The Charles Williams Society

NEWSLETTER

No. 60, WINTER 1990

MEETINGS OF THE CHARLES WILLIAMS SOCIETY

11 May 1991: The Society will hold its A.G.M. at Pusey House, 61 St Giles, Oxford, starting at 11am. This will be open to members only. Following this, from about 11.45 to 12.45, those attending will be invited to read chosen extracts from Charles Williams' works, giving a reason for their choice. Please let Joan Northam know on the day if you would like to read - those who did not read at last year's A.G.M. will be invited to do so first. This, and the afternoon session, will be open to all interested. We will break for lunch from about 12.45 until about 2.15 and stroll down to the Eagle and Child pub, or eat sandwiches (bring your own if you wish). At 2.30 Brenda Boughton will talk on the question: "What part do the slaves play in Charles Williams' poetry?" The meeting will finish at about 4.30 - 5pm. Tea and coffee will be provided.

19 October 1991: Brian Horne will talk on Dante. This meeting will start at 2.30pm at Liddon House, 24 South Audley Street, London W.1.

LONDON READING GROUP

Sunday 16 June 1991: We will start to read Region of the Summer Stars. We will meet at St Matthews Church Vestry, 27 St Petersburgh Place, London W2 (nearest tube stations Queensway and Bayswater) at 1pm. Tea and coffee will be provided but please bring sandwiches.

OXFORD READING GROUP

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

CAMBRIDGE READING GROUP

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

LAKE MICHIGAN AREA READING GROUP

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

NEWS ABOUT BOOKS

April 1991 sees the publication by Boydell & Brewer of Arthurian Poets - Charles Williams edited and introduced by Charles Williams Society member David Dodds. It contains Taliessin Through Logres and Region of the Summer Stars as well as the earlier unpublished Arthurian cycle The Advent of Galahad and later fragments. It is published in hardback at £29.50/$61 (256pp, ISBN 0 85991 327 9), and paperback at £10.95/$22 (ISBN 0 85115 291 0).

BOOK REVIEW

Outlines of Romantic Theology by Charles Williams, edited and introduced by Alice Mary Hadfield. Published by Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, 1990.
Review by Martin Moynihan.

Alice Mary Hadfield was allowed by the late John Pellow to take from him a copy of his typescript of Charles Williams' early essay (1924), Outlines of Romantic Theology. It was declined by the O.U.P. (by Humphrey Milford, as advised by "R" - perhaps the Bishop of Ripon); and Charles Williams let it drop. Alice Mary edited the typescript and added a literary and biographical introduction and commentary. This labour of love, as completed by Charles Hadfield, is now published, plus a reprint of C.W.'s paper (1941) on "Religion and Love in Dante: the Theology of Romantic Love". Also, at the end there is a chronological list of C.W.'s Principal Works. Besides the Outlines themselves (1924), our attention is drawn to: 1938, He Came Down from Heaven (esp. Cap. v, The Theology of Romantic Love) and, also 1938, Taliessin Through Logres, 1939 The Descent of the Dove, 1941 Religion and

Love in Dante (as above); 1943 The Figure of Beatrice, and, lastly, 1944 The Region of the Summer Stars.

Thinking over these titles in sequence, Alice Mary's conclusion is that as a preliminary work, the Outlines stand to the final achievement not as acorn to oak but as a first sketch which was very considerably modified before the finished masterpieces of Arthur and Beatrice. A difficulty is that the Outlines are not all that easy to keep track of. They need, says Alice Mary, to be read and re-read. And more than once I felt like Coventry Patmore's Psyche in De Rerum Natura when she says to Eros:

"Thy sacred words I ponder and revere
And thank thee heartily that some are clear."

Dante said a true poet should be able to say in clear prose what he said in verse. Not all his followers live up to this - or even try to. The re-vealed, they say, must be re-veiled. Charles Williams anticipates and forestalls such comment. He warns against ingenuity; and he stresses that all he writes must be seen in the Mind of the Church.

Briefly, then, Romantic Theology is the theology of romance - specifically, of sexual love in marriage. And, as the Eucharist lends sanctity to every meal (he writes), so marriage shows the universality and necessity of love. The loving couple are the priest and priestess of a sacrament which is a regenerating process with remote results. Love equals Christ; and marriage is a Way of the Soul which follows His Life. Love is His Birth in and from the Beloved, who equates with the Mother of God and is, also, addressable with the titles of the Rosary. She is, e.g. the mother of divine Grace.

