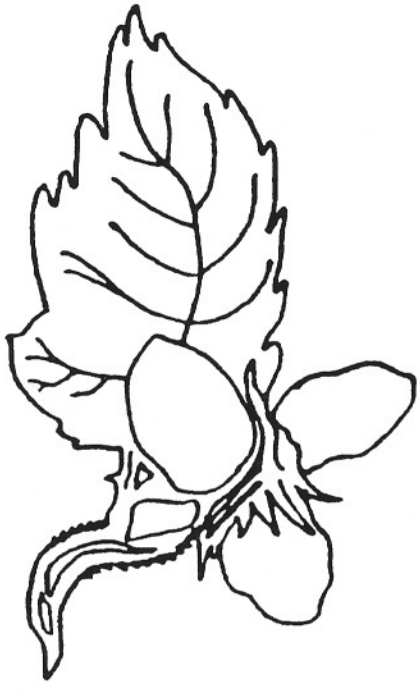
The Charles Williams Society

NEWSLETTER

No. 59, AUTUMN 1990



MEETINGS OF THE CHARLES WILLIAMS SOCIETY

23 February 1991: At this meeting of the Society, Lois Lang-Sims and Glen Cavaliero have kindly agreed to discuss Lois Lang-Sims' Letters to Lalage.

11 May 1991: The Society will hold its AGM at Pusey House, Oxford. Brenda Boughton will pose the question: "What part do the slaves play in Charles Williams' poetry?"

The meeting on 23 February will be held at Liddon House, 24 South Audley Street, London W.1., starting at 2.30pm.

LONDON READING GROUP

Sunday 17 March 1991: We will continue to read Taliessin Through Logres and Region of the Summer Stars. We will meet at St Matthews Church Vestry, 27 St Petersburgh Place, London W2 (nearest tube stations Queensway and Bayswater) at 1pm. Tea and coffee will be provided but please bring sandwiches.

OXFORD READING GROUP

For information 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 Cambridge 311465.

LAKE MICHIGAN AREA READING GROUP

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

SOCIETY BOOK SALE

The magnificent bequest of her books to the Society by Alice Mary Hadfield means that we are able to offer members the chance to aquire a large number of C.W. titles (plus some others related). It was her hope that the supplement-notes to the Arthurian poems, contributed by her and others who had known C.W. while he was writing them, might be gathered into book form. We hope to do this and to finance the project with the proceeds of the book sales. Following a suggestion after the 1988 auctions that valuation would have been helpful, and after discussion at the 1990 AGM, we have taken the advice of an experienced, accredited bookseller and he has valued each book for us.

The Reference and Lending Libraries and "waiting-list" members' requests have been satisfied. The remaining books are for sale to the highest bidder and we give as a guideline a price for each book suggested by him (so a lower bid might "win").

As in 1988 the following rules apply:

i. the books are for sale to members of the Society whose subscriptions and other payments are fully paid up-to-date;

ii. separate bids (in pounds sterling) must be made for each book, in writing, to Mrs Gillian Lunn, 26 Village Road, Finchley, London N3 1TL. As there is more than one copy of some titles each book has been given a number. Please state clearly the number and title of each book for which you bid;

iii. send no money with your bids;

iv. bids do not include postage costs. Overseas members please indicate whether, if you "win", you want the book(s) to be posted by air-mail (strongly advised for safe arrival, although more expensive). British members will be sent their book(s) by second-class post

unless they indicate otherwise;

v. the closing date for bids is 1 March 1991 - the date by which they must have been received by Mrs Lunn.

FAILURE TO FOLLOW THE ABOVE RULES WILL RESULT IN THE BID BEING DISQUALIFIED.

Soon after 1 March 1991, Mrs Lunn will send each book to its highest bidder with instructions about payment. Mrs Lunn will not inform "losers" unless a stamped addressed envelope is enclosed with their bid.

A note to overseas members - you are always asked to pay for books in sterling. We much regret any inconvenience this may cause you but we have to ask for this because bank charges here for foreign currency cheques are so high. We have several times "lost" in bank charges more than the price of the book(s) we had sent.

