Figura rerum: 'the pattern of the glory': the theological contributions of Charles Williams

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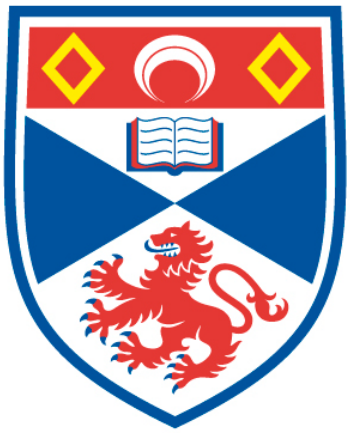

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ABSTRACT

***FIGURA RERUM*: 'THE PATTERN OF THE GLORY', THE THEOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION OF CHARLES WILLIAMS**

by

Paul Stewart Blair

This thesis seeks to show that Charles Williams makes a significant contribution to theology, and it demonstrates the nature of that contribution. A pattern of theological themes centering on the Incarnation, emphasizing the humanity of Christ, is repeated throughout his works. For Williams, human beings are images of the coinherent Godhead.

His theological anthropology further develops through his understanding of imaging, as shown for instance in the Incarnation, and in Dante's characterization of Beatrice as a God bearer. His view of images is built from Coleridge's understanding of the nature of a symbol. This picture of imaging is widely applied, first and foremost to relationships of love, seen as potential incarnate images of grace. Williams seeks to extend his picture to all relationships and, further, to whatever man must do to go beyond himself to an encounter with God.

He believes that man is responsible for his brother, in practice by bearing his brother's burdens, with substitutionary acts of vicarious love. A further part of his thinking then views people as living in coinherent relationships, and the universe as a web of coinherent relations. He draws his examples of natural coinherent relations from the world of commerce with its exchange and substitution of labors and from the child living within its mother, and builds a picture of what he calls the City, a broader coinherent society. Coinherence begins and flows from the Trinity and the Incarnation and then is found in relationships between God and man: in the Church, in the future City of God, and in all Creation. The Fall brings about the breakdown of the coinherence of God and man and man and man, and that breakdown is a central characteristic of sin. Williams believes that a regenerated coinherence in Christ brings about a renewal of mankind.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations will be used for the volumes listed below after the first full reference due to their recurrence throughout the thesis.

Cavaliero, G. *Charles Williams: Poet of Theology*	*POT*
Eliot, T. S. Introduction to *All Hallows Eve* by C. Williams	*TSEAH*
Hadfield, A. M. *Charles Williams: An Exploration of His Life and Work*	*CWX*
Horne, B. 'The Systematic Theology of Charles Williams'	*STCW*
John Paul II. *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*	*TOB*
Shideler, M. *The Theology of Romantic Love*	*TRL*
Williams, C. *Collected Plays*	*CP*
———. *Descent into Hell*	*DIH*
———. *The Descent of the Dove*	*DOD*
———. *The Figure of Beatrice*	*FOB*
———. *He Came Down from Heaven and The Forgiveness of Sins*	*HCD*
———. *The Image of the City and Other Essays*	*IOC*
———. *Outlines of Romantic Theology*	*ORT*
———. *Taliessin through Logres* and *The Region of the Summer Stars*	*TTLRSS*
Williams, C., and C. S. Lewis. *Arthurian Torso*	*AT*

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Third, a special thanks to those who have prayed for us for many years and encouraged us to persevere over the long haul: Paul and Anne Vincent, Dan Strait, Harold and Marcia Burgess, Bruce Baker, Greg and Maria Swanson, Charles and Jean Howell, Daryl and Annette Diddle, Gerald and Claudia Miller, Hule Goddard, David Wier, Tim Shell, Bob St. Clair, Mary Lambert, the Riggs Family, Harry and Marjorie Snyder, and many others who have been encouragers for many years.

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Eighth, our children, Bill, Katie, and Jenny, for their patience.

DEDICATION

To my wife, Mary, who has been for me ‘THE PATTERN OF THE GLORY’ for almost 37 years of marriage. She is my Beatrice, my *theotokos,* and I know something of what the expression *La Carne Gloriosa e Santa* means because of her.

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

'Christ bring us all to the sight of the pattern of the glory which is only he'.
Charles Williams

A. Character of Thesis

The dominant concern of the thesis is specifically with Williams's theology, and nearly all his work is at least theologically relevant, though in a variety of ways. Two major questions lead the thesis. First, does Williams make a significant contribution to theology? A first answer might be, that C. S. Lewis, T. S. Eliot, E. L. Mascall, W. H. Auden, Dorothy Sayers, Hans Urs Von Balthasar, A. M. Allchin, John Taylor, and today John Heath-Stubbs, Glen Cavaliero, John Milbanks, Arthur Livingston, Thomas Howard, Charles Hefling, David Mahan, Geoffrey Hill, Philip Jenkins, Timothy Ware, Aidan Nichols, Brian Horne, J. I. Packer, Eugene Peterson, Ben Witherington, the past Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams (currently the President of the Charles Williams Society) and many others share the view in various ways that his work is theologically important

This leads to the second question: What is his contribution? An answer to this question needs to include a long, thorough, and comprehensive theological review of his entire complex canon. In order to evaluate the significance of his contribution properly, Eliot maintains that to understand Williams, one must examine the whole of his work and not any one or several masterpieces.[1]

First, then, we are trying to see the forest of Charles Williams's writings from thirty thousand feet, discovering from a comprehensive survey the major theological topographical reference points throughout the landscape of Williams's canon, nearly 40 volumes of work. We shall see if it contains a discernable *Figura Rerum*[2], a distinctive shape of things, and, if so, what it looks like. Williams also repeatedly uses another phrase, indicating a theological purpose and structure to his work: 'The Pattern of the

[1] T. S. Eliot, 'The Significance of Charles Williams', *The Listener* 35 (December 19, 1946): 894, Wade Center.

[2] He uses the term *figure* on several occasions and in several different contexts to give an imagistic shape to his content. They are *The Figure of Beatrice*, *The Figure of Arthur,* the Figure of Forgiveness, *Figura Rerum,* and the figure of a woman's body as the map for the original edition of *Taliesssin through Logres.*

Glory', referring at its center to the Incarnation of Christ and spreading out to encompass the Creation—*'Vestigium Quoddam'*.[3] As Charles Hefling suggests, perceiving the pattern 'is as much a matter of aesthetic intuition as of logical reasoning'.[4] The major reference points of the pattern will be reflected in the structure and style of the thesis.

But then, we shall also explore a great deal of the detail in Williams's theology, closely examining particular major themes in the overall pattern. This second task interrelates with the survey so that the picture is built up together chapter by chapter. Chapter II begins to unfold this difficult and complex task by surveying and attempting to sort out the significant thematic elements in some initial detail.

According to Lois Glenn, Williams is one of the most prolific writers of his time, and he wrote in many genres.[5] The volume of his work and the variety of genres also makes for a difficult task. This difficulty alone is one of the reasons why this type of overview is not readily available with a few exceptions. Only three comprehensive works examine the entire corpus of his theological ideas and are also good critical reviews of his overall work; however, only one is published.[6]

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[3] C. Williams, *Collected Plays*, Seed of Adam 171. 'Christ bring us all to the sight of the pattern of the glory which is only he'. Williams extends his use of the expression to speak of Christ, and of his wife, Beatrice, and others who symbolize Redemption, Christ, or Love. See *HCD*, 36, 70, 78. He also extends to the pattern of coinherence he sees in Creation. See C. Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994), 92. This will be discussed in Chapter VI.

[4] C. Hefling, ed., *Charles Williams: Essential Writings in Spirituality and Theology* (Boston: Cowley, 1993), 6.

[5] L. Glenn, *Charles W. S. Williams: A Checklist* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1975), viii. He wrote seven novels, seven volumes of poetry, over twenty plays, four books of literary criticism, five books on theology, seven biographies, over two hundred articles and reviews, several introductions, many editorials to works, and close to a thousand letters. Many of his reviews and articles were written for *Time and Tide* and *Theology*, as well as other journals. He has over three hundred manuscripts of finished and unfinished works, lecture notes, unpublished plays, etc.

[6] G. Cavaliero, *Charles Williams: Poet of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1983) is the only comprehensive published work, and the other two are dissertations remaining, for the most part, unread. With the author's permission, I was able to purchase a copy of Brian Horne's "The Systematic Theology of Charles Williams." I also purchased a copy of Georgette Versinger's 'Charles Williams, Sa Vie, Son Oeuvre' from her sister Nicole Versinger. Georgette died and Nicole and Arlette Sancery finished her dissertation. It is a solid comprehensive major work in French, 699 pages. Three other published volumes offer glimpses of his canon: C. Huttar and P. Schakel, eds., *The Rhetoric of Vision: Essays on Charles Williams* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press; London: Associated University Press, 1996); B. Horne, ed., *Charles Williams: A Celebration* (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 1995). The last two volumes are a helpful stimulus for further work, but they are not theologically comprehensive. Charles Hefling, ed., *Charles Williams: Essential Writings* may also be mentioned. It is a good volume to start with, but Hefling's work is limited by the scope of his examination. This thesis does not make a concerted effort to draw much from the biographical work on Williams's life (except what directly bears on his theological work). The focus of the thesis is on the theological elements in his written work. Williams's work can stand alone on its own merit beyond the man.

