The Charles Williams Society

NEWSLETTER

No. 25, SPRING 1982

MEETINGS OF THE CHARLES WILLIAMS SOCIETY

22 May 1982: The Annual General Meeting of the Charles Williams Society will be held at Liddon House, 24 South Audley Street, London W.I. on Saturday May 22 1982 at 2.30pm. Agenda:

I. Apologies for absence.
2. Report on the year's activities by Richard Wallis, chairman of the Council.
3. The accounts - to be presented by Richard Wallis.
4. Report of the General Secretary Gillian Lunn.
5. Report on the Newsletter by the Editor Molly Switek.
6. Election of Council members under paragraph 5 of the Society's constitution.
7. Any other business.

Gillian Lunn
General Secretary

The A.G.M. is open to members only. After it has ended at about 3.30pm, a meeting open also to non-members will be held, at which the speaker will be John Heath-Stubbs on 'Charles Williams and the 20th Century literary tradition'. Questions and discussion will follow, after which refreshments will be available. The Council hopes that as many members as possible will be present and that they will invite friends to the open meeting.

I8 September I982: CWS one-day conference at St Andrew-By-The-Wardrobe church in Queen Victoria Street, London EC4, I0am - 5pm. In the morning Stephen Medcalfe will speak on 'The Novels of Charles Williams and the quartets of T.S.Eliot'; this will be followed by discussion and lunch (bring your own food - coffee and tea will be provided). After lunch we will read one of the Masques and Thelma Shuttleworth will talk on her recollections of CW.

I3 November I982: David Llewelyn Dodds will talk on:'"I Am A Wonder Whose Origin Is Not Known"; some thoughts on Taliesin and Taliessin'.

26 February I983: Richard Sturch will speak on 'Common Themes among Inklings'.

II June I983: AGM. Barbara Reynolds will speak - title to be announced.

Unless otherwise stated the meetings will be at Liddon House, 24 South Audley Street, London W.I.

OXFORD READING GROUP

This group has just finished reading and discussing all the poems in Taliessin Through Logres and The Region of the Summer Stars. Out of a total of thirteen people who have wanted to come as and when they could we have had an average of eight at the (roughly) fortnightly meetings. Their occupations are as varied as Egyptologist, bookseller, mathematician, and (which would particularly please C.W. I feel) O.U.P. proof-reader; the sexes are pretty evenly balanced and the ages range from Rhodes Scholar to OAP. This diversity of people has produced an equal diversity of contributions, resulting in a series of interesting and lively evenings which everyone (to judge by the steadiness with which attendance has held up for more than a year) has found to be very enjoyable. Our discussion of the poems in Taliessin Through Logres has been greatly assisted by the Notes circulated with the Newsletter. There have been times when we wanted to quarrel with some of them, and more frequent times when we would have liked to have more points covered by them, but we all hope that the poems in The Region of the Summer Stars will be similarly annotated. We have now decided to read the later plays, starting with Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury, and we very much hope that any member who is visiting Oxford will telephone 55589 or 53897 to see if there is a meeting taking place during his or her visit.

Brenda Boughton
Anne Scott

LONDON READING GROUP

Sunday I August 1982: This meeting will be held at Ipm in the Guild Room of St Bartholomew's Hospital - ask at the Porters Lodge for directions. Bring sandwiches, coffee and copies of The Descent of the Dove which we will continue reading.

NEWSLETTER SUPPLEMENTS

Members will be interested to know - especially in view of the Oxford Reading Group's appeal above! - that the first annotation of The Region of the Summer Stars is being worked on and will appear with the next Newsletter.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions are due from I March and we would be grateful if these could be paid promptly. The current rates are £3 for single members, £4.50p for joint membership, and an additional 50p to either rate for overseas members to cover the higher postage. For those members who have not yet renewed a form is enclosed to encourage you!

NEW MEMBERS

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members:
Peter Couchman, 2I Kingsbury Road, Brighton, Sussex, BNI 4JR
Michael Fletcher, I620 Vinta Street, Denver, Colorado, 80220, USA
Mr M Harth, 36 Earlham Grove, London E.7

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CHESTERTON AND CHARLES WILLIAMS by Martin Moynihan
(The Ballad of the White Horse and Taliessin Through Logres)

"The headless Emperor":- a pregnant phrase, so full of meanings. Life without the light of reason; lands without true rule; idiot or cruel sensuality; invading hordes of blind destruction:- all, the antithesis of what Christendom seeks to be. So the phrase represents, you might say, the end of the world - of that true world to which, truly, we belong.

