters respond. In a way War in Heaven, the earliest, is the most complex, because the instument of power, the Holy Graal, is being sought for so many reasons. Gregory Persimmons desires power for possession (which is still a recognition of some sort of good); Manasseh desires only destruction; Lavrodopoulos, as we have seen, is beyond even that, 'not fighting but vomiting'. Among their opponents the Duke and Kenneth Mornington are to some extent romantics, and shroud the Graal with papal or poetical associations; they are inclined to treat it as just that which has these associations, and even to think in terms of avenging an insult to God. The Archdeacon is the opposite of the Greek, living by acceptance as the other lives (in a way) by rejection, and is consequently the only one really able to let the Graal return to its Keeper. None of the three wishes to dominate the Graal or with it; but two are still in part devoted to their own ideas. Only one has attained to actual self-denial, where power can best be used by leaving it alone; when it is sought to destroy the Graal by magic, the Archdeacon calls on his friends to pray, but not against anything, even the magic, only 'that He who made the universe may sustain the universe, that in all things there may be delight in the justice of His will'.

Sybil in The Greater Trumps is a female counterpary of the Archdeacon, though she is not called on to guard the Tarots, only to rescue her brother from their manipulation by Henry. Nancy, on the other hand, is faced with the need to divert the storm they have raised, and again this is not done by power. Her hands 'moved as if in dancing ritual they answered the dancing monstrosities that opposed them. It was not a struggle but a harmony'. (We might compare the way in which the movement of Mary and the negress Hell in Seed of Adam 'quickens and becomes a dance'.)

As far as Many Dimensions is concerned, we have in Lord Arglay's judgement there the various attitudes towards the power of the Stone that we have seen exemplified in the other books - selfish use, good use, and renunciation of use. The odd thing is that while here too it is renunciation of use that prevails, no-one was more aware than Williams of the need for power of some sort if order is to exist. Order is sustained by power: we remember the episode in The Greater Trumps in which for a moment a policeman directing traffic takes on the Imperial form 'helmed, in a white cloak, stretching out one sceptered arm ... Something common to Emperor and Khalif, cadi and magistrate, praetor and alcalde, lictor and constable, shone before her in those lights'. And this is taken up in the Arthurian poems, where the Byzantine Emperor is 'operative providence' - as near God as you can get without turning image into allegory.

We cannot simply distinguish in Williams between Authority and Domination, as in The Lord of the Rings. Undoubtedly Domination is excluded from order; but not all the cases of power, or the seeking of power, in Williams's novels are cases of Domination. The Mayor of Rich, seeking the cure of the sick, was not. We are given a clue in the quotation from Dante which Williams prefixed to Taliessin through Logres: 'Unde est, quod non operatio propria propter essentiam, sed haec propter illam habet ut sit', 'The proper operation (working or function) is not in existence for the sake of the being, but the being for the sake of the function'. This is true even of the immortal soul of man. 'Man's end is to know God and to enjoy him for ever' - so; but to know God and to enjoy Him are functions, and apart from them man's existence would be pointless. To Williams the whole of creation presented itself as a vast arrangement of interlocking functions - the cosmic dance of The Greater Trumps: 'Change - that's what we know of the immortal dance; the law in the nature of things - that's the measure of the dance ... quick or slow, measurable or unmeasurable, there is nothing at all anywhere but the dance'. It is therefore a mistake to set yourself, or even your own good purposes, against the rhythm of the dance, or twist anything from its proper functions; domination is only an extreme instance of this. Power exists for its own proper purpose, and not for another, least of all for the sake of its possessor. If 'possessor' is correct; elsewhere Williams says that 'power is not something one has, it is something that one is'(Arthurian Torso p.89), so that to want to have it cannot be right. We might compare the picture of the dance of creation in Williams with rather similar ones elsewhere. The myth of creation which begins Tolkien's The Silmarillion depicts the