If anyone has any spare Jiffy bags could they please either send them to Mrs Lunn or bring them to the February meeting.

C.W. TITLES

The following information is given about each book: its number in the sale, the guideline price, its title, publisher, date of publication and any relevant comments.

1. £60; All Hallows Eve; Faber; 1945; signed C.W. and dust-wrapper (d/w).
2. £22; Arthurian Torso; OUP; 1948; d/w.
3. £12; Descent into Hell; Faber; 1937.
4. £15; Descent of the Dove, the; Longmans; 1939.
5. £45; Divorce; OUP; 1920.
6. £5; English Critical Essays: selected and introduced by Phyllis M Jones; OUP;reprinted 1954; includes 1 C.W. essay.

7. £22; English Poetic Mind, the; OUP; 1932; d/w.
8. £6; English Poetry selected by K Muir (C.W. associated in production); OUP; 1938; d/w.
9. £18; Figure of Beatrice, the; Faber; 1943; d/w.
10. £45; Flecker of Dean Close; Canterbury Press; 1945; d/w.
11. £11; Forgiveness of Sins, the; Geoffrey Bles; 1943.
12. £1.50; Four Modern Verse Plays (incl. Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury; Penguin paperback; 1957.
13. £9; Greater Trumps, the; Faber; 1954; d/w.
14. £9; Greater Trumps, the; Faber; 1964; d/w.
15. £1.50; Greater Trumps, the; Sphere paperback; 1975.
16. £6; House of the Octopus, the; Edinbor. House Press; 1945.
17. £6; House of the Octopus, the; Edinbor. House Press; 1945; identical to No. 16.
18. £12; Image of the City, the; OUP; 1958.
19. £15; James I; Barker; 1934.
20. £12; Judgement at Chelmsford; OUP paperback; 1939/45.
21. £6; Longer Modern Verse, chosen by E A Parker, preface note by C.W.; OUP; 1926.
22. £5; Many Dimensions; Gollancz; 1931; poor copy.
23. £11; More Short Biographies, edited by R C Goffin, including Queen Victoria by C.W.; OUP; 1938.
24. £32; New Book of English Verse, edited by C.W.; Gollancz; 1937; signed C.W. + d/w.
25. £3; New Christian Year; OUP; 1942.
26. £7; Oxford Book of Regency Verse; OUP; 1928.
27. £22; Place of the Lion, the; Mundanus; 1931.
28. £10; Place of the Lion, the; Mundanus paperback; 1931.
29. £6; Place of the Lion, the; Faber; 1952.
30. £22; Poetry at Present; OUP; 1931; d/w.
31. £12; Queen Elizabeth; Duckworth; 1936.
32. £22; Region of the Summer Stars, the; Poetry London; 1944; d/w.
33. £6; Region of the Summer Stars, the; OUP; 1950; spine torn.
34. £22; Religion and Love in Dante; Dacre Press; 1941; paperback.

35. £15; Seed of Adam; OUP; 1948; d/w.
36. £15; Seed of Adam; OUP; 1948; d/w, identical to No. 35.
37. £6; Selected Writings: C.W., chosen by Anne Ridler; OUP paperback; 1961.
38. £6; Selected Writings: C.W., chosen by Anne Ridler; OUP paperback; 1961; identical to No. 37.
39. £6; Shadows of Ecstasy; Faber; 1948.
40. £3; Shakespeare Criticism 1919-35 ed. Anne Ridler, 2 essays by C.W.; OUP reprint; 1951; d/w.
41. £12; Short Life of Shakespeare, a (abridged by C.W. from Chambers); OUP; 1933; d/w.
42. £7; Taliessin Through Logres; OUP; reprinted 1948.
43. £15; Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury; OUP; 1936.
44. £15; Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury; OUP; 1936; identical to No. 43.
45. £37; Three Plays; OUP; 1931; signed C.W..
46. £6; Victorian Narrative Verse; OUP; 1931; imprint.
47. £3; War in Heaven; OUP; 1930; re-bound.
48. £1.50; War in Heaven; Faber paperback; 1962.

TITLES NOT BY C.W.