Fittingly, therefore, it is at one end of the world that Charles Williams has placed the headless Emperor.

In Time, there are also ends of the world - Arthur's Last Battle was one - and when they come, or are about to come, then the headless Emperor joins forces with the currently victorious epoch of evil. As in the final Advent, the Beast comes before the Parousia - and, until that Advent, comes not unvictoriously.

In expressing these ideas in the form of imagery Charles Williams brilliantly succeeded in avoiding the creation of an evil Hero. Loving Milton as he did, he avoids what has wrongly been read into Paradise Lost. He has found a way of neither being, nor even seeming to be, a surreptitious admirer of the Devil.

For some of his imagery he may have drawn, consciously or unconsciously, upon Chesterton

> Gored on the Norman gonfalon
> The Golden Dragon died.

Chesterton's hero, in "The Ballad of the White Horse", is Alfred - but there is something about him of Arthur too, as these lines from the Dedication half hint. Alfred, though finally victorious (unlike Arthur), sees that all things, even victorious ones, pass. Good is overtaken by greater good, or defeated by recurrent evil. The Beast returns. The headless Emperor re-prevails.

For the end of the world was long ago -
   And all we dwell today
As children of some second birth
Like a strange people left on earth
   After a judgment day.

Chesterton pictures this in Britain, be it Arthur's or Alfred's Britain:

Age beyond age, on British land,
   Aeons and aeons gone,
Was war and peace in western hills -
   And the White Horse looked on.

But, supremely, he sees it in the fall of Empire and in the ebb and flow of Christendom:-

When the ends of the earth come marching in
   To torch and cresset gleam
And the roads of the world that lead to Rome
Were filled with faces that moved like foam,
   Like faces in a dream.

And men rode out of eastern lands,
   Broad river and burning plain,
Trees that are titan flares to see
And tiger skies, striped horribly,
   With tints of tropic rain.

Chesterton pitted Alfred - as did destiny - against the sad, blank, cruel, heathen North. The threat which Alfred met might come again:-

By all men bond to Nothing,
   Being slaves without a lord,
By one blind idiot world obeyed,
   Too blind to be abhorred,

* * * * * *

Know ye the old barbarian,
   The barbarian come again!

But beside such an end of the world from the North there is also that end of the world which is, metaphorically, the East:- the place of desire denied or of desire run riot: a place of

Scrawled screens and secret gardens
   And insect-laden skies.

It is a barbarism which is to be known

By a broken heart in the breast of the world,
   And the end of the world's desire.

This too could come again. And that is why, for both Chesterton and Charles Williams, the story of Avalon is linked, for better or worse, with that of P'o L'u. It is a tale:-

Of a good king on an island
   That ruled once on a time;
And as he walked by an apple tree
There came green devils out of the sea
With sea-plants trailing heavily
   And tracks of opal slime.

BOOK REVIEW

The Passionate God by Rosemary Haughton. Published by Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981, 335pp, £12.95p. Reviewed by Brian Horne.

Originality is a rare quality and The Passionate God is a rare book, compelling and irritating at the same time, and it will provoke extreme reactions in its readers. Whether or not one will be prepared to consider its argument seriously will depend on the extent to which one is able to accept the author's understanding of 'Romantic Passion' and her determined use of it as an instument for interpreting the Christian religion. Her aim is clear and her application is rigorous: 'Romance gives us a language which can open up the whole of Christian theology.'(p.27). A claim as startling as this needs to be substantiated and the first sixty pages of the book contain an attempt to give some definition to those frequently-occurring but elusive terms 'romance' and 'passion'. I am not at all sure that her account of the appearance and growth of the phenomenon of Romance - a rather sketchy affair based largely upon C.S.Lewis' theories in his book The Allegory of Love - is accurate. It has a far more complicated, perhaps longer and more puzzling history than she allows; so it is fortunate that, in the end, her thesis does not depend upon historical accuracy. It does depend, however, upon her power to persuade us that what she has understood by 'romantic passion' can be seriously entertained as a real means of describing and analysing our universal experience.