shaping of the potential world, before its actual creation, as a song; so does that in Lewis's The Magician's Nephew. There is the dance of heaven in The Problem of Pain: 'It does not exist for the sake of joy, (or even) for the sake of good, or of love. It is Love Himself, and Good Himself, and therefore happy. It does not exist for us, but we for it'. And there is the 'Great Dance' of all being in Perelandra (in which 'each movement becomes in its season the breaking into flower of the whole design to which all else had been directed' and at the summit of whose complexity is 'a simplicity beyond all comprehension, ancient and young as spring'). Side by side with this - forming indeed part of it - comes a principle of hierarchy: 'I believe the authority of parent over child, husband over wife, learned over simple, to be as much of the original plan as the authority of man over beast. If we had not fallen ... patriarchal monarchy would be the sole lawful government' (Transposition and Other Addressesp. 489). We need democracy because we are fallen, including parents, husbands, learned men and monarchs.

Williams's idea of hierarchy, despite his use of the image of Byzantium with its suggestion of rigidity, and his liking for words like 'geometry' and 'diagram', is more flexible. There is no one fixed system: 'we are not to suppose that the hierarchy of one moment is likely to be that of the next'(The Image of the Cityp. 127). If there are degrees of capacity - as there are - they are relative and changing: 'the Prime Minister must be docile to an expert scullion'. Similarly, 'Each man', said MacDonald, 'has his peculiar relation to God. It follows that there is a chamber in God Himself, into which none can enter but the one, the individual, the peculiar man - out of which chamber that man has to bring revelation and strength for his brethren ... How shall the rose ... rejoice against the snowdrop?' But to Williams this holds everywhere, not only in our relationship to God. (Let me be fair to Lewis: in the Dance in Perelandra 'each is equally at the centre and none are there by being equals').

Hierarchies of function are more stable than those of merit; they depend on the need for tasks to be done more than on the abilities of particular people to do them. At any given time there will be many who think the current Prime Minister less fit to hold that office than the Leader of the Opposition; but they do not deny her authority. Of course, even the Prime Minister may be subject to the direction of a traffic-policeman; but in general it is true that in function, as distinct from merit, degree and order are to some extent opposed; it is therefore best that high function be conferred from without. The dictator is one who has seized high function, and who thinks it exists for his sake, not vice versa. Lewis's imaginary worlds are mostly hierarchical on the lines depicted in his address on 'Membership'. Narnia and Archenland are 'patriarchial monarchies'; Perelandra will become one. On Malacandra the inhabitants are not fallen, but neither have they overcome temptation to fall; they are therefore under the rule of beings higher than they, the eldila. Williams's subtler views are not so prominent in his fiction, partly because he sees hierarchy at work in, say, the correcting of a mistake, where most of us would not. Hence when Anthony in The House of the Octopus is definitely in the wrong, and claims the 'prestige of my priesthood', he is told 'there is no pretige in any blessed priesthood,
only the priesthood; no prestige in any
true thing, but God and the thing itself'.
For the moment, the hierarchy of accuracy is the reverse of the hierarchy to which Anthony was used. This is a hierarchy of merit; if we want an instance of hierarchy of function in action, I suggest the 'Judgement' in Many Dimensions. Lord Arglay is no doubt wise, but then so is the Hajji, and so in another way is Chloe; but judging is his proper function as it is not that of the others.

Moralism, the problem of power, hierarchy: these form a connected series of themes. We may pick out another one that is important in all our four - that of Providence or Luck. (The two terms are deliberately identified.) No doubt Providence bulks large in all forms of Christianity. Certainly it does so in our group - most of all, perhaps, in MacDonald, especially his non-fiction. It may in effect take the place of predestination in his Calvinist forebears. Already in his twenties we find him writing to his uncle: 'The conviction is, I think, growing upon me that the smallest events are

ordered for us, while yet in perfect consistency with the ordinary course of cause and effect in the world'(In G.M.MacDonald,George MacDonald and his Wife, p. 109). At this stage he was thinking of those who serve God (with Romans 8:28 in mind); later all were included, and he thought it necessary 'to believe every trouble fitted for the being who has to bear it,every physical evil not merely the result of moral evil but antidotal thereto'(The Miracles of Our Lordp. 44). Williams might have agreed: 'It is certain that (outside sin) the position in which at any moment we find ourselves is precisely the best for us at that moment'(Flecker of Dean Closep.35). Eventually the whole idea was versified:

'If to myself - "God sometimes interferes" -
I said, my faith at once would be struck blind.
I see him all in all, the lifting mind,
Or nowhere in the vacant miles and years'. Diary of an Old Soul, Jan 9.

