

The Charles Williams Society

NEWSLETTER

No. 63, AUTUMN 1991



MEETINGS OF THE CHARLES WILLIAMS SOCIETY

22 February 1992: Kerrylynne Henderson will talk on the early poetry of Charles Williams.

16 May 1992: The Society will meet from 11am to 5pm and hold its AGM. Immediately after the AGM at 12 noon Ruth Spalding will read with the assistance of three other voices her script of "A Portrait of Charles Williams" first broadcast on BBC Third Programme on 13 September 1961. After lunch Rev T Gorringer will speak on "Eros and Spirituality".

7 November 1992: Professor John Hibbs will speak on "Charles Williams and current economic thought".

LONDON READING GROUP

Sunday 29 March 1992: We will start to read The House of the Octopus. We will meet at St Matthew's Church Vestry, 27 St Petersburg 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.

DALLAS CATHEDRAL READING GROUP

For details please contact Canon Roma King, 9823 Twin Creek Drive, Dallas, Texas 75228, USA.

NEWS ABOUT BOOKS

We have been told of an American firm, University Microfilms International (UMI) which reprints out-of-print books. Their catalogue includes Poems of Conformity, The Silver Stair, Taliessin Through Logres and The Region of the Summer Stars + Arthurian Torso with an introduction by Mary Mc Dermott Shideler. For details please contact UMI's UK representatives Information Publications International Ltd, White Swan House, Godstone, Surrey RH9 8LW.

Gillian Lunn writes: "Earthstars: the geometric groundplan underlying London's ancient sacred sites and its significance for the new age by C E Street, foreword by John Michell - that's on the front cover; on the back - "The circle is squared. The circuit completed. The power is flowing. The change is inevitable." Hermitage Publishing PO Box 1383, London N14 6LF. ISBN 0 9515967 (no price). There are geometric patterns on both front and back and inside lots of maps and geometrical diagrams showing ley-lines and sacred sites. I haven't read it all but Chapter 1 sets out to prove Camelot to be a couple of miles from my London home. The author, listing 'Arthurian associations', first cites the local finding of a lead cross '... to all intents and purposes ... identical to the one which is said to have graced King Arthur's tomb in Glastonbury'. He goes on to this '... a map drawn by the poet, novelist and occultist Charles Williams, clearly showing Camelot in the general area of North London, several hundred miles from Tintagel or Cadbury Castle, the usual candidates for its location. Mr Williams obviously had good reasons for this, but unfortunately, whatever they were, he seems to have kept them to himself, although one consideration to be born in mind is that he was a member of an occult group called the Society of the Golden Dawn, so we can reasonably assume that he may have been privy to quite a lot of information that could hardly be described as common knowledge.' There is no index but I do not think he mentions C.W. thereafter."

EXCHANGE AND MART

Society member Conrad Gempf has written to ask if anyone has a copy of Mary McDermott Shideler's book The Theology of Romantic Love. If anyone has a copy they would be willing to part with please get in touch with him direct at 10 Ashurst Close, Northwood, Middx., HA6 1EL

BOOK REVIEW IN NEWSLETTER 60

Martin Moynihan writes: "In my review of the Outlines of Romantic Theology by Charles Williams, edited and introduced by Alice Mary Hadfield, I quoted Patmore, and recently I have come across lines of this which seem to confirm that he may indeed have been one of Charles Williams' sources quâ Calvary as the place of the Scorpion. The lines are from 'The Child's Purchase' which is poem xvii in Book II of The Unknown Eros. They are about the Crucifixion and are addressed to the Lady Elect, to Mary our Second Eve:

In season due, as this sweet-fearful bed,
Rock'd by an earthquake, curtained by eclipse,
Thou shared'st the rapture of the sharp spear's head
And thy bliss pale
Wrought for our boon what Eve's did for our bale.

The 'bliss' must be the realisation that Christ's accomplished penal death (attested by the lancing which pierced his heart also) had expiated the sin of the world.