From the presentation and from Simeon's prophecy the lovers learn that sorrow (tristitia: verb. sap.) follows joy. Christ's public Baptism (strictly unnecessary, C.W. writes) betokens their public marriage - which is also strictly unnecessary, because the sacrament is one they administer to themselves. Christ

is the synthesis of the positive, the B.V.M. of the receptive side of man. The Crucifixion is (horribile dictu) symbolised by intercourse. Despaired of, Resurrection yet takes place; and is followed by Ascension and then the Descent of Grace, of the Spirit. There follow applications of all this to the New Testament, to the Mass and to the Ten Commandments with appeals to the poets, to Dante, Donne and Patmore. Finally, in a coda we are told that virginal love and indeed any romantic preoccupation can, in reciprocal relationship be identified with Christ. Virginal or married, the alternatives are either (Charles Williams writes) mere morality or else sheer nature, reproduction of the race and nothing more.

This last is well said. Consider by contrast Bridges' Testament of Beauty. In his "loose alexandrines" - loose but so often lovely - Bridges describes just this reproductive-cum-pagan way. It is Plato out of Lucretius. The reproductive pandemian Venus rises, by emergent Evolution, into the beauty-loving Uranian Venus; and we are merged into the One. Like all mysticism outside Christ, it is uni-one. It is Wordsworth on Helvellyn or Younghusband in the Himalaya. It is the oneness of all religions and religion of oneness, of the loss, not the finding, of the self in the One. Uniquely Christianity, the absolute religion, is biune. It is Christ and His Creation, Bridegroom and Bride till, finally, the Biune, as in Dante, shares in the Triune. Adoration represents and reflects true biune reality. And the Outlines gloriously vindicate this and those moments which reveal it - as Othello knew:

> "My soul hath her content so absolute
> That not another moment like to this
> Succeeds in unknown fate"

Coventry Patmore and Charles Williams both wrote before the permissive society. They could take it as widely granted that falling in love and marriage and rapture, both emotional and sexual, were to be treated in theological, not to say Christian, terms. Even so, it is strange that in his theological treatment of romance

C.W. makes little of the marriage Sacrament itself, as canonically interpreted and expressed. (This, at a time when Charles Morgan, in his novels and plays, was making much of the English Service: "with my body I thee worship"). Established "in man's innocency" (Adam and Eve) the Church does, 'pace' Charles Williams, declare it a great sacrament (Heb. 13.5.) deriving its force and message and lifelong bond from The Biunity, from the bond between Creator and Creation, between Christ and His Church. "I will never leave thee." Compared to this, the Outlines' Way of the Soul can appear secondary if not deviant.

The Outlines plumb the depths as well as the heights. But how much of the Way is partnership, with the comfort and probation of fidelity; and these surely have a large place in sanctification (C.W. sometimes fails to distinguish between regeneration at baptism, and santification along the pilgrim way). Adam Fox (one of the Inklings and one-time Professor of Poetry at Oxford) put this emphasis well in his Old King Coel(1937). Constantius woos Helen by recounting the Platonic Ascent of Love. Helen demurs and says they should rather be thinking of shared companionship. More recently (1976) in his The Dove in Harness (in allusion to The Descent of the Dove) Philip Mason has made the same case and phrased true marriage as a state of "habitual" almost subconscious "recollection", recollection of intense vows and moments.
This brings us back to Charles Williams himself who certainly saw the Beatrician moment as something to be lived out - and (to repeat) in accordance with the Mind of the Church. But do the Outlines square with this? Alice Mary prints footnotes pencilled in later by Charles Williams which show the degree to which he himself came to fault them. Is marriage necessary to salvation? Yes, say some creeds and sects. Fatal to it, say others. The Outlines say it is generally necessary. Or they did, until their author pencilled in: "it is of course nothing of the sort"!

A fuller footnote might have shown how the Church

(here, as so often, the Golden Mean), in Cana of Galilee on the one hand and in the Counsels of Perfection on the other, provides her children with both marriage and celibacy.

John Heath Stubbs recently remarked that he sometimes wondered how far Charles Williams had entirely outgrown, or say rectified, the occultness of the Occult. That C.W. in his novels uses the occult as compelling Christian allegory, few would deny. But, doctrinally, did he draw quite clear? Consider, in the Outlines, one other footnote which Charles Williams might or might not have deleted before any publication. Valuable to the Christian student are, it states, non-Christian documents like the Symposium or the Zohar*. Symposium, yes: it is pre-Christian, and Plato can be a schoolmaster to Christ. But the Zohar, hardly. With its monistic emanationism, and its equation of the Fall with finitude, it is, or may be meant to be, vice-Christian. And this Zohar footnote of his confirms that much of Charles Williams originated with the Cabbala **. No harm provided it ends not there, but flows on, as it did for Charles, into the Christian tradition and the Faith of Love.