49. £15; Arthur of Britain by E K Chambers; C.W.'s own copy.
50. £9; Bright Shadows of Reality : C.W. Lewis + The Feeling Intellect : Corbin Scott Carnell; Eerdmans paperback; 1974; signed by author.
51. £22; Charles W S Williams: a Checklist : Lois Glenn; Kent State UP; 1975.
52. £15; Charles Williams: Poet of Theology : Glen Cavaliero; Macmillan; 1983; d/w.
53. £30; Essays Presented to Charles Williams; OUP; 1947; d/w.
54. £3; Flower in a Teacup: Vol 2 of autobiography: Lois Lang-Sims ; Deutsch; 1973; d/w.
55. £22; Imagination and the Spirit: Essays ed. Charles A Huttar; Eerdmans; 1971; d/w.
56. £12; Novels of Charles Williams, the : Thomas T Howard; OUP; 1983; d/w.

57. £7; Oxford University Press, the : an informal history : Peter Sutcliffe: OUP: 1978; d/w.
58. £7; Pattern of Love, the: William P Wylie; Longmans; 1958; d/w.
59. £7; Precincts of Felicity, the: Charles Moorman; University of Florida Press; 1966; d/w.
60. £7; Religion in Modern English Drama: Gerald Weales University of Pennsylvania Press; 1961; d/w.
61. £13; Romantic Religion: a study of Barfield, Lewis, Williams and Tolkien; University of Georgia Press; 1971; d/w.
62. £16; Shadows of Imagination: Fantasies of Lewis, Tolkien + C.W.: editor Mark R Hillegas; Southern Illinois Press; 1967; d/w.
63. £15; Sword of Wisdom: McGregor Mathers and the Golden Dawn: Ithell Colquhoun; Neville Spearman; 1975; d/w.

NEWS ABOUT BOOKS

A copy of The Magical World of the Inklings by Gareth Knight and published by Element Books Ltd of Shaftesbury, Dorset price £9.99, 250pp, has been received by the Society. The text is confined to four members of the group - Lewis, Tolkien, Williams and Barfield - and their works are analysed in four separate sections. The section on Charles Williams deals principally with the novels. There is also a short preface by Owen Barfield. It is hoped to review the book in the next issue of the Newsletter.

Over 30 orders for Outlines of Romantic Theology were received. Charles Hadfield has sent a bulk order to Eerdmans in America. As soon as he receives them he will send the books out to those who ordered them.

Gillian Lunn writes: "Two recent books including quotations from C.W. may interest members. I confess that I haven't read either of them right through:

i. The enormous Oxford Illustrated History of

Christianity, edited by John McManners (OUP 1990, ISBN 0198229283, £25) has 19 sequential chapters by various hands. Chapter 4, 'Eastern Christianity', by Bishop Kallistos Ware is, as far as I could see, the only one to include poetry-extracts. He starts the chapter with Yeats': 'And therefore I have sailed the sea and come

To the holy city of Byzantium ...'

Further on, embedded in a section called 'The "Organic Body": Emperor and Patriarch within the Byzantine Polity' comes: '... So through the imperial administration Byzantium was maintained in unity as an "organic body", to use the phrase of Charles Williams in Taliessin Through Logres:

The logothetes run down the porphyry stair
bearing the missives through the area of empire.
. . . . . .
The organic body sang together.

But the "organic body" had also its religious aspect,...'

ii. Redeeming the Dream: Feminism, Redemption and Christian Tradition by Mary Grey (SPCK 1989, ISBN 0281044104, £11.95) looks interestingly full of wide-ranging literary and theological quotations. Muddling howlers in the index confuse C.W. with Daniel Day Williams. There is no bibliography but I think I sense The Descent of the Dove hovering about references to Ss. Perpetua and Felicitas. Aptly embedded (and correctly attributed in a chapter note) in an illuminating paragraph about the Marriage at Cana is mention of the 'Beatricean moment'. Two other chapter notes are references to The Forgiveness of Sins. Yet another says: 'I develop some of Charles Williams' ideas ... because of his influence on ... Rosemary Haughton...' Several quotations from Taliessin poems illustrate the development of objections to C.W.'s ideas about women, blood and priesthood. The first of all references to C.W. is this:

'Even when a discerning poet like Charles Williams, who explored so brilliantly in his novels the interconnections between divine and human spheres, speaks about knowledge, and specifically about the

knowing of the body, it is to downgrade flesh-knowing as opposed to spirit-knowing:

Flesh knows what spirit knows,
but spirit knows it knows - ...' (continues).

