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THE THEOLOGY OF
CHARLES WILLIAMS

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

A. Statement and Significance of the Problem

Halford E. Luccock in the introduction to his anthology, The Questing Spirit, characterizes the last ten years thus:

"The decade from the beginning of World War II, roughly from 1937 to 1947, has seen a revolution in the thinking of multitudes of people in regard to the relation of the spiritual world, man's faith in spiritual values, to life on our planet, to civilization and all man's hopes."¹

This change in outlook has profoundly influenced modern literature. There is a groping and a searching after something positive in which to believe, something purposeful and orderly in the midst of chaos. "One can almost reach out his hand at random in any direction and find in the writing of the last ten years expressions of this searching spirit."² Some are only vague wanderings seeking vainly after shadows of truth, while others move confidently forward into the clear brilliance of faith in God and in His purpose in Creation. In this latter group the writings of an almost unknown British author, Charles Williams, stand out as unique and completely alone. He has succeeded in clothing profound religious truth in the garb of what may be termed "mystery fiction", and in so doing has created

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1. Halford E. Luccock and Frances Brentano, The Questing Spirit (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1947), p. 37
 2. Ibid.

"a new medium of dramatized belief".¹ Yet in spite of his unusual literary achievements, he has remained, until recently, practically unknown in America, and perhaps even in his native England.² However, an effort is now being made, through the publication of his outstanding novels, to acquaint the American public with the works of this unusual artist.³ It will be the purpose of this study to discover the theology of this little-known British writer, as it is presented in his theological writings and then to observe this theology as it is reflected in his novels.

B. Delimitation of the Subject

The subject will deal only with the investigation of the theological truths expressed in the related writings of Charles Williams. There will be no attempt to evaluate his theology or to compare it with that of any contemporary. Likewise, there will be no evaluation of the work as permanent literature nor will there be any comparisons to contemporaries on a literary basis.

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1. Louise Townsend Nichol, "Return of the Holy Grail", Herald Tribune.
 2. Richard McLaughlin, "Amor Vincit Omnia", Saturday Review of Literature, 31:16, October 23, 1948.
 3. Ibid., p. 16.

C. Method of Procedure

The method of procedure will be first to treat the four theological books, surveying the content of each, and then to examine them for the theology found. The four novels will be treated in a similar fashion, reviewing briefly the content of each one, and then discussing the theology as it appears in the books. The findings of the study will be drawn together in the summary.

D. Sources

The sources for this study will be the books on theology and novels of Charles Williams, reviews of his books and critical articles written about him, and several books giving background material for the study.

CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND OF THE AUTHOR
AND THE LITERARY BACKGROUND

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THE BACKGROUND OF THE AUTHOR AND THE LITERARY BACKGROUND

A. Introduction

No piece of literature can be truly appreciated or understood apart from its author for "the life of a novel is the vitality of its author,"¹ and its value "rests ultimately upon the value of the personality which creates it."² Thus the writings of Charles Williams, although fascinating and extraordinarily gripping by themselves, are not complete apart from their creator. His vivid personality, which attracted to him friends from among the most brilliant of English writers, added to his works the extra enthusiasm and inspiration which made them completely credible. There existed between Williams and his writings an inseparable unity. What he was as a man he was as a writer, so that knowing Williams was to know his books and knowing his books was to know the man. As T. S. Eliot so aptly put it, "I can think of no writer who was more wholly the same man in his life and in his writings."³

It is also equally true that literature, in general,

1. Elizabeth Drew, *The Enjoyment of Literature*, p. 112.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

3. T. S. Eliot, *Introduction in All Hallows' Eve*, p. xi.

reflects the spirit of the age which has produced it.

Thus the writings of Charles Williams bear upon them the mark of the restless years in which they were brought forth, and in their pages one may trace the trends of a changing, religious outlook.

It is the purpose of this chapter to investigate the life of the man, Charles Williams, and then to survey the period in which he wrote, noting how the author's personality and the times in which he wrote are reflected in his writings.

B. Background of the Author

1. Biographical Sketch

Charles Williams was born in 1886 in northwest London in the suburb of merry Islington, said to be "a suburb¹ patient of poets but properly boastful of politicians."

He was educated at St. Albans Grammar School in London and the University College of London. His father was "a poorly paid translator . . . who spent his free hours reading, meditating on God, and turning out an occasional poem or play."² After two years of study at the University of London, Williams was forced to leave school due to lack of funds. He was able to obtain employment with a small

1. Eugene Mason, "Charles Williams and His Work," Bookman, 68:26, April, 1925.

2. "English Author Theological Thriller," Time, 52:88, November 8, 1948.

publisher at the rate of three dollars a week, while continuing his studies at night in London's Working Men's College. Eventually he went to work for Oxford University Press and remained until the day of his death on the editorial staff. During the second World War, Oxford Press moved to the town of Oxford, and it was not long before Williams was tutoring and lecturing at the University. He was given an honorary M.A. degree, and became a regular¹ lecturer both on religion and literature. During his lifetime he acquired many friends from all social levels for he had a charm and attractiveness which drew men to him. His literary admirers included T. S. Eliot, Dorothy Sayers, W. H. Auden, C. S. Lewis, as well as numerous others. In May, 1945, he died rather suddenly in Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford, leaving behind him a wealth of creative writing and a large group of loyal friends.

2. Description of the Author's Personality

In his preface to his volume Essays Presented to Charles Williams, C. S. Lewis describes Williams as follows:

In appearance he was tall, slim, and straight as a boy, though grey-haired. His face we thought ugly. I am not sure that the word 'monkey' has not been murmured in this context. But the moment he spoke it became, as was also said, like the face of an

1. C. S. Lewis, Preface in Essays Presented to Charles Williams, p. ix.

angel . . . a spirit burning with intelligence and charity . . . One of the most characteristic things about him was his walk. I have often, from the top of a bus, seen him walking below me. The face and hair being then invisible, he might have passed for a boy in the early twenties, and perhaps a boy of some period when swords were worn. There was something of recklessness, something even of panache, in his gait . . . He always carried his head in the air. When he lectured, wearing his gown, his presence was one of the stateliest I have ever seen . . . He gave to every circle the whole man; all his attention, knowledge, charity, were placed at your disposal . . . One kept on discovering that the most unlikely people loved him as well as we did.¹

He had a personality which was friendly and attractive and erected no barriers, yet he always remained even to those who knew him best, "somewhat elusive and incalculable."² T. S. Eliot said of him that he had "an immediate charm and likeability, a radiation of benevolence and amiability, which, while it concealed nothing, yet left the best of him to disclose itself gradually on better acquaintance."³

He was a man possessed of both a skeptic pessimism and a wholly optimistic belief. His pessimism and skepticism were the expression of his feelings which he never tried to crush or annihilate. On the contrary he allowed his optimistic believing self to rise high above his skeptic feelings, and to carry his weak complaints even to the very Throne itself if necessary.⁴

1. Ibid., pp. ix-x.

2. Ibid., p.x.

3. Eliot, op. cit., p. xi.

4. Lewis, op. cit., p. vi.

Perhaps his most outstanding characteristic was his complete naturalness in the realm of the supernatural. "For him there was no frontier between the material and the spiritual world."¹ He was just as much at home in the one as in the other. "To him the supernatural was perfectly natural, and the natural was also supernatural."² He accepted as obvious fact immortality and portrayed so vividly its details that the continuity of his own spirit after death seemed inevitable.³ When he died in 1945, C. S. Lewis wrote of him:

No event has so corroborated my faith in the next world as Williams did simply by dying. When the idea of death and the idea of Williams thus met, in my mind, it was the idea of death that was changed.⁴

3. General Survey of his Work

During his lifetime he turned out some thirty-seven volumes, comprising ten books of drama and poetry, seven novels, five biographies, four books of theology and four of criticism.⁵ His first work, published in 1912, was a volume of poetry and, although he subsequently turned to other forms of expression, he never lost his first love for poetry. Some of his volumes in the field of history and literature have been termed "pot-boilers,"

1. Eliot, op. cit., p. xiii.

2. Ibid., p. xiv.

3. Geoffrey Parsons, "The Spirit of Charles Williams," *The Atlantic*, 184:77, November, 1949.

4. Loc. cit.

5. "English Author Theological Thriller," op. cit., p. 88.

but such writing is forgivable in him since "he always boiled an honest pot."¹ "The fullest and most brilliant expression of his outlook is to be found in his poetry,"² his most exciting and popular expression of his faith lies in his novels, while his theology presents his view of the Christian faith in a most unique fashion. He had a message to convey which was beyond the scope of one literary form, thus accounting for the wide variety that he employed.

4. His Work in Relation to His Life and Personality

The unusual personality of Charles Williams can be unmistakably traced in his writing, for most of his works were the expression of himself, his own faith, his own imagination. His aim was not to have his reader accept a dogmatic belief but to have him partake of the same experience that he himself had had. Because he believed in a supernatural world and because he had experienced it, he could write with profound insight about Good and Evil and Heaven and Hell.³ Because he possessed a mysticism, not of curiosity nor of desire for power but of love, he was able to write of Love as a Deity seldom seen by human beings. And because he possessed a keen sense of

1. Eliot, op. cit., p. xii.
 2. Lewis, op. cit., p. vi.
 3. Eliot, op. cit., p. xiv.

humor and a healthy active mind, he was able to write of the struggles of ordinary men and women, their weaknesses and triumphs, as they sought to reach the triumphant Love.

C. Literary Background

Literature in any period grows out of the soil of the era in which it is produced. "The soil out of which the literature of the twentieth century has grown, that is, the life and experience of which it has been the reflection and expression, has been a stony soil."¹ Faith has not blossomed and religion is not one of the dominant flowers of literature.² The Victorian heritage of the Twentieth Century, plus the impact of World War I, played a large part in setting the general intellectual and spiritual climate. Lewis Mumford, in describing the effect of the first World War, writes:

No one can understand the literature of the last half-century, its contradictions, its dehumanization, its preoccupation with violence, its increasing unintelligibility who does not understand the great breach that the first World War effected in the human mind.³

With the disillusionment of World War I and the destruction of hopes for a progressing world, there came criticism, and bitterness, and loss of faith. Most of the writers of this

1. Luccock, op. cit., p. 43.

2. Loc. cit.

3. Lewis Mumford, Mirror of a Violent Half Century, The New York Times Book Review, January 15, 1950, p. 1.

age could be characterized by disappointment and loss.¹ They were hostile to religion, but they needed faith. The illusion of man going steadily upward had been shattered and the "light of burning cities showed that when man is put at the center, the result is not man at the center, but the extinction of man."² But with the coming of the second World War, some of the bitterness melted out of men, and common suffering and pain drove them to seek a higher power for comfort. Faith blossomed and flowered in many strange places, and the faint stirrings which were scarcely perceptible in the '20's and '30's became firmer steps toward God. The children of the disillusioned parents of World War I, out of their own shattering war experience, began to seek a new idealism, a new faith. This reaching for the higher and the better is seen in fiction today as Agnes Hansen expresses it:

Youth's need for values being great, however, this younger generation seems to be setting itself the task of creating new ones and it is these which are shaping the character and content of a large proportion of world fiction today . .

In short, these younger writers in every land are seeking, in physics, in philosophy, in art, in mystic experiences, that ineffable something which will lend significance and value to human existence.³

One of the new trends in literature which arose

1. Agnes Hansen, *Twentieth Century Forces in European Fiction*, pp. 32-34.

2. Luccock, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

3. Hansen, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

after World War II and could be called a decided gain in religious insight was a new awareness of evil.¹ Theology along with literature experienced a similar sense of the darker aspects of man's nature, and there has been a casting off of false optimism and superficiality. The rosy glow of man's inherent goodness has almost vanished, and a wide new emphasis upon evil and its consequences has appeared. It is with this all important conflict between Good and Evil that Charles Williams is primarily concerned.