That this did not lead to a complete theological determinism was the result of an equally strong insistence on human freedom, even at the cost of allowing a 'sometimes interference': 'He wants to make us in his own image, choosing the good, refusing the evil. How should he effect this if he were always moving us from within, as he does at divine intervals?'(Unspoken Sermons,I,p.174 (Creation in Christ, p.337)). Such an idea of universal providence would be hard to embody in fiction, and I do not think MacDonald tried; it is easier in a play, and in some of Williams's plays we do find something very like this. The Skeleton in Cranmer, Mary in The Death of Good Fortune, the Flame in The House of the Octopus all embody the figures of Necessity which is very much part of Williams's doctrine of Providence. 'Necessity' stands outside the action to comment upon it, but also directs it throughout. They are obviously 'providential' figures, but equally obviously they do leave room for the individual's freedom. In The Death of Good Fortune the way is opened for five characters to accept that all luck is good; three do, two do not. This is perhaps an unusually high failure rate; 'Most men', says the Accuser in Judgement at Chelmsford, 'when at last they see their desire, Fall to repentance - all have that chance'. I think that for all four, faith and repentance are the natural reaction to a 'clear vision of good and evil as they really are; it needs self-destruction or deliberate perversity to do otherwise, and usually a long period of preparation, as with Saruman or Laurence Wentworth.

There have been attempts to argue that free-will does not in fact exist in the worlds of Tolkien and Williams. Mr Douglas Parker has declared that the world of The Lord of the Rings is 'totally deterministic', and that at the end 'free-will has not been restored; it never existed in the first place' (Hwaet We Holbytla, Hudson Review, Vol9, 1956-7,esp. pp.603-4). This is false. There is no doubt a general programme for history: the Third Age is undoubtedly ending, whatever succeeds it, and the Elves are undoubtedly fated to leave Middle-Earth or 'dwindle to a rustic folk of dell and cave'. And at times a more particular providence is at work. At the end of The Hobbit, Gandalf says to Bilbo 'You don't really suppose that all your adventures and escapes were managed by mere luck, just for your own benefit?'; and later he tells Frodo 'Bilbo was meant to find the Ring, and not by its maker. In which case you also were meant to have it. And that may be an encouraging thought'. ('It is not', said Frodo). And other passages could be quoted. But of course they only make sense in a context in which things are not 'meant' to happen; if all things are directly planned by Ilúvatar, then it is no encouragement to think that one particular event was planned by Him. And it may be possible to frustrate the plans even of Providence, temporarily. This is quite common in Lewis. In That Hideous Strength, the Studdocks were to have had a son who should 'turn the enemies out of Logres' for a thousand years; but they had decided against having children. Williams, again, says of the failure of the Jews as a whole to accept Christ that it had been intended that their nation should become 'almost unbearably august', yet it did not happen. What does happen is that God brings some other good, or achieves His ends in some other way. Adam's fall was a felix culpa. And this is to be found in Tolkien too; at the last moment on Mount Doom Frodo after all his heroic struggles fails and claims the Ring. The plan is frustrated - and changes to meet that frustration; it is another, the unhappy Gollum, who seizes the Ring and falls into the fire with it.