Williams did not write a systematic work in theology or work theology out in a systematic way. Instead his theology is spread throughout his many works in the various literary genres, rendering its own challenges in a thesis surveying most of his work. In order to present an overall picture of his theological thinking, we have first tried to select what can be regarded as its major theological elements and then arrange them with some order and structure. The first reflection of interpretative order is in the Chapters themselves, their thematic significance and their subsections.

Although a comprehensive survey has its own limitations, it can reveal much that an in-depth examination in one genre is unable to disclose. Yet most of the criticism, dissertations, books, and articles on Williams and his work are related to one genre or theme and often take a particular perspective on his work. This limitation results in characterizations and interpretations of his work, which are understandably restricted and frequently distorted especially when the theological writings are not examined first, for they can aid one to discover the foundational themes and overarching pattern imbedded in his work. A more comprehensive perspective is needed to take in and understand the rich and complex variety of his writings, which are permeated with a creative, poetic, orthodox theological point of view.

Much of the existing work concerns only the literary interests of the commentator, coupled with a light religious flavor, but without any serious theological reflection.[7] Some other commentators take up a prejudiced and negative perspective. For example, some writers see Williams's work only as a projection of his inner psyche and focus on the supposed religious and moral turmoil of the suppressed tensions of his marital and extramarital relations. The result is imposing their interpretation of his emotional and spiritual state upon all his life and work.[8] In contrast, many major theologians and writers treat his work as a serious creative theological vision.

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[7] D. Sayers, 'Dante and Charles Williams', in *Christian Letters to a Post-Christian World: A Selection of Essays* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B.Eerdmans, 1969), 159–77. Dorothy Sayers addresses the disenfranchising of authorial intention as a major problem of literary criticism, especially with Williams's work.

[8] See Appendix C.

B. Some Outstanding Theological Reference Points

In building a comprehensive theological understanding of his canon, a few significant issues need to be emphasized that are not given the appropriate emphasis in other works. But in my opinion, they are critical to Williams's theological thinking.

One such reference point is Williams's emphasis on Duns Scotus's view of the reason for the Incarnation: Christ's coming was not God's Plan B that became necessary because of the Fall. Instead, this view holds that the Incarnation was coming because God loves His Creation, especially man. God wanted to be in relationship with man. This view is only mentioned a few times in his work, but Williams's interpretation of it frames his theological perspective on God's nature and acts, especially His initiatory and sustaining love. In Williams's view, the nature of God (Love) is the principal determinative factor for Creation and the Incarnation and the Fall is not the central reason for Christ's Incarnation.

Then, too, Williams more obviously emphasizes the importance of the humanity of Christ, especially His bodiliness. It is not a problem for God to take humanity into the Godhead. Williams's concern about physicality is why he repeatedly refers to this particular line in the Athanasian Creed: 'not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh: but by taking of the Manhood into God'. Williams shows that the bodiliness of man is still good and that it is more important in the life of man than is sometimes thought. It is used by God for man's joy and salvation. Further, Williams allows no dualism in his theological perspective—he is a monist.

Unique to this thesis is the important place given to the presentation and exploration of the complementarity and coinherence of the Two Ways. Williams emphasizes the way of affirmation, partly because of the manichaeistic tendencies of the Church, which lead to Gnosticism and Docetism. But he clearly states that a balanced view of the Two Ways functioning together in a perichoretic manner is necessary for the spiritual health of the individual and the Church. Williams also points out how some skeptics, and some critics of the Church, have served the purposes of God when the Church has become hypocritical in her ways.

Williams demonstrates that Creation is a coinherent whole—'Vestigium Quoddam' analogous to God's coinherent unity. For him, Creation is an icon of God's coinherent love, and a person in love is especially an icon of God's love. A person in love can be a glimpse of the 'Pattern of the Glory'. He also demonstrates that the Fall,

sin, and damnation (knowing good as an opportunity for evil) are parts of the breakdown of this pattern of coinherence and that its reversal (knowing evil as an opportunity for good) in Christ is the beginning of its renewal and restoration.

C. Thesis Structure

The thesis is structured as follows. Chapter II, The Theological Typography, is a survey of the major elements in his writings, including the recurring theological themes throughout the various genres, and it examines the various genres themselves. Chapter III, The Two Ways, discusses Williams's understanding and use of two classical approaches in our pilgrimage with God. Chapter IV, This Also is Thou, Neither is This Thou, delves particularly into his understanding and use of images. Chapter V, Romantic Love and Other God-used Relationships and Activities, explains the primary family of images that Williams develops to show how God comes to us through various relationships of love and through activities that draw us beyond ourselves. Chapter VI, The Coinherence in Reality and in Life, concerns the image of the City, exploring his multifaceted understanding of coinherence, which brings together the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Church, marriage, childbirth, and the burden bearing economies of life. Chapter VII, The Fall: Knowing Good as Evil, examines his understanding of the Creation and of the nature of the Fall, Sin, Evil, and Damnation, all in relation to the nature of the Incarnation and man's response to grace. The Afterword evaluates the viability of Williams's contribution for our age, and its application to postmodernity.

D. Biographical Sketch

Born in 1886 into a committed Anglican Christian family where the great literature of the world was common currency, story became second nature to Williams. He had a lifelong investment in the love poetry of the Arthurian Legends and the work of Dante Alighieri. For ten years (8 to 18) his early formative training at St. Albans Abbey School developed in him the theological framework for the later literary career. He was immersed in the scriptures, creeds, sacraments, liturgy, liturgical calendar, and dogmas of the Church of England.[9]

[9] C. Huttar, 'Seeing Williams' Work as a Whole—Church Year and Creed as Structural Principles', *Mythlore* 14, no. 1 (Autumn 1987).

In his early adult years, he regularly taught Sunday school.[10] He was unable to finish a degree at University College, London because of a lack of funds. He was also kept from serving in the military due to his poor eyesight.[11] He worked in the Methodist Bookroom in London from 1904 to 1908. From 1908 until his death in May 1945, he spent his working career as an editor at Oxford University Press in London and Oxford.[12] He lectured in English Literature at Oxford University and was awarded an honorary master's degree by that University. He also taught in evening classes outside of the University, in the City Literary Institute, where he influenced Dylan Thomas and other young poets.[13]

He married Florence Conway in 1917 and they had a son—Michael. His marital relationship was full of problems, and he had several notable inappropriate emotional, though nonsexual, relationships with young women.[14] From 1917 until 1927, he was also a member of and became a leader in A. E. Waite's hermetic society, The Fellowship of the Rosy Cross, where he met Evelyn Underhill, W. B. Yeats, and other literary and religious figures.[15] The relationship with Waite and the influence gleaned from the association were useful resources for his future fictional writings.[16] In 1936 he and C. S. Lewis exchanged letters and met several times. From 1939, when OUP moved to Oxford, until his death in May of 1945, Williams met together at least two to three times a week with the group that became known as the Inklings. He also preached regularly and was scheduled to preach on Whit-Sunday 1945 at St. Mary's in Oxford, but he died a few days before.[17]

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[10] A. M. Hadfield, *Charles Williams: An Exploration of His Life and Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 13.

[11] Hadfield, *Charles Williams: An Exploration*, 11–12.

[12] Ibid., 13.

[13] Anne Ridler, Introduction to *Image of the City and Other Essays*, selected by Anne Ridler (1958; Berkeley, CA: Apocryphile Press, 2007), xx.

[14] See Appendix C.

[15] G. Ashenden, *Charles Williams: Alchemy and Integration* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2008), 2–6. See also Hadfield, *CWX*, 29.

[16] See Appendices B and C.

[17] Ridler, xxix.

CHAPTER II
THE THEOLOGICAL TYPOGRAPHY FROM A NARRATIVE SURVEY

It is the whole work, not any one or several masterpieces,
that we have to take into account in estimating the importance of the man.
—T. S. Eliot

A. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to show and track the major repeated elements and theological themes and the major theological discussions through the variety and volume of Williams's work. The task is large and complex. The novels, poetry, plays, and some parts of the biographies display Williams's use of at least four major elements across his work: stories,[18] images, recurrent theological themes, and theological discussions. Some theological discussions are concentrated; others interpenetrate into the various writings of other genres. These elements are obvious throughout his works. For example, novels contain story and make use of images in the story; recurrent theological themes are woven into the story; and, sometimes, explicit theological dialogue may briefly interrupt the story or indirectly be discussed by the characters. Regardless of the action of the narrative or drama, Williams continually interweaves a theological conversation into his stories. Some letters and essays are also used to demonstrate the same recurring elements.