What I think C.W. might have done is to indicate more clearly his sources, with consequent enrichment for us all. On the Commandment to devote the Seventh Day to Rest, the Outlines allude, cryptically, to a duty of married love-making on the Sabbath. This, I believe, is Hasidic - and has wide ramifications! Throughout Scripture, Rest is a code-word for the married state.

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* Zohar: the Book of Splendour (cf. Genesis I.3 and the year of Light) probably by Moses de Leon of Castile (died c.1305 AD).

** Cabbala: spelling as in O.G.D. (q.v.). Rhymes with parabola. Means Hebrew oral tradition and mystical interpretation of the Old Testament. Zohar is a main part of it.

"There remaineth therefore a Rest." On a lighter note, thus was Tristam Shandy able to calculate when he was conceived, i.e. on which Saturday. At the other pole, there looms, in some lines, and ominously I feel, the Black Mass.

The Outlines, then, are at times stimulating, at times exasperating and, on occasions (as their author sometimes concluded), plain wrong. Stimulating is their defence of prayers for the Sovereign; or, again, their question, why the Temptation had in it no temptation by women? Because Our Lord was pledged to the Church? To Biunity! Biune - I am indebted for that word to Thelma Shuttleworth. It came to me from a book she gave me by Crowley. The Magician, he said, was the Son. Correct, I thought, and imagined the Hanged Man as Adam and the Lovers as Christ (the Son again) and (in Mary) the redeemed Creation. Then I discovered that, for Crowley, the Son was Lucifer! But the goal was still biunity: "love under will", but through promiscuous albeit ritualised biunification. This is the Ape of the Schoolmen who defined our risen bodies as agile, impassible, shining and subtle (able to pass through matter) and perfectly under will, perfect instruments of the redeemed soul as part of the Biune, i.e. the Risen Body of Christ and His Spouse. As in the Paradiso, through Christ the Biune participates in the Triune, that is in the Before-beyond-and-after-all-worlds incandescent super-ecstatic Coindwelling of Love: Love triune. (Absolute Rest, and absolute Motion - as it was said in Ezekiel, o Wheels! rotas istas). This, first and last, is the Perichoresis, the Co-inherence. It is in this absolute Co-inherence that our lesser re-coinherences, our corporate and individual redemptions from tne Fall, coinhere.

At the time of his unexpected death, what Charles Williams was thinking of was not publication of the Outlines but Wordsworth. Would he have taken us deeper into "the index of the body"? Not uniune, not Shiva with a myriad eyes, not Blake's Glad Day, not the

Zohar's Adam Kadmon, not the Universal Man (see Swedenborg) with no Universal Woman. No, the Biune; Creative Wisdom, the fore-ordained Christ (Scotus) and, "like one intended first", His Spouse to be, the Created Wisdom - in Mary the New Creation, "the rosed femininity".*

"My Covenant shall be in your flesh." In Genesis, this is male circumcision. In Christ, it is the sacraments, in particular lifelong male-female union, twain-in-one flesh. Our bodies are halves, halves of the completed body, completed in the nuptial union, physical, and/or spiritual, which tells us that we are biune, that the soul was made for her maker and earth for heaven. They are prophecies. Though each one of us, in "I-me-myself", is imaging the Trinity, yet it is the androgyne - neither male nor female but twain in one flesh which images the Triune most fully. In conceptual union there is a third person; and likewise, in life-long holy matrimony, there is that third thing, the spirit of their love which Patmore called the Angel in the House.**

Nor is it ('pace' Charles and Patmore) the Mind of the Church that matrimony involves only two partners. There is also their pledged love (issuing, so be it, in offspring). And there is that third partner, the Holy Name (thumb and two fingers for the Trinity, the next finger for the wedding ring), taken in their mutual vows. Be It taken not in vain, for then the two

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* Taliessin in the Rose Garden.

** The Holy Ghost, said St Hilary, is the embrace of the Father and the Son. It was not good for God, said Patmore anticipating Chesterton, to be alone. And let Us, God said, make Man in Our Image. See also Nicholas of Casa The Vision of God introduced by Evelyn Underhill (Deut 1928) Chapter 18, "How God, unless He were a Trinity, could not be Bliss" and chapter 17, "Thou, my God, who art Love, art Love that loveth, and Love that is lovable, and Love that is the bond between these twain.

receive back, from it, that tertium quid, lifelong Grace. "Forsaking all other" - in the Outlines there is rather too little of this. What a contrast with later writing. In Religion and Love in Dante mention comes to be made of what must have been in mind from the first, Paolo and Francesca. And Alice Mary tells us that in Many Dimensions, Charles Williams may have worked out the depth of his feelings for Phyllis Jones. How well, if so. Here is no "sublimation" merely - here is something "offered to God", sacrificed. Death here is the solution, physical or metaphoric. And the Way of the Soul looks towards the Parousia and the World to come. Fidelity, touched on lightly in the Outlines, regains due place - not without, one feels, heroic virtue on the part of Taliessin's co-faithful Michal.