This theme is made more explicit in the Silmarillion (not available to Mr Parker when he wrote). Melkor, in the Ainulindale, tries to drown the angelic music with his own

theme; but 'its most triumphant notes were taken by the other and woven into its pattern', and the bitter cold of his work in the actual world produces the snowflake. It is undeniable that words like 'fate' and 'doom' are common in the Silmarillion. But Ulmo declares that 'in the armour of Fate (as the Children of Earth name it), there is ever a rift, and in the walls of Doom a breach, until the full-making, which ye call the End' (Unfinished Tales, p. 29), and that rift or breach has its origin in freedom - the freedom of Ulmo himself, one of the greatest of the Valar, or of an insignificant hobbit. The real answer to Mr Parker's notion is the emphasis made on choice, already discussed. Galadriel 'passes the test'. Saruman's decision comes to 'the balance of a hair'. When Eomer asks Aragorn 'What doom do you bring out of the North?', the answer is 'The doom of choice'. There is Providence but not Predestination.

Mr Gunnar Urang (Shadows of Heaven, p. 89) inclines to believe that freedom is unreal in Williams, on the grounds that freedom is bound up with the idea of time, and that Williams sometimes treats time as unreal. But freedom is simply a negative - the absence of anything settling our decisions independently of ourselves - and as such is not time-bound. There is one place where Williams does seem to query freedom, in Anthony's thoughts on the edge of the pit in Berringer's house in The Place of the Lion: 'How could there be choice, unless there was preference, and if there was preference there was no choice'; but the debate is not ended one way or the other. (It can be taken further. If I am invited to take something I should like - prefer - and abstain for another's sake, then, if I can be said to 'prefer' abstention, it is because I have chosen to prefer it ...). The reality of freedom in Williams is shown up by the description of Sybil in The Greater Trumps, who really is no longer free, by her own deliberate surrender to the divine will.

In Miracles, Lewis tried to describe how Providence and freedom could co-exist, suggesting that our normal view of physical nature as constant and human volitions as variable is no more true than the converse: that it is equally true (though equally misleading) to regard the whole of nature as adapted by God to the free choice of human beings. I do not think this will do. Laws and states of nature can be described (though incompletely) without reference to human decisions; the reverse is not the case. I cannot choose to vote for Smith unless Smith, and voting exist; more, my choice cannot even be described unless they do. Not even God could make Smith or elections dependent on my decision to vote for Smith. This is not to say that providence is impossible; only that it cannot work in quite that way.

Now if Providence is a reality the ancient Problem of Evil arises in a particularly acute form. All theists are faced with an apparent need to make God ultimately responsible for the existence of evil; but a 'providential' theist seems to make Him directly responsible for it. How do our authors deal with this?

Tolkien we can be fairly brief with: as we have seen, freedon is real, but God can turn misused freedom to good. Meanwhile, as far as this Middle-earth is concerned, we are given a kind of dualism; there is a perpetual battle going on between good and evil. Evil often seems the stronger; but this is misleading. Even in Mordor Sam is able to realise that 'in the end the Shadow was only a small and passing thing; there was light and beauty for ever beyond its reach'. Heaven does not normally intervene directly, and therefore seems weaker; most of the time its cause is waged by us lesser beings, Men and Elves and hobbits and the like. Sometimes we fail; and when the failure is of someone great it seems to those inhis shadow that the world itself has been ruined; but it has not.

MacDonald, while of course acknowledging that we can fall into evil despite the will of God for good, believed strongly that the evils we suffer are in the long run good. 'What we call evil', says Anodos in almost the last sentence of Phantastes, 'is the only and best shape which, for the person and his condition at the time, could be assumed by the best good'. Hell itself is for MacDonald first and foremost a curative

place. Evil 'must be destroyed one day, even if it be by that form of divine love which appears as a consuming fire ... That which is fire to them which are afar off is a mighty graciousness to them that are nigh. They are both the same thing' (Adela Cathcart, 1890 ed. p.147). Chapter 25 of Lilith is a concrete example of the MacDonald hell at work.

Once a soul has repented, past offences no longer matter (cf. Ezekiel 18:22). Much the same applies, it seems, to natural evil as well; the whole creation is ultimately to be redeemed, and this must include all sentient life. If so, all suffering by anything 'is not to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed'. Not that this is developed; MacDonald always sought to be practical, not theoretical, and what he wanted was for his readers to respect and love the creation, and believe that God did so too.