In another context I think the author quotes mischievously the Archbishop's palliative (am I being fair here, I wonder?!) summing-up of the arguments about money in The King's Coins. And her last textual reference to C.W. returning to the theme of blood, women and priesthood, quotes:

'I heard, as in a throb of stretched verse,' ...
... (6 more lines)
and concludes
'The reason for bothering with such distorted theology is that appreciation of the poetry frequently masks the truth that these ideas are rooted psychically rather than rationally, ...'.

Both these books quote and use C.W.'s words for their own purposes, appearing to assume that the reader will know his name and value his words. Perhaps this is a trend or development from the now considerable number of books about C.W.'s works."

BOOK REVIEW

Letters to Lalage. The Letters of Charles Williams to Lois Lang-Sims. Lois Lang-Sims with an Introduction by Glen Cavaliero. The Kent State University Press, 1990, $16.50.
Review by Brian Horne.

It is well known that W H Auden wanted many of his friends to destroy the letters he had written to them, fearing that, after his death, the letters might be collected and appear in print. He thought the publication of a private correspondence, especially without the permission of the authors, a dubious affair morally, and of little value for the understanding of an artist's work. I am ambivalent: on the one hand, I

admit to reading volumes of letters with a great deal of enjoyment. On the other hand I have seldom found it profitable - in the sense that it has increased my understanding or appreciation of anyone's poetry or theology. So it is here: we may be interested in Charles Williams or Lois Lang-Sims as persons and learn something more about them from these letters, but they lead us no further into the mysterious depths of his poetry or theology. That is why I cannot agree with the claim in the Introduction: "No matter what may be said to the effect that a writer's output should be assessed without reference to his personal character and the circumstances of his life, in the case of Charles Williams it is all but impossible to disentangle the one from the other, since the one continuously proceeded from the other, in a way that can only with difficulty be understood by anyone who was never personally involved in his experiments." (p.16).

Lois Lang-Sims provides an informative commentary linking the letters and undoubtedly contributes something to our knowledge of Williams the man, if little to our knowledge of the art which he produced. Not having known Williams I have no way of judging the truth of her remark at the end of her comment before the last letter Williams wrote to her: "But Charles was incapable of behaving naturally in any context." (p.85). His own friends and acquaintances will have to assess its accuracy, and, along the way, decide what the word "Natural" means. My own feeling is that none of us behaves "naturally"; we all live out our own mythologies, some more consciously than others, few with the consistency and self-awareness as Charles Williams, mainly because so few of us have so coherent and consistent view of reality. But, even trying to live life as a Christian or a Muslim is to live not naturally but mythologically. Problems begin to arise when one creates ones own mythology for it can easily become both self-serving and destructive of others. There may have been something of this in Charles Williams - as there is in all of us. The chief interest of this book lies

here: in the contrast between Myth and Nature and the extent to which Williams, as the paradigm for every human being, lived out the myth that he had created. It may be that some readers will be shocked, repelled or even distressed by the revelation of Williams' behaviour towards his young friend. I can only say that in the light of what I have experienced of the way in which people treat each other, his behaviour seems only mildly eccentric.

Glen Cavaliero provides a characteristically thoughtful and sympathetic introduction to the volume.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Please note that subscriptions are due to be renewed from 1 March 1991. A form for this purpose is enclosed.

NEW MEMBER

A warm welcome is extended to Janet Chambers, The Coach House, Derby Road, Risley, Draycott, Derby DE7 3SS.

* *

At the Society's meeting on 24 November 1990, Mrs Vernon Watkins spoke on "Two Notions of Hell". We are pleased to be able to reproduce the talk in this Newsletter.