Taliessin - how much more than his prose does Charles Williams' verse give the tension and sublimity of Departure. The manumitted slave-girl ("he sent his energy wholly into hers") and Dindrane ("Dindrane, farewell!"). Negative and positive merge - merge, married or virginal in moments of joy and especially in the Holy Mysteries. Sacred and secular kiss each other.

What are we to make though, asks C.W., of how Dante devoted so much thought to another woman? Surely, that she was dead and that his thinking was - for what? To "set love in order". Evelyn Underhill quotes this injunction from St Francis. But, earlier, it was St Augustine's and, earlier still, the Vulgate (Canticles II,4. Ordinavit caritatem in me.) It is cardinal. And, in He Came Down From Heaven, Charles Williams shows - what is not shown in the Outlines - how the Song of Songs requires and receives its fulfilment in the Apocalypse. "The Spirit and the Bride say Come". Private romance is part (or is not part) of the whole world's trans-cosmic Romance.

What, then, of the Way of the Soul? Criticism first. Too often the diachronic (our participations) diminish what we are to participate in, i.e. the historic Drama. Christ is not a state. He is a person. This Patmore

recognised when he apostrophised the Blessed Virgin, His Mother, as

"Our only Saviour from an abstract Christ."

And the Crucifixion: - the Crucifixion (dare one speak thus) was surely not the marriage but the engagement. It was the Bride-Price (the Judge paid the fine). Union in holiness was made possible. Daily at each Jordan-hallowed font, we are to perceive souls re-born and (bathed and anointed) hallowed and therewith betrothed. In the Holy Mysteries ("let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth") they then share the Marriage Supper and foretaste the trans-carnal Marriage Union-to-be in Heaven. Of this foretaste, romantic love conveys a foretaste. The lovers **feel** and breathe to all creatures (how true) absolute goodwill or, as Dante wrote, "love only".

The existence of Charles Williams' essay The Outlines of Romantic Theology had long been known; and their publication fills a bibliographical gap of much significance. They raise profound themes. And they point forward, and inspire us towards, the fuller and final picture of the Earthly City (Arthur's), set (with Beatrice's help) against the background of the Eternal. They are thus a substantial addition to our knowledge of Charles Williams' thought and of how it developed into those maturer writings the power of which we have all so deeply felt. And if we are grateful, as we indeed are, to Eerdmans for publishing the Outlines, how much more are we indebted to Alice Mary Hadfield and also to Charles, her husband, who helped her, as health failed, to complete her work. Fittingly, the work commemorates a partnership; and fittingly, for a work with such a Beatrician theme, it comes to us from beyond the grave. So coming, it crowns all that Alice Mary herself did, in life and letters, for one who (I again recall) was to her (as still to so many of us who did not know him) Taliessin in person.

Footnotes

1. Commenting on Robert Bridges, Charles Williams

champions against him the orthodoxy of the Fall (not "a divine fiasco") and of the Quicunque vult which, in The Greater Trumps, he shows to be part of the Mystery of Love. Contrariwise, in The Forgiveness of Sins, he does scant justice to St Thomas Aquinas (and Anselm) in respect of the Atonement. In The Figure of Beatrice, the Comedy constrains him (itself rather slight on the subject) to pay lip service to Anselm. But his over-fondness for William Law and for Boehme blurs sin and its antidote, world salvation. Sin is disobedience (not mere self-delusion). And an "ought", as Pritchard lectured to Oxford in 1912, cannot be wholly rationalised without losing its "oughtness". "If ye love Me, keep My commandments". The Myth of the Alteration in knowledge can sometimes be a bit facile. Evil can be so infinitely terrible. And, to expiate it, the infinite death of Christ was needed: it purged, in God's sight, our whole race. Thus salvation is primarily not of separate souls but of souls accepting humbly (or not accepting) a shared salvation - a share in a God-ward 'fait accompli'. This distinguishes Christian belief and life from any other. Both are corporate. And this radically distinguishes Christian mysticism from any other.