More than that I leave to further reflection. This is linked to the two points which I made earlier. The Crucifixion, for the Church, is the marriage-dowry. By it, the Groom payed off, by substitution, what would otherwise have been a fatal blemish, the debt of mankind. Secondly, the Pieta: this is sometimes seen as the commencement of the Biunion, of that biunion which was prehalloved by the death on the Cross.

Still with an eye to sources, but this time quâ

Substitution, I record a remarkable passage on its practice in a book on Islam: Islam in European Thought by Albert Hourani (Oxford University Press 1991). In pages 123 - 127 there are fascinating allusions to Huysmans, Massignon, Hallaj and notably Paul Claudel."

BOOK REVIEW

The Pattern in the Web: the Mythical Poetry of Charles Williams by Roma A King published by the Kent State University Press 1990. ISBN 0-87338-412-1. Review by Anne Scott.

This book is the most detailed study yet of Taliessin Through Logres and The Region of the Summer Stars. Dr King goes through the two volumes poem by poem, discussing, explaining and commenting on each one in the utmost detail so that it is necessary - happy necessity! - to have the poem in front of one as one reads. Believing these poems to be "the culmination of Williams' achievement both intellectually and artistically" he sees in them "the poetic creation of a coherent mythical vision of man and his place in the larger creation of which he is part." Williams, Dr King justly observes, "saw all as one web ... each filament distinct and yet each fully itself only in relation to the whole." In an exact analogy, the poems form a cycle "of which each is in its limited way a complete and functioning whole and yet dependent for its ultimate meaning upon a larger pattern of which it is part." Of the "new style" in which the poems are written, he says "Williams had abandoned the traditional cliches, verbal and technical, to permit meaning in all its dimensions - intellectual, emotional and sensuous - to emerge more precisely."

When the individual poems are exhaustively analysed - a process which takes up all but 17 of the 178 pages of the book - I am reminded of A N Wilson's dictum: "Very often the simplest understanding of a text would turn out, in another person's eyes, to be a 'misreading' of it. Reading is a creative exercise, and exercise of the imagination." This is most particularly true of the reading of poetry. Consequently, in chapter after

chapter of this book one finds oneself at first saying, "Surely not" but then finding that the poem had been enriched by a whole new set of suggestions and resonances.

But unfortunately it is not possible to recommend the book whole-heartedly. It is not only that it is afflicted (a word misprinted on p.127 as "inflicted") by a number of misprints which destroy the sense of the passage: "mordant" for "moribund" (p.38), "tortuous" for "tortured" (p.46), "Sacred Hollows" for "Sacred Hallows" (p.70), "thames" for "themes" (p.169). More disconcerting is a large number of factual mis-statements. When one has read in the very first chapter that Sophia is the central city of the Empire rather than the central church in Byzantium; that in Persian mythology Ormus is the evil creative force and Ahriman the good, rather than the other way round; that "umcial" means uppercase characters, rather than rounded ones; and that "logothete" means a letter or sign used to replace an entire word, rather than "the designation of various functionaries under the Byzantine emperors" (Oxford English Dictionary) - well, one's confidence in the writer's accuracy is somewhat shaken. It is not restored by finding passage after passage inaccurately quoted: "a bloody fish" for "a silver fish" (p.46); a speech of Kay's attributed to the Archbishop (p.78); Taliessin's building of a fleet to repel the Moslem attack described as those same Moslems building a fleet to attack Christendom (p.87). It is particularly unfortunate when a misquotation is made the basis of an explication, as is the case with "the Tower" instead of "Tor" of Badon (p.44) or "It was a dull day" instead of "It was dull day" (p.94).

This book is so clearly a labour of love that it is a very great pity that it should be marred by so many flaws.

NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome is extended to:
Aidan Mackey, Administrator, The G K Chesterton Study
Centre, 15 Shaftesbury Avenue, Bedford MK40 3SA,

Dr W North, 19 Dukes Avenue, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1EN,
Julian Smith, 1670 Pershore Road, Stirchley, Birmingham,
B30 3BH,

Dr Timothy J Butler, 15 Eastman Road, Somerville,
Massachusetts 02143, USA, and

Frank Kibblewhite, Walnut Tree Cottage, Mappowder,
Dorset, DT10 2EH.

+ Mr. Miss John Matthews

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At the Society's meeting on 19 October 1991, Brian Horne spoke on "Charles Williams, Dorothy L Sayers and Dante". We are pleased to be able to reproduce the talk in this Newsletter.

I

Dorothy L Sayers's translation of The Divine Comedy in the Penguin Classics Series carries a dedication: To the dead master of the affirmation, Charles Williams.

'E quant io l'abbio in grado, mentre io vivo
convien che nella mia lingua si scerna'

The words are from the fifteenth canto of Inferno. Dante and Virgil have come upon Brunetto Latini in the seventh circle of hell and Dorothy L Sayers translates Dante's address to his old teacher:

'..... know this too
I am so grateful, that while I breathe air
My tongue shall speak the thanks which are your due.'

II

On the eighth of February 1944 Charles Williams wrote to Lois Lang Sims:

'O the labours of the world interrupted me! And here is your letter of Lear before I have dealt with Othello, but I will catch up, though not now, for I must go and find Miss Sayers who is a nice creature, and is always kind to my own literary efforts. No. Lalage [his name for Lois Lang-Sims] that is NOT a feline scratch; it is a

Dove's wing jest. She is; and so am I to hers.' (1)

And, indeed, it was not 'a feline scratch': by 1944 Williams and Sayers had become friends and genuinely admired each other's work. He was writing from Oxford which had become his home and his place of work since the first week of September 1939 when the Oxford University press had evacuated its premises at Amen House in London and moved to Oxford. He does not say why he was meeting Dorothy Sayers, but we may suppose that it was not with the purpose of discussing Dante. That was to come later because, surprisingly, Sayers had made no direct contact with any of Dante's works at that time. However, Dante was hovering on the horizon for she had read, and been fascinated by, Williams's book on Dante, The Figure of Beatrice. But she postponed the meeting until the first week of August 1944.

How, and when, Williams encountered Dante is not easy to ascertain, though it must have been before 1912, and probably occurred when he was an undergraduate reading Modern Languages at University College, London. His first volume of poetry, The Silver Stair, appeared in 1912 and the presence of Dante can already be felt: some of the imagery can, without difficulty, be traced back to a source either in the New Life or the Comedy. Dante and his work remained central to the whole of Williams's intellectual, emotional and imaginative life. In 1924 he wrote his first substantial prose work, Outlines of Romantic Theology (2) in which, among other things, he made an attempt to analyse the concepts of love and religion in Dante. In 1942 there came Religion and Love in Dante, a short study for the Dacre Press, and the following year Faber & Faber published his major (and perhaps his finest) work, The Figure of Beatrice. He not only returned to Dante over and over again himself, he never tired of urging others to read the Italian master. His biographer, Alice Mary Hadfield recalled, for instance, that in 1938 when she went to work at the Oxford University Press, Williams set her to read Dante's Divine Comedy insisting 'that I start, not with the Inferno but instead with the Paradiso, so that I should grasp the aim of the whole journey, the celestial glory

that moved the verse and drew the travellers onward from the fearful beginning.' (3)