"The subject of Hell has always been a popular one, not only for painters, writers and speakers, but for their audiences. Dante was pointed out with a delicious frisson as the man who had actually been in the infernal regions; the mediaeval Ars Moriendi books were immensely popular largely because of their rivetting descriptions of the fate awaiting the unrepentant sinner; and many of you will perhaps follow the example of the Quivering Brethren in Cold Comfort Farm. When Amos Starkadder bellowed at them that they were all damned, 'an

expression of lively interest and satisfaction passed over the faces of the Brethren, and there was a general re-arranging of arms and legs, as though they wanted to sit as comfortably as possible while listening to the bad news.'

But however enjoyable the dipicting of Hell in paint or words, it is a subject with which every serious theologian must concern himself. If God exists and has created man to know Him and enjoy Him for ever, it is possible that some men will refuse this knowledge and this enjoyment; that they will separate themselves from the purpose of their creation. 'Sin' says Charles Williams, 'is the name of a certain relationship between man and God. When it is fixed, if it is, into a final state, [man] gives it other names; he calls it Hell and damnation.'

Now it is possible for writers, but not, I think, for painters, to represent Hell in two ways; as a place, or as a state of being. And since man is the only state of being known from the inside by man, Hell can be dipicted as, or in, a person. Dante chose the first way. There are many individual sinners in his Inferno, but it is as a place that he describes it and we remember it. Marlowe and Milton use both modes. Mephistopheles says: 'Why, this is Hell, nor am I out of it.' Satan is hurled:

> to bottomless perdition, there to dwell
> In adamantine chains and penal fire'

but even when he is approaching Paradise he is forced to say: 'Which way I fly is Hell, myself am Hell.' C S Lewis in The Great Divorce represents Hell as the Grey Town which first appears in Letters From Hell, a translation from the Danish to which George MacDonald wrote an introduction. But George MacDonald and Charles Williams almost always represent Hell as a state of being - in their fiction always, I think, as a person. It is curious, but natural, that Heaven, on the other hand, is always a place, and it is easy to see why. Heaven is always a place of exchange, but Hell a place of

separation, and therefore Heaven consists of many of the blessed, Hell of the single soul drawing further and further away from its fellows into itself and finally into disintegration. The one principle of Hell is, 'I am my own.'

Williams' image of Heaven is always the City; when he opposes Hell to this, he calls it the Infamy. When Lawrence Wentworth descends into Hell, it is into himself that he really descends. When in that great novel of the city All Hallows' Eve, where London itself is seen as the type of the heavenly city, Lester sees the subway entrances as the tubes and tunnels of damnation, she perceives them to be the pits of her own selfishness. When Evelyn refuses Lester's help, and rushes with lunatic glee into the pit, it is into her own refusal to accept love and dependance that she goes, 'there to wait and wander and mutter till she found what companions she could.'

When I first gave this talk - or at any rate a talk with a similar title, since I am incapable of giving the same talk twice, I dealt also with C S Lewis' ideas about Hell, and I discovered something rather strange. The influence of MacDonald on him was so great, as he himself admitted, that he quotes from MacDonald in almost every one of his books; he also regarded Charles Williams with the greatest love and reverence, and was in some ways strongly influenced by his thought. And yet on the subject of Hell, it is Lewis who is the odd man out. MacDonald never read Williams, of course, and though Williams read and liked MacDonald, I do not believe he was ever influenced by anything except the Anglican liturgy and one or two books of A E Waite's. As Lewis said, 'You might as well try to influence a bandersnatch.' And yet these two are closer

together, through independent thinking and feeling, than to the man who was soaked in their work.