D. Summary

At the outset of this chapter it was suggested that an author and his work are inseparably linked, and to understand the work it is necessary to know something of the personality that created it. It was further stated that an author is influenced by the age in which he lives and his works bear the mark of that influence.

This was followed by a study of the life of the author, beginning with a biographical sketch giving the important events in his life. Then a description of the author's personality was given, in which it was shown that Williams' nature and personality gave him a complete naturalness in the realm of the supernatural about which he wrote so convincingly.

A general survey of his work followed, in which it

1. Luccock, op. cit., p. 46.

was noted that Williams had a diversity of style, writing in the field of poetry, history, criticism, and fiction. And, finally, the author's work was seen in relation to his life and personality. His writings were the expression of what he himself was.

In discussing the literary background of the age in which Williams wrote, it was shown that the world has experienced major social and political disturbances which have profoundly influenced literature. The discouragement of the first World War produced bitterness which has been replaced by a new idealism, the result of the second World War. In such an atmosphere Williams produced his books which deal with one of the great problems of the new idealism--Good and Evil.

CHAPTER II

THE THEOLOGY OF CHARLES WILLIAMS

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THE THEOLOGY OF CHARLES WILLIAMS

A. Introduction

Having surveyed briefly the background of the writer and the age which produced him, the study will now concern itself with the actual writings of Charles Williams. This chapter will deal particularly with those works which are placed in the field of theology or historical theology. Of the four books under consideration in this chapter, two fall into the category of theology proper, He Came Down From Heaven and The Forgiveness of Sins, while Witchcraft and The Descent of the Dove are developed along historical lines. The books will first be surveyed briefly, and a review of the contents of each will be given. Then there will follow a study of the theology in all four volumes, which will be organized under the major headings generally recognized in the field, as follows: 1) View of the Scriptures, 2) The Godhead, 3) Man and Sin, 4) The Person of Christ, 5) Salvation, 6) The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit, 7) The Church and the Life of the Christian, and 8) Last Things.

B. Content of the Books

1. He Came Down From Heaven.

The author begins this book with the interesting combination of the ideas of heaven and the Bible. Heaven, he describes as the place of God's abode, the place (if it can be described in spatial terms) where God's will is done. When the kingdom of heaven was brought to earth, it came in the person of Christ who perfectly fulfilled the Will of God.¹ The Bible is the record of that "coming down from heaven". Thus by studying some of the words and events recorded in the Scripture which are associated with the phrase, something of the meaning of the coming of the Kingdom may be determined.

The first such event is the Creative Act, in which God is presented as the Origin of all life and particularly of man. The book of Genesis reveals God as Creator, and man as his perfect creation. With the entrance of sin and evil, there is alteration of the bond which holds man to God,² and the event termed the Fall takes place. To restore the broken bond God begins to act, and his activities move through the whole Old Testament history, culminating in the coming of Christ, and His work of Atonement.

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1. Williams, Charles. He Came Down From Heaven, pp. 45.
 2. Ibid., p.20.

This activity of God is evidenced for the first time in the covenant with Noah in which God makes man responsible for the life of his fellow man, and at the same time, limits himself to a patience. (which later becomes known as grace)¹ in His dealings with man. This covenant is followed by a second one with Abraham and with his children, which climaxes in the great Deliverance from Egypt, and the establishment of the nation through the giving of the Law. The movement of God towards restoration, which previously has been obscure, now becomes clearly defined, for a kingdom of priests is to mediate the law which will reestablish the bonds broken by the act of Eden.² This law and the covenant of which it is a part become also the burden of the prophetic message, although the prophets add to it the greater revelation of the glory of God.³ They expand the idea of pardon and man's need to have his sins removed, and they cry out to the nation of Israel that it must seek the restoration which God alone can effect.

The climax of all of this movement towards restoration is the Incarnation when God himself becomes flesh and knows in Himself the evil which man had chosen in Eden. By his death and resurrection Christ perfects the broken

1. Ibid., p. 24.

2. Ibid., p. 38.

3. Ibid., p. 42.

bond between God and man and restores the lost goodness. What man could not do for himself Christ does and by his action he brings pardon to all mankind.

With the completion of his work on earth, Christ ascends to heaven leaving the work of the regeneration of mankind to his church. In carrying out this work, the church down through the centuries develops a philosophy of romantic theology which opens a Way of approach through love. It finds its highest expression in the great poets, particularly in Dante who found in Beatrice a love which led him through hell and purgatory to the presence of God. In the experience of this love there is the element of substitution and self-denial like unto the substitution which Christ himself made when He redeemed others at the cost of his own life.¹ This way of substitutionary love is the Way of the City of God, that City which is at once contemporary and future.² The author closes his book with a discussion of the Lord's prayer which he says is the link between that City and "its reflection upon earth".³

2. The Forgiveness of Sins.

The chief concern of Charles Williams in this book is how sin may be forgiven and what the results of such forgiveness are. In his introduction he sets forth

1. Ibid., p. 133.
 2. Ibid., p. 143.
 3. Ibid., p. 144.

the difficulties of the topic which lie in two opposite directions, the one being the inability of the human to comprehend the infinite, and the other the need for the human to understand and know the possibilities of forgiveness.¹ In the face of these problems the author launches into the topic beginning with forgiveness on the human level and moving on to forgiveness on the Divine plane.

The best expression of forgiveness in man is found in Shakespeare, for here it is completely removed from Christian theology. Although this forgiveness is only that of human experience, that is, man in relation to man, yet it is a natural experience which finds its parallel in the supernatural.²

The author proceeds now to a discussion of Christian forgiveness, beginning with the creation of man, and the entrance of sin which broke the bond between God and man. This destruction of that perfect relationship, "the web of co-inherence", necessitated some action of restoration. Thus forgiveness in the God-man relationship involves sin, the manner in which it is dealt with, and the resulting reestablishment of the originally perfect bond. In summary the author says:

Sin is the name of a certain relationship between

1. Ibid., pp. 2-4.

2. Charles Williams, *The Forgiveness of Sins*, p. 90

man and God. When it is fixed, if it is, into a final state, he gives it other names; he calls it hell and damnation. But if man were to be restored, what was to happen to the sin? He had a name for that relationship too; like a second Adam indeed he named the beasts of our nature as they wandered in the ruined Paradise; he called this 'forgiveness'.¹

In order to have a clear understanding of what precisely is involved in this state of forgiveness, it is necessary to study the life of the Incarnate Son of God who made it possible. But before considering his life in relation to forgiveness, there is also the necessity of viewing the Old Testament sacrificial ritual which prepared the way for the Christ. This ritual involved two things, the sacrifice, which had at its heart the blood on the altar, and the prophetic idiom, which declared the seclusion² of sin. These are the background for the coming of the Son of God.

With the Incarnation these two things appeared in the flesh on earth. "He became then Forgiveness in flesh; he lived the life of Forgiveness."³ This life of forgiveness proceeds steadily toward its consummation in reconciliation. That reconciliation he was able to effect only by becoming himself the sacrifice and shedding his own blood. And with his death and resurrection he released an energy of forgiveness in the church. The

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1. Ibid., p. 33.
 2. Ibid., p. 48.
 3. Ibid., p. 50.

principle became one which he himself had laid down,
¹
 forgive as you are forgiven.

The author concludes his book with two chapters on the practical outworking of forgiveness in the life of the Christian. There is a technique to pardon which all Christians must learn to use, for forgiveness may be applicable in three different ways. It may apply, "1) to things which need not be forgiven, 2) to things which can be forgiven, 3) to things which cannot be forgiven."² When forgiveness is understood in these three realms, it is perfectly understood, and if the church practiced it in these realms, the true Christian State would come into existence.

There is the further realization that forgiveness also produces reconciliation, a Union not only with the Divine but with the human.³ This Union is that which is termed the Communion of Saints.

The author concludes his study with a chapter on the present day problem of war, and forgiveness in relation to it.

3. Witchcraft.

In the introduction to his book on Witchcraft, the author states that his purpose is chiefly historical, and

1. Ibid., p. 65.
 2. Ibid., p. 70.
 3. Ibid., p. 108.

that he is not interested in method or prodecures. He says in his preface:

These pages must stand for what they are--a brief account of the history in Christian time of that perverted way of the soul which we call magic, or witchcraft, and with the reaction against it.¹

He begins with a background survey of the world into which Christianity came, describing it in terms of the Roman culture and Jewish traditions. It was a world which was accustomed to believing in magic and the operation of supernatural powers, for Rome had her wizards and conjurers, and the Judaic tradition had an established legend of evil and its source. Into such a world the church was born, but not without the knowledge of her own super-²natural power.

The church at first gave evidence of believing that evil was defeated and her Lord's cry, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from Heaven" meant the end of all occult powers. But as the centuries passed, the church lost her first ecstasy, and the throb of power within her seemed to diminish. In the face of opposition, persecution, and death, she felt the need of rallying against her enemies, but the enemy was undefined. It was not permissible for the church to launch an attack on those who persecuted, and so the hatred was turned upon the vanquished Devil.

1. Charles Williams, *Witchcraft*, p. 9.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

"Primarily, the church more and more tended to feel, the malice of that flash which had fallen from Heaven and of those in whom still living that fatal lightning burned."¹

The idea of the fallen world and its power steadily grew within the church, but it was largely due to the work of Augustine that it became established and accepted. In his City of God he built up the vision of the holy city surrounded by raging demons and evil spirits, and in so doing he gave credence to those spirits of evil.

With the growing ignorance and fear of the Dark Ages, the church found itself faced with the necessity of checking the spreading belief in witches and Goetic life, and of turning men's minds back to Christ and the Kingdom of God. To accomplish this, the church in 1234 accepted as a part of its canon law a denunciation of Goetia, and a positive statement of the power of Almighty God. It was this statement which kept the church for three centuries from the frenzied fear which finally seized it and held it in a grip of misery and horror for two hundred years. Had this law, the 'Canon Episcopi', remained in effect, much of the later misery which covered Europe, England, and America would never have taken place.

The general concern of the church of the Middle Ages was with heresy, and it was not until witchcraft became

1. Ibid., p. 39.

identified as heresy that the Church began to operate against it. Perhaps two of the most important factors in the establishment of this identification were the Rise of the Inquisition and the overthrow of the Templars. In addition to these two factors there were several outstanding trials for heresy and witchcraft so that by the end of the 15th century the church was fully aroused to combat the evil. As a result of this feeling, one of the most important documents, the *Malleus Maleficarum*, was produced. It was largely the labor of two Catholic priests, and its purpose was to define evil, explain the manner of its working, and discuss the conduct of the church in persecuting such evil. It became the basis for the action of the church against witchcraft in the following decades, and lent support to the horror perpetrated in the name of Religion by the Inquisition.

In describing this period of suspicion and fear and terror, the author writes:

Monotonous repetition of the miserable tales serves no purpose. The evil things of the Sabbath by all these ways reproduced themselves everywhere . . . Almighty God was denied on the one hand and defended on the other . . . The diabolic familiars were invisible on the one hand and visible on the other; toads and cats, judges and torturers.¹

The attacks reached their height in the 17th century and came to a conclusion with the Salem trials at the end

1. Ibid., p. 186.

of that century. In commenting upon the period and the source of the persecution, the author writes that there is little distinction between Roman and Reformed faith. Both were zealous in the cause. He says: "Catholic and Reformed¹ disputed about heaven, they almost made a pact over hell."

The author concludes his book with three notable trials held at the end of the 17th century which resulted in repudiation of witchcraft in Europe and America. The one held in Paris, the La Voisin case, received a regular, clear, just trial, and in large part was probably true. The Salem cases were direct outgrowths of popular suspicion and reveal how it creates its own bloody results. There was no truth in any of them. The third case, held in Edinburgh, Scotland, the Weir case, was the direct result of a deranged mind and may or may not have been true.

These three notable cases marked the end of the terror and the misery called Witchcraft. Weary and disgusted, the church turned its attention to more important and vital matters.