By contrast Dorothy L Sayers came to Dante comparatively late in life; and it was through Charles Williams that she did so. The story of Sayers's encounter with Dante has been admirably told in a recent book, The Passionate Intellect, by Barbara Reynolds who completed the Penguin translation of the Divine Comedy when Sayers died in 1957 having finished only twenty of the cantos of Paradiso. The story of this encounter is one that will fascinate not only those who care about Dante and the intellectual problems of scholarship, but also those who care about friendship and the kind of love that can grow between those who despite having strongly different personalities share a deep concern for the same things. They were both natural and, one might say, compulsive letter-writers; fortunately, much of their correspondence has survived. In 1933 Williams, having read Sayers's detective novel The Nine Taylors, wrote to Victor Gollancz, '... Your Dorothy Sayers ... Present her sometime with my profoundest compliments. It's a marvellous book; it is high imagination ...' (4) Alice Mary Hadfield, who was trying to prepare an edition of Williams's letters at the time of her death, commented: '... while they corresponded mainly on business matters, they were wild and wonderful letters.' (5) It was Williams who had, after the great success of his play Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury at the Canterbury Festival in 1936, suggested Dorothy Sayers as the author of the next play - which was to be The Zeal of Thy House. They became friends; but, as yet, for Sayers, Dante was still some way off. Then on Sunday 29 August 1943 she read a review by Desmond McCarthy in the Sunday Times. It was of a book called The Figure of Beatrice by Charles Williams. She bought the book and read it immediately; but, deeply impressed as she was, and admiring the work of her friend, she postponed the reading of the Divine Comedy for a year. 'After all' she said later, 'fourteen thousand lines are fourteen thousand lines, especially if they are full of Guelphs and Ghibellines and Thomas Aquinas'. (6) However, in August 1944 she sat down to read the Comedy in the Temple Classics edition. Her reaction is vividly and amusingly described in her contribution to the volume

Essays Presented to Charles Williams in 1947:

"However foolish it may sound, the plain fact is that I bolted my meals, neglected my sleep, work, and correspondence, drove my friends crazy, and paid only a distracted attention to the doodle-bugs which happened to be infesting the neighbourhood at the time, until I had panted my way through the three Realms of the Dead from top to bottom and from bottom to top; and that, having finished, I found the rest of the world's literature so lacking in pep and incident that I pushed it all peevishly aside and started from the Dark Wood all over again." (7)

On the sixteenth of August 1944 she wrote her first letter to Williams about Dante. There are thirty letters extant, nineteen from Sayers and eleven from Williams. She began with an accusation: 'I have embarked upon an arduous enterprise for which you are entirely responsible.' The correspondence lasted for only nine months for on the fifteenth of May 1945 Charles Williams died. His last letter is dated 24 April; her last, 9 May. At the time of the encounter she knew no Italian and was reading the Comedy with a crib, but she was a skilled classical scholar and had a sure command of French, and the combination of Latin and French gave her enough confidence to criticise the translation she was using.

"[Why] do the Temple classics translators, having carefully established that isplendor and risplendere always in Dante mean 'reflected splendour', insist on rendering them by 'glow' or 're-glow', which suggests neither splendour nor reflection? 'sheen' or 're-sparkle' or almost anything would have been better than 'glow', which always sounds dull and reddish, unless accompanied by some sort of adjective like 'fierce' or 'white-hot'." (8)

It is interesting to see how quickly she was focussing not only upon the narrative and the theology of the Comedy (which one would expect of a writer of fiction and theology) but upon poetic technique, imagery, movement of verse, and, significantly, the problem of translation. I should like to quote Barbara Reynolds's estimate of the Sayers side of this remarkable correspondence:

"So the letters proceed, day after day, week after week, most of them over ten pages long, one of them running to twenty-six Everything she said later about Dante is here in embryo. Indeed, one can say that it is already to be found

in the first three letters, written between the sixteenth and eighteenth of August. There it all is: the grasp of the essentials, the acute observation of detail, the correlation of parts to the whole, the lively appreciation of character and plot, the vivid imagination which visualises figures and movement, the dynamic delight of discovery, the craftsman's admiration for control and structure and pace: above all a readiness to take Dante seriously, to recoil in horror from his portrayal of evil and to rejoice with him in his communication of joy." (9)

In these last two observations we touch upon what is my main concern here, theology: the theological perspective of Sayers and Williams and their perception of the way in which Dante's own theological vision is communicated. Sayers dedicated her work on the Comedy to Williams, "the dead master of the affirmation". The "affirmations" are the affirmations of the "images", and it is in her understanding of what an image is and how it is to be affirmed that Sayers owes her greatest debt to Williams.