Lewis' clearest exposition of the doctrine of Hell as he sees it is given in the chapter entitled Hell in The Problem of Pain. He says there that the lost soul is 'etenally fixed in its diabolical attitude.' Lewis argues on behalf of an everlasting Hell skilfully and even passionately, and appears to hold to the idea as a personal belief, not merely as a dogma to be defended by scholarly means. But MacDonald and Williams nowhere express any such belief. In one of his early novels, Robert Falconer (though it was written when he was forty-four, so is a product of his mature thought), the old grandmother continually mourns for her son, who, if he is dead, is inevitably suffering the agonies of the damned, according to the calvanistic religious beliefs from which MacDonald broke away. "Them 'at gangs there, their doom is fixed, and nothing can alter it." But the boy Robert is not prepared to believe such things, of God or man. He has been thinking, he tells his appalled grandmother, of a plan to empty Hell. After the Day of Judgement, when all the Elect are sitting at the Lamb's Supper, he will call on them to take over the sins of the damned, for 'It'll be some sair upon them to sit there aiting and drinking and talking awa' and enjoying themsel's, whan ilka noo and than there'll come a sough of wailing up frae the ill place, and a smell and burning ill to bide.' The grandmother says that only the sinless can take over the sins of others, but Robert replies triumphantly that the Elect will have had all their sins washed away in the blood of the Lamb.

This note of salvation even in the depths of Hell recurs constantly in MacDonald's work. In his introduction to Letters From Hell, he comments on the 'faint, all but inaudible tone of possible hope' in its pages. Even in his children's books the same thought recurs. When Curdie and the old Princess are discussing the way in which human beings may grow downwards into beasts, Curdie asks of one of them 'And is there no hope for him? Can nothing be done? It's so awful to think of going down, down, down like that.'

'Even when it is with his own will?'

'That's what seems to me to make it worst of all', says Curdie, but the Princess's only answer is to call up a shockingly hideous animal and place its paw in Curdie's hand. Instead of the hide and claws, he feels the soft hand of a child. It is clear that humans may grow not only down but up again.

In Robert Falconer, Shirgar's mother, a thief, drunkard and harlot who has sold her little daughter into prostitution and abused and neglected her son, has, according to MacDonald, a hope of the salvation she neither knows nor cares about, and which Calvinism would deny her. 'She too was eternal - and surely not to be fixed for ever in a bewilderment of sin and ignorance - a wild-eyed soul staring about in hell-fire for want of something it could not understand and had never beheld - by the changeless mandate of the love of God.' And in Lilith, MacDonald's final statement of belief, so many times redrafted and rewritten, there is a scene in which Mr Vane sees the dancing skeletons whose remaining rags of flesh are hanging from their bones, their lidless living eyes gleaming in their sockets. Is this

Hell? No, these ghastly figures are growing human again, 'centuries ahead' of the two bare skeletons in the coach, hating and loathing each other, only able to reject or injure each other. These two are in Hell, says the raven, but adds: 'They must at last grow weary of their mutual repugnance and begin to love another.' And when we last see them, they are not only beginning to help each other, but are on good terms with the Little Ones, who are the touchstone for everything good.

The one principle of Hell, says MacDonald, is 'I am my own'. Charles Williams agrees. Hell is the place of those spirits who wish to have their necessity in themselves. Since this is contrary to the holy Fact of creation, those who believe it possible are irrational. All those who believe in illusion are in danger of Hell. In his introduction to the World's Classics edition of Milton's poems, Williams observes that 'Milton thought pride, egotism and a sense of one's own rights the greatest of all temptations ... and he thought it led straight to inaccuracy and malice, and finally to idiocy and Hell.'

All the characters in Williams' plays and novels who seem to be on the road to damnation cling to some illusion. Foster and Miss Wilmot in The Place of the Lion live in fantasies of power and revenge. Sir Giles Tumulty lives in the illusion that he can cause or observe suffering in others without himself being involved, but he is told that he shall scrabble in the universe as an ant scrabbles against the side of a cup, 'and none shall pick you out or deliver you for ever'. Wentworth is one of those who 'beget themselves on their adoration of themselves', and refuse to accept the facts of creation, that frustration and pain may be aspects of the mercy of God. All

these characters may seem to be on the way to, or already in, Hell, but it is the hell of themselves that they are descending into, rather than some Dantean Inferno. Lester, in All Hallows' Eve, is described as being after a fit of anger 'in a trance of horror at herself or hell, or at both, being one.'It is into his own illusion that Wentworth finally slips off the rope of time. In the short story Et in Aeternum Pereant, there is a ladder down into the smoking pit of anger; but a ladder can be climbed up as well as down. 'There was [Lord Arglay] remembered, a way in, therefore a path out. He had only to walk along it. But also there was a way still farther in ... From every gate of hell there was a way to Heaven, yes, and in every way to heaven there was a gate to deeper hell.' We must never forget that Williams himself claimed that All Hallows' Eve began where Descent Into Hell left off.