The mansions of St Teresa, the dark nights and spiritual joys of St John of the Cross are all part of a shared forgiveness, vicariously achieved. But if Charles Williams sometimes under-emphasises the Substitution (Calvary) no one has done more to exemplify the practice of it in everyday lives. What Bernard Shaw, what Ayer (blind leader of Logres) condemn as immoral - that, in the Redemption, one person should be able to indemnify another - that, over and over again, Charles Williams shows to be the essence of love in action, whether God's love or ours.

2. Baptism - Christ's, not necessary? For Him no, for us yes. At Jordan (as the Prayer Book baptismal service so clearly states - how strange that C.W. passed this over), at Jordan Christ was the sanctifier, not the sanctified. Retroactively, His

Cross hallowed water (blessed in His Name) to be the washing away of sin. Retroactively it sprinkles, superseding Hebrew and Gentile rites, pasch and taurobolium. John's baptism was symbolical, Christ's by vicarious substitution, is effectual. He accomplished what Ezekiel (cap. 16) prophesied. St Ephrem (Chavasse, The Bride of Christ, Faber 1941) writes of this corporately. Christ drew up out of the water the Church, cleansed, hallowed and, for betrothal, anointed. Truer Orpheus He, truer Eurydice she. Recall, in splendid contrast with the Outlines, that moment in All Hallows Eve when it transpires that Betty had been, when newly-born, baptised by her nurse (in the Wise Water).

3. Commenting on "he that is able to receive it" (Matt. 19, 12) the Outlines seem to refer this saying to the indissolubility of marriage, not (as surely it does refer) to consecrated celibacy.

4. We must not, say the Outlines, attribute a masculine principle and a feminine one to the Transcendence. True, but the triune includes all good in pre-eminence and is to be thought of as more than, not less than, sexual. God is love, a relationship. Love, loving and beloved; Love, beloved and loving; and Love in Love. So, too, in heaven, the Biune is for us (see Scotus) the fruitional (not merely the intellectual) love of God.

5. The Outlines suggest that the Twelve Apostles may each be regarded as separate Attributes of Christ's person. This distorts the Gospel to fit in with the Cabbala and the Sephirotic Tree.

6. Tertium quid: since writing as above about the triple nature of matrimony, I have learned from Charles Hadfield that in the late 1940s Alice Mary herself worked on this theme, as found by her in Kierkegaard (see his Works of Love).

7. Justice, Fortitude, Temperance - twice the

Outlines name this trio and, in doing so, echo the Tarot. From both, the fourth cardinal virtue, namely Prudence, is missing. I have little doubt that herein lies a main clue to the understanding - and rectification - of the Tarot.

NEW MEMBER

A warm welcome is extended to Lorna Flint, 1 Chestnut Walk, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire CV37 6HG.

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At the Society's meeting on 23 February 1991, Glen Cavaliero spoke on Lois Lang-Sims' book Letters to Lalage. Lois Lang-Sims was unfortunately unable to attend the meeting. We are pleased to be able to reproduce the talk in this Newsletter.

"The following is an abridgement and partial re-writing of the Introduction to Letters to Lalage, the latters of Charles Williams to Lois Lang-Sims, published by Kent State University Press, 1989.

The affinity between Charles Williams and Lois Lang-Sims was not surprising. Some thirty years younger than he was, she was to become an interesting writer herself, with a variety of unusual books to her credit. Among them, her descriptive history, Canterbury Cathedral (1979) resembles The Descent of the Dove in being as much concerned with the metaphysical dimension of its subject as with temporal factors. Still more indebted to him is an exposition of esoteric Christianity called The Christian Mystery (1980), which throws a good deal of light on the attitude towards theology which one finds in his religious writings. The book, completely alien to the religious temper of the times, was all too soon lost to sight; but Williams' admirers should find congenial its refutation of that literal-mindedness, where dogma was concerned, which he himself so wittily opposed. At the time of their meeting, however, all Lois Lang-

Sims's books were in the future, and she herself, only twenty-six years old, was, according to her autobiography A Time to be Born (1971), in a state of mental and emotional confusion.

Williams's friends and asociates knew him in a variety of roles - as husband and father, as member of the occultist Fellowship of the Rosy Cross, as teacher, editor and man of letters. And each of these circles tended to be self-contained, just as the Inklings at Oxford were self-contained. The Letters to Lalage are interesting as showing him in relation to an individual who belonged to none of these groups, and show him at work as a spiritual counsellor.