Essential to this understanding of romance are concepts of 'exchange', 'breakthrough' and 'spheres'. The latter pair are, I believe, the author's own coinage; 'exchange', however, is at least as old as Christianity, though Rosemary Haughton acknowledges it as having been conveyed to her in its most powerful form in the writings of Charles Williams. It is clear that he is the source of many of the ideas in this book and the final chapter includes extended quotations from his Arthurian poems. Her debt to him is profound, but I cannot help feeling that her work would have been more convincing and stimulating if she had allowed his intellectual scepticism to temper some of her wilder imaginings. However, on the concept of 'exchange' she writes with great force and percipience. The notion of the universe as a vast structure of 'exchange' involves 'thinking of everything not just as part of an infinitely complex web of interdependence, but as a moving web, a pattern of flowing, a never-ceasing in-flow and out-flow of being.'(p.21)

Furthermore, the universe is not to be regarded as a 'fixed' system; it is composed of 'spheres' which are capable of moving in and out of each other at points where a 'breakthrough' is possible: the breakthrough itself being caused by the passion of romantic love. The spheres are material and immaterial, and the immaterial is no less real than the material. Her examples of the immaterial 'breaking through' into the material in incidences of visions, ghosts, poltergeists, levitations etc. need not prevent the more sceptical amongst us from receiving sympathetically her account of the Transfiguration of Jesus and his Resurrection, or her interpretation of the doctrine of the Incarnation in these categories. Indeed, one could say, what better way is there for making the Incarnation intelligible than a way which talks of it as the breaking through of God's passionate love into the sphere of human existence at its most vulnerable point?

The central doctrines of the Christian tradition are all examined in this remarkably courageous and comprehensive book: Incarnation, Atonement, Revelation, the Church, the Sacraments, life in the Spirit, the Last Things. Of particular interest is her treatment of eschatology and the prickly question of the Second Coming. She remarks, correctly, that this has been an intractable problem with which all theology and all Christian life has had to struggle, and in a brief exposition of the thought of St Paul she offers a theory, which believers must take seriously, that 'the timing of the End of all things depends on the activity of the Church, especially in prayer.' (P.165) "Even so. Come Lord Jesus." If this is true, what a terrible, but glorious burden has been laid upon the followers of Christ by their Lord.

Of course, even sympathetic readers will find a good deal to complain of in this book. The progress of the argument is not always clear; the writing is sometimes slack and slangy. I do not, for instance, believe it is possible to enter into the inner experience of the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth and reconstruct his psychology in the way the author does; and while I believe, with her, that there is today in Christianity 'a stretching of older theological concepts which will not serve because they were developed to fit an experience of life which is now irrelevant', I do not believe that the new styles of faith, life and ministry are beginning to emerge yet, and I need much more persuasion before I can accept that they will emerge along the lines suggested in the later chapters of this book. The speculations of these pages do not grow organically out of the theology which has preceded them. Imagination has given way to special pleading: interesting but unconvincing.

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At the Society meeting on 27 February 1982, James Brabazon talked to us about Charles Williams and Albert Schweitzer. His talk was recorded and is here transscribed by the Editor with the only changes being stylistic. The talk had been advertised as 'Greater Love - a comparison between Charles Williams and Albert Schweitzer', but James Brabazon opened by saying - It's not 'Greater Love' I want to talk about , it's 'Greater Joy', the reason for that needs to be explained as does my choice of what to talk about. I was asked to come here very largely because of the book I had written about Dorothy L Sayers. When I was asked to do that my immediate reaction was that I did not really want to for I have talked a lot about her in the last 5 years and written and thought a lot about her. But I did not want to turn the invitation down, so I thought about what I could talk to you about. As I thought about this it came to me that Charles Williams (CW) is one of the people whom I have responded to most passionately as a writer in my life, and the only other person I remember responding to in the same way is Albert Schweizer (AS). They appear to be such totally different people so I wanted to find out what it can be that makes some kind of common ground in me if nobody else. I thought, therefore, I would work this out in this paper.