Lewis may have been disingenuous in his defence of an irreversible Hell in a way that MacDonald and Williams never are in their rejection of such a concept. Lewis says that if a soul will not, ultimately, repent, 'it is better for the creature itself, even if it never becomes good, that it should know itself for a failure, a mistake', and that that knowledge, made permanent, would be what we call Hell. To ask otherwise, he says, to ask that God should, by whatever means, save the soul He created from infinite suffering, is to cancel out the miracle of an Omnipotence which agrees to be defeated by its own creature. But even to use the word defeat is to bring in the imagery of war; and God is not at war with His people. MacDonald sees no vanquished God, but a God whose love is inexorable, and whose fires may be not the fires of Hell, but of redemption. He thinks it false to believe that if Hell is not everlasting, there is

no Hell at all. 'I see no hope for many, no way for the divine love to reach them, save through a very ghastly Hell.' 'The Lord never came to deliver men from the consequences of their sins while yet those sins remained. ... No man is safe from Hell until he is free from his sins. ... If Hell be needful to save him, Hell will blaze until he takes refuge in the will of the Father.' 'The children will rush inside the centre of the life-giving fire whose outer circles burn.'

Another of Lewis' arguments is that the doctrine of a final Hell 'has the full support of Scripture, and, specially, of our Lord's own words'. But Christ says (Matthew 5.26) 'Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.' But what does MacDonald say? 'Herein is the Bible greatly wronged. It nowhere lays claim to be the Word, the Way, the Truth. The Bible leads us to Jesus, the inexhaustible, the ever unfolding Revelation of God. It is Christ 'in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, not the Bible, save as leading to Him.' Or, again: 'God has not cared that we should anywhere have assurance of His very words, ... Even Christ must depend for being understood upon the spirit of His disciple. Seeing it could not give life, the letter should not be throned with power to kill.'

MacDonald and Williams agree in allowing the possibility of a final Hell, but both continually express an intuitive conviction of its impossibility, Williams because of eternal Justice, and MacDonald because of eternal Love. (These are of course the very reasons that Dante gives for the creation of his Hell - 'Justice moved my great Maker ... and the primal Love supernal.') 'It is certain', says Williams, 'that

if they have the power of choosing joy in Him, they must have the power of choosing the opposite of joy in Him. But it is not credible that a finite choice ought to result in an infinite distress.' Williams wrote in a letter to a friend towards the end of his life: 'I am convinced that there must be a Redemption of Sin ... I believe that every soul experiences and understands fully the entire and living Justice of the universe. I believe that Justice to be a living, responsive and intelligent Existence - and one with Almighty Love. And I believe It makes Itself clear to every soul in the way that that soul choses ... because Justice - in - Love exists, I believe in a Judgement, an Accounting.'

And MacDonald - 'If at last it should prove possible for a created being to see good and evil as they are, and choose the evil, then, and only then, there would, I presume, be nothing left for God but to set His foot upon him and crush him, as you crush a noxious insect. But God is deeper in us than our own life.'

Both our authors reach, not by dogma but through a lifelong exploration of the ways and the love of God, the same conclusion as that given us by one whom they would both agree to be immeasurably greater than themselves, the Lady Julian of Norwich. Holy Church taught her to believe that some men should be damned to Hell without end, and because of this 'Methought it was impossible that all manner of thing should be well.' 'And as to this', she says, 'I had no other answer in Shewing of our Lord God but this: '"That which is impossible to thee is not impossible to Me: I shall save My word in all things and I shall make all things well."'

'For this is the great deed that our Lord shall do; in which Deed He shall save his word in all thing, and He shall make all well that is not well.' It was this great deed in which George MacDonald and Charles Williams so profoundly believed."

* *

OFFICERS OF THE CHARLES WILLIAMS SOCIETY

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