The reader will be asked to view Williams's work with a similar sense of literary criticism as Williams expects others to read any piece of literature. The first step involves looking for the main themes. Ignoring his major recurrent themes will prevent understanding what he is trying to say.[19] Whether the reader agrees or not is another matter. Second, his major themes have a connectedness and culminate in the larger purpose of his writing: This latter point is related to Williams's repeated references to coinherence, which is a critical aspect of Williams's understanding of God and the

[18] Story and narrative are used synonymously throughout the thesis.

[19] Williams is critical of people who ignore the main theme. Agreeing with the main ideas is not important first; rather, readers need to look and see what the story is really about. Dismissing the main ideas misses the author's intention. See C. Williams, *He Came Down from Heaven* (1942, 1938; Berkeley, CA: Apocryphile Press, 2005). 14–15.

greater story of God's love for man.[20] He has his own purposes behind and within his storytelling, which implicitly points beyond itself to serious theological reflection.

The following section considers these major recurring elements, and the next section discusses the variety of genres and ways in which the elements are interwoven in them. In particular, it observes the presence of theology in one form or another in all of these genres.

B. Primary Elements of Williams's Writings

This section focuses on four of Williams's recurring primary elements—stories, images, repeated theological themes, and theological discussions.

1. Stories

Elie Wiesel writes, 'God made man because He loves stories'.[21] Narrative gives coherence to the ambiance of prosaic thoughts. It serves many functions: 'We dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, gossip, learn, hate, and love by narrative'.[22] In the web of story, Williams expresses his views on a vast range of topics.

The novels, plays, and Arthurian material each has its own narratives inter-woven with a Christian perspective. Borrowed from legends, from past and current history, some fictional and others combining history and legend together, the narratives function for Williams especially to bring out his theological opinions. The novels normally use contemporary British settings as a place of intersection for, among other things, the meeting of the natural and the supernatural. The plays use biblical stories, modern history, and contemporary settings. Even his literary criticism have the same recurring elements. For example, in *The Figure of Beatrice*, Williams analyzes the story of Dante's love for Beatrice. All of these genres are discussed at length in the following sections.

Williams also weaves into the fabric of his stories what he thinks is the greater story behind all stories. Williams's foundational meta-narrative is God's pursuing love

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[20] Coinherence will be discussed at length in Chapter VI.

[21] E. Wiesel, *The Gates of the Forest* (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1966). 'Prologue', from a Yiddish proverb.

[22] B. Hardy, 'Towards a Poetic of Fiction: An Approach through Narrative', *Novel* 2, no. 1 (Fall 1968): 5.

of man through his fellow man, shaped by his understanding of the Incarnation of Christ and man's responsibility to love his neighbor. His narratives, in whatever genre, also have recurrent theological themes: for instance, the interpenetration of the supernatural into everyday lives, the decisions for good or evil, love or selfishness, a sacramental vision of life, and the painful contradictions in life, which he calls impossibilities.

Even his more directly theological writing has strong narrative elements. Using the biblical stories in *He Came Down From Heaven* Williams demonstrates the narrative movement in the Old Testament towards the Incarnation. Beginning with the Ascension and Pentecost, *The Descent of the Dove* interprets the historical stories of Christendom, revealing Williams's own unique interpretation of their significance.

2. Images

Images and stories are built together as bricks and mortar, counterparts to each other. Austin Farrer, a younger friend of Williams,[23] explains that individuals write in symbol when they want to present rather than to analyze or prove. Farrer says, 'A revolution occurs with the advent of Christianity which ushers in a transformation and rebirth of images'.[24] For Williams, the image leads to a source, basis, or referent.[25] Williams's epistemology of imaging is similar to Farrer's and Mascall's.[26] Understanding these aspects of the image in its relationship to the beholder and its source is critical to understanding Williams's contribution to Christianity.

Using objects and people to image important theological themes is a major aspect of Williams's narrative tapestry. In particular the use of human persons as images

[23] Two years before Williams died, he met and established a friendship with Farrer. See A. Loades, 'The Vitality of Tradition: Austin Farrer and Friends', in *Captured by the Crucified: The Practical Theology of Austin Farrer*, ed. D. Hein and E. Henderson (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 30. See also S. Platten, 'Diaphanous Thought: Spirituality and Theology in the Work of Austin Farrer', *Anglican Theological Review* 69 (January 1987): 35–37. Platten says that Williams influenced Farrer in his understanding of an image and coinherence and the way of affirmation of images. See also H. Carpenter, *The Inklings: C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and Their Friends* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), 188. Farrer exchanged the term symbol for image in *A Rebirth of Images* (as Williams had done earlier). A. Farrar, *A Rebirth of Images: The Making of St. John's Apocalypse* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006).

[24] Farrer, *A Rebirth of Images,* 14–15.

[25] Source is the term used for referent or basis in the dissertation.

[26] E. L. Mascall, *Theology and Images* (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1963), 3–4. Mascall (also influenced by Williams) mentions that Farrer in *The Glass of Vision* maintains that images have a direct epistemological function They illuminate us directly without intervention of an intermediate stage of conceptual thought and render a contemplative metaphysical approach to the natural world, which can lead by an analogical movement to the God who is creative ground.

is the most significant part of Williams's theological methodology and will be discussed at length in the following chapters. However, we may note that Williams also used all sorts of other objects as images: works of art,[27] words, animals,[28] the grail,[29] the stone of Solomon,[30] tarot cards,[31] a lion,[32] a picture,[33] a skeleton,[34] Beatrice, Byzantium, London, and Britain,[35] romantic love, women, the human body, and the city are all images and vehicles of mediation.

Those symbols (primarily people and objects) become theological icons and are used to help tell a story of love and evil. Mary Shideler thinks that the framework and meaning of these images provide guiding theological purposes:

> Williams' imagery … is undergirded by a complex, but exceptionally coherent, pattern of ideas. Beneath his images … lies a theological structure which is as astonishing for its scope and consistency as for its originality, and which gives to his separate books and ideas their enduring strength. The design may not be immediately apparent, but it exists.[36]

His use of images also explains what T. S. Eliot said about Williams's work: 'What he had to say was beyond his resources, and probably beyond the resources of language…'.[37] He uses the media of poetry, plays, essays, and novels, all the while employing the vehicle of images to carry the ideas he wants to communicate.

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[27] R. C. Holder, 'Art and the Artist in the Fiction of Charles Williams'. *Renascence* 27 (1975): 81. Holder says, 'The Figure of the artist in the novels of Charles Williams is unique in the fiction of our century.… The artist or art functions as a theological guide to what is happening in the story'.

[28] See C. Williams, 'The Place of the Lion: Chasing Philosophical Rainbows', *The Charles Williams Society Newsletter* 89 (Winter 1998): 10–18.

[29] C. Crowley, 'The Grail Poetry of Charles Williams', *The University of Toronto Quarterly* 25 (1956): 484–93. See also E. Fuller, 'Many Dimensions: The Images of Charles Williams', in *Books with Men Behind Them* (New York: Random House, 1962), 197–234.

[30] R. Beare, 'Charles Williams and the Stone', *Mythlore* 8, no. 3, iss. 29 (Autumn 1981): 34.

[31] C. Huttar, 'Charles Williams Christmas Novel: The Greater Trumps', *Seven* 4 (1983): 68–83.

[32] B. B. Doyle, 'The Ways of Images In Charles Williams' *The Place of the Lion*', *Mythlore* 16, no. 3 (Spring 1990): 15–19. See also J. J. Kollman, 'Charles Williams, *The Place of the Lion*, and Neoplatonic Fantasy', *Kansas Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (Summer 1984): 35–42.

[33] Holder, 81.

[34] J. Dixon, 'Charles Williams and Thomas Cranmer at Canterbury', *Seven* 5 (1984): 42–43.

[35] J. Curtis, 'Byzantium and the Matter of Britain: The Narrative Framework of Charles Williams's Later Arthurian Poems', *Quondam et Futurus* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 28–54. See also S. Dunn, 'Mr. White, Mr. Williams and the Matter of Britain', *Kenyon Review* 24 (1962): 363–71.

[36] M. McDermott Shideler, *The Theology of Romantic Love* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2005): 4.

[37] T. S. Eliot, Introduction to *All Hallows Eve* by Charles Williams (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), xi.

3. Recurrent Theological Themes

Williams had a selection of repetitive themes: good and evil, man's choice or refusal of love, the interpenetration of the natural and the supernatural, substitutionary love, forgiveness, the occult, and the impossibilities. Glenn writes, 'His use of themes that recur in his canon are perhaps his most significant contribution to a lasting literature'.[38] His characters or images frequently incarnate a particular theme, thereby personalizing the themes and linking them to a particularization of expression.[39]

a. Good and evil: the choice of love or its refusal. Edith Z. Alward writes, 'As one reads several novels of Charles Williams the same basic set of characters are found striving for the same end. Most of his characters are incarnations of either good or evil…'.[40] Alward goes on to say, 'The basic conflict is always between Good and Evil as distinguished from a conflict between good men and bad men'.[41] In all his writings is a continuing struggle in the lives of the characters between what is good and what is evil. The repetition of this particular theme is part of the background for all his narratives. The good is shown as loving; evil is self-centered and destructive. The latter is antithetical to love and to the web of glory—the City. Evil is about power and manipulation in relationships. However, a theological interpretative marker by Horne needs mentioning:

> Many interpreters of Williams's work seem to detect—or at least show a desire to find—a dualism in his thought and imagination: evil against good; darkness against light; natural against supernatural. I think this kind of interpretation is profoundly mistaken. For all his interest in witchcraft and the occult, for all his use of images of supernatural conflict in his novels, Williams's imagination and thought are monistic, as the theological essays demonstrate.[42]

Horne reinforces that Williams has no dualism in his work.

