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The
**Charles
Williams**
Quarterly



No. 122

Spring 2007

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The Charles Williams Society

The Society was founded in 1975, thirty years after Charles Williams's sudden death at the end of the Second World War. It exists to celebrate Charles Williams and to provide a forum for the exchange of views and information about his life and work.

Members of the Society receive a quarterly magazine and may attend the Society's meetings which are held twice a year. Facilities for members also include a postal lending library and a reference library housed at The Centre for Medieval Studies in Oxford.

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Reading groups

For information about the **Oxford** reading group please contact Brenda Boughton, tel: 01865 515589.



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From the Editor

We are all damned. I worked this out, finally, when writing an article that took an episode from Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* as its text. I mean the bit where he produces a dish of ripe grapes for the Duchess of Vanholt in "the dead time of winter." Quite a neat trick in its day no doubt. A.E. Waite summarized the aims of medieval Ceremonial Magicians thus: "To be rich in worldly goods, to trample on one's enemies and to gratify the desires of the flesh." No real change there then, and it hardly seems fair to pick out magicians for special attention.

Unless..... Can we not outdo Faustus? Television, DVD's and cinema provide us with visions of almost anything of which we can conceive; our supermarkets allow us to eat whatever we desire in any season and at any time of day or night; the touch of a button provides any music we wish to hear; our cars etc. allow us to go wherever we wish at ever greater speeds (except in London of course); if we want to speak to someone wherever we or they may be we have our mobile phones; and if we are "lonely and libidinous" (Waite again) there is the internet. The 1970's TV time-travelling sorcerer Catweazle expressed the fact after his first encounter with a car. " 'Faster than the wild boar,' he muttered 'and men sit inside!' He was in a world peopled with sorcerers. Now all men followed the magic path."

As we are beginning to realize, such magic powers come at a cost. Feel free to panic as midnight approaches.

Edward Gauntlett.

Society News & Notes

New Member

We extend a warm welcome to the following new member of the society:

Mr Nigel Wells
'Trafalgar'
Quay Parade
Aberaeron
Ceredigion
SA46 0BT

Dante overpriced

CORRECTION: In Brian Horne's review of *Dante. The Poet, the Political Thinker, the Man* we incorrectly gave the price of the book as £50. It is, in fact, £20. Please accept our apologies for this mistake.

New Book

The Company They Keep: C.S.Lewis and J.R.R.Tolkien as Writers in Community by Diana Pavlac Glyer challenges the assumption that Lewis, Tolkien and Williams etc. had little influence on each other's work and argues for a high level of mutual influence. Published by Kent State Univer-

sity Press at US\$45.00.

ISBN 0-87338-890-9

www.kentstateuniversitypress.com

Violence & Religion

The Centre for Religion and Popular Culture. The Second Annual Conference : Understanding Violence and Religion in Popular Culture. 2nd-4th February 2007

CALL FOR PAPERS

The authors of religious scriptures have rarely had difficulty enhancing sacred narratives with the rhetoric of violence. The phenomenon continues in the easy cohabitation of violence and religion in film, music and literature, and this raises a number of important questions, such as: To what degree does violent rhetoric shape belief and values? How might we understand the social function of violence in popular discourses? How might we understand audience empathy with violent protagonists in popular narratives? What is the significance of violence being associated with particular religious groups or ideas in the media?

We would like readers to consider attending the conference. We had tremendous feedback from attendees of last

year's conference on Satanism in culture. Apart from discussions about the theme of the conference, the event proved to be an excellent chance to meet with others interested in religion and popular culture generally. Next year's conference will provide the same valuable opportunities.

We have several slots for short papers (25 minutes) and long papers (40 minutes). Hence, we would welcome proposals for papers on any area of the relationship of violence to religion in popular culture. To propose a paper, please email a title and brief abstract (no more than 150 wds) to Eric Christianson (e.christianson@chester.ac.uk).

Those whose proposals are accepted will be asked to pay a discounted conference fee and will most likely have their papers published in a volume on the subject.

The conference will be held at St Deiniol's Library in Hawarden, North Wales (<http://www.st-deiniols.org>), from 5:30pm Fri, 2nd February until 1:30pm Sun, 4th February, 2007. Booking: To book please contact St Deiniol's Library (deiniol.visitors@btconnect.com)

The conference fee of £125 (£100 to those giving papers) covers dinner, bed and breakfast at St Deiniol's Library. All extras (lunch, drinks etc.) will be added to your bill.

