

The Charles Williams Society

NEWSLETTER

No. 51, AUTUMN 1988

MEETINGS OF THE CHARLES WILLIAMS SOCIETY

25 February 1989: Elizabeth Brewer will speak on "The Role of Women in the Arthurian Poetry of Charles Williams"

20 May 1989: The Society will hold its Annual General Meeting followed by an exploration by Brian Horne of "The Cuttings From Colindale"

25 November 1989: There will be a reading of "The House by the Stable" introduced by Ruth Spalding.

These meetings will be held at Liddon House, 24 South Audley Street, London W.1, starting at 2.30pm.

LONDON READING GROUP

Sunday 12 March 1989: We will continue reading Descent Into Hell. We will meet in St Matthews Church Vestry, 27 St Petersburg Place, London W.2. (nearest stations Queensway and Bayswater) at 1pm. Tea and coffee will be provided but please bring sandwiches.

OXFORD READING GROUP

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

CAMBRIDGE READING GROUP

For information please contact Geraldine and Richard Pinch, 5 Oxford Road, Cambridge CB4 3PH, telephone 311465.

LAKE MICHIGAN AREA READING GROUP

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

Holywell Cemetery by St Cross Church, Oxford

The Chairman writes: "As our members will know, Charles Williams's grave is in Holywell Cemetery which has in it the graves of eminent scholars, writers and others. His grave was visited by a number of members following the service at the University Church on 20 September 1986. The cemetery, opened in 1847, is now administered under the Diocese of Oxford by the incumbents of the University Church of St Mary the Virgin and St Michael at the Northgate, but the cost of maintenance (14 acres) is too great for the inadequate resources available. The cemetery has become neglected but for the last two or three years an attempt has been made to keep the pathways clean and cut. This has now proved to be beyond the capacity of a voluntary septuagenarian and we heard earlier this year through Anne Scott, our Council member in Oxford, that the Friends of Holywell Cemetery had been formed to establish an endowment fund to ensure the proper maintenance of the cemetery. Their objective is to raise sufficient capital to provide £450 pa, the minimum cost of basic maintenance. A number of colleges are patrons of the appeal.

Your Council considered that the Society should support this appeal and a donation of £100 has been sent and gratefully acknowledged. Their target is £10,000 and we understand that the Friends are three quarters of the way towards this figure. We hope to send a further donation later.

A brief report (as requested) on the book auction from Gillian Lunn

All the books save one (The House of the Octopus) were bid for. All went remarkably smoothly. The books were sent on November 1st, the money came

straight back and is all now safely paid in. The total sum (less postage etc expenses of £14 odd) is £468.91p which seems highly satisfactory.

Interestingly I had only six parcels to do: one person was the highest bidder for four books, one person got three, one got two and the others were singles. Apart from one member who wanted a book so much that the bid was signed: "Yours - in torment ..!" all comments I received about the idea and the rules/procedures etc of the auction have been favourable and kind. More auctions have been called for! BUT it may be that some other members think it was not a good idea, not a fair set of rules/procedures or have some other objections. Please would anyone who disapproved of the auction write and tell me so? If I am not told I can't know

Some more books remain to have their futures settled; some will probably go into the libraries and there are likely to be more for sale to members. All comments or suggestions (as soon as possible) about how donation-books (other than waiting-list titles) should be allocated will be gratefully received. But I'm afraid we haven't got any copies of Silver Stair or Heroes and Kings up our sleeves! ...

P.S. I can always use more jiffy-bags and am always grateful.

BOOKS BY C.W. SOCIETY MEMBERS

New and Selected Poems by Anne Ridler has been published by Faber at £8.95 hardback (ISBN 0 571 15193 0) or £4.95 paperback (ISBN 0 571 15140 X).

SUBSCRIPTIONS

If anyone has forgotten to renew their subscriptions, could they please do so as soon as possible. Rates are £5 single, £7.50p joint membership for UK members, £6 or US\$13 single, £8.50p or US\$18 for joint membership for overseas members. Please send a cheque to

Peter Couchman, 85 Hangleton Way, Hove, East Sussex,
BW3 8AF.

NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome is extended to:

Mrs Lynette Talbot Rice, 33 Blenheim Drive, Oxford,
OX2 8DS,
Charles Franklyn Beach, 1919 S.5th #10, Waco TX 76706
USA

SUPPLEMENT

There is no Supplement with this Newsletter.

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At the Society's meeting on 12 November 1988, Doreen Berry spoke on "**Byzantium, Rome and Canterbury**". We are pleased to be able to reproduce the talk in this Newsletter.