As Lois Lang-Sims was to discover, Williams, by the time she got to know him, was completely absorbed into the mythological interpretation of life that he had fashioned in his work at Amen House, in his correspondence and in his poetry: his identification of himself with Taliessin was more total than he was perhaps aware, and resulted in a vocabulary that excluded most of the commonplace of ordinary converse. This may have been in part the result of his ten years involvement with occultism and its rituals; a natural tendency towards the ceremonious and a temperamental attraction towards making patterns were fostered by such preoccupations, and nurtured in the rather limited circle of his domestic life with its restricted financial circumstances. But Williams responded favourably to constriction. It suited his particular character to live by routine and in particular places that he did. It also suited the development of that personal mythology which, while it energised his finest poetry, led him into difficulties where his personal life was concerned. Lalage/Lois was to prove no more tractable to imaginative type-casting than had Michal/Florence or Celia/Phyllis.

The nervous energy and intellectual concentration that informs Williams' literary output must have demanded a stronger personal outlet than his work at the Press

and at his evening classes was able to afford. His awareness of the dangers of spiritual power is evident in such fictional characters as Considine in Shadows of Ecstasy and Simon in All Hallows' Eve; but he probably felt frustrated at the purely material level of his life, for his abilities were much in excess of his opportunities, at any rate in his earlier years. The inward distress in many of his early poems, in Windows of Night especially, may be largely due to this.

His occult studies must have ministered to his tendency to subordinate individual personalities to the requirements of mythology. The transformation of the young woman Lois into the slave-girl Lalage is a case in point; and the way in which she finally rejected such a subordination of herself was a demonstration to Williams, if such were needed, that all patterns and mythologies were relative with regard to absolute truth. Of course he knew this perfectly well; but the psychological pressure to ignore such insight would seem to have been at this time particularly great.

The situation was poignant rather than sinister; it even contains an element of comedy. The relationship of Williams with his disciples (it is impossible for one who never knew him not to use the word) is one of the questions raised by these letters and their accompanying effects. It is a great loss that we only have his side of the correspondence; and Williams's relations with other young women may have been very different - Lalage's role may have been more determined by Lois's actual character than we can know. That he sensed in this particular disciple an independent mind and forthright truthfulness that made her anything but an unquestioning follower of his direction, is evident from the convoluted and often self-protective nature of his letters to her. He must have sensed that she was, as she admits, in love with him. And Williams did not have what one might call 'benefit of cassock'. He may have taken care to keep his distance, for both their sakes.

He seems to have been under great strain at the time, over-worked, racked by his own complicated personal emotions, and driven by a compulsive intellectual energy that was resulting in his theological masterpieces: the letters are often so allusive and cryptic as to be unintelligible. The two acts of corporal punishment he imposed, displeasing as they must be to contemporary sensibility, are not psychologically unintelligible, and need not be interpreted in exclusively sexual terms. He was imposing the pattern of his myth on a particular situation, a rare case of literal mindedness on his part.

That myth used allocated roles and names in order to escape any misleading confusion between image and reality. The truth that 'Neither is this Thou' is the more evident the more blatantly material an image is. By assigning to himself the role of Taliessin and by elevating his friends into a Company, Williams could simultaneously assert the relativity of his position as spiritual leader and director, and secure himself from the personal involvement which he was not prepared to undergo. But, as his relationship with Lois Lang-Sims reveals, this could be hard on the other party concerned, could even itself become a false absolute. But Williams's direction of souls was designed to clarify the individual's awareness both of his or her (but it usually seems to have been her) unique importance as a member of the company and also of the particular function attendent on that membership. It considered for the most part in adjusting attitudes and in maintaining balance between a seriousness that would not degenerate into introspection and a joyous sense of freedom that would not relapse into slothful sensuality. What was unusual about his counselling was that he was prepared himself to take it partly as a game. He knew the distinction obtaining between the ordained priesthood and the worthiness of the individuals who minister it.

The account of this particular exercise in spiritual

counselling brings to the fore Williams's essential humanity. Other people who knew him well will have other aspects of him to portray. This particular one is salutory in exhibiting the human dangers of too deep a drinking of the wells of imaginative mythology; and it does not belittle Charles Williams to say that he was capable of succumbing to his own provisional myth: even the saints were not immaculately conceived. Some readers may be disquieted by the seeming inadequacy of the doctrines of Romantic and Substituted Love in this particular context: but 'particular context' are the important words. Theory is not necessarily disqualified by one failure in practice. But that very failure gives rise to fruitful and necessary testing. Williams's very inability to meet his friend on the terms she asked of him, assure us that he was a vulnerable as well as a highly unusual man. The encounter between these two people shows the interaction of minds and temperaments sufficiently similar to appreciate each other and different enough to hurt each other, certainly to sift each other's truth. The real truth behind Charles Williams's strange and powerful personality may never be really understood, so diverse were the effects he had on people; but one does learn a good deal more about him here."