The Centre for Religion and Popular Culture. A partnership between the University of Chester and St Deiniol's Library

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Charles Williams Society Meetings

- ◆ **Saturday 24 March 2007** (Oxford) The details have yet to be worked out, but at the time of writing we were considering a play reading of *The House of the Octopus* in the afternoon, preceded by a talk in the morning based around some material in the archives. Full details will be issued nearer the time.
- ◆ **Saturday 13 October 2007** (London)

CHARLES WILLIAMS AS BIOGRAPHER

BY

BRIAN HORNE

(a paper given at the Society Day Conference on **Saturday 14 October 2006**)

It goes without saying that a basic requirement of all biographical writing is factual accuracy; and many of the finest biographies display not only this quality but a high degree of historical scholarship. Charles Williams was not a scholar in the way that his friends C.S. Lewis or J.R.R. Tolkien were, but he was an intellectual (not all scholars are) and, most decidedly, as intellectually distinguished as they. In making this distinction and by calling him an intellectual I mean to draw attention to his profound interest in the life of the mind: in ideas, their origin, their effects, their play; and these biographies can be seen to exemplify the distinctive, intellectual quality of Charles Williams. He had neither the time nor, I think, the inclination to spend hours in the manuscript room of the British Museum or the Bodleian library poring over unpublished documents in order to discover historical details that were hitherto unknown to the world before he came upon them. Nor was he interested in facts merely for themselves. In the biographies we shall look in vain for startling new revelations about his subjects; everything he tells us about the details of their lives was already in the public domain. What is new, and sometimes startling, is what conclusions he draws from what is already known. This does not mean that he was uninterested in, or careless about, factual details; his description of, for example, Henry VII's coronation: who stood where, who carried what, who said what to whom etc. illustrates his capacity to grasp and represent all manner of complicated historical detail. But a fact for Williams is not merely a fact, it is both itself and something more than itself. Facts do have an intrinsic interest for him, but they are more interesting when they can be seen to point beyond themselves; to offer a way into understanding a quality of existence.

In the introduction to their recently published volume of essays on the Church during the reign of Mary Tudor, the historians Eamon Duffy and David Loades remark that historians ‘in the nature of things are mostly concerned with externals, and counterfactual speculation about how events could or should have been managed differently is of limited use as a historical tool. Whereof we cannot speak, thereof we must be silent.’ (*The Church of Mary Tudor*, Ed. Eamon Duffy and David Loades. London. Ashgate. 2006. p. xiv) In other words there are no ‘ifs’ in history; events occur and it is pointless to ask what would have happened if things had been different. I do not doubt that Charles Williams would have had no hesitation in concurring with the second half of this assertion both on historical and theological grounds: ‘counterfactual’ speculation is not a characteristic of his style as a historian or a biographer. Facts were of the utmost importance to him; his doctrine of providence would have precluded counterfactual speculation; wistful dreaminess about ‘what might have been’ would have been regarded as fruitless. However, to judge by the biographies, he might well have been in some disagreement with what seems to be implied in the first half of the Duffy and Loades assertion: the necessity, for the historian, as historian, to focus on ‘externals’ in the writing of history. A grasp of the ‘externals’ was seen by Williams primarily as a means to an end: a way into the ‘internals’ of the subject. This is not to suggest that he was either uninterested in, or incapable of undertaking a thorough investigation of what Duffy and Loades call ‘externals, but it becomes obvious from the first pages of all his biographies that he was prepared to embark on all kinds of speculation as a result of the observation of these externals. That is to say, externals served Williams’s purpose when they could be used as symbolic representations of psychological and philosophical theories he had about more fundamental issues: the nature of kingship, religion, character and culture. That is where his interest lay. Again, I do not want to suggest that he distorted facts to fit some previous philosophical or theological position, but like an inductive scientist, he built up patterns of facts to construct a general theory.

They are curious works: these biographies. Six in all: four written for the publisher Arthur Barker: *Bacon* (1933), *James I* (1934), *Rochester* (1935), and *Henry VII* (1937). One for Duckworth: *Queen Elizabeth* (1936) and one published posthumously in the year following Williams’s death in 1946: *Flecker of Dean Close*.

This last, the biography of a well-known, late Victorian, clerical schoolmaster came at the request of W.H. Flecker's widow in 1944. I find them puzzling for a number of reasons and I am not surprised that they have received so little attention from those who have written about Williams. But they form a substantial body of work: six books – probably more than 300,000 words. Yet even Alice Mary Hadfield in her expanded biography gives only four pages to a consideration of them. Are they so uninteresting? Or are they so peculiar that interpreters of Williams's work avoid them?