4. The Descent of the Dove

In this book, the author presents a history of Christendom from its origin at the time of Pentecost down to the present age. He begins with a summary of the life of "a certain being" who had "appeared in Palestine during

1. Ibid., p. 186.

the government of the Princeps Augustus,"¹ and whom he describes as being "in the form of a man, a peripatetic teacher, a thaumaturgical orator."² This being lived, taught, worked miracles, called disciples, was put to death, and finally disappeared from the earth leaving only a band of humble, faithful followers. But he also left a promise of power to come upon these followers, and it was this promise which was fulfilled upon the Day of Pentecost. The Spirit came, giving the promised power, and the church³ was born.

Thus the church had its inception, and thus it grew in the early ages, under the direct guidance and power of the Spirit. It met at once with opposition from the ancient Judaistic faith, from the suspicious Roman world, and from the very center of its own community. Yet it learned in the early centuries how to reconcile itself to awaiting the reappearance of its Lord and became "as universal and as durable--as time."⁴

As the centuries passed, the church learned more and more to reconcile itself to time. Great figures appeared who, under the guidance of the Spirit, kept the church to its appointed task. In the second century five names stand out, for they "prefigure a kind of reconciliation between the church and the ordinary process of

1. Charles Williams, The Descent of the Dove, p. 2.

2. Ibid.,

3. Ibid., p. 3.

4. Ibid., p. 15.

things."¹ This reconciliation was completed in the reign of Constantine, and with its completion came a new era for the church.²

This age was characterized by inward strife as heresy and secularism invaded the church, and by outward pressure from a decaying society and a dying Empire. Yet the Spirit moved as always in the activities of the church and raised up men to interpret the truth and purify the subtle corruptions which appeared. Athanasius, Jerome, Augustine, and others lived and wrote and sustained the church in these centuries.

This period was followed by that era known in history as the Dark Ages in which the church was further split by strife between the Eastern and Western portions. The wars and the invasions by the barbarian hosts threatened to destroy the Western church, and Byzantium became the stronghold of the faith. Yet the Popes at Rome refused to admit the Eastern supremacy of the church, and in the year 1054 the church split into two separate parts.

It remained divided through the long centuries of the Middle Ages which followed. The church in Rome grew stronger in this age as peace descended on Europe, and Christianity spread to the farthest reaches of the continent. The papacy flourished and came to the height of its

1. Ibid., p. 27.

2. Ibid., p. 48.

power, and the church knew an age of tremendous secular power. But the greatest force of the age was, Canon Law, which was promulgated by Gregory IX and "which was co-eval with the church."¹ It controlled and directed men's lives and relationships, both clergy and laity.

"The end of the Middle Ages can be variously regarded as a break-down, a break-up or a break-through."² But before the termination of the period there appeared two books, The Cloud of the Unknowing, and the works of Dante, which were important because they represented two modes of life, "The Way of the Rejection of Images and The Way of the Affirmation of Images."³ Both of these works represent the expression of the imagination of Christendom.

With the end of the Middle Ages, there came the Renaissance, followed soon after by the Reformation. The church was stirred anew and the Holy Spirit seemed to come into it with something of the fire of Pentecost.⁴ Torn and split by the hot passions of men, it nevertheless continued to proclaim its message of salvation, and although the strife spread and became temporal, contrition was renewed and men were changed.⁵

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1. Ibid., p. 123.
 2. Ibid., p. 128.
 3. Ibid., p. 129.
 4. Ibid., p. 176.
 5. Ibid., p. 177.

The Reformation era was followed by an age of Humanism and skepticism, so that all over the Continent there were voices raised in unbelief. But the unbelief and skepticism were met by the Spirit, who stirred up men to greater faith, and love and piety. Within the church, both Catholic and Protestant, there arose revival under the leadership of devout, inspired men. The work of these men enabled the church to grow and carry on its program, so that it lives in the present age in spite of great intellectual and moral difficulties.

The book concludes with a chapter on the church today and on the need for an understanding of what substitution in love and exchange in love truly mean.¹

C. Theology Found in These Writings

1. View of the Scriptures

In his theological writings, Charles Williams makes little mention of his view of the Scriptures apart from his first chapter in He Came Down From Heaven. Yet the truth of the Bible is accepted by him, for in the development of his theology he continually refers to the truths of the Old and New Testaments. Thus, for example, in The Forgiveness of Sins he discusses at length the whole Old Testament ritual of sacrifice as it was originally given

1. Ibid., p. 236.

and as it appeared in the prophets, and the Scriptural account is the basis for his own views and entirely acceptable to him.¹ He also, in his discussion of the temptations of Christ, accepts without question the Biblical account, finding no difficulty or point of stumbling in suggested discrepancies in the Gospel records. He says:

The order of the three temptations in the Canonical Writings cannot be of first importance, or we should not have been given two different accounts; we may presumably use each for edification without denying the other.²

There are other instances found scattered throughout his writings indicating his acceptance of the Bible as containing the record of the relationship between God and man, but his fullest statement is found in He Came Down From Heaven.

His view of the Bible as set forth in the first chapter of the book, is that it is the record of the relationship between Christ, "who is the kingdom of heaven" come to earth, and man. Thus he writes:

It is the Bible which describes and defines for us the coming of the kingdom, and by the Bible is meant for this book the English version, the Authorized supplemented by the Revised. It is whether fortunately or unfortunately, that source from which the English imagination has for centuries received the communication of Christendom, and from which the Christian imagination in England still, commonly and habitually, derives.³

1. Williams, The Forgiveness of Sins, pp. 35-51.

2. Ibid., p. 52.

3. Williams, He Came Down From Heaven, p. 7.

It is, further, only half of this record, for the other half still goes on in the church today in the form of the Church ritual and the Church life. However, the Bible does not in any sense derive from the church, but the two exist together "as allied and intermingled organisms."¹

Because his approach to a study of the Bible is literary, he finds it to be a book having one dominant emphasis or one dominant theme. All the other varying themes of the Bible are bound together by this great theme and without it the Bible cannot exist. Thus, he says:

The whole Canon signifies a particular thing--the original nature of man, the entrance of contradiction into his nature, and the manner of his restoration. If this theme is ignored the Bible as a whole cannot be understood as literature.²

He pushes the point to an even stronger conclusion when he says that, if the Bible is deprived of this central unifying theme, it ceases to exist both as metaphysics and as literature. It becomes merely a jumble of little bits of literature and a rather odd jumble at that.³

Although his view of the Bible leads him to complete acceptance of its basic truth and of respect for it as a piece of literature, he seems also to possess an open-mindedness toward it which allows him to view the theories of modern criticism without undue alarm. When he writes

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid., p. 9.
3. Ibid.

on the Life of Christ as recorded in the Gospels, he takes full cognizance of the theories of the Historical Jesus and the supposed inaccuracies of the Gospels. He willingly faces the ideas expressed in the Historical critical view and then points out their weaknesses. Having done this he goes on to discuss his own views of the Christ which are based upon the Gospel records. For example, he says in discussing Mark's Gospel and the possibility of removing the supernatural, "But with the Gospel of St. Mark the thing is impossible. To remove the apocalyptic is not to leave the ethical but to leave nothing at all."¹ And in his further discussion of the Gospel of Mark regarding the views of higher criticism upon authorship and accuracy, he says:

It is of course arguable that the influence of St. Paul who is often regarded as the villain of early Christianity . . . had already had its perfect work. Or . . . an Ur-Paul, or (documentarily) the fatal and fascinating Q which no man hath seen at any time but the contents of which we so neatly know . . . St. Mark may be dogmatically asserted to have been an intentional or unintentional liar. But at least we have to admit his lies for the purpose of explaining that they are lies . . .²

Thus he never permits the censor of the higher critic to disturb his basic beliefs in the Truth of the Scripture. He willingly calls the story of the Fall in Genesis a myth but the truth of what occurred as recorded in the myth he

1. Ibid., p. 60.

2. Ibid.

accepts as the only explanation for sin.¹

This then is his position in regards to the Bible. He believes it to be primarily the record of God's relationship with man. He finds that when it is viewed from the standpoint of literary criticism, it reveals a unity of theme and purpose which cannot be removed without destroying it. And finally, he finds that it is a record of supernatural events, a book of metaphysical nature, which must be accepted as such if it is to be accepted and believed at all.

2. The Godhead

In all the writings of Charles Williams there is evidence that he accepts without question the existence of God. Because of this fact there are no lengthy arguments to prove His being, but there is, rather, a ready acceptance of the opening statement of Genesis, "In the beginning God . . ."² His definition of God indicates further that he accepts God as a spiritual Being, for he says, "God himself is pure spirit; that is in so far as any defining human word can apply to him, he is pure spirit."³

He believes in the self-existence of God, that is, in the Transcendence of God, for he says in discussing the revelation of God in the exodus of Israel from Egypt:

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1. Williams, The Forgiveness of Sins, p. 19.
 2. Williams, He Came Down From Heaven, p. 12.
 3. Williams, The Forgiveness of Sins, p. 15.

. . . the God is no longer only creative but self-existent. It is this utter self-existence the sound of which is prolonged now through the whole book; 'I am the Lord' rings everywhere like the refrain of the heavens.¹

And he believes along with this, in an Immanent God. "He had created matter," he writes, "and he had determined to unite himself with matter. The means of that union was the Incarnation."²

But the author not only accepts God as an infinite, self-existing Being, he also believes in him as a personality with perfect freedom to act and to will. Thus he says, "But it was within his Nature to will to create joy, and he willed to create joy in this manner also."³

He further believes in a God who is eternal, that is, one who is unlimited by time and space, and in a God who is immutable, that is, a God who is completely constant. He says, in discussing the Creation and Incarnation, that they cannot be separated into two acts for all things are at once present to the Creator. For ourselves the acts must be differentiated, yet all theological terms should have in them a double meaning, one for time and one for timelessness.⁴

In his writings, Williams gives ample evidence that he believes God to possess the natural attributes of

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1. Williams, He Came Down From Heaven, p. 29.
 2. Williams, The Forgiveness of Sins, p. 15.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Ibid., p. 17.

Omnipresence, Omniscience, and Omnipotence. As an omnipresent God, he is characterized in his relation to creation as First Cause. He writes, "If the First Cause has power, intelligence, and will to cause a universe to exist, then he is the First Cause of it."¹ Likewise, he is the Sustainer of that Creation.² The author accepts the omniscience of God, for he ascribes to him perfect knowledge of all that ever has been or will be, and foreknowledge of the acts of his Creation.³ For Charles Williams, the Omnipotence of God is perhaps one of the most outstanding attributes of the Deity, and he refers again and again in his writings to God as "the Omnipotence."⁴

The moral attributes of God are referred to by the author in his writings concerning the Deity as he acts toward men. God's goodness as it is reflected in acts of love and mercy and grace is an important attribute of God. He does not, however, see God as only goodness, for he says in describing the experience of Moses on Sinai:

Moses in a cleft of the rock, intreats to see the glory, and beholds the God pass by: 'I will make all my goodness pass before thee . . . thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me and live.' The glory is the goodness but even the goodness is not he.⁵

Love, for Williams, was perhaps the greatest of all

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1. Williams, He Came Down From Heaven, p. 140.
 2. Williams, The Forgiveness of Sin, p. 64.
 3. Ibid., p. 17.
 4. Williams, He Came Down From Heaven, pp. 140-141.
 5. Ibid., p. 39.

the moral attributes found in the character of God. He says:

. . . the compassionate love of God that forgives sin is no other than God's love of his own righteousness, for the sake of which and through the love of which he makes man righteous again . . . And this righteousness that is thus rigorous is nothing else but the unalterable purity and perfection of the divine love which, from eternity to eternity, can love nothing but its own goodness, and therefore can will nothing towards fallen man but the return of his lost goodness by a new birth of the divine life in him which is the true forgiveness of sins.¹

Out of this purity of love, the whole work of Redemption flowed, and it is this Divine love coming into man which restores and regenerates him.²

There is also present in Williams' writings, perhaps more implicitly than explicitly, the Holiness and Righteousness of God. God as a holy God, cannot bear evil in man, and so must in some way provide a means for removing that evil.³ It is only thus that man can be restored to his original relationship to God. Similarly the Righteousness of God is evident in the work of Atonement and Restoration of Man.