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[38] Glenn, vii.

[39] His characters tend to have a universal application as well as a particular personification by just one particular character when the image incarnates a theme that is repeated throughout his works and embodied in other characters. The major themes represented by a character are more important and larger than the character.

[40] E. Alward, 'A Literary Analysis of the Theological Motifs in Four Novels of Charles Williams' (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1953), 15, 48. See also R. McLaughlin, 'Drama of Belief and Unbelief', *The Saturday Review of Literature* 33 (April 1950): 19.

[41] Alward, 18.

[42] B. Horne, 'The Theological Rhetoric of Charles Williams', in *The Rhetoric of Vision:Essays on Charles Williams*, ed. Charles A. Huttar and Peter J. Schakel (London: Bucknell University Press, 1996), 28.

Anyone can see in Williams's writings the struggle for power and autonomy in contrast to the vicarious suffering and interdependence of love. His portrayal of good and, particularly, of evil is challengingly strong. Livingston thinks that Williams is sometimes not liked because of 'his awareness and loathsomeness of evil, which was tied firmly to his literary ability to make his audience share in his disgust and horror of that which offends God'.[43] Livingston also writes, 'A reader feels with deep emotions the abyss and emptiness of that which separates itself from the Creator'.[44] Eliot furthers this point, saying, 'He is concerned, not with the Evil of conventional morality and the ordinary manifestations by which we recognize it, but with … the repulsive thing it is'.[45] In Williams's fiction, good eventually triumphs over evil. The corresponding consequences of both decisions for good and decisions for evil are exposed in order to make one conscious about oneself and one's life.

b. The interpenetration of the natural and supernatural. Edmund Fuller says,

> He freshens our awareness that human life is lived at all times and in all places in a double dimension of the natural and the supernatural. He shows us that, in every act, we are in contact with … Him Who is beyond nature because He created nature.[46]

Williams demonstrates in stories the interpenetration of the supernatural and natural worlds. Eliot says, 'For him there was no frontier between the material world and the spiritual world'.[47] To Williams they are not separate worlds. Refusals of love are an impiety against man and God—sins.[48] This refusal is why Williams's quoting of 'The Kingdom of God is at hand' has an acute reality.[49] Allchin says that Williams's interplay of worlds and time shows us 'the way in which the world of time and space is constantly in interaction with the world beyond time and space'.[50]

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[43] Arthur Livingston, 'Systematic Philosophy and Theology in an English Novelist: The Survival of the Franciscan Tradition in Charles Williams' (PhD diss., Loyola University of Chicago, 1982), 84.

[44] Ibid., 84–85.

[45] *TSEAH*, xvi.

[46] Fuller, *Books with Men behind Them* (New York: Random House, 1962), 206.

[47] Ibid., xiii.

[48] *HCD*, 36.

[49] Ibid., 12. See Mark 1:15.

[50] A. M. Allchin, 'Charles Williams and the Arthurian Legend', *The Charles Williams Society Newsletter* 78 (Summer 1995): 18.

The worlds and time intermingle with each other. For example, Williams's stories (similar in this respect to Lewis's *Great Divorce* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*) include conversations and decisions among the dead and between the living and the dead.[51] Williams has characters in one realm interacting with those in another[52]—praying for someone dead, carrying their fear, reminding one of the substitution in the Baptism of the Dead.[53] Williams wants his readers to think, feel, and be aware that they are real participants in the interpenetrating realms of the natural and the supernatural. At the same time, he also wants his readers to be acutely aware that the spiritual world is the foundation or superstructure of their world, and that they all interpenetrate that world whether they are aware of it or not.[54]

c. Substituted love. A certain old man used to say,

> It is right for a man to take up the burden for those who are near to him, whatsoever it may be, and, so to speak, to put his own soul in the place of that of his neighbour, and to become, if it were possible, a double man; and he must suffer, and weep, and mourn with him, and finally the matter must be accounted by him as if he himself had put on the actual body of his neighbour, and as if he had acquired his countenance and soul, and he must suffer for him as he would for himself.[55]

The Christian life is interpersonally demonstrated through the vicarious exchanges of the concerns for others as acts of love. This picture is derived from Williams's understanding of the nature of God and the Incarnation. Central to his perspective is his understanding of exchange and substitution as examples of the natural universal aspects of life, exemplified in different forms: for instance, in childbearing and economic relations. Auden says that a basic theme that runs through all of Williams's work is a doctrine of exchange, substitution, and coinherence.[56] For Williams, this theme is simply part of the way the world is and how it works. Our life and our death are with our neighbor, whether we are aware of it or not. We derive our lives from others and they derive theirs from us. We cannot live from ourselves. This interdependence is part

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[51] C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (New York: Macmillan, 1976), 64f. See also C. Williams, *Descent into Hell* 1937 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1949), 118.

[52] *DIH*, 152–75.

[53] Ibid., 168–71, 188–89. Pauline Anstruther reflects on taking the fear of a relative who is burned at the stake four centuries earlier. She takes her place at 'The table of exchange' of past and present. See 1 Corinthians 15:29.

[54] C. Williams, *Witchcraft*, 1941 (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1966). 14.

[55] C. Williams, ed., *The New Christian Year* (London, OUP, 1941), 53.

[56] W. H. Auden, 'Charles Williams: A Review Article', *The Christian Century* 73, no. 18 (May 2 1956): 552.

of the structure of creation and life that for Williams is a natural analogue of the nature of God—the living for another, in another, and from another.

Williams explains 'The Doctrine of Substituted Love' in a full chapter in his novel *Descent into Hell*. His example is a young woman who is afraid of her ghostly double. She, Pauline, is counseled that someone can carry her fear as their burden, and she could carry another person's burden for them. She will find carrying the burden of another easier while another more easily carries her burden. She is told, 'Haven't you heard it said that we ought to bear one another's burdens?'[57] and, 'But I'm sure that this is a law of the universe, and not to give up your parcel is as much to rebel as not to carry another's'.[58] In *HCD*, Williams also gives his own spiritual counsel on substituted love in a direct theological discourse, offering solid practical pastoral counsel, interpreting Galatians 6:2 on bearing another's burden. In doing so, he removes the more extreme aspects and gives a balanced thoughtful perspective.[59]

Emmanuel Levinas also recognized this universal law of love in the context of embracing or carrying another's fear: 'Love aims at the other: it aims at him in his frailty. To love is to fear for another, to come to the assistance of his frailty'.[60] Lewis also tried and prayed for this type of substitution as Joy, his wife, was suffering with cancer.[61] He prayed that her cancer and pain would abate and that he could take her pain. In prayer, the carrying of another person for their spiritual benefit is a living descriptive metaphor and is regularly taken quite literally in a spiritual sense in every Christian home and church. Sometimes it is taken too far, and not just by Williams.

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[57] *DIH*, 98.

[58] Ibid., 99. Another example of substituted love is developed in his last novel, *All Hallows Eve.* See the discussion by C. W. Trowbridge, 'The Beatricean Character in the Novels of Charles Williams', *Sewanee Review* 79 (1971): 340–43.

[59] *HCD*, 82–94. To be fair, others disagree with Williams about substitution and think he has gone too far. See J. D. Ratecliff, 'Rhetorical Strategies in Charles Williams's Prose Play', in *The Rhetoric of Vision: Essays on Charles Williams,* ed. C. Huttar and P. Schakel (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1996), 245.

[60] E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne Press, 1969), 256.

[61] G. Sayer, *Jack: C. S. Lewis and His Times* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 225f. See C. S. Lewis to Sheldon Vanauken, quoted in Sheldon Vanauken, *A Severe Mercy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 227–28. Her cancer went into remission for some time, and he began to suffer from osteoporosis. See also Carpenter, 246. And see the letter, C. S. Lewis, Letter to Bernard Ackworth, September 18, 1959, Wade Center.