The first puzzle is a 'practical' one: why were they written? What was the actual process by which they came to be? We know who commissioned them and who published them, but why? Why was it thought that Charles Williams: a poet, a literary critic, a theologian, a playwright, a novelist, a busy editor in the Oxford University Press, would be a suitable person to write a series of historical biographies? These first few years of the 1930s were a period of extraordinary creativity; and they were also the period in which his complicated relationship with Phyllis Jones was at its most intense. Alice Mary Hadfield suggests that there is a connection between the turbulence of his emotional state and the appearance of the biographies: 'Given the turmoil of his mind and emotions, it seems natural that his next books should be, not novels or poetry or verse plays, but historical biographies' (*Charles Williams. An Exploration of His Life and Work*. OUP. London. 1983 p. 118) Much as I admire Alice Mary's Hadfield's book, I can't say that it seems natural to me. The first biography to be published was of the Elizabethan and Jacobean philosopher and politician: Francis Bacon. Lois Glenn in her check list of Williams's works tells us that Williams, 'finding no biography of Bacon decided to write one.' But Alice Mary Hadfield suggests that he was approached by the publisher to provide one. Given the genesis of the work I am inclined to believe Lois Glenn. Anyway, however it came into being, are we to suppose that the publishers were so pleased with the result that they commissioned another book almost immediately? *James I* followed *Bacon* within a year and the third biography, *Rochester*, (in many ways a flawed piece but also in some ways the most interesting) was hot on its heels. It should be noted that all his major biographical studies are located within a relatively narrow span of time and place: late fifteenth century to mid-seventeenth century England. Alice Mary

Hadfield argues that he ‘had a special understanding of, and feeling for the age of the Elizabethans. He entered into its enormous intelligence and consequent demands, its sense of the supernatural, for good or bad, its poetry, its scope and colour and darkness, its conflict between glory, self-protection and necessity.’ (p. 119) He certainly seemed to sense within himself an affinity with this age, whether he had ‘a special understanding of it’ is, perhaps, another matter. Where Alice Mary Hadfield is, I think, correct is in her assertion that he had a real insight into of two of the bases of the society he discussed in these biographies: kingship and religion.

It so happened that as I was preparing this talk I was re-reading T.S. Eliot’s introduction to the first American edition of *All Hallows’ Eve* and Graham Greene’s short story, *May We Borrow Your Husband*. The relevance of Greene’s comical, cool and ultimately sad and tender tale I shall try to make clear a little later. The T.S. Eliot piece, generous about Williams and perspicacious about the novel, offers a way in to a firmer grasp of what is going on the biographies too. ‘I have already tried to indicate’ Eliot wrote, ‘the unity between the man and the work; and it follows that there is a unity between his works of very different kinds. Much of his work may appear to realize its form only imperfectly; but it is also true in a measure to say that Williams invented his own forms – or to say that no form, if he had obeyed all its conventional laws, could have been satisfactory for what he wanted to say.’ (*All Hallows’ Eve*, Pellegrini & Cudahy. New York. 1948. p. xiii) This observation follows on a remark that Eliot had made at the beginning of his piece: ‘What he had to say was beyond his resources, and probably beyond the resources of language, to say once for all through one medium of expression. Hence, probably, the variety of forms in which he wrote.’ (p. xi) Now, we know that Williams was always anxious about money; a condition which, like many other people, caused him to take up tasks simply because they were a way of bringing in some much needed extra cash, but this does not entirely explain why he felt so confident and eager to express his thoughts and feelings in such an extraordinarily wide variety of literary forms. This urge has much, I think, to do with what Eliot identified in Williams – not that this was ever consciously articulated by Williams himself. I have always argued that a consistent sensibility is observable in all Williams’s works, of whatever kind, by which I mean that certain modes of thinking and feel-

ing, and certain habits of style, consistently appear in all the variety of literary forms so that a paragraph of prose, whether it appears in a novel, a theological essay, a historical piece or a biography is instantly identifiable. I do not want, at this stage to discuss whether Eliot was correct in maintaining that what he wanted to say was ‘beyond his resources’, but I do want to agree with his comment that much of his work ‘may appear to realize its form only imperfectly’ adding that he did, to some extent, seem to ‘invent his own forms’ – perhaps nowhere more obviously than in the genre of the biography; a genre in which he seems constantly trying to do more than is usually done in a biography – or do it differently. The style is immediately recognizable, and the book that most closely resembles it in style is *The Descent of the Dove*. The texture of the prose is dense, the manner is epigrammatic and allusive; at its best full of illuminating connections and conceits, at its worse obscure and irritating. Nor do we feel there is much narrative thrust, by which I mean that the books are not driven by the narrative of his subjects’ lives; we do not feel that he is longing to tell us what happened next; that is not where his interests lie. Just as in *The Descent of the Dove* the events of the history of the Church, however interesting in themselves, are presented as a working out of a theology of the Holy Spirit, so in these books the recounting of the events is there to serve another purpose: to uncover mysteries that lie at the heart of certain human lives. But he does not lose sight of his subject, and that he does not, is part of his mastery. Even in the least successful of the six, *Henry VII*, these gifts are apparent. Towards the end there is a paragraph that is quintessentially Williams: so compact that we are given a portrait of a century of Tudor rule in six sentences. ‘The later Tudors – even Elizabeth – were louder and less composed. True, Elizabeth had a more difficult time; she had to deal with religion where her grandfather had only to deal with property. He did; he managed it so well that by the end of his reign it was indeed his property. He left it to his son, and his son lost it. He might well have turned in the tomb of his spoiled chapel at Westminster, could he have seen the cause of that loss: the throb of a spiritual fear, the itch of a fleshly nerve. He himself was not so fretted by texts or tantalized by faces.’ (p. 262)