There are two other important points regarding the Godhead which Williams touches on, one being the Trinity, the other, the work of God in Creation. Williams accepts the Doctrine of the Trinity in its fullest sense, believing God to exist in three persons, co-equal and co-eternal,⁴

1. Williams, The Forgiveness of Sin, p. 58.

2. Ibid., p. 64.

3. Ibid., p. 31.

4. Williams, The Descent of the Dove, p. 31.

yet with the Son subordinate to the Father and the Spirit¹ proceeding from the Father and the Son. He accepts also² the Creation as the work of God, both the material world and the spiritual realm. The creation of the world he ascribes to the Holy Ghost, for in discussing it he writes, "The operation of the Holy Ghost was at once over the world³ and in the womb." He also believes God to be the creator of the spiritual beings, for he writes concerning angels, "In that sense, spirit as they might be, those celestial and splendid beings were wholly different from their⁴ Maker."

This then is the doctrine of God as it is found in the writings of Charles Williams. He believes in a God who is a Spiritual Being, Transcendent yet Immanent, characterized by Omnipresence, Omniscience, and Omnipotence, and having the moral attributes of goodness, holiness and righteousness. This God is one God, yet exists as three persons in particular relation to each other. He is the God of Creation, the one who brought into being all things both material and spiritual.

3. Man and Sin

Charles Williams' views of man and sin are put

1. Ibid., pp. 2-3.

2. Williams, The Forgiveness of Sin, p. 29.

3. Ibid., p. 16.

4. Ibid., p. 29.

forth in clear fashion in his theological writings, and they are of greatest importance since they influence and mold his views on the problem of evil and its relation to man's deliverance from his sinful state. He believes man to be a creature formed as the result of the Divine Will¹ to create matter and to become united with it. But his view in no way makes the Incarnation dependent upon the Creation, rather the Creation shares the joy of the Incarnation. He writes, "He willed therefore that his union with matter in flesh should be by a mode which precisely involved creatures to experience joy."²

He further created man with freedom of choice, that is, with freedom of will to act as an independent being. He says:

The possibility of alteration had been created as an element in the whole . . . The Adam had been created and was existing in a state of knowledge of good and nothing but good. They knew that there was some kind of alternative, and they knew that the rejection of the alternative was part of their relation to the Omnipotence that created them . . . Some possibility of opposite action there must be if there is to be any relation between different wills.³

The nature of man he describes as bipartite, that is, body and soul, but essentially a unified being.⁴

Williams' doctrine of the Fall touches two important points, 1) the nature of sin and evil, and 2) the

1. Ibid., p. 15.

2. Ibid., p. 16.

3. Ibid., p. 21.

4. Ibid., p. 23.

result of sin in man. The author clearly separates what is termed evil from what is called sin. Evil may spring from an outward source, but sin is the result of man's own wilful action.¹ In describing witchcraft, one form of sin, he lays its horror and wickedness to sin in the heart of man. He writes:

It is one exhibition among many . . . and more flagrant than some . . . of prolonged desire of the human heart; few studies of the past can present that heart more terribly--whether on one side or on the other--in its original and helpless corruption.²

He speaks of sin as being rooted deeply within the heart of man, so deeply that it is actually in the good and on this good it thrives and sends up sap and produces "the black fruit of hell."³

The results of sin are death and hell, for if sin remains fixed in the life of man, it inevitably leads into this state which is termed hell.⁴ "An everlasting rejection of God by man must be admitted as a possibility; that is, hell must remain."⁵

The Fall involves essentially a concept of alteration within the nature of man so that man knows contradiction and schism within himself.⁶ This alteration is the result of man's own wilful action and is nowhere attributed to the exterior forces of evil. Williams takes the

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1. Williams, Witchcraft, p. 10.
 2. Williams, The Descent of the Dove, p. 86.
 3. Ibid., p. 108.
 4. Williams, The Forgiveness of Sin, p. 33.
 5. Williams, The Descent of the Dove, p. 40.
 6. Williams, He Came Down from Heaven, p. 21.

position that since God is the originator of all things, he is likewise the source of sin. In his discussion of this problem he declares God to be the First Cause of all Creation and thus responsible for all. God knew all of the pain and misery which would ever exist in creation and yet with that knowledge he created, and thus, in a sense, became responsible for all.

Without him it could not have been; and calling it his permission instead of his will may be intellectually accurate, but does not seem to get over the fact that if the First Cause has power, intelligence, and will to cause a universe to exist, then he is the First Cause of it . . . The pious have been--as they always are--too anxious to excuse him; the prophet was wiser: 'I form the light and create darkness: I make peace and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.'¹

But although he makes God the ultimate Cause of all good and evil, he accepts at the same time the possibility of evil existing separately in the form of the fallen angel, Satan.

There is certainly no rational argument against him (the devil); there is perhaps a psychological, for something very much like dualism is apt to follow the devil and in fact dualism did appear in the Middle Ages.²

But his view of the Fall of man is essentially one which omits the outside evil of the Devil and lays the guilt directly upon man himself. He describes the Fall in terms of a broken relationship, broken by the wish of

1. Ibid., p. 140.

2. Williams, The Descent of the Dove, p. 105.

man to achieve knowledge which belongs only to God. This knowledge is in essence the knowledge which God possesses whereby he knows contradiction in "the good." In God this is a possibility, but in man it cannot be. In attempting to obtain this knowledge man merely brought upon himself a contradiction within his own nature, so that he not only knows the good but he knows the good as evil.¹ His whole nature is torn and "there is no corner into which antagonism to pure joy has not broken."² The results of this action are Death, for it is the final and necessary schism between the two great categories (soul and body)³ which once were one.

The author's view of original sin is that in the actions which brought the Fall, all mankind had a part, and sin is part of every man's nature. Because it is possible we all may have been co-inherent in the original Adam, we all share in his wrong choice and consequent Fall. He says:

But Adam may have been our name as well as our single father's, we in him and he in us in a state other than sequence. We were in him for we were he. We were all there, and we were all greedy or proud or curious. The original sin was in us as we originally were. The co-inherent will of mankind moved, and moved against its divine Original, which is the definition, so far, of sin.⁴

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1. Williams, He Came Down From Heaven, pp. 16-22.
 2. Ibid., p. 21.
 3. Williams, The Forgiveness of Sins, p. 26.
 4. Ibid., p. 22.

Thus the author would support the view that sin became a part of the human race and as such is inherent in every man.

One other consideration at this point is the matter of God's eternal purpose and man's free will. God's purpose, the writer believes, is to restore his Fallen Creation into the original co-inherence with Himself.¹ This purpose was achieved through the Atonement wrought out by the death and resurrection of Christ who perfectly fulfilled the will of his Father in heaven. There is, however, involved in this Redemption, the Sovereign act of God whereby He chooses men to receive the grace and mercy extended in this Redemption. In discussing this problem of the operation of the Sovereignty of God in conjunction with the free will of man, Williams accepts the Augustinian view, but with reservations. He says:

The Equity of Redemption is immediately at work; it predestinates whom it chooses, and it does not predestinate whom it does not choose. But its choice is (beyond human thought) inextricably mingled with each man's own choice. It wills what he wills, because it has freedom to do so. Predestination is the other side of its own freedom. Words fall away from the inscrutable union, which can be the inscrutable separation.²

His view of man may be summarized as: First, that

1. Ibid., p. 32.

2. Williams, The Descent of the Dove, p. 71.

he is a Creature of God formed as a result of Divine purpose and possessing a bipartite nature, that is, soul and body. Second, that man was altered by the entrance of sin, so that his inner being knew schism, the schism of good and good as evil, and he consequently was separated from his original state of co-inherence with the Creator. Third, all men shared in the sin of the first man so that all men are in need of the restoration which was affected by the Atonement. Fourth, the eternal purpose of God is that man shall be reestablished in a close intimate fellowship with Himself similar to that which existed before the Fall.

4. The Person of Christ

Charles Williams never at any place in his writings questions the Deity of Christ. He accepts Him as being the second person of the Trinity, the one who was Incarnate, called the Son of God.¹ He believes the Incarnation to be the union of God with matter, arising solely from the Will of God to unite Himself to His creation. He holds that the original first purpose of Incarnation was simply that God should become flesh and this "he might have done to himself alone."² "But he determined to be incarnate by being born, and his mother and her companions were to

1. Williams, The Forgiveness of Sins, p. 35.

2. Ibid., p. 15.

be related to him in a state of joyous knowledge."¹ Thus the first purpose of Incarnation was to join God and man in a web of simultaneous interchange of good.² But the Incarnation also came to have a further purpose, for with the entrance of sin the flesh was defiled and became repugnant to the nature of God. This defilement, the Incarnate God willingly accepted in order to sustain his creatures in the pain in which they found themselves.³ The purpose went even deeper than a mere sharing of suffering, for he became Incarnate to effect the Redemption of lost mankind. He determined not only to endure with his creation, but to renew it. Mankind had been literally incoherent in its suffering. "He proposed to make those suffering themselves co-inherent in him, and therefore to reintroduce them into the principle which was he."⁴

Williams summarizes his view of the Incarnation as follows:

All that we take for granted is that the Trinity had determined the Incarnation of the Word, that They had determined and caused the creation of superfluous mankind with a purpose of entire joy, that mankind had set itself in such a relation to Them and especially to the flesh of the Word that it was bound, if the creation so ordained continued, to victimise its Creator, and that They had accepted that result and had determined that the original Incarnation should be a Redemption also; that is that his life on earth should redeem life and earth. He was to be born, as he had

1. Ibid., p. 16.

2. Ibid., p. 18.

3. Ibid., p. 32.

4. Ibid.

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willed of a Mother.

The manner of his Incarnation was through the ordinary process of human birth, so that he derived his flesh from the womb of his mother. But he was also the Son of God, for "that Holy thing" which was born of the virgin was created by the direct act of God the Holy Spirit. "The operation of the Holy Ghost was at once over the world and in the womb."² He thus became God in the flesh, son of Man, yet also Son of God. "He derived in his flesh, from men and women; but also in that Incarnation he derived from his Father."³

The author, in writing of the life of Christ, accepts the Gospel records of the events which occurred in the earthly ministry of Jesus. He describes his preaching ministry, his healing ministry, his work with his disciples, his betrayal, arrest and trial, and his death and resurrection.⁴ In all, he follows closely the gospel story, including in his account many specific details found in the Gospels.

He recognizes that Jesus made claims for himself while He was on earth which reveal some of His attributes as God, and he discusses them as they appear in John's Gospel summing them up as follows:

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1. Ibid., p. 35.
 2. Ibid., p. 17.
 3. Ibid., p. 31.
 4. Williams, He Came Down From Heaven, pp. 63-82.

. . . it declares itself to be the union of heaven and earth (1:51); the one absolutely necessary thing for escape from a state in which the contradiction of good is preferred (3:16,36); it is the perfect satisfaction of desire (6:35; 10:27-8); it is judgment (5:25-30, 12:46-8); it is in perfect union with its Origin (10:30; 14:11); it restores the truth (5:33; 7:31-2; 13:37).¹

He accepts Jesus, in his humanity, as one who is the object of worship, one who is able to forgive sins, one who is the source of life and one who is united perfectly with his Father. He further recognizes the evidence of Jesus' unique personality which is shown in the titles used to address Him. When talking about Christ, he quotes some of these names calling him Son of God, Son of Man, Jesus Christ, and Messias. His own title and most frequent means of address is the "Divine Thing" or "It."