I was reading CW and found the phrase 'Greater Joy' in a quotation by him from Dante. The quotation that CW uses in The Figure of Beatrice which is quoting his own translation from The Divine Comedy is: 'I saw, I believe I saw, because in saying this it feels to me as if I had Greater Joy' in other words he believes because of his joyful response and that belief makes him see - a rather unconventional but valid way of accepting something. The world's full of prophets and sages of all sorts and I have spent much of my life trying to work out which of these sages is right, and why it was that a lot of other people seemed to think that a particular person was on the right lines. It seems to me now that nobody has this kind of monopoly of truth. There can only be the truth for oneself. Not because there is not a truth but because it is far beyond our ability to grasp. CW quotes Kierkegaard as saying: - before God man is always in the wrong - and if he is always in the wrong it does not really matter too much in what way he is in the wrong but he must try to get it as right as he possibly can for himself. So, following CW's recommendation, I trusted the heart rather than the mind, trying to remember the mind is just as fallible as the heart but the heart has a certain kind of purity and directness of apprehension. Understand as much as you can but then respond to whatever seems to you worth responding to, and this is where joy came in. My response to both CW and AS was joy, both gave me joy and experienced it and responded to it and built their beliefs on that joy. This is not to say that the visions these two men had were comforting, cosy or sentimental in any way. They were very much nicer than the really negative visions like Nietzsche or

John Osborne or even AS's cousin Jean-Paul Sartre; they were not negative but they were not without their black side. So it is not sentimentality we are talking about. The joy itself is a form of understanding, a sense of recognising right through one's whole being that what is said **fits** what one is and experiences, and that is at one and the same time belief and joy. It's a point at which truth and beauty touch and one rejoices because the truth is recognised as beauty or beauty as truth. I want to talk about what these two men have meant to me and my response to them.

Let me start with CW, how I got to know him and my response to him as it happened. In the summer of 1940 I was working at the Admiralty; they wouldnot let me fight for my country because of my poor eyesight. I was living in a Toc H hostel in Kennington and the Toc H padre, a man of great dynamism, invited me to a lecture at a place called St Anne's House in Soho. Dorothy Sayers was giving the talk so I went. I got very closely involved with the people at St Anne's House and after a while I went to work and live there. One of the clergy who ran it, Patrick McLaughlan, knew and loved CW, who was an associate of the House, coming there when he could. There was a party there once when he was the guest of honour and recited some of his poetry, and that was the first and only time I set eyes on him and heard him speak. It was an extraordinary experience and I remember feeling surprised at his high-pitched, rather excessive way of reciting poetry; it might easily have been taken to be a bit absurd, but it was not 'ham'. I define 'ham acting' as big, exuberent, large-scale acting which is not filled with sufficient emotional truth to make it work. CW was not 'ham' because whatever stylisation he used, one took it seriously because one knew he had to do it like that and that he meant it; one would only mock if one was deeply insensitive to the whole thing. As a result of that I decided I must get to know more about this extraordinary person, but very soon after that he was dead. But I started to read the novels and poetry and anything I could get hold of of his. It all seemed very peculiar, it did seem as though he inhabited a world I found very hard to recognise except in chunks, but when those chunks arrived they seemed to say something which was more important and more interesting than chunks of anybody else. They just did not seem to fit into any kind of coherent world which I could really recognise or understand. As I proceeded and persevered, the experience was increasingly that the chunks began to fit together.

Dorothy Sayers, who knew him much better than I did, put it this way when she wrote about him: 'To read only one work of CW is to find oneself in the presence of a riddle, a riddle fascinating by its romantic colour, its strangeness, its hints of a rich and intricate unknown world just outside the barriers of consciousness. But to read all is to become a free citizen of that world and to find in it a penetrating and illuminating interpretation of the world we know.' Her whole translation of The Divine Comedy was set off by CW's interest and love of Dante, and it was as a response to his book The Figure of Beatrice that she started on that enterprise.

That was her response to CW. For me it was a little different for I did not find that the world he inhabited was a totally strange one. At first it was totally strange, but as one got to know it, it was as though a whole landscape which did not seem to fit together, slowly swung round until you realised that actually all the roads did lead somewhere, all the pylons which had appeared to be spaced across the landscape were really in a straight line and you were standing at last in the position where CW stood, and you realised that this world he was writing about was not a strange world but our own world seen in a very special light and by a very special person. So I would disagree with Dorothy that one was entering another world - one was entering ones own world but in a very interesting new way.
When you reached that point there was a certain special sort of directness about the way he looked at the world which was part of this joy; it was recognising things in the new light and thinking "that's wonderful!"; in a way it actually makes