Of the five biographies I am familiar with (I am excluding *Bacon*) I believe that the one of James I is the most accomplished. It was held in high regard by

one of the most distinguished scholars of the seventeenth century, David Mathew, who went so far as to call it the finest book on the subject that was available when it appeared in 1934. (Hadfield, p. 120) It also appears to have been the most popular as it was re-issued in 1951, with an introduction by Dorothy L. Sayers. The only other biography to go into a second printing was *Queen Elizabeth* – in 1953. There is a fine assessment of *James I* by Donald Nicholson in the collection of essays, *Charles Williams: A Celebration* which ends with the words: ‘So we leave this enigmatic man secure in his kingship, made more secure (one might almost say) by the intense internal understanding of Charles Williams, an understanding of a King and of a Kingdom, finite, actual.’ (*Charles Williams. A Celebration*. Ed. Brian Horne. Gracewing. 1986. p. 258) So, setting aside *Bacon*, *Henry VII* and *Flecker of Dean Close*, we come to *Rochester*.

II

How does one judge a biography? What does one expect? What is it supposed to do? This is the point at which I want to re-introduce Graham Greene. Charles Williams was not the only person to be working on the life of Rochester in the early 1930s. There was also the Professor of English Language and Literature at, what was then, the University College of Southampton, Vivian de Sola Pinto – a formidable figure in academic English studies in the first part of the twentieth century – and Graham Greene. Greene had begun his work on the Restoration poet and rake in the late twenties and presented his manuscript to the publishing house of Heinemann in 1932. It was rejected, sent back, he tells us, by return of post; and it was not until 1974 that he managed to get it published under the title, *Lord Rochester’s Monkey*. However, our concern is not with Greene’s biography, but with the short story of 1967, *May We Borrow Your Husband*. The narrator of this tragic-comic tale is a novelist, like Greene and Williams, who is spending the winter in a quiet hotel in Antibes trying to complete his biography of Lord Rochester. He observes the ‘goings-on’ of the other guests and overhears their conversations. The novelist/biographer fusion is important. He addresses the reader complaining of the difficulty of describing one of his characters. ‘In writing a biography’ so the narrator tells, ‘one can, of course, just insert a portrait and the

affair (of describing someone) is done: I have the prints of Lady Rochester and Mrs Barry in front of me now. But speaking as a professional novelist one describes a woman not so much that the reader should see her in all the cramping detail of colour and shape but to convey an emotion.’ (*Collected Short Stories*. London. Penguin Books. 1986. p. 267) How often in Williams’s biographies are we conscious of the entry of the creative imagination of the novelist as we are presented with not so much as a description of the subject as an emotion surrounding or generated by the subject?

Later in Greene’s story the narrator is in conversation with a young woman. ‘Do you write sad things?’ she asks. ‘The biography I am writing now is sad enough’ he replies, ‘Two people tied together by love and yet one of them incapable of fidelity. The man, dead of old-age, burnt out, at less than forty and a fashionable preacher lurking by the bedside to snatch his soul. No privacy even for a dying man: the bishop wrote a book about it.’ (p. 275) John Wilmot, second earl of Rochester (1648 – 1680): glamorous, quarrelsome, witty, a brilliant writer of scurrilous verse, louche and promiscuous, driven by demonic urges, a favourite at the court of Charles II (from which he was frequently banished), patron of the theatre, and especially the actress Elizabeth Barry, and, finally, perhaps, a sinner repenting on his deathbed.