Dorothy Sayers's "discovery" of Dante delighted Williams; so much that he wrote to her on 7 September 1944 suggesting that she allow her letters to him to be printed so that they could be made widely available to those who had no knowledge of Dante. Her response was a suggestion that they should attempt a joint-venture in which she would write a kind of Beginner's Guide and he would simplify and shorten all his "stuff" (the word is Sayers's) about Beatrice and the images. This proposal probably met with some resistance in Williams and nothing came of it. Instead Sayers began translating the Comedy, the first five cantos of which were to be Williams's Christmas present in 1944. In February 1945 she suggested that if she could find a publisher for her translation he might be persuaded to write the introduction and explanatory notes. He responded warmly to this invitation, and she approached E V Rieu, the editor of the new Penguin Classics series. It is reported that when Sayers enthusiastically told Dr Rieu that the obvious person for the introduction was Williams since he was the only living being who really understood the allegory, he looked quizzical and replied "But will anyone understand Mr Williams?" It was not to be, in any case, for Williams was dead within three weeks; and rather than find anyone else Sayers decided not only to

translate the Comedy but also to provide the introductions and commentaries herself.

III

Each canto of the Sayers translation has an appendix: notes explaining and amplifying obscure references in the text, proper names, theological and philosophical statements - all immensely helpful to the untutored reader and a demonstration of the translator's prodigious learning. Such commentaries are commonplace in translations of Dante's work: what is unique to this translation is the section that immediately precedes the explanatory notes on the text. Between the last line of the canto and the first line of the footnotes comes a section simply called The Images: discussions of the most important poetic images of the preceding canto. And at the very beginning of the translation, directly before the opening of Canto I, there is a section entitled The Greater Images: Dante, Virgil, Beatrice, Hell, Purgatory, Paradise, the Empire, and the City. All are to be recognised as images; images which carry the burden of the poem. If they are not understood, and if it is not understood how Dante is employing them, nothing will be understood. I have no doubt that it was because of Charles Williams that Dorothy Sayers so arranged and presented her work; that it was his perception of what an image was and how it operated that opened her eyes to the wonder and import of the Comedy. Of Williams's The Figure of Beatrice she wrote: "I read it - not because it was about Dante, but because it was by Charles Williams. It became immediately evident that here was an Image, and here an image-Maker, with whom one had to reckon and that the world had been right to call Dante a Great Poet - perhaps the greatest." (10)

Of course, the word "image" is part of the lingua franca of literary criticism, but in Charles Williams's thought it is initially, and fundamentally, a theological concept; though, it must be admitted, it is often difficult to say, when one is reading the prose of Williams, whether one is reading theology or literary criticism - so theological is his interpretation of literature and so poetical is his

understanding of theology. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the book that caught the imagination of Sayers, The Figure of Beatrice. It is in this work, too, that he develops most comprehensively his concept of the Image. Because it was this book that was, in Sayers's own words, "responsible for the arduous enterprise" upon which she had embarked, we will need to examine it briefly to see what it was that so inspired her.

It is an extraordinary book, impossible to classify; dense in its rhetoric, yet energetic and swiftly moving in argument. The impression given is of the author entering into the imagination of the thirteenth century Italian in order to expound and develop his own themes - but from the heart of a profound understanding of and sympathy with the poetic vision of Dante. It should also be seen as an extension of the first piece of sustained literary criticism that Williams wrote: The English Poetic Mind. What fascinated him was, what he called, "the hidden springs of imaginative power". Underlying the explication of the work of several major English poets were the questions: where and how does poetic power arise in the life and mind of the artist? In an illuminating passage from the introduction to The Figure of Beatrice Williams offers a comparison between Dante and Wordsworth claiming that the source of poetic power in both men might be traced to "a definite and passionate personal experience". It should not be supposed that all poetic activity must arise in this way, but some undoubtedly does, and, he argues, Dante and Wordsworth have this - a passionate, personal experience - in common. The particular experience of Wordsworth is identified as an experience of Nature; the particular experience of Dante is the experience of a woman, an experience of "romantic love": Beatrice. (It is by no means Dante's only "passionate, personal experience", but it is the one at the centre of his life). Wordsworth's Prelude, according to Williams, is the English poet's attempt to explore and articulate the