"My reasons for choosing this title are several. Charles Williams himself, of course, made a number of references to Byzantium in his poetry and prose. Secondly, from the day I entered the BBC's European Service in January 1940 until I retired 42 years later, my work had been somewhat Byzantine: (as a sub-editor in the European News in 1943; editor of the Balkan News Unit in 1944; a Programme Organiser in 4 East European Sections in 1945, and appointed head of the Romanian Service in 1947 for the next 20 years (very Byzantine!). Finally, from 1967 for the next 13 years: seconded from the BBC to the Great Britain /East Europe Centre as its Deputy Director (covering Bulgaria and Romania - formerly part of the Byzantine Empire - and Czechoslovakia and Hungary - formerly of the Austro-Hunhagian Empire). My third reason for choosing the title was a more serious one than this somewhat egotistical introduction might suggest - namely, the new awakening within Christendom in the 1960s in the historical context of Byzantium, Rome and Canterbury, (although few people were aware of this at the time).

For the first time since the great schism of 1054 A.D. between Rome and Byzantium - and the consequent division of Europe up the centuries between the Catholic West and the Orthodox East (affecting religious, political and cultural life on both sides of that divide), hostility, suspicion and indifference gave way gradually to something new. Thus, when, in 1962, journalists asked the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople (Athenagoras) his reactions to Pope John XXIII's summoning of the Vatican Council, the Orthodox Patriarch quoted these words from the New Testament:

"There was a man sent from God whose name was John". And on another occasion he spoke of Pope John from within what I would regard (rightly or wrongly) as Charles Williams' concept of coinherence: namely - "The Pope of Rome is the first leader of Roman Catholics for centuries who has grasped the mystery of Christ's seamless robe, and fingered intuitively its warp and woof". Perhaps the 10 years (from 1934 to 1944) which John XXIII spent in Constantinople as Apostolic Delegate gave him a fuller insight into Orthodoxy than any previous Popes had occasion to have.

Beginning in 1960, a new relationship also developed between Canterbury and Rome. Since the Reformation 4 centuries ago, relations had been either mutually hostile or almost non-existent. The ice was broken by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher, who made an historic journey (first to Jerusalem and Bethlehem as a pilgrim visiting the Holy Land), then Istanbul, where he was a guest of the Ecumenical Patriarch, of whom he said before leaving London: 'I hope my visit to the Ecumenical Patriarch will stimulate great interest in the Orthodox Churches in the East, which retain - perhaps in their purest form - the traditional beliefs and practices of the early centuries of the Church and on which so heavy burden of responsibility for Christendom in the East rests. For long they have been on the friendliest and most intimate terms of fellowship in the Holy Spirit with us.' Archbishop Fisher then went on to Rome in December 1960, which, (to quote the former Dean of Westminster Abbey) 'did more than any other single

event in its symbolic and dramatic significance to change the climate in Anglican relationships with His Holiness Pope John XXIII.'

On his return to London, Archbishop Fisher was guest of honour at a reception at Lambeth Palace, to which a number of guests from different Christian Churches were invited (including myself). The Archbishop spoke for half an hour to the many who were present; but perhaps the most significant remark about his meeting with the Pope was the one he made himself as Pope John greeted him: 'Your Holiness, we are making history'. (Perhaps Charles Williams, if he was observing that historical encounter from whatever dimension beyond our earthly knowledge would be relishing that moment, faithful Anglican that he was!).

Six months later, in June 1961, after Dr Fisher had retired as Archbishop of Canterbury, the BBC European Service asked me to write a script for broadcast to various European audiences on the historic background to the enthronement on 27 June of Michael Ramsey as the 100th Archbishop of Canterbury, in the Chair of St Augustine, who had arrived in England in the 6th century A.D.. Metropolitans of the Russian, Romanian and several other Orthodox Churches formed part of the procession through the ancient Cathedral of Canterbury.

Four months later, on 15 October 1961, there was a joint Anglican and Orthodox pilgrimage to St Cuthbert's shrine in Durham Cathedral. St Cuthbert had been consecrated Bishop in the 7th century by Theodore of Tarsus: the only Prelate of the Eastern Church to become Archbishop of Canterbury. Pope Vitalian had sent him, when he was a monk in Rome, to Canterbury during the most critical period in the history of the Anglo-Saxon Church. Among other things, a terrible plague had swept the country and many were relapsing into heathenism. Yet, within a few years, Theodore was able to call together the first National Council of a United English Church. Not only were those present fixing the laws for a newly united Church of England, they were also showing the way towards a United Kingdom of England. Thus, in this country, the State owed its unity in the first instance

to the Church. In the words of Bishop Wand (former Bishop of London): 'It must surely have been providential that, at the outset of its united life, the Church in England have been led by one who, in his own person, combined the traditions of both East and West. He led the people out of heathenism into Christianity, enriched by his knowledge of the two great centres of Christian civilisation: Byzantium and Rome'.