The death of Christ, the writer accepts, much as it is given in the gospels, and although he does not discuss the facts in detail he mentions enough to indicate his acceptance of the record as it stands.² He believes in the bodily resurrection and its evidence in the post-resurrection appearances.³ And finally, he discusses the final appearance of the Lord to his disciples, their commission, the ascent of the Lord into heaven, and the promise of His swift return.⁴ Thus, the author accepts

1. Ibid., p. 72.

2. Ibid., p. 77.

3. Ibid., p. 81.

4. Ibid.

the life of Christ on earth as it is recorded in the Gospels recognizing its uniqueness and its purpose in the plan of God.

Williams' view of the person of Christ may be summarized as follows: 1) He is Divine, being the Second Person of the Trinity and existing co-equally with the Father and the Spirit. 2) He was Incarnate for the purpose of uniting man with God, sharing in man's suffering, and in effecting man's Redemption. His Incarnation was accomplished by the act of the Holy Ghost within the womb of the Virgin. 3) He lived a life on earth in which he proclaimed to men his message, his mission, and his nature; he was put to death upon a cross, was raised again in the flesh, and ascended to heaven from whence he promised to return.

5. Atonement

The doctrine of Atonement as it is set forth in the writings of Charles Williams clearly rests upon the life and death of Christ as the only basis for reconciliation between man and God. Williams accepts the view that atonement involves the perfect obedience of the Son of God leading to His substitutionary death for the¹ Redemption of sinful man.

1. Williams, The Forgiveness of Sins, pp. 60-68.

He accepts the Old Testament sacrificial system as preparatory and illustrative of the one great sacrifice¹ to be made by the Incarnate Deity. He accepts further, the Old Testament view of the Atonement which made the shedding of blood an absolute necessity. He summarizes the Old Testament teaching as follows:

The expiation for the sins of the soul (since sin was necessarily of the soul) was by the life of the flesh, either by the flesh that was in union with the soul that had sinned or by some other . . . The sprinkling of blood seven times from the high priest's finger before the mercy seat where between the wings of golden cherubim the Shekinah . . . reduced the blood-offering to its most ritual and least visible form. But it did not alter the essence; that remained. The forgiveness of sins demanded it; without shedding of blood is no remission of sins.²

The author describes the work of Christ in the Atonement as being sacrificial in its nature, involving the shedding of his blood as a basis for forgiveness. He writes:

He concentrated upon himself the two ideas which had marked the Jewish tradition. Sins had been forgiven by virtue of the blood; 'it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul.' The result of that atonement had been the seclusion of the knowledge of the sin into God. The angelic glories of heaven had proclaimed before the birth of Jesus that he had come to save his people from their sins; he himself declared that he had come to die: 'the Son of Man must . . .' His age-long victimisation was perfected.³

He further sees in the work of Atonement, the removal of sin, not by hiding or by covering, but by the

1. Ibid., p. 37.

2. Ibid., p. 40.

3. Ibid., p. 60.

Divine acceptance of the full agony of sin and of knowing the complete deprivation of all goodness.

But that the life of the whole of mankind began to fail in that hour is not incredible; that the sun and all light, without as within, darkened before men's eyes, that the swoon of something more than death touched them, and its sweat stood on their foreheads to the farthest ends of the world. The Thing that was and had always been, and must always be; the fundamental humanity of all men; the Thing that was man rather than a man, though certainly incarnated into the physical appearance of a man; the Thing that was Christ Jesus, knew all things in the deprivation of all goodness.¹

Man had fallen by desiring to know the good as evil, so the one effective remedy was to know the evil as good and to be free from the necessity of the knowledge of evil in the future.² This restoration mankind could not itself effect since it was not able to endure such a total deprivation of good. But what "mankind could not do, manhood did, and a manhood which was at the disposal of all men and women."³ Atonement thus had become the means of pardon and reconciliation to God.

The author's view of atonement may be summarized as follows: 1) It rests upon the finished work of Christ. 2) It is illustrated by the Old Testament ritual. 3) It is a removal of the sin through Christ's bearing of it upon the Cross. 4) It is the means of restoration of the perfect good which man lost in the Fall.

1. Williams, He Came Down from Heaven, p. 77.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 79.

6. The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

Because Charles Williams believes in a Trinitarian God, Father, Son, and Spirit, he believes in the Deity of the Holy Spirit. He uses the phrase "Our Lord the Spirit" in referring to His coming at Pentecost indicating his view as to the Spirit's position in the Godhead.¹

He further believes the Spirit to possess personality similar to the Father and Son, describing the activity of the Spirit as that of an individual with purpose and plans which He carries out Himself.²

In writing of the work of the Spirit in relation to the church, the author stresses particularly the Spirit's direction and oversight of the church's work.³ This activity was clearly demonstrated in the Apostolic church, which knew a union with the Spirit as intimate as its union with the Lord, and which enabled the church to say, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and us."⁴ This activity of guidance the Spirit continued to show through the history of the church even down to the present day.

In His activity in relation to the church, the Holy Ghost is revealed as the source of power and the author of spiritual gifts.⁵

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1. Williams, *The Descent of the Dove*, p. 3.
 2. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
 3. *Ibid.*, p. 252.
 4. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
 5. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

He is particularly active in the work of conversion in the lives of individuals both without and within the church. In speaking of Luther, the author says: "Our Lord the Spirit permitted him to follow Augustine,"¹ and in describing the conversions of the Reformation era he says: "it pleased our Lord the Spirit violently to convulse these souls with himself."²

There is one other sphere of activity of the Spirit which the author mentions and that is his work in Creation. He says of the Spirit, "The operation of the Holy Ghost was at once over the world and in the womb. It was a free generosity of love that deigned to create both the world and the secret womb."³

The person and work of the Spirit may be summarized as follows: 1) He is Divine, being the third person of the Godhead, and possesses personality like the Father and Son. 2) His work in relation to the church is primarily one of guidance and control. 3) He is the source of power for the church. 4) He is active in the lives of individuals particularly in the work of conversion. 5) He was the agent of creation when the worlds were formed.

1. Ibid., p. 162.

2. Ibid., p. 172.

3. Williams, The Forgiveness of Sins, p. 17.

7. The Church and the Life of the Christian

Charles Williams defines the church as those who are the followers of Christ beginning with the first disciples upon whom the Spirit came. "When Messiah removed his visibility," he writes, "he left behind him a group of united followers; he had created the church."¹ Its first purpose is the regeneration of mankind, the conversion of the world. He writes of the apostolic ministry: "The real work was now to begin, and the burden of the work was accepted by the group in the city. That work was the regeneration of mankind."² The further purpose of the church is for the fellowship of the saints, the communion of believers together for their mutual strengthening.³

The church, he believes, is characterized by a unity which is achieved by acts of love between its members.⁴ They are bound together by a mutual sharing of burdens and exchange of hearts.⁵ It is further a universal church "as universal and as durable as time."⁶ Its foundations were laid upon the apostles who received the Spirit at Pentecost and who began the great work of

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1. Williams, *He Came Down From Heaven*, p. 116.
 2. Williams, *The Descent of the Dove*, p. 3.
 3. Williams, *The Forgiveness of Sins*, p. 84.
 4. *Ibid.*
 5. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
 6. Williams, *The Descent of the Dove*, p. 15.

regenerating mankind with the Gospel.¹

Williams also believes that it is particularly the duty of those who belong to the church that they bear each other's burdens, as Paul commanded, "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." The church is thus instructed to follow the practice of "mystical substitution" and to carry the burdens of others, denying self and following Him. It is a process of substitutionary love involving the act of taking up the cross. It is the very heart of the new life which Christ himself came to give.²

The Christian life, Williams believes, is to include in it not only this practice of substitutionary love but it is to include in it prayer³ and the sacraments. His emphasis is particularly upon intercessory prayer as a means of burden bearing. But carrying out this prayer must be charged with substitutionary love or it will avail nothing. It may even become dangerous for it may unleash a power of which we have no knowledge.⁴

Williams' view of the church and the Christian life is summarized as: 1) The church was born at Pentecost with the coming of the Spirit and it is composed of believers in Christ. 2) Its purpose is the regeneration of mankind and the fellowship of the saints. 3) It is characterized

1. Ibid., p. 3.

2. Williams, He Came Down From Heaven, p. 123.

3. Ibid., p. 36.

4. Ibid., p. 129.

by unity, universality, apostolicity. 4) It has a particular duty of burden bearing through which it achieves all of its purposes.

8. The Last Things

Charles Williams' views concerning the end of the age are only mentioned briefly since his greatest concern lies with the work of the church upon earth in the present time. However, he does touch upon a few matters pertaining to the last things.

He writes concerning the new heaven and the new earth, which are contained in "the City", describing it in terms of the new Jerusalem in the Revelation of John. It is "to descend out of heaven" at some future time when God ordains it, and is to be the dwelling place of the Lamb¹ and the Redeemed. It has, however, a contemporary relation, since glimpses and flashes of it appear on earth. The heavenly City is linked with its earthly reflection by the prayer given by Messias to his disciples.²

D. Summary

The chapter began with a survey of the content of the four books under consideration, He Came Down From Heaven, The Forgiveness of Sins, Witchcraft, and The

1. Ibid., pp. 138-139.

2. Ibid., p. 144.

Descent of the Dove, He Came Down from Heaven was concerned chiefly with the descent of the Messias from Heaven to earth and the results of that descent for mankind. It is described in terms of the coming of the kingdom of God, and the restoration of fallen mankind to that kingdom.

The Forgiveness of Sins centered mainly in the basis and means of forgiveness, and the results of that forgiveness in the lives of men. It was achieved by the work of Christ in atonement and resulted in union both vertical between God and man, and horizontal between man and man. Witchcraft was concerned with the history of the growth of evil and Satanic powers from the early centuries of the church's history to the culmination of the perversion in the sixteenth century. The Descent of the Dove was a history of the church with particular emphasis upon the work of the Spirit within it.

Next the theology of Charles Williams was reviewed under the major headings of Systematic Theology, beginning with a consideration of the Holy Scriptures. His view of the Bible was revealed as: 1) It is the record of God's relationship with man. 2) It has a unifying theme which cannot be removed without destroying the essential nature of the Scriptures. 3) It is a record of supernatural events which must be accepted as such if it is accepted at all.

His doctrine of God was shown to be: 1) God is a

Spiritual Being, Transcendent, Immanent, Omniscient, Omnipresent, and Omnipotent, and having the moral attributes of goodness, holiness, and righteousness. 2) God exists in three forms, Father, Son, and Spirit, who bear a particular relationship to each other. 3) God is the Creator of the worlds and the Sustainer of all life.

His doctrine of Man and Sin was found to be: 1) Man is a creature, formed as a result of Divine purpose and possessing a bipartite nature. 2) Man was altered by the entrance of sin, and was separated from his original co-inherence with the Creator. 3) All men have shared in the sin of the first man so that all men are in need of restoration. 4) The eternal purpose of God is that man shall be re-established in a close, intimate fellowship with Himself.

His view of the person of Christ was shown as: 1) He is a Divine Being, the Second Person of the Trinity. 2) He was Incarnate for the purpose of uniting man with God, and in effecting man's Redemption. 3) He lived a life on earth in which he proclaimed to men his message, his mission, and his nature; he was put to death upon a cross, was raised again in the flesh, and ascended to heaven, from whence he promised to return.

Williams' doctrine of the Atonement was found to be centered in the work of Christ, his life and his death. It was further shown that the Old Testament ritual was a prefiguring of the true Atonement. It was also shown that

it was a removal of sin through Christ's bearing of it upon the cross, and it is the means whereby man is restored to God.

His view of the person and work of the Spirit was revealed as: 1) He is Divine and possesses personality. 2) His work in relation to the church is primarily one of guidance and control. 3) He is the source of power for the church. 4) He is active in the lives of individuals particularly in the work of conversion. 5) He was the agent of creation when the worlds were formed.

His view of the church and the life of the Christian was revealed as: 1) The church came into existence at Pentecost and is composed of believers in Christ. 2) Its purpose is the regeneration of mankind and the fellowship of the saints. 3) It is characterized by unity, universality, apostolicity. 4) Its particular duty is bearing burdens in order to fulfill its purposes.