more sense of the world rather than less and so you respond to it at that kind of level. Part of it was the fact that, in his phrase: "the images were affirmed", one said "Yes" to life, one said "Yes" to the world and to everything that mattered in it, and no way did one grumble about the world. One might say: "Yes, part of this world is full of horror", but one did not actually grumble about it; one responded to it in an affirmative way even at that stage, because one accepted his understanding that people who chose horror chose horror willingly and that was their choice, and in a sort of way that was what they wanted and what they deserved. This seemed to me an insight of incredible validity because I had often wondered why it was that people do wrong. The obvious answer is that they do not think it is. If they think that doing wrong is what they happen to want at that moment, then they have chosen it and the results of it they have also chosen, because they probably know what the results are. I am not talking about people who are deranged, obviously, and there are certain exceptions to this, and there are philosophical problems here. There is a Greek saying, something like "nobody ever sins" - meaning if you really think it is a sin you do not do it - at that particular moment you think that doing that is better than not doing it and that's why you do it for under whatever pressure you may be. Later on you may think "I wish I hadn't done it", but you do not do the wrong thing at any given moment knowing that it is wrong. I believe that psychologically that is very true. I think that CW also would have said that people who were in a state of ungrace willed that and willed the consequences of it. He would rejoice that the pattern made that happen. The strange, high-pitched, sort of hysterical way in which he wrote which some people find very off-putting seems to me the outward and visible sign of that penetrating light that he cast on the world which is also reflected in that high-pitched excessive sort of way of speaking.

My next experience of anything to do with CW was when I was a member of the cast of a production of <u>The House of the Octopus</u>. Perhaps it is worth recording my response to that. I was in the process of learning about CW. I reacted to it in two ways. Personally I found it extraordinarily interesting and very fascinating, and as I got to know the play and got to understand and study it, very valuable and valid, and the lines meant a great deal. I could never bring myself to believe tha anyone who just turned up one evening and sat down and listened to it would have gone away with anything like the same kind of apprehension that I had got. I do no think that CW is a good playwright in that sense. I think that to expect anybody t get more than a very remote glimmering of what the play was about would have been asking too much - unless of course if they knew the play or were familiar with CW's form of thought. So I felt very much torn between these two feelings about it as an actor.

So that is basically how I came to know CW. Now what has this almost ethereal character, radiant being, as he emerges from his writing and as I understand he was in person, got in common with the very burly, peasant-like pastor who built a small hospital in the middle of Africa, cutting down the trees and building with his own bare hands? A very different sort of person you may think. Let me sketch out how I got to know about AS before I talk about the ways it seems to me these two people come together. I was wondering what to do next in my life when I was asked to write a book about AS. I had no idea why I should be asked but felt it would be very interesting. It turned out that it all stemmed back to St Anne's House, like CW. I had written a piece about Dorothy Sayers when she died, and the person who had read this realised that I knew a little about theology and could write a bit, so he introduced me to the person willing to commission the book, so I was starting entirely from scratch. Really all I knew about AS was what people would know who pick up a very old copy of 'Everybody's Weekly' in the dentist and they read the page-and-a-half and the picture of AS and a black baby. It could either be an article saying he was the most extraordinarily wonderful creature that ever lived on earth, or it could be saying he was a bogus character who had to disappear to the jungle in order to have a nasty psychological time with a lot of lady disciples, and nobody quite knew what went on in the hospital anyway. Those were the two views of him and I had to find out which one was true. Obviously neither, but one had to prove it.

He was born in 1875, the son of a pastor in Alsace. Alsace had ceased to be French four years before following the Franco-Prussian war and was now German. He made the best of such uncertainties saying that as an Alsatian you eat as much as a German and as well as the French, but it could be an uncomfortable situation. He was brought up in the Alsation hills. He loved them dearly. He was an incredibly bad scholar for the first ten years, so much so that his father doubted that he would even make a good postman. On the other hand he did have very vivid apprehensions of the value of life and the misery of other people and particularly other creatures, birds that got shot by boys with catapults, dogs that got beaten, there was an old Jew who used to be mocked by the kids, and his response to these was deeply sensitive and deeply upset.