Every year on 19 September, this monk of the Eastern half of the Church, who became Archbishop of Canterbury and died in 690 A.D. is commemorated in the Anglican Church with thanksgiving for what he did for the English Church and Nation. St Cuthbert died 3 years before Archbishop Theodore, having lived as a hermit on Farne Island until he was made Bishop of Lindisfarne in 685 A.D.

In August 1962 Archbishop Michael Ramsey visited the Russian Orthodox Church as a guest of Patriarch Alexei. Back in London, he invited Cardinal Bea (Head of the Vatican Secretariat for Christian Unity) to lunch with him at Lambeth Palace - knowing that the Cardinal had a very topical interest in the Russian Church, as it had sent Russian Orthodox Observers to the first session of the Vatican Council, and was due to send more to its second session.

In November 1962, the BBC gave me 6 weeks Sabbatical leave, after I had then completed 23 years in the BBC European Service. I chose to spend a month of it in Jerusalem, a week in Beirut and a week in Rome. I chose Jerusalem first as two years ago I had made my first journey to the Holy Land as one of a group of pilgrims led by the then Anglican priest at Lancing College, Sussex, with assistance from the French-born Greek Orthodox monk, Fr. Lev Gillet. He gave the pilgrims on this inter-Church Travel visit a wonderfully simple but profound half-hour talk every evening on what they would - or could - experience the following day in the different places they visited. I had found that pilgrimage inspiring, and loved the month I spent there in 1962. In Jerusalem I had the opportunity of sampling many different forms of Christian worship. In Beirut, I was grateful to be the guest of an

excellent English couple in their flat; and in Rome I had a quite unexpected privilege. Through the combined kindness of a Jesuit and the Protestant representative in Rome of the British and Foreign Bible Society, I was given a ticket for the Mass in St Peter's which Pope John was celebrating next day at the end of the first session of the Vatican Council. I was assigned one of the last seats available in the vast Basilica. As the Pope entered and left the Basilica on foot, passing by within inches of where I stood, I was able to appreciate the deep humility of that holy man. Alas, on Whit Monday 1963, he was to die what then seemed to me a Pentecostal death, as the power of the Holy Spirit around him that day in St Peter's had been unmistakable. After my return to London, I was grateful to be invited to attend the Requiem for Pope John which Archbishop Ramsey was to celebrate in Lambeth Palace Chapel.

The election on 23 June 1963 of Cardinal Montini of Milan as the next Pope was widely welcomed by Anglicans, by other Observers at the next session of the Vatican Council and by those Christians of other Churches who regarded Pope Paul as an intellectual with a deep spirituality. A few days after Pope John's death, Pope Paul preached a sermon in Milan Cathedral advocating that the reforming policies of what he called "the incomparable Pope John" be continued. Incidentally, few people know that in 1955 - 8 years before Cardinal Montini became Pope - he had shown a special interest in the Church of England, and had asked Anglican authorities to send a group of Italian-speaking Anglican priests, well versed in doctrinal differences between Canterbury and Rome, to stay for a time as his guests in his Archbishop's Palace in Milan, so that he could learn about the Church of England at first hand.

Following his election as Pope, he delivered his first declaration to the world in Latin from the High Altar in the Sistine Chapel. Recalling Pope John's "charity towards all - particularly the lowly; his pastoral solicitude; and the greatness of his soul, by which he gathered around his death-bed all mankind", Pope Paul said he wanted to continue the great work begun by Pope John for Christian unity. "We open our arms to all who glory in the name of Christ", he said. He remembered in particular those who suffered; but also "bold and generous youth