Finally, his view concerning the end of the age was shown as an expectation of the coming of the City of God.

CHAPTER III
THE NOVELS OF CHARLES WILLIAMS
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A. Introduction

In discussing the function of the novelist, Joyce Cary writes:

As it is a philosopher's job to make sense of life to the mind, to present it as a rational unity, so it is a novelist's job to make sense of it to the feelings.¹

This is precisely the function which the novels of Charles Williams play in relation to his theology. That which he believes, and which he has expressed in theological form, he brings to life in the vivid, sensitive creatures which people his fictional writings. Because he is writing in the realm of the supernatural and the fantastic, his novels may give the appearance of being only weird imagination, but there is more than just mystery thriller fiction here. Richard McLaughlin writes of All Hallows' Eve:

One has to admit that for sheer imaginative writing there has been nothing like this novel in years. Although Williams employs the usual props of the ghost story--demons, vampires, magicians, evil spells--we never find that the total effect of his novel is merely one of cumulative horror. This customary effect in thrillers--and Williams is a master of the macabre thriller--is scored out by Williams' mysticism.

1. Joyce Cary, "On the Function of the Novelist," The New York Times Book Review, October 30, 1949, p. 1.

For in a profound sense, he is a writer of religious thrillers. Throughout his earlier 'Descent into Hell' and 'The Figure of Beatrice', there is the continual theme of the conflict of good and evil. Only Williams, as T. S. Eliot observes, is not a conventional moralist; 'his morality is that of the Gospels.'¹

It will be the purpose of this chapter first to survey the content of the four novels, All Hallows' Eve, War in Heaven, Many Dimensions, and Descent into Hell. Then the theology of Chapter II will be related to the books, showing how it appears in the novels and what are its dominant points.

B. Content of the Novels

1. All Hallows' Eve

All Hallows' Eve, which is the most mature of the author's novels, having been published only a year before his death, presents a poignant and convincing picture of life after death.² It opens with the discovery by the heroine, Lester Furnival, that she is dead and is existing in a twilight city which is the passage between life and death. As she wanders through this misty, twilight city, she meets her friend Evelyn, who was killed in the same plane crash as she, and who is also lost in the nether world. Together she and Evelyn move aimlessly through the streets of the deserted city, until suddenly they are

1. McLaughlin, *Amor Vincit Omnia*, p. 16.
2. Parsons, op. cit., p. 79.

arrested by a shrill cry which seems to pierce into their very souls. This strange call comes from a living soul, Betty, who has been sent into the realm of the dead by her father Simon, a sorcerer and magician.

Evelyn begins to run toward Betty, and Lester follows, but neither of them can reach her before she vanishes into the house of Simon. As Lester and Evelyn come up to the house they are aware that Betty is in need, for they can hear her crying within. Lester determines to go in to help, and with this decision her salvation begins. Evelyn, however, refuses to go with Lester, and her decision is the first step in her final destruction.

The story now becomes tense with the conflict between Simon, who tries by all his magic powers to separate Betty's soul from her body, and Lester, who seeks in penitence and goodness of heart to help her friend and prevent the destruction. Because she has sought and received Betty's forgiveness in true penitence, Lester is able to take upon herself the death which Simon is pronouncing for Betty. But the death is not able to overwhelm Lester, for she is supported by a strong wooden cross and as she rests upon it and trusts herself to it, it bears her up away from the greenish-blue waves of oblivion.

By her action, she takes the shock of the curse which Simon is pronouncing, and suffers for Betty. She is delivered by the "Name which is the City" coming to

her rescue.¹ With this defeat in such a supreme test for power, Simon now begins his slippery descent into hell.

The powers of evil having been vanquished, there remains now only the final resolution of the story, which has so closely linked the dead with the living. Richard, Lester's husband, must meet his wife once again to discover in that meeting what love may really be, and how it is able to redeem. He comes with Jonathan, a young painter, who is in love with Betty, to find Betty and rescue her. He meets Lester in Simon's home and that meeting changes his whole life and fills him with a new joy and peace.

Simon makes a last effort to get control of Betty by attempting to destroy Lester who thwarted his first efforts. He uses Evelyn to bring Lester's spirit to him, but although Evelyn gladly becomes his slave, Lester's newly redeemed soul cannot be bound by him. Lester and Betty both try to help Evelyn to escape destruction, but Evelyn is too self-engrossed to be able to renounce her own desires and sacrifice herself to the needs of another.

The story ends with the departure of Lester's spirit to the city and the destruction of Simon and his evil powers. Thus good triumphs over evil, and love prevails over hate and greed.

2. War in Heaven

"Imagine gentle reader, if you can, a telephone

1. Williams, All Hallows' Eve, p. 164.

ringing wildly and no one in the room to answer it but a corpse under the table. That is the note with which we start this hair-raising theological thriller."¹ Thus Richard McLaughlin begins his review of this strange tale of the modern quest for the Holy Grail.

The finding of the murdered man in the offices of the publisher Stephen Persimmons sets off a chain of events which brings the forces of evil led by Gregory Persimmons and Sir Giles Tumulty into conflict with the forces of good led by the Archdeacon of Fardles, the young Duke of Rindings, and Kenneth Mornington. The knowledge of the existence of the Grail in the Archdeacon's church at Fardles is obtained by Gregory Persimmons from Sir Giles who has just written a book on magic. However, the Archdeacon happens by accident to gain the same knowledge, and so when Gregory comes to him and asks for the Chalice, the Archdeacon refuses. But Gregory is determined to possess the cup, and so he breaks into the church and attempts to steal it. When this fails, he waylays the Archdeacon, as he is on his way to London to place the Chalice in a safe place, and steals the cup from him. Having obtained it, Gregory proceeds to use it in his worship of evil and the saying of the Black Mass.

1. Richard McLaughlin, "Chasing the Grail in England," *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 32:40, October 1, 1949, p. 16.

The conflict grows in intensity when the Archdeacon runs away with the Chalice from Persimmons' house while the police inspector and Persimmons are arguing over it. He is aided by Kenneth and the Duke, who drives them to London to his private house. There they discuss what ought to be done with the Grail to safeguard it.

But before they can make any decisions, Gregory has found a way to recover the cup. He makes the wife of Lionel Rackstraw (also an employee of the publishing house) violently insane by the use of a magic ointment. Then he sends for the Archdeacon to bring the cup in payment for her cure.

Events now move to a rapid climax as Gregory in possession of the cup plans to flee from England with a Greek sorcerer and his apprentice. They decide to take Rackstraw's young son Adrian with them since Gregory wants him as an offering to the infernal powers.

Just as it seems as if Gregory and his colleagues are going to achieve their evil purposes, there appears the figure of Prester John, the keeper of the Grail. He destroys the power of the evil Greek, condemns Gregory to his just punishment, and frees the Archdeacon and the Duke from their captivity.

The story ends when Prester John takes the Grail to the church and in a service of adoration and high communion he and the Grail vanish, taking with them the spirit of the Archdeacon.

3. Many Dimensions

This novel centers around an unusual Stone called the stone of Sulieman which is endowed with strange magic powers. It was obtained by Sir Giles Tumulty from an Eastern Temple and has become the cause of an intensive search by a group of devout Persians who revere the stone as sacred. However, Sir Giles decides that he wants to experiment with it especially when he discovers that it has unusual powers for moving in time and space.

But Reginald Montague, the nephew of Lord Arglay, sees in the Stone unlimited possibilities for financial gain and so he takes it to his uncle, and tries to interest him in it. They discover entirely by accident that the stone may be multiplied so that instead of only one, any number can exist. Before anyone can stop him, Reginald proceeds to sell one of the stones to an American transportation executive for a large sum of money. However, the executive loses the stone and it is recovered by an artist who knows nothing of its magic powers.

But when it miraculously heals a sick woman, he realizes that it is something unusual. As the news spreads, thousands begin to flock to the little town of Rich where the healing occurred, and a national crisis threatens.

However, the Persians are still trying desperately to get the Stone back into their possession and the

schemes and intrigue grow as more people come to possess copies of it, all of which are able to act as miraculously as the original.

Meanwhile, Sir Giles has been experimenting upon innocent victims to discover the properties of the Stone, and has ruthlessly twisted human lives in the process. One man is entrapped in the past but with the intervention of Lord Arglay is restored again. Another, a criminal, is placed in a state of suspended animation from which he never can possibly escape.

The tension grows as an increasingly large number of people seek to possess the stone and use its magic powers. The Persians attempt in depparation to steal from Chloë, the secretary of Lord Arglay, her copy of it, but the thief is destroyed in the attempt. Chloë has given herself to the stone, and the Way of the Stone which is the End of Desire, and it protects her.

Because she seeks the good in it and not the evil, she is able in the end to be the Way of the Stone and all of the Stones are mystically gathered into her being. Giles Tumulty, on the other hand, because he abused the power of the Stone, is destroyed by it.

Thus the Stone is removed from the earth and Chloë achieves the End of Desire which is found in it. Since she is no longer capable of happiness on earth, she dies and the Stone and its Mystery disappear forever.

4. Descent into Hell

The scene for this novel is Battle Hill, an aristocratic suburb of London, inhabited by the cultured talent of the present day, and the unhappy ghosts of the past.

Peter Stanhope, famous poet and dramatist, has consented to allow the talent of the Hill to produce his latest play, a poetic fantasy, and the novel begins at the point where Stanhope is reading the play to the assembled cast. The production of this play, "A Pastoral", forms "the pegs on which the mysticism is hung",¹ so that the material story is only a frame for the underlying spiritual struggles of the inhabitants of the Hill.

One of the conflicts is that of Pauline Anstruther, who has a minor speaking part in the chorus. She is filled with a great terror created by a vision of herself, her doppelganger, which appears at intervals and seems to be coming towards her to meet her. Her sensitive spirit lives in mortal dread of that day when this image may actually meet her face to face. Her burden of fear becomes apparent to Peter Stanhope, so that one day at rehearsal he suggests that Pauline give her burden to him and permit him to carry it for her. Pauline cannot, at first, understand what he means, but finally consents to try the

1. Robert Halsband, "Social Comedy and the Supernatural,"
The Saturday Review, 32:14, April 23, 1949.

experiment. She finds, to her amazement, it works. When she tells Stanhope of her relief and freedom, he explains to her that she may be called upon to carry someone else's load, but the carrying will be easy for the Almighty gives men strength to bear burdens.

In startling contrast to Pauline, Lawrence Wentworth, who also carries a spiritual burden of jealousy and self-preoccupation, refuses to see the dangers of indulging his passions and begins a downward course which finally ends in the depths of a hell of living oblivion. Interwoven in the experience of Lawrence Wentworth and a part of his problem, is the love affair of Adela Hunt and Hugh Prescott. Adela, who has the leading part in the play, was until the appearance of Hugh, an admirer of Wentworth. But when she falls in love with Hugh, her interest in Wentworth declines, and instead of accepting this fact graciously, Wentworth allows himself to be devoured by jealous rage. Thus, his descent into hell begins.

Pauline's experience is likewise interwoven with the conflicts of others, both the living and the dead. Her grandmother, who is about to die, helps her along the path which leads eventually to her complete salvation and joyful new life. She, under the guidance of the Almighty, sends Pauline out into the night to give assistance to a lost soul and to shoulder the burden of another in the exchange of love which brings salvation.

Here the novel reaches its climax as Pauline goes forth into the night to find her deliverance. She meets first the spirit of a poor worker who killed himself because the pressure of his existence had become more than he could endure. When she extends to him sympathy and mercy, she gains for herself the Way to salvation. For now, she meets her long dead ancestor, John Struther, who needs her aid. John, who died a martyr's death at the stake, carries a great burden of fear and across the centuries Pauline hears him cry to God for deliverance. Knowing what she must do for him, she cries out bidding him deliver the burden to her. By this act, she frees him so that he may die with a great triumphant shout of rejoicing. What is strange and incomprehensible in time, is accomplished readily outside of time, as the Omnipotent God lays the burden of John's fear on Pauline. And then Pauline turns to face her own image which calmly awaits her. This meeting, which she had previously looked upon in great terror, she now finds is one of blessing; and as she feels the joy flow through her, the doppelganger vanishes from her sight forever.