Williams's attitude towards evil was of course quite different, in fact containing several different ideas intertwined. His picture of the Fall in e.g. He Came Down From Heaven is almost MacDonald in mirror-image: to MacDonald what seems evil will turn out to have been good, to Williams what is now good may be seen as evil because we insist on seeing it wrongly. The 'free candour' of the Adam's nakedness was known as undesirable, because they had insisted on knowing evil as well as good. Part at least of our redemption must then consist of another alteration in knowledge - the realisation that 'all luck is good'. This may not be easy; it may be 'heaven's kind of salvation, not at all to the mind / of any except the redeemed, and to theirs hardly' as Williams said in another context. Williams himself said that Christianity did not come easily to him, that it was a matter of conviction, not of instinct, and there is a thread of what might be called a pessimism of the emotions, especially in some of the earlier plays and poems. (Do you know that rather horrifying poem in Windows of Night called 'Domesticity - what Chesterton, and Tolkien after him, called 'Recovery', but in a kind of dark inversion?). Lionel Rackstraw in War in Heaven, when he says 'let us pray only that immortality is a dream. But I don't suppose it is' was echoing feelings of his author.

In some way this has to be resolved. (Even Lionel is offered 'the annihilation which is God'). But the resolution was harder to describe than the conflict it would resolve. It is clear that Lester, at the end of All Hallow's Eve, is entering beatitude and glory; but it is even clearer that she is parting from her husband in a far more final way than she had by death; almost her last words to him are 'I did love you'. MacDonald would not have approved. 'Shall God be the God of the families of the earth, and shall the love that he has thus created go moaning and longing to all eternity; or worse, die out of our bosoms?'(Unspoken Sermons, series I, p.242). Not that Williams asserted either of these: only that 'of any future union, if any were to be, she could not even begin to think; had she, the sense of separation would have been incomplete, and the deadly keeness of the rain unenjoyed ... without him, what was immortality or glory worth? And yet only without him could she even be that which she now was'.

In the meantime this life is almost unendurable, as 'infinite distress'. Ordinary apologists, like Lewis, will say God permits evil without willing it Himself; to Williams, God must have known the consequences of creation before creating, and still chose to create. 'Shall there be evil in a city, and I the Lord not have done it?' as the Archdeacon quotes from Amos somewhat to his hearers' bewilderment. Williams's answer to all this, or part of his answer, is in the essay on The Cross, 'Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things?' 'Yes, He ought ... But then also He did.' To introduce this into plays or novels is

another matter. The submission of God to His own system belongs to one particular period of history, and so does not make appropriate material for imaginative fiction. The nature of evil can be depicted, and its defeat in the individual; but the ultimate reason why it can be defeated can only be referred to, not depicted.

In his The Problem of Pain, and also in some of his other writings, Lewis takes very seriously the idea of the devil. This is not true of the other three - or not in quite Lewis' way. Tolkien calls Morgoth 'the Diabolus', but he and his successor Sauron operate mainly on the physical plane (though it does seem that Morgoth was responsible for the Fall of Men). In MacDonald, Satan appears as the Shadow in Lilith, but he is only a vague and even impotent menace, the real danger lying in Lileth herself. MacDonald clearly believed in his reality (and even in his ultimate repentance - though a character in Alec Forbes wonders whether even Satan's present state might be easier than that repentance! - but Lilith would not lose much if the Shadow were dropped altogether, and in MacDonald's other fantasies he does not appear. Williams' attitude is more hesitant; he neither affirms nor denies the existence of a devil - either way he is an 'indulgence'; he is not affirmed even in the novels that deal with black magic, and the Satan of The Rite of the Passion is not the usual one. The nearest you get is the Emperor of P'o-lu and Mrs Sammile in Descent into Hell; but the fact that the former is a person in the poems and for the purpose of the poetry says nothing about the actual facts. Mrs Sammile is a difficult figure in a difficult book. Certainly she tempts people to serve and adore themselves (like Lilith in Heroes and Kings); certainly she is not a human being; but she is hardly supernatural either.