As I have said Graham Greene was not the only other person to be working on this figure. There was Vivian de Sola Pinto’s book published in 1935 the preface of which contains a paragraph that is of particular interest to us. ‘I am grateful to Mr Charles Williams for the kind help he gave me in connection with two of the pictures. One of the chief pleasures which I owe to the study of Rochester has been my personal contact with Mr Williams. I welcome the appearance of his study of the poet which is to be published at the same time as mine, and hope that between us we shall have succeeded in doing justice to the memory of this great, neglected English author.’ (*Rochester. Portrait of a Restoration Poet*. London. John Lane. 1935. pp. x – xi) In return Charles Williams gracefully salutes the professor in his own list of acknowledgements: ‘. . . he has been good enough to discuss Rochester with me and to make of our separate tasks a pleasant companionship.’ (*Rochester*. London. Arthur Barker. 1935. p. vi) Such evidence as there is suggests that he found the writing of this book hard going. Alice Mary Had-

field quotes from one of his letters to Anne Ridler: 'How this damn book is ever going to reach 75,000 words I don't know We have reached 17,000 and all the best bits except the Repentance it mustn't barge in on literary criticism. My present motto is: *Keep Milton out*; if he gets in we're lost.' (p. 121) This inevitably raises the question again: why was he doing it? For money? At the publisher's insistence? If there is something else; something unsaid, why would he have been attracted to this seventeenth century libertine? Perhaps he wasn't, perhaps he was using the biographical form for another purpose. He had, after all, written to Anne Ridler that the book would not be about Rochester at all but about Charles Williams. (In the light of this one is led to wonder if he had himself in mind when he wrote of Rochester: 'He was never a poseur, but he was always an actor. It was his misfortune that the Court of King Charles offered him no adequate parts.' (p. 49) I shall continue with this passage as it may throw further light upon Charles Williams's own assessment of himself. 'He tried to create them even there; he ran from it to create them; anything that he was offered him anywhere he was always ready to take. He waited always for his cue, ready to improvise, capable of any gallant and romantic improvisation. The universe neglected his cue. Panting and willing he waited in the wings, and the right recognizable words never came. Yet he felt them through his wild heart, felt them being spoken, and could not guess where.' (p. 49) Is this the answer, that it is disguised autobiography? Did he see in Rochester something he desired and responded to; the poetry, the theatre, the sensuality and eventually the mysterious, spiritual fidelity of John Wilmot?

He begins his story, not with his subject nor his lineage nor with a general presentation of the era but with an incident with which John Wilmot was only remotely connected: the story of the young Charles Stuart in flight after defeat in the battle of Worcester in 1651 taking refuge by night in the branches of an oak tree. The second earl of Rochester was, of course, still a small child but his father was probably present as he was certainly at the battle and was a loyal follower of the young king. Williams does not question the veracity of the story and makes much of this event (the wood is there for a particular purpose at this stage of the story): the darkness, the tree, the flight. 'The wood in which, on the evening of that Saturday, September 1651, Charles II, stood, was symbolical of another forest – a thing of the spirit.' (p. 2) One cannot help thinking that Broceliande is not

far away. This is the poetic imagination at work, the image of the wood and the necessity of finding one's way through it appears over and over again. The first chapter is even given the title: 'The Romantic Forest'. Almost immediately after this, (John Wilmot still unmentioned) two other figures are introduced: the Quaker, George Fox and the philosopher Thomas Hobbes. Rochester had certainly read Hobbes and most scholars agree that he was influenced by him, but he probably knew little, if anything, of Fox and would certainly not have found him agreeable; but Williams is putting them to his own use here and setting the template of the biography down: ' . . . both Fox and Hobbes were to have their parts in John Wilmot; their great names describe different and contending states of his being. It was in the contention between those two states that, and in the comment upon them of the third state, which can more properly be attributed to Charles Stuart, that the significance of John Wilmot's life was to lie.' (p. 11) A kind of tension, perhaps even a conflict between two worlds, that of the senses and that of the intellect, sometimes between the spirit and the flesh, even imagination and logic, fought out against the backdrop of a third world, the Court, is the leitmotif of this study of Rochester. This tension is seen embodied in the life and person of Rochester himself. 'In all there is an energy, an energy which seems to have become almost terrible to the Court in which he moved, an energy of search for something he could not find, an energy of anger and contempt for what, in himself as in others, he did find. He desired significant emotion; they offered him insignificant sensation He belonged to the gentlemen, but he was a romantic, and they were not romantic. When romantics cannot find the world they desire, they yearn to create it.' (pp. 31 – 32)