Filled by a great calm and peace, Pauline seeks to help the other members of the Hill who have not yet found that which she now possesses. Adela who, with Hugh, views a terrifying apocalyptic scene of resurrection in the graveyard, sends for Pauline to come and help her. But

Pauline can do little for Adela because her soul is in need of a great cleaning and renewing which only the Omnipotence can give.

The novel concludes with the final destruction of Lawrence Wentworth who has at last reached the bottom of the abyss into which he has been sliding. The long rope down which he has climbed has completely vanished and he is alone in a living oblivion which has no end. His self-absorption and self-love betray him into a completely purposeless life whose end is this awful oblivion from which there is no escape.

C. The Theology in His Novels

1. His View of God

In his theological writings Charles Williams reveals that he believes in a God who is a Spiritual Being, Transcendant and Immanent, one who is Omniscient, Omnipotent, and Omnipresent characterized by the moral attributes of goodness, holiness and righteousness. He believes in God as Triune, Father, Son, and Spirit, and as Creator and Sustainer.

This view of God, which the author sets forth clearly in his books on theology, is the basis for his presentation of Deity in his novels. He draws upon this theological concept to present God as the power of good which defeats all evil. In some of the novels the concept

of the Divine Being is more clearly related to that of his theological writings than in others. Thus, in War in Heaven, God is seen through the spiritual eyes of the Archdeacon of Fardles, and the God thus revealed is a God who is very similar to the Jehovah of the Scriptures. At the other extreme is the concept of God in Many Dimensions which makes Him a mystical power from whom the magic in the Stone of Sulieman is derived. He is associated with the God of Islam, the One God, the Supreme, Divine Being. Between these two views are the concepts found in All Hallows' Eve and Descent into Hell, both of which reveal God as mystical Omnipotence, but intimately connected to man through "The City."

In these four novels Williams has emphasized above all the other characteristics of God that of Omnipotence. Thus, in War in Heaven, it is "the Omnipotence" which destroys the forces of evil which seek to appropriate the Grail for personal use.¹ In Many Dimensions it is "the Omnipotence" which is the power behind the magic stone which is known as "The End of Desire."² The Omnipotence in All Hallows' Eve is the power which destroys the sorcerer Simon and brings salvation to the wandering soul of Lester.³ And it is "the Omnipotence" in Descent into Hell who gives power to the

1. Williams, War in Heaven, pp. 277-279.

2. Williams, Many Dimensions, pp. 191-193.

3. Williams, All Hallows' Eve, pp. 162-164.

frightened Pauline and enables her to find redemption in the art of substitutionary love.¹

But the other attributes have not been omitted entirely from these novels. In War in Heaven, God is revealed by the archdeacon as the Creator and Sustainer of the world. When the evil sorcerer Manasseh attempts to destroy the Grail by willing its disintegration, the archdeacon cries to his friends to join in prayer to the Almighty to preserve it. He says, "Pray that he who made the universe may sustain the universe that in all things there may be delight in the justice of His will."² The archdeacon also believes in God as the Sovereign of all life, and particularly of the life of man. In discussing the problem of the free choice of man and the Sovereignty of God he says,

'Man is free to know his destiny but not free to evade his destiny.'

'But he can choose his destiny,' Gregory answered. 'If you spell destiny and god with capital letters -- no!' the archdeacon said. 'All destinies and all gods bring him to One, but he chooses how to know Him.'³

There is, further, the idea of a Providential God found in All Hallows' Eve and Descent Into Hell. In All Hallows' Eve, it is the Providential intervention of the "acts of the City" which, in the end, destroy the sorcerer Simon and prevent him from his murderous attempt on Betty. In the Descent, it is the Providence of God

1. Williams, Descent Into Hell, pp. 186-195.

2. Williams, War in Heaven, pp. 157.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 93

which brings together the dying woman Margaret Anstruther, and the dead man who had sought to escape life.

He had come back from his own manner of time to the point in the general world of time from which he had fled, and he found it altered. The point of his return was not determined by himself, but by his salvation, by a direction not yet formulated, by the economy of means of the Omnipotence, by the moment of the death of Margaret Anstruther.¹

One other attribute of the character of God is revealed in these novels and that is His eternality. In the Descent Into Hell, the suggestion is made to Pauline that she may learn the meaning of substitutionary love by carrying the burden of a long dead ancestor.² The idea is so completely strange to her that at first she is incapable of receiving it and asks her dying grandmother what it can mean.

She was saying, 'But how could one give backwards?' ...Pauline for a minute struggled with this in silence; then evading it, she returned to time. 'But four hundred years,' she exclaimed.

'Child;' her grandmother said, 'I can touch Adam with my hand; you aren't as far off.'

'But how could he take it before I'd given it?' Pauline cried, and Margaret said, 'Why do you talk of before? If you give, you give to It, and what does It care about before.'³

2. His View of Man and Sin.

In his theology, Williams gives a comprehensive treatment of the doctrine of man, and sin in relation to man. He believes man to be the result of God's creative

1. Williams, Descent Into Hell, p. 172

2. Ibid., p. 165

3. Ibid., p. 175

act and Divine purpose to unite himself with flesh in a particular manner. He believes man to be bipartite in nature, and that the original nature was altered by the entrance of sin. This sin did not just touch the nature of the first man, but through him all men are altered so that they cannot be united to God. However, it is God's purpose in Redemption that the lost good of men be restored to them.

This theological view of man and sin forms a basis for Williams' treatment of sin and evil in his novels. Since the element of struggle in his plots ¹is concerned with the battle between good and evil, the problem of sin and evil in man is thoroughly treated. Various aspects of the nature of evil are revealed in all of the novels, as well as its results and its various modes of expression. But in each of these different aspects which are found in the novels there is the basic factor that evil and sin spring from the corruption of man's heart. It is this point in his theology--the corruption of man's nature--which is the underlying truth in the novels.

In War in Heaven, sin is expressed in the two words possession and destruction. Gregory Persimmons, the leader of the forces of evil, desires for himself above everything

1. Charles Wier, Jr., *Heaven Versus Hell*, The New York Times Book Review, October 9, 1949.

else possession in order that he may have power. His theft of the Grail, his attempt to steal the child, Adrian, and his willingness to work with the evil Greek are all the result of his desire for possession. And with the possession there is also the desire for destruction, the destruction of all those who would interfere with the workings of evil. The Greek very ably defines it thus:

'Let him that desires to possess seek to possess' . . .
'and him that desires to destroy seek to destroy. Let each of you work in his own way, until an end comes; and I who will help the one to possess will help the other to destroy, for possession and destruction are both evil and are one.'¹

The nature of evil is characterized in a different manner in All Hallows' Eve. Here evil is seen as "the single-minded lust for unlawful power."² Simon the sorcerer seeks to obtain for himself by the use of magic arts, spiritual domination over men. As Richard McLaughlin writes:

He represents all that is unmentionable and sinister in our eyes, intoning his anti-Tetragrammaton, and bearing resemblance to that other dictator of Europe who tried to mesmerize the people too.³

He desires that men shall acknowledge him as God and that he shall become the ruler of the spiritual world. In describing his ambition Williams writes:

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1. Williams, *War in Heaven*, p. 163.
 2. Eliot, *op. cit.*, p. xvii.
 3. McLaughlin, *Amor Vincit Omnia*, p. 28.

There shaped itself gradually in his mind a fame beyond any poet's and a domination beyond any king's. But it was fame and domination that he desired, as they did . . . He put away the recollection of the painting; the time for his spiritual enthronement was not quite come.

In Many Dimensions, the evil takes the form of greed and selfishness which seeks to possess that which will gratify inner desires. Because the Stone of Suleiman possesses magic powers everyone wants to obtain it but the motives are all greed. Geoffrey Parsons in his discussion of the book summarizes it thus, "There are evil men who would use this appalling power selfishly."² Sir Giles wants the stone to use it in experimentation to gratify his own selfish curiosity. Reginald Montague wishes to possess it in order to exploit it and gain material wealth. Likewise, the others who learn of its powers desire it only from selfish reasons and because of their greed they lose it. Sin, here, is greed devouring the human soul and dulling the human mind.

But the most loathsome picture of evil is presented in Descent into Hell, where it takes the form of self-adoration and self-gratification. In discussing evil in the novels of Williams, T. S. Eliot writes:

He is concerned, not with the evil of conventional morality and the ordinary manifestations by which we

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1. Williams, *All Hallows' Eve*, p. 65.
 2. Parsons, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

recognize it, but with the essence of Evil; it is therefore Evil which has no power to attract us, for we see it as the repulsive thing it is, and¹ as the despair of the damned from which we recoil.

The picture drawn here of the utter vileness of the human soul which possesses and cultivates self worship is unparalleled in any of the other novels. The growth and development of this evil in the life of Lawrence Wentworth is carefully traced by the author from the first warning in his dream of the rope to his last conscious step into the oblivion of his own making. He begins his downward course by yielding to his jealous passion of Adela, who had formerly shown a friendly interest in him. When she leaves him for a younger man he all but eats his heart out with rage and frustration, and instead of controlling himself he indulges in his passion. "A remnant of intelligence cried to him," Williams writes, "that this was the road of mania, and self-indulgence leading to mania."² As his jealous anger grows, so also does his desire for self-gratification, so that he moves another step down into the abyss. Williams describes his conflict and its inevitable result thus:

He wanted to get away to give himself up to them:
life and death, satisfaction of hate and satisfaction

1. Eliot, op. cit., p. xvi.

2. Williams, *Descent into Hell*, p. 50.

of lust contending, and the single approach of the contention's result--patter, patter, steps on the Hill.¹

The next step in Wentworth's descent is the horrible self-love in which he indulges and by which he creates a magical creature who becomes satisfaction for him. He rejects an opportunity to save himself through rejoicing in another's good fortune and prefers instead anger. It is this refusal of all "joy of facts" which condemns him. Out of his own ego he creates a creature who will satisfy all his desires.²

The self-love of Lawrence Wentworth, which created for him an idol of himself in feminine form, now gives him satisfaction within himself and the purposeless idolatry of self. The author describes his state thus:

A man cannot love himself; he can only idolize it, and over the idol delightfully tyrannize--without purpose. The great gift which this simple idolatry of self gives is lack of further purpose.³

The descent down into the abyss becomes more rapid now as Wentworth continues to indulge himself. As he grows weaker in soul he becomes incapable of exercising his own personal integrity in matters of honor. He is asked for his opinion of the uniforms of the guards who are taking part in a forthcoming play. He sees at once

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1. Williams, Descent into Hell, p. 83.
 2. Ibid., pp. 86-96.
 3. Ibid., p. 139.

that there is a flaw in the shoulder knots which he could have his housekeeper repair in the evening but the thought of giving himself to anything else besides his own desire is beyond him, and so he refuses. This is an even further step down in his degradation for he has now lost his personal integrity.¹

The last step for Lawrence Wentworth is the final decision not to even attempt to see or share joy with another.² He has reached by this time the bottom of the pit and the rope of his dream down which he has been sliding has disappeared. He is hopelessly lost in the abyss. He loses all consciousness of himself and exists only in "the blankness of a living oblivion, tormented by oblivion."³

Thus his sin carries him down from the first stirrings of jealous rage into the hopeless oblivion of nothingness, the end of all self-love and self-absorption.