Williams connects the atonement[62] of Christ with Christ calling his followers to deny themselves and be part of that 'greater love' (John 15:12–13—laying down one's life for another). This act of self-denial is an aspect of substitution: 'He saved others; himself he cannot save'.[63] He calls substituted love an 'epigram of the kingdom.'[64] Williams says that this act of self-denial is part of the shared 'mystical substitution', as Christ calls man to follow his example and by God's grace to lay down his life for others:

> We are to love each other *as* he loved us, laying down our lives *as* he did, that this love may be perfected. We are to love each other, that is by acts of substitution. We are to be substituted and to bear substitution. All life is to be vicarious—at least, all life in the kingdom of heaven is to be vicarious.[65]

Williams challenges the Church to see that this practice of substitutionary love may be one means of recovering the more miraculous experiences of the early apostolic era, if it is accompanied with a recovered honesty.[66]

d. Williams's 'impossibility' or 'contradiction'. Wiesel writes, '"For God's sake, where is God?" And from within me, I heard a voice answer: "Where he is? This is where—hanging here from this gallows…"'.[67] After seeing a young boy hanged, living babies thrown into a burning ditch, mother and sisters sent into the flames, fathers beaten to death, and torture and death daily, the impossible becomes the reality and the contradiction to all knowledge. The shock, the crisis, and the world turned upside down become unbearably painful. These events are an extreme example of real contradiction in life. What is happening is terrible, yet it happens even though it should not be. A child dying, God crucified, and the love in a marriage dying. Life has many paradoxes; some may be painful and others not. Williams discusses this universal experience,

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[62] *HCD*, 93, 153. Williams uses the term *atonement* sparingly because he is not only interested in the issue of sin being dealt with by Christ, but in the restoration, renewal, and fulfillment of the relationship between God and man. This is part of the reason why so much of his emphasis is on the Incarnation. The Christology of the Incarnation is of supreme importance for Williams. This will be dealt with in depth later in the thesis.

[63] See Mark 15:31.

[64] *HCD*, 82. Williams also calls exchange and substitution in love: 'the epigram of experience which is in all dogma'. See C. Williams, *The Image of the City and Other Essays*, selected by Anne Ridler (Berkeley, CA: Apocryphile Press, 1958), 188.

[65] Ibid., 86. He interprets John 15:12-13 and 1 John 3:16, 4:12. He also mentions the wrong kind of self-sacrifice or self-denial noted in 1 Corinthians13:3. He comments that self-sacrifice without *caritas* is just as remote from salvation as is self-indulgence, 82.

[66] *IOC*, 154–58.

[67] E. Wiesel, *The Night Trilogy: Night Dawn Day: Consisting of a Memoir Translated by Marion Wiesel, and Two Novels* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008), 83.

usually from the aspect of suffering, and he does so on several levels—as it relates to God, the State, the Church, nations, groups, and individual persons.

Horne discusses two positive contradictions found in Williams's descriptions of contradictions: (1) In his biography of James I, Williams focuses on the contradictions of Queen Elizabeth I coming to the throne and her reign, and (2) Williams also sees a parallel in the character of the Church of England in its origin and its nature as being both Catholic and Protestant. These contradictions are quite different, but they exist. They scream, 'Things should not be this way', but they are.[68]

Horne agrees with Williams's descriptions of the inner tensions of humanity, including some of the most painful and puzzling, which Williams sometimes calls 'the impossibility', and they are quite common to everyone at sometime:

> … the light of that strange and dreadful crisis in which a man becomes a mockery to himself, in which annihilation is his only desire and in which the whole power of the universe denies him annihilation and sustains and nourishes his imagination that it may be at the same time more terribly destroyed; the crisis … in which death eats the heart, the blood becomes living venom, and the wise spirit sits in its tabernacle girding at its own pain.[69]

For example, Williams relates this same type of inner conflict in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida.* Troilus's particular experience of inner pain results from the infidelity of Cressida.[70] Horne explains Williams's representation of the 'Troilus experience': 'Troilus's incapacity to sustain this abrupt contradiction in his world is the source of his tragedy: his reason is subverted and he is driven to a kind of interior destruction'.[71] Horne thinks that the Troilus's experience is similar to what Adam and Eve felt and experienced, partly as a result of the Fall.[72] The fact that Paradise had become the place of estrangement is an example of knowledge in a contradictory mode. Paradise was no longer the place God intended it to be. However, 'the contradiction of

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[68] C. Williams *James I* 1934 (London: Arthur Barker, 1951), 178–79, 90. See discussion, B. Horne, 'The Systematic Theology of Charles Williams' (PhD diss., University of London, 1970), 342–45.

[69] C. Williams, *Bacon* (London: Arthur Barker, 1933), 258. See B. Horne, 'Known in a Different Kind: The Literary Criticism of Charles Williams', *Seven* 3 (1982): 87. See also *POT*, 198.

[70] C. Williams, *The English Poetic Mind* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), v, 59. Williams sees the pain and contradiction in the Troilus experience as part of the reason for writing *The English Poetic Mind*. See also *POT*, 27.

[71] Horne 'Known in a Different Kind', 88.

[72] Ibid., 89. See Chapter VII.

The Fall cannot be escaped but it can be marvelously transcended and as far as Williams was concerned, poetry and theology testify to that'.[73]

Others writers have observed the same contradictions and made the same interpretations. [74] Everyone may feel contradiction at some time, especially in relation to God, his neighbor, and himself. Williams shares a Kierkegaardian picture that, while experiencing these terrible impossibilities, man, in humility and trust, should leap into the arms of God.[75] Williams is certainly not the only writer in modern times to experience and deal with these impossibilities.[76]

Williams's response to these paradoxical impossibilities is God's identification with man in the passion of Christ.[77] If Christ is to share man's identity, he must cry out with the psalmist, 'My God why hast thou forsaken me?'[78] And if experiencing the contradictions and impossibilities of life are universally man's experience, then it must be the experience of Christ as well. Williams explores the paradox of God crucified in a state of abandonment and dereliction: the Creator at the mercy of his creatures. 'The thing that was Christ Jesus, knew all things in the deprivation of all goodness'.[79] It is part of Christ's continual identification with man:

> He accepted the terms of the creation [for] whom he had limited his omnipotence to create; in that sense he accepted justice. If he meant to sustain his creatures in the pain to which they were reduced, at least he gave himself up to that pain. The First Cause was responsible for them; he accepted responsibility and endured equality.… He would not only endure; he would renew; that is, accepting their act he would set up new relations with them on the basis of that act. In their victimization, and therefore in his, he proposed to effect

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[73] Ibid., 92.

[74] Stephen Barber, 'Charles Williams as a Literary Critic', *The Charles Williams Quarterly*, no. 133 (Winter 2009): 20–21.

[75] C. Williams, Introduction to *Kierkegaard: The Present Age:And Two Minor Ethico-Religious Treatises*, trans. A. Dru and W. Lowrie (London: OUP, 1940), xii. For an exposition of Williams's influence on Kierkegaard being published in English, see M. Paulus, 'From a Publisher's Point of View: Charles Williams's Role in Publishing Kierkegaard in English', in *Charles Williams and His Contemporaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 20–41. Williams's biographer says that Williams found in Kierkegaard a writer who spoke to his condition, and Williams lectured on Kierkegaard in his evening classes. See Hadfield, *Charles Williams: An Exploration*, 124, 131, 139, 223–24.

[76] See A. Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, 1952 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 147–59.

[77] Williams wrote a devotional book on the Passion of Christ, *The Passion of Christ Being the Gospel and Narrative of the Passion with Short Passages Taken from the Saints and Doctors of the Church* (London: OUP, 1939).

[78] Ps. 22:1.

[79] *HCD,* 58. See also *IOC*, 132.

> an escape from that victimization. They had refused the co-inherence of the original creation, and had become (literally) incoherent in their suffering. He proposed to make their sufferings themselves co-inherent in him, and therefore to reintroduce them into the principle which was he.[80]

This identification of Christ with man through the passion of the Cross is central in Williams's understanding of the contradictions of life, and he refers to Christ as Life itself experiencing these terrible impossibilities:

> The Cross is the exhibition of Life … 'the whole creation groaneth and travaileth'…. Life itself consents to shrink from its own terrors; it concedes to us its utterance of our own prayer: 'Oh not *this*! If it be possible, not *this*!' … Life itself is acquainted with grief.[81]

For Williams the passion of Christ answers Job's challenge with the innocent suffering (God experiencing the contradictions) as did other innocents, from friend and foe outside the camp, making God credible.[82] He says, 'His body which was His own means of union with matter, and was in consequence the very cause, centre, and origin of all human creation, was exposed to the complete contradiction of itself'.[83] Williams also discusses the dreadful possibility of reality without God experiencing and redeeming the impossibilities. There would be no forgiveness, and without it all evil would have to be maintained.[84]

e. Forgive us *as* we forgive others. In Williams's opinion, refusing to forgive others is an extremely dangerous decision.[85] Williams says of Christ, 'He made forgiveness a necessity of the Kingdom; he withdrew hope from those who would not understand that necessity'.[86] A disciple not only had to be forgiven, he had to forgive others or forfeit his own forgiveness.[87] We are to measure ourselves by Christ's example.

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[80] *IOC*, 131–32.

[81] Ibid., 134. See Isa. 53:3 and Rom. 8:19-22.

[82] Ibid., 133.

[83] Ibid., 136.

[84] Ibid,. 154–55. Williams's dealing with the contradictions of life demonstrates his power as a theologian and an artist. See *POT*, 75.

[85] *HCD*, 157.

[86] Ibid., 152.

[87] Ibid., 146, 157–58. Ultimately forgiveness is measured out to us as we have measured it out to others.