meaning of the mysterious experience (of Nature); the New Life, The Banquet and the Comedy are Dante's attempt at the same process; elucidating a personal mystery.

We know nothing of this young woman Dante chooses to call Beatrice - except that he himself tells us, but Williams was as adamant as Etienne Gilson was (and as Dorothy Sayers was to become) on the real, physical existence of a Florentine girl whom he met when he was nine years old and with whom he "fell in love". Neither Williams nor Gilson, and certainly not Sayers, had any objection to Beatrice being rendered, allegorically, as Theology or Grace, so long as what the poet said about his own life is taken seriously: that Beatrice (so to call her) was a flesh and blood reality and that Dante fell in love with her. There is no intention, on Williams's part, to read the works of Dante simply as a rather peculiar kind of autobiography; but he insisted on their being rooted in the actual experience of the poet, and it is out of Dante's own interpretation of the nature of the Beatrician "vision" that Williams's concept of the image grew.

In the introduction to The Figure of Beatrice Williams gives an explanation of his use of the word:

"I have preferred the word image to the word symbol, because it seems to me doubtful if the word symbol nowadays sufficiently expresses the vivid individual existence of the lesser thing. Beatrice was, in her degree, an image of nobility, of virtue, of the Redeemed Life, and in some sense of Almighty God himself. But she also remained Beatrice right to the end; her derivation was not to obscure her identity any more than her identity should hide her derivation." (11)

It is when we understand the weight of that last sentence that we understand what it means to affirm the image. "The allegorical meanings emerge in parallel without blurring the literal." (11) Williams's earlier work frequently brought together the themes of religion and love; in Dante he discovered the perfect

interweaving and complementarity of these themes. His is an intensely "romantic" reading of the Comedy, yet it is, at the same time, profoundly theological. The romantic vision in no way replaces or contradicts the beatific vision. The sight of God, conversely, does not nullify the sight of Beatrice. The Beatrician experience is an intimation and an Image of the experience of the Divine. The flesh of the girl in Florence becomes a vehicle for the revelation of the splendour of its Creator:

"A kind of dreadful perfection had appeared in the streets of Florence; something like the glory of God is walking down the streets towards him"

And

"The image of an awful Origin came down the road; it seemed to hint at a saying of that 'True Light' of which it was - a similitude?" (12)

Williams makes it clear that he does not regard these passages as hyperbolic; he is not self-consciously heightening language to persuade the reader of the force of the writer's emotion. His kind of romanticism is far removed from the subjectivism of the romantic poetry of the nineteenth century. In Dante's presentation of the figure of Beatrice he sees an exact theology being enunciated. The spiritual is to be understood as inseparable from the material; Nature is capable of receiving, expressing and being perfected by Grace; the natural becomes the channel of the supernatural. This is not something new, however, it is the poetic representation of a tenet fundamental to Catholic theology; and the theological principle, already to be found logically propounded in the writings of Thomas Aquinas, achieves its supreme poetic manifestation in Dante's treatment of the figure of Beatrice. The glimpse of a girl in Florence leads to the sight of the Holy Trinity. The human particular discloses the divine

universal. The first moment is the necessary precursor to the last. The salutation of Beatrice leads to the salcation of Dante. And insisting on both the reality (and worth) of the image and the derived nature of its being is the essence of what is called the Way of Affirmation. The true following of the Way, therefore, consists in discerning and accepting the identity and the difference between the image and that which it represents. (13) In Dante Williams found the supreme master of this Way. As did Dorothy L Sayers.