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In the next few editions, the Newsletter will carry an article written by Alice Mary Hadfield which was amongst the papers she bequeathed to the Charles Williams Society.

Coinherence, Substitution and Exchange in Charles Williams' Poetry and Poetry-Making by Alice Mary Hadfield.

Charles Williams considered that the most important concept of his writing was that which he called coinherence, or, in full, coinherence, substitution and exchange. He himself became more aware of it as it developed through the middle years of his work, but

anyone looking through his early writings can see shoots of the growth from the beginning. In a pamphlet called "The Way of Exchange", reprinted in The Image of the City (London 1958), C.W. pulled the concept out of his writings into a single focus. He says there is a union of existences, and everywhere an interdependence in social life for mutual benefit or survival. But the Christian church holds a promise by our Lord of a "particular and intense union with each other through Himself" (p. 149), a union of the same nature as that which he has with his Father, a coinherence in which the Son exists in the Father and the Father in the Son and the Spirit correspondingly in each. This is the Christian imagination of the authority and origin of all things. Depending directly on this coinherence, the Son has substituted his manhood for ours in the Incarnation and the Atonement, and we can if we chose accept this exchange of our life in all our awareness and activities.

From the highest imagination of perfected life to the basic condition of human existence, exchange, substitution, and coinherence are not a matter of faith but of fact, a single principle. The root of all human facts is an example of it - childbearing. "The masculine seed has to be received by the feminine vessel ..... By the substitution of the woman for the man the seed fructifies" (p. 150). New life is begun, and must coinhere with the mother's for nine months to be fully formed.

The rest of life follows the same principle. We live from others - aware of it or not - and we can do so with far more intense energy than in common. It is not a matter only of married people loving each other, however deeply, or of dedicated communal communities. A greater life lies about us and holds us all. Awareness of this life can affect our emotions and our wills, and in time our actions. A new life can spring in us, which is known in the coinherence of the greater life and ourselves. Lovers know a little what it is to live the other's life, to live her family

troubles, his fear of failure at work - not sharing but living from these conditions as if they were one's own, a true substitution, coinherence and exchange. What we can do and know as lovers, love teaches we can spend our lives becoming able to do and know in a few more instances and circumstances.

All this is not new. Most religions and humanists have considered much of it. But as religion or practical help it was largely dead stuff to between-the-wars generations. Charles Williams saw the living element in it, unstifled by religious accretion. He spoke of an awareness of burdens carried, of lives substituted, not blurred or suppressed, but a redeemed life living the unredeemed life, not dodging or rising above it, but producing in it a new life of the nature of creative power that holds us all. The ability to assent to this and to do it comes from the life of Christ, which experienced the life of us all and was substituted for each of us at the final agony. But C.W. was no man of religion, and did not press a creed. He was a man of ideas, and a poet. Insofar as he was a poet he was not a Christian, and his presentation of Christ's work in man was acceptable to people who could tolerate no religious creed. How prophetic his approach was! He presented unchurched Christianity a generation before the search for it became conscious.

Ideas of this scope are often too big to make much impact. We need detail to put flesh on the pattern, and this was C.W.'s method. He did very little abstract writing, but rather showed ideas as visible effects in will and word and action in his characters or images. He never in conversation thought of himself as inventing or thinking up an idea, but always as finding it. He observed in lives or events a relationship or principle which he declared was there for all to see - and indeed his friends used to imagine that the idea was obvious once he had pointed it out, and his insistence on the perfectability of each and all of us made it easy to fancy that we should have thought of it ourselves if he had not said it first.

His poetry chose for its continuing theme the Arthurian myth, and in this his meditations on coinherence led him to a significant interpretation. In the central story of the myth, the birth of Galahad was the result of Lancelot's being deceived into lying with Helayne instead of with Guinevere. By a shift of words, Williams saw that, unintended by Lancelot or Guinevere, Helayne was substituted for the Queen in the act of conceiving. Thus by substitution, an unwilled, say, a heavenly substitution, the healer of the Dolorous Blow, the achiever of the Grail, the figure of man's capacity for Christ, was born, as by substitution Christ in his manhood brought into time the healing of the nature of man. Instantly Galahad is central to the myth, which everywhere lacked him till he was born, instead of being a late development or coda.

The substitution took place in a dark room, one of many in the stories of the myth. Williams took the image to represent not only an interior rather than an external activity, but also a mind completely in the dark about it - and not only the mind of the knight or lady concerned but in a deeper sense the mind of the writers who through many centuries were unaware of their own ignorance about this kind of scene. Williams held that myths, ideas and the like could be used only by a generation or mind for which they were valuable, and lay dormant in knowledge until another such generation arrived. They are not vitiated by those who ignore them or even who "debunk" them. He used to quote of such dormant ideas: "He will not suffer his holy one to see corruption."