In commenting on the Lord's Prayer and the parable of the wicked servant, Williams says that this parable is God's answer to remaining in a state of forgiveness.[88] We are mercifully given the state of forgiveness as long as we practice with others what we have been given: 'The condition of forgiving then is to be forgiven; the condition of being forgiven is to forgive'.[89] He continues,

> The parable is not perhaps altogether consistent with our feelings; it may shock us that a man who has had his debts forgiven, should have them again set against him. But the moral and metaphysical doctrine is exact; this is what happens. It is that state of things in action which the Lord's Prayer entreats to come into action. The threat implicit in that prayer—in that single clause—is very high; it is the only clause which carries a threat, but there it is clear. No word in English carries a greater possibility of terror than the little word 'as' in that clause; it is the measuring rod of the heavenly City, and the knot of the new union. But it is the key of hell and the knife that cuts the knot of union.[90]

This interpretation is a place where one can feel the seriousness and force of Williams's interpretations. John Milbank thinks this principle of forgiving others as we have been forgiven is a pivotal juncture in Williams's understanding of pardon.[91] Forgiveness of others is central to participation in the coinherence of God's love. For Williams, a double sense of forgiveness exists between two parties. In order to maintain a state of forgiveness, the person(s) needing forgiveness need to ask forgiveness of the other person or party, and the other party or person(s) needs to forgive the other party or person. If the party that has been offended refuses to forgive, then their sins are not forgiven.[92] After remarking on Jesus's reply to Peter about how many times he must forgive, Williams says that with any willful failure of forgiveness, one is not considered a disciple: 'He was by necessity, self-outcast'.[93]

The serious nature of Williams's thoughts on forgiveness owes something to the historical setting. In particular, *The Forgiveness of Sins* was written in the midst of the war with Germany, and it reflects that context. In it, Williams calls for Christians in

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[88] Matt. 6:12 says, 'Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors'. And Matt. 18: 21-35 discusses Peter's question to Jesus about how many times he has to forgive. Jesus answered him with the parable of the wicked servant.

[89] *HCD*, 157.

[90] Ibid.

[91] See J. Milbank, 'The Ethics of Honour and the Possibility of Promise' (working paper, Centre of Theology and Philosophy, University of Nottingham, n.d.), http://theologyphilosophycentre.co.uk/papers/Milbank_TheBreadofForgiveness.pdf (accessed December 23, 2013), 26, note 37. He refers numerous times to *HCD* on pp. 2, 11, 24, 42, 45–46, 59.

[92] *HCD*, 158.

[93] Ibid., 157–58.

Britain to forgive Germans. He concludes *The Forgiveness of Sins* with a warning to one's own harm and danger of hell if forgiveness is not heeded.[94] Horne writes that despite its defects, '*The Forgiveness of Sins* … is one of the most profound and original contributions that has been made to English theology in this century'.[95]

f. The occult. Williams clearly states what he thinks about witchcraft, magic, and the occult in his own volume *Witchcraft*. He comments on the recorded history of witchcraft and renders his own interpretation as to its evil nature. Although active and a leader in A. E. Waite's neo-Rosicrucian Fellowship of the Rosy Cross early in his career, he was not an occultist.[96] In *Witchcraft*, he shows no indulgence 'for a little perverse spiritual prurience'.[97] *Witchcraft* is a real history, and Williams takes a clear stand on the issue of witchcraft:

> No-one will derive any knowledge of initiation from this book; if he wishes to meet 'the tall, black man' or to find the proper method of using the Reversed Pentagram, he must rely on his own heart, which will, no doubt, be one way or other sufficient. I have not wished to titillate or to thrill; so far as I can manage it, this is history.… [98]

In his play *Terror of Light*, he again demonstrates what he thinks of the occult, especially with regard to Christianity:

> *Simon*. Will you exchange magic with me?
>
> *Peter.* I have no magic to exchange. I can tell you a formula, Simon Magus, but it will not help you.
>
> *Simon.* Tell me then.
>
> *Peter.* Others he saved; himself he could not save.
>
> *Simon.* That is not magic; that is pulpit stuff, bourgeois-stuff.… Tell me the magic, and I will give you all the money you want.
>
> *Peter*. Money!
>
> *Simon.* … Come; name your sum and tell me the secret.
>
> *Peter*. Perish with your money and you. Do you think I will sell the mysteries for trash? I have told you the formula of the Kingdom, without payment … you

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[94] *HCD,* 200.

[95] B. Horne, 'Theological Rhetoric of Charles Williams', 278.

[96] This influence and association is the theme of Gavin Ashenden's *Charles Williams: Alchemy and Integration* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2008) and is discussed in Appendix A–C.

[97] S. Dunning, *The Crisis and the Quest: A Kierkegaardian Reading of Charles Williams* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000), 102.

[98] Williams, *Witchcraft*, 9.

> desired to inquire into what you call our magic—and it is nothing but the knowledge of Jesus.[99]

Cavaliero says that one of the distinguishing marks of Williams's mature work is that he is not a 'dualist obsessed with the question of evil: such a concept arises from a misunderstanding of his use of occult symbolism'.[100] The elements of the supernatural, hermeticism, occult, and magic are all part of the variables of the scenery in his novels and poetry. Eliot says, 'There is much he invented, or borrowed from the literature of the occult, merely for the sake of telling a good story'.[101] The occult seems like a prop in the setup for the stage of the drama. Again, a comprehensive study of his written theological works, published and unpublished, answers any lingering questions concerning his stance regarding the occult, witchcraft, or magic. The occult never wins; vicarious love always triumphs. Nichols encapsulates Horne's assessment of Williams's use of the occult: 'The occult powers and phenomena that occur so regularly in his novels are striking metaphors for aspects of the devices and desires, the spiritual condition and agency, of human hearts'.[102]

4. Theological Discussion

Williams's theological discussions can be divided into two groups: (1) a diverse group of works concentrating in unique ways on theology, and (2) other kinds of texts throughout the various genres in which theology is interpolated. Williams purposely designed his work to have theological discussions continually woven into texts of different kinds. Theological discussion, implicit or explicit, is part of the ambiance of Williams's work. He displays a more concentrated and continuous, yet not an ordinary systematic or dogmatic approach, theological discourse in *HCD, DOD, ORT,* and in many essays and reviews. *FOB* is not only a significant literary critique of Dante's major works but a theological and literary analysis of a person bearing the image of Christ, which is of paramount importance in Williams's work on images.[103] His

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[99] C. Williams, 'Terror of Light', *Collected Plays* (Vancouver: Regent College, 2005), 353–55.

[100] *POT*, 174.

[101] *TSEAH*, xv.

[102] Nichols, *A Spirituality for the Twenty-first Century* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2003), 98. See B. Horne, *Imagining Evil* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1996), 104–23.

[103] C. Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice* (1943; London: Faber and Faber, 1994), 7–8. See Chapter IV. Persons as Living Images. See also B. Reynolds, *The Passionate Intellect: Dorothy Sayers'*

Arthuriad is a mythopoeic theological work. In his novels, poetry, and plays, the reader is brought into theological discussions arising from the literary context and story. He writes unique strange books that no one else does. They are unclassifiable in the normal genres of theological books.

Here is one example of Williams's interpolation of theological discussion in a book review referring to the Virgin Birth:

> The Passion—often the too-angry passion—with which the orthodox have defended a doctrine, such as the Virgin Birth, has (apart from mystical interpretation and vicious obstinacy) this consummation of the historical sense as its chief cause. The union of history and the individual is, like that of so many other opposites, in the coming of the kingdom of heaven, historic and contemporary at once. It was historic in order that it might always be contemporary; it is contemporary because it was certainly historic.[104]

Here, Williams demonstrates his creativity and complexity as a lay theologian.

Commenting on the difference of emphasis between the fourth gospel and the synoptics, he reinforces the connections between the events in the biblical record and the way they relate contemporarily to the state of one's soul. This commentary is in the form of two book reviews in one article. Williams uses this review as an opportunity to emphasize that the work of the Spirit cannot be isolated from the flesh and cannot be easily divided off or spiritualized.[105] He corrects what he thinks W. F. Howard (the author of one of the books being reviewed) may have missed by a possible over-spiritualization of the fourth gospel:

> It is true that the Fourth Gospel is peculiarly the Gospel of the Holy Spirit, and that it particularly stresses the fact that all the events in the life of our Lord, as well as happening in Judea, happen in the soul; whereas the Synoptics made it crashingly clear that all the events that happen in the soul happened in Judea. Why this second fact should be thought a rather low business is always surprising.… That God should be born in the spirit was permissible—not that He should be born in the flesh; the birth by inward fire—yes, the new birth by outward water—no; the mystical union—yes, the physical resurrection—no.… It is St. John who describes the departure of those—no doubt, all of them mystics—who were shocked by its materialism. The priesthood? It is St. John who records the commission—'whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted; whose ye retain, they are retained'. The awful subordination of heaven to earth,

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Encounter with Dante (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1989), 175–76; Dorothy L. Sayers, *Introductory Papers on Dante* (London: Metheun, 1957), 196.