It was from Hobbes that Rochester learned that the primary force in nature was what he called 'sense' which was nothing other than the result of the action of matter in motion, that there was no soul, no spirit, no eternity no god; and that 'imagination is simply decaying sense'. (*Leviathan* II) There was, consequently, no good and evil, or rather, these were no more than useful terms to describe what gave or did not give pleasure. We have here, as de Sola Pinto remarks, a reasoned defence of sensuality. There was plenty of opportunity for the indulgence of sensuality at the court of Charles II – and the young Rochester seized almost every opportunity. This is well understood by Williams who manages to convey the attraction of Hobbes's reductionism, the use to which it could be put

in justifying the life of a libertine. But he is also able to convey the tensions this view of the world set up in the young man; the felt experience of this state of affairs. It conflicted with, what Williams recognises as his radical, romantic imagination; and here I think the anachronism is permissible. Williams does not shy away from its usage: the words 'romantic', 'romanticism' and 'imagination' occur frequently and are contrasted just as frequently with what he calls sensation. Here is where he sees the tragedy of Rochester to lie: in an unresolved tension, a lack of psychological and emotional integrity. ' . . . with the logic of the intellectual heart Rochester was not well acquainted. That needs the imagination which is the companion of spiritual love, as Wordsworth, a poet who was something more than a romantic, has taught us. Behind and before Rochester went the masters of those terrifying syllogisms which are as much of the blood as of the brain. But another master intervened; "imagination was nothing else but the decay of sense." And Fox, who might have been an interpreter, provincial as he was, was distant, in space and social degree from my lord. John Wilmot's heart throbbed; "presagefully it beat; presagefully." He could not follow the presages. Something seemed to have been spoken, but not to him.' (p. 51 – 52) He was eager to indulge his sensuality while longing for something more and different.

The four concluding chapters of the book are given titles which seems to suggest that Williams is charting Rochester's way through the forest from sensuality to religion: 'The Way of Sensation', 'The Way of Argument', 'The Way of Conversion' and 'The Way of union'; almost a mystical path. Rochester lay mortally ill at Woodstock in conversation with Bishop Burnett who wrote his own account of the circumstances of the young man's repentance. Williams seems to have accepted this account at face value. 'My lord lay in his bed; power and sweetness took him' but he adds his own gloss: 'He set himself, with a new singleness of heart, but with no less than his old capacity for acting, to play the part appointed him. He had never been so utterly himself.' (p. 252) 'He was, no doubt, truly repentant, but it was, according to his nature, a romantic repentance still.' (p. 257) It appears that Rochester had lost little of his mordant wit even on his death bed for in discussing the faith with Rochester, Burnett is said to have pointed out the celestial rewards that are promised to those who live according to the moral conditions laid down by the Almighty. "We are sure the terms are difficult," Rochester said dryly; "we are not so sure of the rewards." Williams cannot resist adding

his own characteristic comment: 'As for our Saviour, only in the high sense of mystical redemption can He so far be generally said to have made life tolerable for anybody.' (p. 240)

Charles Williams may well have found the going hard in the writing of this biography; it was his third in as many years and he may have been tiring of the form. He was also irked by some of the criticism it received on publication. In reply to those who complained of his style he wrote in a letter to Anne Ridler: 'I say it is at its *Hamlet* period – or perhaps *Othello* – a little rampant, a little muddled, but, (like the Holy Ghost) Proceeding' (Hadfield, p. 121) He may have felt, as he said to Anne Ridler, that he had 'done' all the best bits by the time he had reached page one hundred and seventeen, nonetheless he had power in reserve for the conclusion.

'He was sincere enough. . . . Could he play, for the rest of the run of his life, the part to which he had given his romantic and converted spirit? The monotony of the religious life is like every other monotony - only more so; the simplicity of sanctity lies far away. Until that simplicity is reached, and the actor is lost in the part, the *ceremonarius* in his office, there is bound to be division. . . . He clung to Burnett, who played his own part so well, who knew his lines, . . . and so carried on, unfaltering, the plot of the drama of all living, the drama of adoration and love.' (p. 261) It is, certainly, the account of Rochester's death but it is also much more – and I suppose this is where I come, temporarily, to rest. It is a statement about the human condition and John Wilmot, second earl of Rochester, is the convenient occasion of its utterance.

CHARLES WILLIAMS AND OWEN BARFIELD: AN ADDENDUM

BY

STEPHEN MEDCALF

The Editor was right to bracket my impromptu account of Rudolf Steiner's theory of the Incarnation in the Autumn issue of the Quarterly: it was quite inaccurate. Steiner's account, of which Owen Barfield gave a simplified version in his *Unancestral Voice*, is much more complex than I stated. It is too complex, indeed, to outline here; but it does involve two Jesus children. One, whose birth is recorded in St Matthew, descended from David through Solomon, whose descent is traced back only to Abraham, that is "the stage of emergence When individuality had for the first time been recognizably attained by the human spirit" (Barfield) and in whom many incarnations, including Zarathustra, were fulfilled. The other, recorded in St Luke, never before incarnated as a human being, descended from David through Nathan, the descent traced back to Adam "who was the son of God", a soul mysteriously related to Buddha, unfallen and free from karma. At the time of Jesus being found in the Temple, the Solomon Jesus united himself with the Nathan Jesus, and, as a separate human being, died. It was the united Jesus on whom "the uncreated light, the untransformed transforming" Christ descended at the baptism by John in Jordan. See, for a fuller account, *Unancestral Voice* and Steiner's lectures on Matthew and Luke.