on whom rests the hope of a better future"; and ended by giving his Apostolic blessing "to the whole human family". In August 1963, Pope Paul issued an appeal to the Eastern Orthodox Churches whose timing was significant. It came two weeks after the return from Moscow of two official Papal envoys whom Pope Paul had sent to attend the jubilee celebrations of Patriarch Alexei of Russia: the first time for 900 years that a Pope had sent official representatives to an Orthodox ceremony. The heads of many Orthodox Churches were present on that occasion. Pope Paul said he had been very sincere in sending a Catholic Bishop (Mgr. Charrier of Lausanne) to Moscow for the jubilee celebrations: wishing to pay homage; to show there were no motives of rivalry, prestige, pride or ambition, nor any desire to perpetuate disagreements. He concluded: "We are all a little deaf; we are all a little dumb. May the Lord open us to understand the voices of history open us to hear His voice - the Word of God." The Pope's appeal came a few weeks before the second session of the Vatican Council where, as at the first session, official Observers from the Russian Orthodox Church were to be present; and where, it was still hoped, Observers from other Orthodox Churches might yet attend. Hitherto, the Orthodox had rejected all appeals for reunion with Rome because they said it would mean their "absorption". Pope Paul, however, declared that no absorption was intended: "We wish (he said) neither to absorb nor to mortify the great flowering of the Eastern Churches. We want it regrafted on to the one tree of the unity of Christ. We pray that the unity of as many as are still authentically Christian - and specially unity with the most vulnerable and holy Eastern Churches - may be re-established. Let the barriers which separate us fall!" He then recalled that the Eastern Churches "have the same Baptism, the same fundamental faith; a valid hierarchy and valid Sacraments."

Three weeks after Pope Paul's appeal to the Orthodox, the Eucmenical Patriarch gave a positive reply: proposing to the heads of all the autocephalous Orthodox Churches that they should meet together in Rhodes on 19 September 1963 to discuss relations with the Vatican and to set up an inter-Orthodox Commission which would go to Rome for discussions, in an attempt to restore unity between the two

historic Churches. Most of the Orthodox Churches - including those in Communist countries (representing 85% of Orthodox Christians) agreed to send representatives to the Rhodes meeting. There, unanimous agreement with the Ecumenical Patriarch's proposal to begin a dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church on equal terms was said to have been reached. Also that each autocephalous Orthodox Church should be free to make its own decision about sending Observers to the Vatican Council. When the second session of that Council opened on 30 September 1963, 60 non-Catholic Observers were present - including Orthodox and Anglicans. Pope Paul expressed the authority of his high office with an impressive humility - in these words: "If we are in any way to blame for the separation, we humbly beg God's forgiveness; and ask pardon too of our brethren who feel they have been injured by us. For our part, we willingly forgive the injuries which the Catholic Church has suffered ...". On the previous day, the Rhodes Conference had issued a 'Message to the World', referring to the Roman Catholic Church in very cordial terms - unprecedented since the 1054 schism. "The Orthodox Churches (it said) are aware of the expectations of all the world that there be a reconciliation between the Orthodox Church and the venerable Church of Rome."

However, a quarter of a century has gone by since the high hopes of that September 1963 about reconciliation between the two historic Churches. Politics have undoubtedly influenced the Orthodox position - both as regards reconciliation with Rome and the long-promised summoning of a pan-Orthodox Synod. One very positive development, however, occurred in December 1965: the lifting of the mutual excommunications pronounced between Pope and Patriarch in 1054, when Cardinal Humbert laid on the altar on the Great Church of St Sophia (the then glory of Christian Byzantium) the Papal Bull of excommunication; and the then Orthodox Patriarch reciprocated. That lifting of the mutual excommunications prepared the way for Pope Paul to make the first visit by a Pope for more than 1000 years to the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople. He did so in July 1967. On the eve of that visit Archbishop Michael Ramsey broadcast an expression of his satisfaction at the visit: "Anglicans everywhere (he said) will give thanks for this first official contact between Rome and Constantinople since the Council of Florence in the 15th century The Church of England has maintained contact with Constantinople since the 16th century ... and one of my earliest

visits abroad, after my enthronement as Archbishop of Canterbury, was to the Ecumenical Patriarch ... The Anglican Church (he concluded) continues to help forward in every way it can the friendship of Eastern and Western Christendom."

The causes of the Great Schism of 1054 are now recognised to have been not only over questions of doctrine and jurisdiction, but because of lack of communication; and the Schism itself was but the seal on a division which had been developing for several centuries before then. Today, communications are open, language is no longer a barrier to scholars, and there is greater readiness on all sides to view past and present divisions with fresh understanding. In 1959 the Jesuit scholar, Francis Gill, had published a very interesting Roman Catholic re-assessment of the last major attempt at the reunion of Rome and Orthodoxy - namely, the council of Florence in 1439, which the Orthodox had deplored. Francis Gill's book, based on the Greek Acts of that Council (the Latin Acts were unaccountably lost several centuries ago) show that modern Catholic scholars are much more aware of the Orthodox case than before.