[104] *HCD*, 12–13. See also C. Williams, 'The Virgin Birth', *Time and Tide* 24 (April 3, 1943): 276, a book review of *The Virgin Birth in History and Faith* by Douglas Edwards, Wade Center.

[105] *IOC*, 87–89.

> with every responsibility that it involves, is made more, not less, complex by the Fourth Gospel.[106]

Williams argues that the work of the Spirit in the flesh of man is crucial to the pneumatology of the fourth Gospel.

In Williams's more direct theological discourse is a strong sense of deliberate indirectness in his approach. He uses expressions such as, 'The Divine Thing', 'The Holy Thing', 'The Holy Flesh', 'The Mercy', 'The Omnipotent', 'Messias', 'The Will', and 'The Figure of Forgiveness', not so much to hide, but to make the reader think.[107] Rolland Hein makes an astute observation about Williams's work:

> In Williams's fantasy world, God is mysteriously both everywhere and nowhere; the reader is not directly made aware of His presence, but His love is incarnate in select characters.… Williams's vision echoes that of Isaiah 45:15 RSV, 'Truly, thou art a God who hidest thyself'.[108]

Williams hides God indirectly, but his theological dialogue is substantial even when parabolic, which explains the need for an understanding of both his direct and indirect theological works. One will gain a bigger picture and deeper appreciation when words such as exchange, substitution, or coinherence are used in a biography, play, or novel if one has an understanding of the symbolism implied by such words.

Humphrey Carpenter suggests that *HCD* demonstrates that Williams could make a reasoned argument in his own style. Williams is unsystematic in his writings on the subject of doctrine and belief. His heart was a poet's heart: His vision of Christianity was idiosyncratic first because he was a poet, and many of his writings on theology are in fact poetic vision rather than rational argument.[109] Cavaliero confirms that perspective. He says that Williams uses theology as an apologist, but not polemically, as an artist in theology, as a poet.[110] Davies' observation of the English Mystics holds a

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[106] *IOC*, 88.

[107] G. E. Veith, 'Defamiliarizing the Gospel: Shklovsky and a Theory of Religious Art', *Christianity and Culture* 28, no. 2 (1979): 40–45. See also V. Shklovsky, 'Art and Technique', in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays, Regents Critics Series*, trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965). Veith surveys the different terms Williams uses for God and Christ, and compares Williams's usage to the way in which, in Shklovsky's opinion, Tolstoy makes the familiar seem strange by not naming the familiar object.

[108] R. Hein, *Christian Myth Makers: C. S. Lewis, Madeleine L'Engle, J. R. R. Tolkien, George MacDonald, G. K. Chesterton, Charles Williams, John Bunyan, Walter Wangerin, Robert Siegel, and Hannah Hurnard* (Chicago: Cornerstone Press, 1998), 141.

[109] Carpenter, 154.

[110] *POT*, viii.

key for understanding Williams's approach; such theological writing has a different emphasis and a different set of forms.[111]

5. The Bible, Myth, and History

Allchin writes,

> For Charles Williams, as for Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, the great myths of human history were not simply fabulous stories, creations of human ingenuity. They were essentially truth telling. At the heart of them all there lies the story of Bethlehem and Calvary and the empty tomb. There the myths have been fulfilled in becoming history. There one can see how the very nature of this world and of God's relation to it, involves a sacramental incarnational method of action, in which eternal and infinite things make themselves known and become embodied in actual historical persons and events. The Word is made flesh and dwells among us.[112]

The Bible is foundational for Williams with its stories, images, and theological discussions. It is strategically influential in shaping his views of myth and history. Williams's uses of myth, history, and the Bible are intertwined in several ways. He does not deal systematically with the theoretical issues of biblical interpretation. An explicit systematic discussion of theoretical hermeneutics would have been a distraction from what he wanted the reader to consider. However, discussions of biblical material and interpretation of it are embedded in most of his writing.

a. The Bible. Williams scatters his use of biblical quotations and interpretations throughout his works.[113] However, some passages he repeats over and over: (1) Cain's response, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' in Genesis 4:9; (2) 'at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man', in Genesis 9:5; (3) 'My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant', in Genesis 17:13; (4) 'He saved others; himself he cannot save', in Mark 15:31; and, (5) 'Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the

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[111] See O. Davies, *God Within: The Mystical Tradition of Northern Europe* (New York: New City Press, 2006), Chapter 6, 157–89. Oliver Davies has pointed out that Julian of Norwich's *Revelation*s, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and other writings in 'the English mystical tradition reflect more of the practical dimensions of spiritual living and a lack of speculative structures in order to express the highest mystical experience.… The emphasis is on love and the ascetical dimension of spiritual living.… The English mystical tradition which, although it contributes many brilliant and expressive images,… wholly lacks the sense of theological system, of theological ontology, which is the very foundation of the work, and genius of Meister Eckhart' (p. 177). These English mystics were some of the mystical writers who influenced Williams; and their work was not systematic, which demonstrated to him that you did not have to be highly theologically systematized to communicate the deep things of the love of God. This fits his style and manner of communication as a poet.

[112] Allchin, 'Charles Williams and the Arthurian Legend', *The Charles Williams Society Newsletter* 78 (Summer 1995): 17–18.

[113] Often he referred to certain passages or stories about the passage without quoting the exact references.

law of Christ', in Galatians 6:2. He also refers repeatedly to Job to suggest that one must ask for answers from the Almighty. He mentions several times the 'greater love'[114] of laying down one's life for another, which underlies his understanding of the denial of self and losing one's life to find oneself. Acts of self-denial are Williams's answer to Cain's question: Yes, you are your brother's keeper. [115] For Williams, man's responsibility of love is expressed biblically in God's call for accountability for the way we treat one another.

Williams wants his readers to see something familiar and yet think about it from a different perspective, using the Bible well:

> As a fact words such as 'faith', 'pardon', or 'glory' are taken with meanings borrowed from the commonplace of everyday; comparatively few readers set to work to find out what the Bible means by them. The word 'love' has suffered even more heavily. The famous saying 'God is love', it is generally assumed, means that God is like our immediate emotional indulgence, and not that our meaning of love ought to have something of the 'otherness' and terror of God.… At its beginning the Bible knows very little of the meaning of words. All great art creates, as it were, its own stillness about it, but by nature of its subject the Bible does more. It opens with a single rift of light striking along the darkness which existed before words were: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth'.[116]

Williams believes that the Bible creates its own meaning for what it says.

Williams writes, 'The New Testament consists of inspired records concerning the earthly life of Jesus Christ and of inspired commentaries upon Him'.[117] He writes, 'Christ's sayings are the expression of Life itself'.[118] He refers to the 'fantasies of apocalypse' and 'myths of creation'.[119] For him these myths and fantasies are stories bearing truth; they are not necessarily literally true but theologically true. However, he never unpacks clearly what he means by inspired, or by myth, or history. He assumes the reader will struggle with the text and work it out himself. He would probably have found a literalistic interpretation simplistic and one dimensional.

By literary criticism and Bible study, Williams means searching and working with the material to understand what the text says about itself in ways that have been

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[114] John 15:13 says, 'Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends'.

[115] *HCD*, 24; Genesis 9:4, KJV.

[116] *HCD*, 15–16.

[117] C. Williams, *Outlines of Romantic Theology* (Berkeley, CA: Apocryphile Press, 2005), 27.

[118] Ibid., 28.

[119] *HCD*, 12–16.

developed by a long tradition and careful reading. He is skeptical of those who dismiss the Bible and its themes by referring to it as great literature and ignoring the book's main theme:[120]

> 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. By a deprivation of the central idea, and of the personification of that idea, the Bible does not cease to be metaphysics and become literature; it ceases to be anything at all but little bits of literature rather oddly collated. But without that deprivation it is literature related to the greatest of human themes—the nature of man and his destiny. Its doctrine may be wrong, but without its doctrine it is, as a book, nothing. It deals no longer with mankind, as is pretended, only with a number of men. To alter it so may be a moral virtue, but it certainly is not good literary criticism.[121]

He would affirm with Austin Farrer's *A Rebirth of Images: The Making of St. John's Apocalypse* that God takes part in the biblical images and themes but he does not go into the how of the matter. He argues as a literary critic for letting the Bible speak for itself. We must let go of our own understanding of the words in an 'effort to clear the mind of our second-hand attribution of meanings so that the poet can fill the words with his meanings'.[122] He calls this letting go of our understanding 'the law of emptying the words'.[123]

As well as using the Bible, Williams draws on the Sacraments, Liturgy, Rituals, and Creeds. He especially uses lines relating to the Incarnation. The clause, '*He came down from heaven*' is from the Nicene Creed, and his most used passage, '*not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh: but by taking of the Manhood into God*', is from the Athanasian Creed.

b. Myth. Myth is a name for a certain kind of story, and people differ greatly as to what kind it is.[124] Williams never takes the time to define fully what he means either by *story* or the term *myth*; he just uses them. He refers to 'the great myth of man's origins',[125] 'the myth of the Fall',[126]and Babel as a 'symbolic legend' in all as

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[120] *HCD*, 13.