IV

In 1949 the first volume of Dorothy Sayers's translation of the Comedy appeared, and in 1955 the second. In between, in 1952, she had delivered a lecture entitled the Poetry of the Image in Dante and Charles Williams. It is primarily a lecture which examines a certain kind of poetry, namely, the kind "written in a certain philosophical or mystical tradition in which all images ... within their limits (and according to the use of their creator) become valid for the apprehension of the ultimate reality - God". (14) Her debt, as she acknowledges, is to Williams and through Williams to Dante. Four years later she returned to this theme in the lecture called The Beatrician Vision which is redolent of the theology of Charles Williams:

"The Way of Affirmation, if it is a mystical way at all, has received but little attention from the theologians. This is, perhaps, just as well, for it is pre-eminently the way of the poets, and few poets are as patient as Dante of theological analysis, or able to move so freely in a theological framework." (15)

She frequently adverted to her debt to Williams - sometimes at length and in public as in the lecture Charles Williams: A Poet's Critic (1955), sometimes briefly and intimately as in a letter to his son: "I am so glad Charles was my guide to Dante ... He had the

great gift of making every author he touched alive and relevant; so that the great dead were never pushed back into a historical past but remained in his writing quick and vibrating with their own vitality and meaning." (16)

Barbara Reynolds has remarked that she "never wearied of saying how much she owed to Williams". It was a mark of the generosity of her spirit that she never wearied; but we should not exaggerate this debt: it would honour neither Sayers nor Williams. E V Rieu's instinct was not false when he expressed dubiety about Sayer's wish to have Williams write the notes and introduction to her translation of the Comedy. The startling originality of Williams's mind and his idiosyncratic prose would have baffled many whom they both hoped to reach. However brilliant his perceptions, Williams's rhetoric, always dense and highly charged, would have drawn attention to itself and would have failed to perform the service of an introduction. What Sayers produced was entirely her own: essays on Dante's world, his society, his theology, his poetry, of a brilliant clarity. Footnotes exemplary - even if one disagrees with her interpretation - in the way they expound, elaborate and inform. But the images: they are a different matter. And in her reading not only of Dante's theology but the way in which the poet's imagination worked she, perhaps, does owe all that she said to Williams.

Footnotes

1. Letters to Lalage. the Letters of Charles Williams to Lois Lang-Sims. The Kent State University Press. 1989. P. 67.

2. The book was not published in Charles Williams's lifetime. It existed only in typescript until it was edited by Alice Mary Hadfield and appeared in 1990

shortly after her own death. Outlines of Romantic Theology by Charles Williams, edited by Alice Mary Hadfield. William B Eerdmans Publishing Company. 1990.

3. Charles Williams. An Exploration of His Life and Work by Alice Mary Hadfield. Oxford University Press. 1983. P.128.

4. Ibid. P. 211 and p. 128.

5. Ibid. P. 128.

6. Essays Presented to Charles Williams, edited by C S Lewis. Oxford University Press. 1947. Paperback edition. William B Eerdmans. P. 1.

7. Ibid. P. 2.

8. The Passionate Intellect. Dorothy L Sayers' Encounter with Dante by Barbara Reynolds. Kent State University Press. 1989. P. 27.

9. Ibid. P. 30.

10. Essays Presented to Charles Williams by Dorothy L Sayers. P. 1.

11. The Figure of Beatrice by Charles Williams. Faber & Faber. 1943. P. 7.

12. The Passionate Intellect, p. 171.

13. The Figure of Beatrice, p. 20 and p. 68.

14. There is something comparable in the sacramental theology of the Catholic Church in which a sacrament is defined as that which "effects what it signifies".

15. The Passionate Intellect, p. 175.

16. The Poetry of Search and the Poetry of Statement.
Victor Gollancz. 1963. P. 68.

17. The Passionate Intellect p. 178.

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