He then, later on having left there and gone on to a larger school further away, realised that learning was actually worth doing and he started to learn so fast that he left everyone else behind. It was not that he was stupid, only that he could not be bothered to learn earlier than that. He set himself to do this. He argued with everyone all through his teens so that he became a thorough nuisance and finally settled down to become a pastor himself in Strasburg. There he started to study the question of the historical Jesus - who was this fellow that he had been told about, why were there so many contradictions in the Bible - and he set about trying to demolish a whole centurys-worth of German theology and German quest for the historical Jesus, and came up with his own particular solution which I find very satisfying, but will not go in to now. He published books about this, about Kant, about Bach - a huge 2 volume job - well before he was 30. He had a wonderful time, enjoying every minute of it. He slept about 4 hours every night because he was enjoying life so much he could not be bothered to sleep any longer. Everybody says that he was a dynamo. But he records that on his 21st birthday he woke up and thought - 'I'm having a marvellous time, I'm playing the organ, I'm studying, but there are all these creatures and people who are not enjoying themselves, and I see absolutely no reason why I should be allowed to do so while they are not, it doesn't seem fair.' - it is a very simple reaction and I think that that was all it was. He thought that he could not continue to allow this to happen because his apprehension of people's suffering was such that it got in the way of his enjoyment. He decided that he would continue to enjoy himself until he was 30, and then he would find some way of dedicating himself to the betterment of mankind. He had no idea what he was going to do but he would do it when he was 30. I think most of us have had these kinds of impulses to do good to the world especially around the age of 21 but I am sorry to say we forget all about it. But on his 30th birthday he sat down and thought about what he should do.

He tried to become a missionary but the missionaries would not have him because his theology was not suffiently orthodox. So he decided to become a doctor because he had an extraordinarily sensible idea about missionaries which was not the common one, that the job of a missionary was not to tell black people what to think but to do them a bit of good because of the number of so-called Christians who had done them harm, and that needed putting right, and that is what he intended to do. In fact he never baptised a single black all the time he was out in Africa because he just decided that that just was not what he was supposed to do.

He spent 7 years becoming a doctor as he could not become a missionary and went out to Africa. No-one would support him financially so he raised all the money he needed and he built his hospital and the rest you know. So I responded to him in the end as a totally valid person. I spent 2 years checking out all the criticisms of him and I only found that the people who criticised him had very good reasons for criticising him but the reason was in the critic not in AS. They were people who would get a lot of money from a magazine if they could demolish this saintly figure. Everyone in Fleet Street dreamed of doing the ultimate bad-taste job by destroying the reputation of AS. A lot of people had a go at it and AS did not mind very much. I made this search for the flaw in AS - did not find it and started writing the book. The most extraordinary thing about him was that he was all of one piece. Most books about most people have contradictions; Dorothy Sayers certainly did, I do not know enough about CW to say, but AS did not appear to have any contradictions in him at all If there were any things which were not like him, he had them on the surface, he knew all about them and they were not deep-seated psychological contradictions at all. The worst thing you could say about him was that he was authoritarian and he used to say it all the time. He used to say that if you are running a hospital 200 miles up a river and there is no way of getting a second opinion, then you actually have to tel people what to do. It seems very practical.

So what are the apparent differences between these 2 men to start off with? First of all AS appears to be a man of action as against an academic and literary man in CW. But in fact when you look at AS's character he was a dreamer. Those first IO years at school were spent in sitting and thinking and dreaming and experiencing, and that is why he was not working. The images that he carried with him of Alsace all through his life were his refreshment and his memory. When he started preaching sermons and when he wrote, his image-making was wonderful, he always saw things in very concrete terms, in paint rather than poetry, in the terms of an artist. As an example, once he talked for 4 hours when he had only been asked to talk for one, and when this was pointed out he said: "There's a bird in Africa which when it opens it's mouth it shuts it's eyes, and I'm very sorry to say I'm a bit like that." It was this kind of beautiful, humorous vision of life and his apprehension of images that made him a kind of poet and a beautiful user of words and of course there is no real difference between CW and AS as academics because AS was an excellent academic - he just wanted to do something different afterwards. In fact one of the famous stories about him is that he was lugging some timber one day in his hospital and there was a black gentleman who was very nicely dressed sitting watching him; AS asked him to help and he replied: "I'm awfully sorry I can't, I'm an intellectual." AS said he too had trie to be one of those but it did not quite work.