Charles Williams might have been attracted by this attempt to involve the incarnation in the whole of history; but he would have disliked it for many reasons, because although it reserves a certain place for the two Marys who were mothers of the two Jesuses, it makes it impossible to call Mary *Theotokos* – Mother of God. This is perhaps related to a point I should like to make about Suzanne Bray's account of "Charles Williams and the Sacraments" given at the same conference as my "Williams and Barfield". She gave as the reason for the Archdeacon's delivery, in *War in Heaven* from the operations of the black magicians, his faith. This is so in the sense that, if he had not remained faithful, the sequence of events recorded in the novel would have been in some way short-circuited. But in fact the Archdeacon is "driven beyond consciousness" before

the magicians have completed their attempt to unite his person with the murdered Pattison's. It is because the completion of the plan touches the heart of the Graal that they are defeated. The Graal, till then their instrument, "awoke in its own triumphant and blazing power." Prester John reveals himself, gives Manasseh and the Greek the destruction and rejection which are their destiny, and compels Gregory to sacrifice himself by confessing his murder of Pattison to the police. It is through the Graal itself that God delivers the Archdeacon and Pattison from the snares of their enemies.

There is a parallel, I think, with Williams's devotion to Mary as *Theotokos* in that he thought that the divine power works through the foundations of the created universe. Even in the Incarnation God did not simply, as in Steiner's account, take up command in His creation: He works through Mary. Mary, as it were, speaks both for humanity and for the material universe when she accepts the call to be Mother of God. In our materialistic age, even more than Suzanne Bray suggested, Charles Williams asserted that there is inherent holiness in matter.

CHARLES WILLIAMS COMES TO BEDD TALIESIN

A CENTENARY HOMAGE

BY NIGEL WELLS

REPRODUCED, WITH KIND PERMISSION, FROM HIS COLLECTION *JUST BOUNCE*,
BLOODAXE 1988

At the time of the Perseus
to the high ground:
the *Poet*
by a web of roads.

*Beneath its tilt-stone stirred
the thought of Taliesin
drawing him on.*

Intricate journey,
tramping under grace,
threading shy paths
to this blue land.

*A star burnt out
and Taliesin called.*

Camped hard
against the waterlanes,
wind-bleat
popping in the ears,
words loomed

*and Taliesin leant
his presence on the air.*

The sure voice burst
in reverence;
spirit reigned, knew silence
and the rolling world.

*From under angle-rock
then rattled verse and bone:
Taliesin's drone
thrummed him home.*

So he came
bearing the designs:
a planned city,
a rhymed theology.

COUNCIL MEETING REPORT

THE COUNCIL OF THE CHARLES WILLIAMS SOCIETY MET ON 28 OCTOBER 2006

Suzanne Bray has agreed to review the 10-CD audio course on Charles Williams.

The condition of Charles Williams's gravestone was again discussed. However, it was agreed that the arrangement of cleaning once a year should not be altered at present.

A review copy of a children's book *Here there be Dragons* in which Charles Williams is a character has been requested from Simon & Schuster.

The Current Account stood at £324.15 and the Reserve Account at £8417.95

Following the Treasurer's report at the AGM that last year's income was just under £700 - rather than at least £1500 if all subscriptions had been paid - it had been decided that radical action was necessary. In future all subscriptions will be payable on 1 April and must be paid by Banker's Order except in unusual circumstances. Overseas members will need to make special arrangements to do this. An explanatory letter from the Chairman, together with a new Standing Order form and a Gift Aid declaration will be sent to all members. This should result in more realistic membership numbers and, it is hoped, an increased income.

David Llewellyn Dodds would review Gavin Ashenden's *Charles Williams: Alchemy and Integration*. Another new book, *The Company They Kept* by Diana Pavlac Glyer (on the Inklings generally), should also be reviewed.

The Editor would bring the index of articles in the Quarterly up to date when he had time.

It was agreed that John Heath-Stubbs be re-elected as the Society's President.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
14 OCTOBER 2006
CHARLES WILLIAMS SOCIETY

TREASURER'S REPORT

The last AGM was on 8 October 2005, so this report covers a calendar year.