To Lewis, though, Satan is definitely a person, and only by accident a personification; indeed, he can hardly be a full personification as well as a person without comething close to Manichaeism. (Lewis repudiated dualism, but certainly used 'dualist' language at times. In the 'Hansom' novels he is, like Tolkien's Morgoth, confined to this planet. But in The Problem of Pain it is suggested that 'a mighty created power ... may well have corrupted the animal creation before man appeared', and this no doubt might apply to other planets. We could find out by interstellar travel, which Lewis for one hoped would never become a reality: 'we are not fit yet to visit other worlds' - though it is theoretically conceivable that for some 'Redemption, starting with us, is to work from and through us' (as in Romans 8: 19ff.) 'Only if we had some such function would a contact between us and such unknown races be other than a calamity' (Fernseeds & Elephants, pp. 89 ff.). But all this, as he says, is 'trying to cross a bridge, not only before we come to it, but even before we know there is a river'; it is 'in the realm of fantastic speculation' (Christian Reflections, p. 176). But even fantastic speculation has its attractions, as the Inklings well knew.

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Adrian Thomas has unearthed the following notes of Charles Williams' for an address delivered after the Colchester performance of Seed of Adam on 23 October 1937. The notes are taken from the copy in the C.W. reference library in Kings College, London, which were originally taken by Raymond Hunt and presented by Miss Ursula Grundy.

'Adam & Dullards of darkness, light's lazybones - well, but this did not

take me far.

The shepherds and the Wise men (kings) - the poor and others. The poem on the kings - the imaginations. Original idea of the poor: & in a few fragments I toyed with this notion. But it did not produce anything very interesting; & anyhow it was not a true contrast, unless I made the kings the rich, i.e. the great capitalists, which I was very ill disposed to do (i) because I did not wish to save the capitalists easily in view of Christ's remark about the rich - at the Crucifixion perhaps but not just at the Nativity, (ii) because then I lost my Imaginations, especially my myrrh and Third King. And then Miss Potter wanted a Chorus, & the Chorus and the Shepherds would have been too alike. So the Shepherds disappeared into the Chorus. Mr Eliot has made Choruses a little difficult. I know all about the Greeks, but they do not prevent one being told one is copying Mr Eliot.

Well, I went on brooding, & the Kings increased. But there remained the awful difficulty of how to make the thing interesting. Which do you find most <u>interesting</u> - I don't say which do you think most important - the Nativity or the latest murder? Well, <u>if</u> you found the Nativity most interesting you would be reading theology. And do you? no. I am like you. And as I considered this my attention hung about the Third K. I had originally intended each K. to have a female slave - partly to use up Miss Potter's females, partly to give opportunity for dress - or the opposite, partly to combine both sexes in each imagination. A K. with a dancing girl, a K. with a geometrician or a scribe, a K. with something more dangerous than himself - darker, a Negress. There was my first Negress.

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

Well, then there was Joseph - and the Blessed Virgin. I was quite clear that the old man leading a devout girl on a donkey was not for this play. There are profound and awful possibilities in it, &one day I will do it. But there is something of it in the later plays of Shakespeare, & as a rule it is safer <u>not</u> to go trying to reap what He left. I will put S. into a novel when I want him but I will not chase after him. Besides was there not a Mahommedan tradition that he was young? I hope there is; I thought there was - good: let us have a young Mahommedan Joseph, & let us (incidentally) make the second King a Sultan. The captain of horse I threw in as a pict-

uresque extra, though it fitted so well with poetry that I have done it over again in my Taliessin poems.

And a just man? This theme is not much in, But it exemplifies [the] difference. The B.M.V. & her characteristics: love of God - before [the] coming of God (as such) to her: what state? Love. The romantic pressure of the individual.'

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