So he was an academic and he would have understood CW in that sort of way and they would have had a great deal to talk about had they ever met. The word that AS used when talking of his thought is 'denken'. It took me some time to understand this word, it did not seem to be adequately translated by the word 'thought'. AS was always talking about thought as something which enabled him to penetrate very deeply into his own consciousness, whereas we tend to think of thought as something which enables us to follow a logical sequence. In fact 'denken' means precisely that penetration into oneself, you apprehend something with your whole being. D H Lawrence had a poem about it which finishes: 'Thought is the whole man, wholly attending.' That is what 'denken' means and it seems to me that that is a very good description of how CW thought too. He did not again think logically; his thought is something that penetrates and pierces and quite clearly has gone deep into his own consciousness in order to find what is there - an immediate and vivid apprehension of reality. In the same way AS looked at reality and searched within himself for a response which was not in any way a contradiction to logical thought, it just did not end there. If there was a logical reason why what he experienced was wrong, then it was wrong; the logic must not be denied in any way. There was no silly mysticism which denied logic or truthful response to fact but it penetrated beyond that.

There is a very good remark of Anne Ridler's about CW, that "he argued not to vanquish but to discover", and it seems to me there again the argument is not the argument of a academic to defend a position but to find out and to reject anything which does not seem valid and to go further and deeper.

Now there is another difference between the two men: quite clearly their religious backgrounds. CW had an Anglo-Catholic background, he obviously based his thought very much on the Catholic tradition. AS was a Lutheran. They are very different ways of looking at things and there is no way those two can be reconciled at that level. The only thing is that both of them pinned their final apprehension of religion on the figure of Jesus and although I suspect CW would be forced to say that AS was a heretic, one of the things that I like about CW is the fact that he regards heretics as great if they were great heretics. They are not dismissed because they are heretics but he regards them as being very valid contributions to the truth; that the Almighty has perhaps elicited more out of a great heretic than out of a minor Orthodox and he would respect them immensely for that very reason. That kind of respect he would probably have offered to AS, and I am absolutely sure that AS would have offered it to CW too.

But having got past those two dissimilarities that are perhaps more apparent than real, the similarities are the ones that seem to be the most striking. First of all, obviously it seems to me, that both men were geniuses in the sense that they had an absolutely personal and totally direct apprehension of the way they saw the world. They both had the kind of energy that a genius requires, a passionate energy, a passionate response, and the energy was exhibited in different ways. Neither of them would have accepted the second-hand or the sentimental because their own blinding apprehension would wash that away.

Both of them were ecstatics and both of them were deeply practical. The vision of CW was of a very real world seen in a very special way and I think that is also true of AS. His world was less odd at first sight but at the same time it was an immensely practical world and yet seen in a very special way. His special way was what he called "reverence for life". When he had been in Africa for some time he was constantly aware of the amount of death and destruction, pain and suffering; much more of course than he had first experienced in Alsace. In Africa, the diseases were abominable. People came into his hospital complaining of one and probably had three more. Incidentally, he was not just a leper doctor, he was a doctor for anyone who came in, he had to treat what was there - that is a strange misapprehension - but he was aware of the horror of this. The First World War was going on in his own home country and people were being killed in France just up the hill from where he had lived. He was desperately concerned to find the basic ethic - he was more interested in ethics than CW I am sure - he wanted to find some true north than mankind could steer by and he could not find it anywhere, in any of the philosophers or in any of the theologians or anywhere. In Africa he found it in the phrase "reverence for life", starting with the proposition that the only thing we really have which we are absolutely sure of in common with everybody else and all creatures is life. He wanted to go to the ultimately important thing. Life is what we have in common with other creatures and the thing that we actually need and preserve most, therefore that is what you start with. That is what we reverence in other human beings. You do not reverence their intellect, their colour, their race, their ideas or anything else. If you start with the proposition "Ithink, therefore I am" you are already on a very over-intellectualised path. What matters is not that you think, but that you live. I live and you live, therefore I respect your right to live and you respect mine and that is all you have to start with. That is how he built his philosophy and I personally do not think it is bad. But this was the thing to which his passion finally drove him. And that seems to me to be exactly the same sense that I got from CW when I first came across his conception of co-inherence, his conception of the City, of all life, all humanity, knitted together by this immense web of common experience, common responsibility, so that there is no way you can make any move - the spider's web twitched where ever it is will respond all the way round, not only in space but in time for ever and ever. Everything matters. Now that is also, it seems to me, a way of saying that you have "reverence for life". AS used another phrase "the solidarity of life", and that seems to me to be co-inherence. It is the 'courtesy' that CW used to talk about so much as the true response that everyone should have for everyone else. You respect them, you are courteous to them, because they are, because they exist, and every single thing that you feel, say and do has an effect because of this co-inherence, this inseparability of ourselves from every other creature, past, present, future and everywhere in the world.

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CW BOOKS IN PRINT IN U.S.A.

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