Superficially, this has been a steady year. We have funded all our activities without difficulty and managed to increase our reserves by just over £300. This would have been twice as much, had it not turned out that in the previous accounting period, CAF Bank had wrongly credited us with £325.72. They only discovered their mistake in May this year and of course were then entitled to have their money refunded.

The Society has acted on my recommendation last year to choose cheaper venues for conferences, and this year's conferences have been very much cheaper to finance than last year's. Nearly all the expenditure shown for conferences relates to last autumn's conference at the Royal Foundation of St Katharine. The cost of issuing the Quarterly has actually not only held steady but actually fallen slightly. We have also paid for maintaining Charles Williams's grave in Oxford and made payments to speakers for expenses.

However, in considering our income, we have a difficulty. This came in at just under £700, which is far less than one would expect for a membership of around 130. If all members paid the full £12.50, this would account for only about 56 members. 130 members should produce an income of at least £1,500, allowing for the fact that some members pay reduced rates. We are therefore achieving less than half of what our income should be.

I therefore propose that we circulate the whole membership with a fresh standing order form, under cover of an explanatory letter from the Chairman. We should not accept payment by cheque except in unusual circumstances. Furthermore, we have had no new Giftaid declarations for several years. I therefore suggest that we include the Giftaid declaration with the standing order form. This will allow

us to clean the membership list. No doubt some will leave, or appear to leave, but in fact they may have been receiving the Quarterly without paying a membership subscription, so the effect would be to reduce our printing bill, not our real membership.

If we do this successfully, we shall not need to raise our subscriptions in the immediate future.

Stephen Barber

Treasurer.

Financial Summary 2005 – 06

Income	£
Opening Balance	1,235.40
Subscriptions and Donations	694.86
Giftaid	126.92
Interest	16.49
Transfers from Reserves	775.72
Other	7.00
Total Income	2,856.39
Expenditure	
Quarterly	901.09
Conferences	290.55
Other	656.00
Transfer to Reserves	750.00
Nest surplus of Income over Expenditure (closing bal)	258.75
Reserves	
Opening Balance	8,103.67
Transfers-in	750.00
Transfers-out	775.72
Interest	340.00
Closing Balance	8,417.95

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (14 OCTOBER 2006)
NOTES

APOLOGIES. Apologies were received from Gavin Ashenden, Grevel Lindop, Kate and Michael Taylor, and Ruth Tinling.

LIBRARIAN'S REPORT. Anne Scott's books and papers had been left to the Society. Her son Andrew had been put in touch with the Oxford Centre, and the collection was now there being catalogued. Some items might be reprinted (e.g. correspondence with Victor Gollancz).

TREASURER'S REPORT AND ACCOUNTS. There was some discussion of how to keep members' subscriptions up to date. Mrs Harris Wilson suggested that we should fix an annual date for renewals but tell members that this did not apply to those who had paid in the previous six months. Mrs Lunn said this used to be done, with renewal due on March 1st. Mr Gauntlett suggested saying in the winter issue of the Quarterly that the spring issue would be the last for those who had not paid.

EDITOR'S REPORT. The British Library had written about the change of title; a new ISSN number would be needed. Kent State University Press had sent a list of new books, including two relevant to Williams.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT. He had met Olga Markova and her husband. Ann Shukman was translating an abstract of her (Olga's) thesis for the Quarterly. The Williamses' grave was presumably being cleaned regularly (Mr Jeffery would check this).

ELECTIONS: Dr Horne was re-elected as Chairman, Dr Sturch as Secretary, Mr Gauntlett as Editor and Mr Barber as Treasurer. Mrs Mable, Mrs Harris Wilson, Mrs L Cornicka, Mr Carter and Mr Jeffery were elected as Ordinary Members.

OTHER BUSINESS. The question of a new Membership Secretary was raised.

Editorial Policy

The Charles Williams Quarterly and the Society's Website have two functions. Firstly, to publish material about the life and work of Charles Williams. Secondly, to publish details of the activities of the Society.

Contributions to the Quarterly are welcome. If you wish to submit a contribution, please take note of the following:

- ◆ Submissions should be sent to the Editor, preferably on floppy disc; otherwise by email attachment to: Edward.Gauntlett@down21.freeuk.com.
- ◆ Submissions on paper should be typed double spaced and single-sided.
- ◆ All quotations should be clearly referenced, and a list of sources included.
- ◆ Submissions of just a few hundred words may be hand written.
- ◆ The Editor reserves the right to decide whether to publish a submission. Usually the main article in any issue will be a paper previously read before the Society; in most cases such papers will be published as received, with little or no editorial input. Other submissions may be edited.

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