Three years before Pope Paul's visit to Constantinople, he went to the Holy Land as pilgrim (on 4 January 1964). He recalled that he was the first Pope to go to the Holy Land - "from where (he said) St Peter came, and whither a successor of his has never yet returned - until now". The Ecumenical Patriarch travelled to Jerusalem to meet the Pope there. That meeting had been preceded by Pope Paul's recently published letter to Patriarch Athenagoras, in which the Pope had expressed his strong desire for Christian unity:- "Let us (Pope Paul had written) leave the past to the mercy of God and listen to the counsel of the Apostle Paul: 'Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those which are before...'. Recently, the Patriarch's emissary had visited the Pope in Rome and told him: "It seems that the Pope and the Patriarch are called to climb the same mountain - the mountain of the Lord - from different sides. May they meet at the top, on the ground sanctified by the common Redeemer ... and from then on walk together, trying to rebuild in Christian solidarity the broken bridges, so that all may be one. After centuries of silence, the Latin West and Greek East are moving towards a meeting - to start a dialogue of understanding for the peace of the world and the furtherance of God's Church." In a message to the British people on BBC

T.V. from Rome on the eve of his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Pope Paul said: "We dare to hope that, under the guidance of God's Spirit, we are living at a time of special opportunity, when ancient quarrels are being resolved and old wounds healed. Much needs to be forgiven and forgotten. Pope John XXIII, when he summoned the Vatican Council, called us all to reform and renewal. Great differences remain. But we undertake our task with renewed hope, for a spirit of understanding and mutual acceptance is abroad ... Who knows where the Love of Christ may yet lead us?"

In May 1964, I made the first of 9 visits to Romania for the BBC. For some 14 years I had put off going, knowing that Romania was then very much a police state, and feeling too vulnerable for such an assignment. It was my month in Jerusalem in December 1962 which enabled me to go. In June 1965 the BBC asked me to go on a second visit to Romania - to cover the week spent there by the Archbishop of Canterbury (Michael Ramsey) as a guest of Patriarch Justinian. There were many Byzantine happenings during that week, but also some very good developments including the provision by the British and Foreign Bible Society (B.F.B.S.) of paper for 100,000 bibles to be printed in the Patriarchate (available only through the church in Romania, not in book-shops).

On 23 March 1966, Archbishop Ramsey went to Rome, where he had three very fruitful meetings with Pope Paul, who said he regarded the visit as very important and hoped it would bring the union closer. Accompanying the Archbishop of Canterbury were two Anglican Bishops (one was the senior Anglican Observer throughout the Vatican Council, the other the Chairman of the Archbishop's Anglican Commission on Relations with the Roman Catholic Church), and three priests (including Canon John Satterthwaite, General Secretary of the Church of England Council on Foreign Relations). The first meeting with the Pope took place in the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican, an official, solemn meeting, with texts of the addresses by Pope and Archbishop being made available afterwards to the press in 6 European languages. Then came a televised common act of worship by the Pope and Anglican Primate in the Abbey of St Paul-within-the-Walls. Countless people were said to have seen on their TV screens what hitherto would have seemed unimaginable: Rome and Canterbury crowning a common act of worship with an exchange of the Kiss of Peace by Pope and Archbishop. Next day, beyond the range of TV cameras or

condemned to death for heresy 400 years ago. In the words of Archbishop Carinale (the Apostolic delegate in Britain): "It is interesting to note the relevance of Duns Scotus to current theological questionings - especially in the light of the Second Vatican Council. His thinking may appear bold for his time, but it is certainly prophetic for ours." In addition to the Pope's Message to the Congress, there was one from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and one from the Archbishop of Canterbury.

From that great gathering of Christian scholars in Oxford's University church in 1966, it would (I think) be appropriate in this talk entitled 'Byzantium, Rome and Canterbury' to recall another great gathering of Christian scholars, in Byzantium 1640 years earlier, namely the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D., at which Constantine (the first Christian Emperor) presided. More than 300 Bishops (mostly from the East) are said to have been present. In that great Assembly, where the Nicæan Creed was formulated, spiritual and temporal power met and united. Eusebius (the historian and Bishop of Caesarea), who was at the Council, wrote of Constantine's role:

"He appeared as a messenger from God ... a magnificent figure, tall and slender, full of grace and majesty. He raised before the mighty Assembly a packet of letters of accusation - written by many against many. Exhorting all to pardon and peace, he then solemnly burned them. In such an absence of recrimination, discussion of doctrine then began."

At the Council of Nicaea the heretical doctrines which made Christ to be either divine - to the exclusion of his humanity, or human - to the exclusion of his divinity - were defeated. Christ was declared to be fully Man and fully God, and everyone, from the humblest slave to the Emperor himself, was included in the Gospel of Redemption. Ordinary everyday life took on a new importance, it became the raw material of salvation, and every man and woman had a part to play.