His early verse is not regarded as important, but interesting signs can be seen in the young and still derivative writing. Poems of Conformity was published in 1917, when he was thirty-one, and Divorce in 1920. He was serving his apprenticeship to poetry and to married love during their writing, climbing slowly up through the lower grades of editorial staff in the Oxford University Press, married to the love dreamed of in his first book of sonnets, The Silver Stair, living in a small-street flat in a crowded north

London district, exempt from war service by weaknesses of physique, anxiously supporting the war effort, anxious for his two friends serving in France. The strongest attraction of the books is the experience of friendship; and, shadowing it, substitution and exchange move through the verse unfocussed, just below the surface in many poems, and rising to it in some. I have quoted Poem II of "Christmas" in Poems of Conformity in my Introduction to Charles Williams (London, 1959), but it will bear quoting again in this connection. It speaks of love newly arrived at daily married life, and the newly incarnate Christ.

The Child lies not alone:
His voice, his eyes, his fingers and his heart
Catch at his mother lest she should depart;
Who being gone
He should be hungry soon and naked-cold.

Saved is he, yea, and shown, -
Both held a secret and professed at large
In this committal for a most dear charge
To her, his throne;
Upon her breast he threatens and is bold.

O Infancy! - to us
Himself hath he presented in no less
Protection of another's littleness.
He safely thus
Dares, till time strengthen him and he grow old.

Clings the Immanuel still
Unto some mortal office; he is girt
With use of a familiar soul from hurt,
And holy will:
On human love the new-born Love lays hold.

In "The Continuing Doctrine", also in Poems of Conformity, he speaks of the nature of war as being common to us all, in public or in private.

Who then but ourselves may know
The beginning of this woe,
    Sloth or wry activity
    To so swift catastrophe
Gay intention bringing low?
. . . . . .

Never malice to us clung
But through bloody heart or lung
Of our fellows now hath torn,
Never apathy or scorn
Or hypocrisy of tongue.

In Divorce the war poems are particularly heavy with the feeling of substitution, not always the full doctrine of it but approaches to it. Both of C.W.'s friends, Ernest Nottingham and Harold Eyers, were killed. He knew substitution unchosen but experienced. Poem II of "In Time of War", lovers consenting to the war speaking to lovers parted by it, says:

Our wills, that dare not break with war's will, thus
Are made the agents of your sole divorce:
To you the rent, the agony; to us
Salvation, hardly tinctured with remorse.

Yet doubt not soon, in some new wrath immersed,
On us our Lord shall avenge your pain,
When, smitten with disaster, we shall thirst
For consolation, - and shall thirst in vain.

And in poem IV of the same group. written to his two friends, "In Absence":

So we, 'neath strangers' foorsteps, hear
Your heavy marches sounding near;
And in your silent listening post
Are their confused noises lost.

To walls and window-curtains cling
Your voices at each breakfasting,
As the cups pass from hand to hand,
Crying for drink in No Man's Land.

In "Commentaries", poem IV, on Galatians 4:1-7, being made adult in love:

Duly, the Sunday after Christmas, we
Heard the epistle read, and suddenly
A great voice cried within my heart: Behold,
This is the doctrine ye have proved of old,
And in your bodies bear the signs thereof;
This is the knowledge of the sons of love.

Windows of Night is the book where the ground swell of Williams' new kind of poetry moves and disturbs the early forms. Night-coloured, labouring in a darkness

of existence, the book's life is lit from beneath with a rage of disastrous substitution and coinherence, known in misery and breaking. Read the terrible "Domesticity", which links back to "In Absence" just quoted. Here "Hate steams like a pestilence upward, though far above They build the millenium." Or read "Prisoners", which declares "what each one singly would The commonwealth of all hates, and for fear Of her own lusts hath clutched you with rough hand." Or "The Two Domes", which are St Paul's Cathedral dome in London and the nearby dome of the Old Bailey, England's Central Criminal Court. Or "A Cup of Water": when lying awake the poet saw fire and war devastating the earth, inescapable, necessary to Christendom and all aimed-at good. Or the long poem "To a Publisher", where he speaks of words which are drudges until a poet recharges them with power and they are released into poetry.

They have their life, but at what cost of death,
Out of such dark impassioned moment born
As when young Browning met Elizabeth,
Or, turned from watching on Niphates' head
Milton lamented blindness, or forlorn
Catullus mourned above his brother dead!

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