In his novels Charles Williams not only deals with the nature of sin, but he also reveals something of its results in terms of the after life. In the case of Lawrence Wentworth in Descent into Hell the result of his sin is living oblivion, or complete nothingness whatever such

1. Williams, *Descent into Hell*, pp. 158-160.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 240-248.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 248.

a state may mean.¹ In War in Heaven the results of sin are expressed as an emptiness of soul which yet cannot be destroyed. The evil in Many Dimensions results in the destruction of the body as well as the infinite torture of the soul.² Nowhere in these novels does sin go unpunished or unnoticed, but the evil doers are eventually brought to the bar of justice and are duly rewarded accordingly to their deeds.

It is characteristic of all the novels that the sin and evil in them are expressed in terms of black magic and occult powers, yet it is never doubtful that the evildoers themselves are responsible for their own acts. Nowhere is there a suggestion that evil is forced upon any man or that there is no way of escape from sin. The characters in these books are free to move and to choose, as they will, good or evil. T. S. Eliot states it thus:

. . . the struggle between God and Evil is carried on, by men and women who are often only the instruments of higher or lower powers, but who always have the freedom to choose to which powers they will submit themselves.¹

3. His View of Christ

The main points in Charles Williams' theology concerning the doctrine of Christ were shown as: 1) He is Divine, the Second Person of the Trinity; 2) He was In-

1. Eliot, op. cit., p. xvi.

car-nate to unite man with God, to suffer with man, and to redeem man; and 3) He lived on earth as a man, died on the cross, rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven from whence he shall return.

In his novels, the author has left the figure of Christ in the shadowy background choosing only to allude in a few instances to the Divine Son of God. The illusions which he does make to the Christ are quite in keeping with his theological views of Him. In All Hallows' Eve he twice mentions the Incarnation, once in reference to the birth of Christ¹ and once in reference to the Holy family.²

He mentions one other fact in relation to Christ and that is regarding his substitutionary death. In Descent into Hell he writes:

The central mystery of Christendom, the terrible fundamental substitution on which so much learning had been spent and about which so much blood had been shed, showed not as a miraculous exception, but as the root of a universal rule . . . 'behold, I show you a mystery', as supernatural as that Sacrifice as natural as carrying a bag.³

4. His View of Atonement

The author's view of atonement as it is revealed in his theological writings is found first to be based on the

1. Williams, All Hallows' Eve, p. 62.

2. Ibid., p. 164.

3. Ibid., pp. 47-48.

finished work of Christ on Calvary. It is illustrated by the Old Testament ritual of blood sacrifice. It consists of a removal of sin by Christ's bearing it on the Cross and a restoration of the soul into the state of unified goodness from which it fell.

This conception of atonement is basic to Williams' view of Romantic Theology which is his emphasis in the novels. This Romantic Theology is simply the belief that the experiences in life which are called romantic may have theological implications.¹ Williams believes there is a way of approach through love so that the highest love on the human level may draw the soul into love on the Divine level.* This way of "Romantic Love" is best illustrated in All Hallows' Eve. Here Lester, the dead wife of Richard Furnival, becomes for him the beloved image who teaches him the meaning of love, and brings him to the place where he sees his own need. The first time he sees his wife after her death, Richard is stirred to a realization that he needs her knowledge, a need he had never up to this point realized.² This meeting begins a process of

* A fuller explanation of Charles Williams' views concerning this way of approach to God is given in his volume The Figure of Beatrice which is a study of the poet Dante. The author states here that Dante's work is 'the greatest expression . . . of the way of approach of the soul to its ordained end through the affirmation of the validity of all those images beginning with the image of a girl.'³

1. Lewis, op. cit., p. vi.

2. Williams, All Hallows' Eve, pp. 47-48.

3. Williams, The Figure of Beatrice, p. 8.

change in Richard, the opening of a new life for him. The second time he sees Lester, he receives from her the promise that they will sometime be reunited, for their love is a deathless thing. Out of this experience there grows in him an awareness of his need for a basic change in his own life.

Kindness, patience, forbearance were not enough; he had had them, but she had had love. He must find what she had--another kind of life . . . He must it seemed be born all over again.¹

Richard's last meeting with his wife occurs just before she is finally taken from the twilight city to go to "The Celestial City." This last meeting leaves Richard sorrowing and lonely, but completely certain of the love of his wife. The process of the new birth is beginning in him, and Richard has found the Way into new life through the love of his wife--this is the Way of Romantic Love.

5. His View of the Church and the Christian Life

In his theology Williams defines the church and its functions quite clearly, but in his novels the church is mentioned only briefly. Religion in the form of the official church organization does not find a place of importance here. However, one phase of the Christian life is taken up and thoroughly presented and that is the² current idea of the bond of fellowship between men. In

1. Williams, *All Hallows' Eve*, p. 215.

2. Parsons, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

his theology, Williams presents this idea as one of the most important features in living the Christian life. The command was given to Christians, "Bear ye one another's burdens," and this burden bearing should result in an interchange of love between Christians which would enable them to live freely and joyfully together.

In Descent into Hell this idea of substitutionary love is most fully developed. Pauline, who has been carrying a great load of fear for some time, is urged to give up the burden to Peter Stanhope who promises to carry it for her. As soon as she relinquishes her worry and fear to him she experiences a new peace and joy and her whole life is renewed. Stanhope, in turn, carries the fear for her and experiences all of her spiritual anguish in her stead. Pauline now offers herself to bear the burden of fear carried by a long dead ancestor, and the exchange, made out of time, becomes effective in time, and he is able to bear his martyrdom and die in triumphant¹ courage. Williams describes the scene thus:

She was here. She had been taught what to do. She had her offer to make now and it would not be refused. She herself was offered, in a most certain fact, through four centuries, her place at the table of exchange. The moment of good will in which she had directed to the city the man who had lately died had opened to her the city itself, the place of the present and all the past . . . The choice was first in her; Omnipotence waited her decision . . .

1. Williams, Descent into Hell, pp. 188-191.

Behind her, her own voice said, 'Give it to me, John Struther.'" . . . He stretched out his arms again; he called : 'Lord, Lord!' It was a devotion and an adoration; it accepted and thanked . . . He fell on his knees, and in a great roar of triumph he called out: 'I have seen the salvation of my God.'¹

D. Summary

The chapter began with a summary of the content of the four novels under consideration. All Hallows' Eve was concerned with the desire of the evil sorcerer Simon to achieve domination of the world through control of the spiritual realm. He had attempted to separate the soul and body of his daughter Betty but was foiled by Lester Furnival. She took the force of his curse in Betty's place, and the strength of the Cross enabled her to endure and defeat the evil of Simon. War In Heaven was centered around a struggle for the possession of the Holy Grail. The kindly Archdeacon of Fardles found himself in conflict with the evil Gregory Persimmons, but Prestor John, the keeper of the Grail, defeated Gregory and then mysteriously vanished taking the Grail with him. Many Dimensions was found to be concerned with a magic Stone which was supposed to be the End of Desire. This Stone, which caused a great deal of anxiety, was finally removed when Chloe permitted herself to become the Way of the Stone. Descent Into Hell was

concerned with the spiritual struggles of the members of Battle Hill. It presented the story of Pauline Anstruther who achieved salvation and deliverance from fear, and Lawrence Wentworth who refused salvation and whose soul descended into a hell of oblivion.

Next, the theology of Williams as it appeared in these novels was studied. His theological view of God was seen to be the basis for the God presented in his novels with the chief emphasis upon the Omnipotence.

In his theology Williams revealed that he believed sin to be inherent in the human soul, and this concept was seen to form the basic structure for his presentation of sin in his novels. It was shown that in each of the novels the sin took a different form, but basically it all stemmed from the human heart. He showed how it produced a variety of results, but essentially they all meant death for the soul.

Williams' view of Christ which was revealed clearly in his theology was seen only as a shadowy background in his novels.

The author's view of atonement in his novels was shown to rest upon this theological concept of the atonement wrought out by Christ. His particular emphasis was shown to be that of a way of approach to God which he described as the Way of Images. His view in essence was that through the love of another human being one may reach

the Divine love.

Finally, it was seen that Williams touched on the Christian life in the area of Christian responsibility to others. In his novels he emphasized the point that man has been commanded to bear the burdens of others. Williams believed that in bearing of burdens man finds joy and peace and fulfills his Christian responsibility.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

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A. Restatement of Problem

Because the writings of Charles Williams express a vibrant hope in the Almighty, forming what may be termed an island in a sea of disillusionment, and because Williams presents Christian truth in a unique and new manner, this study of his selected writings was undertaken.

B. Summary

It was first shown that Williams' life and literary background were important to his work for the personality of an author can never be separated from his work. Charles Williams' personality was characterized by a skeptic pessimism and at the same time by a complete optimism, so that he was able to know perfect faith even while he experienced violent doubt. He was further characterized by a complete naturalness in the realm of the supernatural so that he was as much at home in the one as in the other. Because of this belief, he was able to write with profound insight about Good and Evil and Heaven and Hell. His books are the expression of his own personality and that which he was in real life. It was likewise shown that the age in

which a writer lives has an influence upon the work which he produces. Thus Williams' writings have in them some of the spiritual hunger of the age which sought God, and a deep consciousness of the problems of the world in which the author lived.

The writings of Williams in the field of theology were then studied to discover his theological views. A survey of the contents of each of the books was made giving the major ideas and concepts presented in them.

From this review of the contents it was seen that Williams discussed in his theology topics in all of the major theological categories. He Came Down from Heaven was concerned with the coming of the Messiah from heaven and the results of that coming to mankind. The Forgiveness of Sins dealt with the problem of forgiveness and its relation to mankind. Witchcraft was a study of the history of that form of evil which is associated with black magic and occult powers. The Descent of the Dove concerned the history of the Church and the operation of the Holy Spirit in it.

The study then moved to a consideration of the theology itself. It was seen that Williams viewed the Scriptures as a record of God's relationship to man, having a central unifying theme which cannot be destroyed. His doctrine of God revealed that he believed in a God who is a Spiritual Being, Transcendent, Immanent,

Omniscient, Omnipresent, and Omnipotent, One who is characterized by the moral attributes of goodness, holiness and righteousness. His view of man and sin showed that he believed that man is a result of God's purposeful creative act and sin is a violation of man's relationship to God. It was seen that Christ was the Divine Son of God and also the Son of Man. His view of the Atonement showed that he accepted the death of Christ as the sacrifice for man's sin and that sin has been removed and pardoned by that act. It was shown that he believed the Holy Spirit to be the Third Person of the Godhead and that He is active in the life and growth of the Church. His view of the Church and the Christian Life centered in his belief in the Church as an agency for the work of Christ's Kingdom and that its members have a responsibility to bear each other's burdens. His theology of the end times showed that he accepted the Second Coming of Christ and the eventual appearance of the City of God.

The study then moved on to a consideration of the novels of Williams and the reflection of his theology in them. All Hallows' Eve was concerned with the conflict between the evil sorcerer Simon who sought to achieve world domination and Lester Furnival, who defeated him by the power given her from the Omnipotent God. War in Heaven centered around a struggle for the Holy Grail in which the powers of good battled the powers of evil for its possession.

Many Dimensions was concerned with the conflict for the possession of a magic Stone which would give the owner unusual abilities of movement in time and space. Descent into Hell presented the story of the deliverance of Pauline Anstruther from her fear, and the descent into hell of Lawrence Wentworth.

Then the theology was related to the novels and it was shown how the doctrine of God, Man, and Sin, Person of Christ, Atonement, and the Christian life are bases for the religious ideas expressed in the novels. His theological concept of God was seen to be the basis for the God presented in his novels with the chief emphasis upon the Omnipotence.

In his novels the idea of evil was seen to rest upon his theological concept of man and sin. It was also evident in the novels that sin stemmed from the human heart.

The clear-cut presentation of the doctrine of the Person of Christ which was revealed in his theology was seen as a shadowy background in his novels.

The doctrine of Atonement which was fully presented in his theology formed the underlying structure for Williams' particular treatment of an avenue of approach to God. His emphasis was upon this way of access to God, which he has termed the "Way of Images."

Finally, Williams' concept of Christian responsibility which was found in his novels was seen to be an

expansion and enlargement of his theological idea of the Christian life.

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