[121] Ibid., 14.

[122] Ibid., 15.

[123] Ibid.

[124] See J. Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009). He discusses many different ways that myth is understood in relation to the Bible.

[125] *HCD*, 17.

[126] Ibid., 19.

something different from history in an ordinary sense.[127]A clue to Williams's usage of the term *myth* is found in the contents of the second chapter of *HCD*; the chapter is titled 'The Myth of the Alteration in Knowledge'. He means the story of the alteration or change in the mode of knowledge in man as it is told in the Genesis narrative. He uses myth as a vehicle to communicate truth. The next section explains how he adapts the Arthurian legends to his theological concerns.

c. History. As observed, for Williams as a Christian, history has its own unique depth and dimensions. Writing about history and its relation to justice, he says,

> To the theist that 'render account' must have another and more alarming meaning; history is a tale not only of events, but of debts,… of the relations between Creator and creature, then that relation must certainly be one of debts—of things owed.… The Last Judgement is the image of the final paying.[128]

History, justice, and the credibility of God are important factors that are repeated throughout his works.

He says, 'Immortality does not, of itself, imply the significance of history; Resurrection does'.[129] History derives from Christ because He is the maker of history, in some sense history Himself, and every man conforms or does not to Him.[130] He explores further dimensions of the history, including the history of the church:

> The History of Christendom is the history of an operation. It is an operation of the Holy Ghost towards Christ, under the conditions of our humanity; and it was our humanity which gave the signal, as it were, for that operation. The visible beginning of the Church is at Pentecost.[131]

In addition, he says,

> Our Lord Messias had vanished in his flesh; our Lord the Spirit expressed himself towards the flesh and spirit of the disciples. The Church, itself one of the Secrets, began to be.… The Spirit took his own means to found and to spread Christendom before a single apostolic step had left Jerusalem. It prepared the way before itself. Yet this was but a demonstration, as it were; the real work was now to begin, and the burden of the work was accepted by the group in the city. The work was the regeneration of mankind.… The apostles set out to generate mankind anew.[132]

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[127] *HCD*, 24.

[128] 'I Saw Eternity …,' *Time and Tide* 14 August 1943, Book review of *Human Destiny* by Reinhold Niebuhr, MS 301.1, Wade Center.

[129] C. Williams, 'I Saw Eternity …', *Time and Tide* 25 (1943): MS 301.2.

[130] Ibid., MS 301.4.

[131] C. Williams, *The Descent of the Dove* (Vancouver: Regent College, 1939), 1.

[132] Ibid., 3.

These statements are examples of Williams's fusion of history and the supernatural. *DOD* is his attempt to communicate his theological insights through the literary mode of history.[133] The result is an unusual history. Williams diagrams theology as it occurs in the form of history, and does so in a fashion similar to that in which the biblical historical narratives are compressed and recorded. It is an economy of salvation history framed with his ideological choices.[134] Even popular commentators have recognized how Williams's chapter titles have common names for certain periods of church history to demonstrate what he thought matched the era theologically.[135]

In both his historical and biographical writing, Williams also theologically frames persons in the context of their milieu. Williams, as a biographer of Elizabeth I, interprets her historically in relation to religion:

> … a spirit, a quality of mind, which may be called skepticism or realism or toleration or cynicism or wisdom according to the kind of mind which possesses it; perhaps making allowance for her femininity, perversity, obstinacy, and fear, it might be called Elizabethan. It was the spirit which puts the supernatural in its place, a habit which, losing much, gains something, and without which religion is only tolerable in and by saints. At least that spirit, like her own, is flagrant in its egotisim, and neither cares nor is able to conceal its own limited and earthly nature … so far its honesty is manifest. A worldly hypocrite Elizabeth might be; she never succeeded in being a religious.[136]

Williams allows Elizabeth to be seen in the context of the religious and political upheaval of her world where she keeps her head and her throne. Beset with religious and political extremes on every side, her way was difficult but she managed to achieve stability. She was considered something of a heretic and excommunicated by the Pope in 1570.[137] As noted previously, Williams regards her life as a positive impossibility or a contradiction to the expected norm.

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[133] *STCW*, 188.

[134] B. Horne, 'The Dove Descending', *The Charles Williams Society Newsletter* 20 (Winter 1980): 3.

[135] C. Duriez and D. Porter, *The Inklings Handbook* (London: Azure, 2001), 192.

[136] C. Williams, *Queen Elizabeth I* (1936; London: Duckworth, 1953), 44–45.

[137] Ibid., 82–83.

C. Williams's Varied Genres

Lewis says, 'His poems and novels … need more study'.[138] As noted in the Introduction of this chapter, Williams writes in many genres and weaves theology into all of them. This section considers some of the main genres, and, in each of them, shows the presence of major theological themes and theological discussion using conventional genres and classifications, but as we have seen, many of Williams's works are unique in form and not simply classifiable.

1. The Novels

> The back cover of *DIH* states,
>
> 'Reading Charles Williams is an unforgettable experience'—Saturday Review;… 'One of the most gifted and influential Christian writers England has produced this century'—Time Magazine;… 'satire, romance, thriller, morality, and glimpses of eternity all rolled into one'—The New York Times.[139]

Williams's novels are probably his best-known literary genre and the most studied.[140] They are also currently being republished in many languages and formats. The novels explore, among other things, conversion. sacrificial vicarious love triumphing over evil, the subtlety of sin and the process of damnation. They have a complex repertory of diverse elements: the occult, platonic forms, tarot symbols, Bible verses, lines from the creeds of Christendom, and liturgy. They can also markedly affect the reader in a spiritual manner. From this diversity, the following representative themes illustrate the theological elements in the novels.

a. Mysterium tremendum. Edmund Fuller says, 'In his novels, one of Williams's achievements is to restore the sense of the awesome, the other, the holy, in our religious life. He evokes what Rudolf Otto … calls the *mysterium tremendum*'.[141] Stephen Medcalf makes the point that Williams demonstrates the Athanasian principle

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[138] John P. Gigrich, 'An Immortality for Its Own Sake: A Study of the Concept of Poetry in the Writings of Charles Williams' (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 1954), 110. Personal letter from Lewis to the author.

[139] *DIH*, 2002 ed., back cover.

[140] Thirty-eight of the almost sixty dissertations relating to Williams's work concentrate on the novels and do not comment in-depth on his other works (see bibliography).

[141] Fuller, *Books*, 204.

in his use of his images in the novel, including Lewis's version of the Athanasian principle, 'the lower is taken into the higher'.[142]

b. Fusion of the natural and the supernatural. This theme also finds its place in the novels. Lewis discusses Williams's novels and describes his work, supposals of this world and the other world.[143] Lewis says that Williams illuminates both the frontiers of the natural and the supernatural and their supposed violation.[144] Cavaliero says, 'In the novels Williams's art moves towards an ever more perfect fusion of natural with supernatural … in a way that overcomes the potential limitation implied in the use of occult symbolism'.[145] Lewis had tremendous respect for Williams's ability to perceive and describe another world, as Lewis did in his own novels. In a commentary on Williams's novels, Lewis says,

> I am convinced … that he saw further, that he knew what I do not know. His writing,… brings me where I have never gone on my own sail or steam; and yet that strange place is so attached to realms we do know.… You may, of course, ask me how Williams should know. And I am not suggesting that he knows in one sense—that he is giving me factual details about the world beyond death or on the brink of death. What I am quite sure of is that he is describing something he knows which I should not have known unless he had described it; and something that matters.[146]

Sayers in a similar review of his novels says, 'Having read his novels one steps out into the street half convinced that the first passer by may prove to be an angel in disguise, an envoy of Hell, or a peculiar vehicle of the celestial glory'.[147] Owen Barfield says that the unique contribution of Williams's novels is that the spiritual world is not parallel to, but is the infrastructure of and abiding source for, the material natural world.[148] The

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[142] S. Medcalf, 'The Athanasian Principle in Williams's Use of Images', in *The Rhetoric of Vision: Essays on Charles Williams*, 27–43 (City: Publisher, 1996), 42. The lines in the creed are 'not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh: but by taking of the Manhood into God', and so the Athanasian formula is expressed: taking the lesser into the greater. Medcalf actually paraphrases Lewis's sermon 'Transposition'; see notes 14 and 15, pp. 41–42.

[143] C. S. Lewis, *On Stories and Other Essays on Literature* (London: Harcourt, 1982), 21–27. This chapter is a transcript and was originally a BBC Radio Broadcast, Third Programme, February 11, 1949.

[144] Ibid., 24.

[145] *POT*, 161.

[146] Lewis, *On Stories,* 26.

[147] D. Sayers, "Many Dimensions," *The New York Times Book Review Supplement* August 21, 1949: 7.

[148] *DIH*. Barfield reviewed *DIH* and Williams reviewed Barfield's *Romanticism Comes of Age.* For a review of their commonalities and differences, see S. Dunning, 'Charles Williams and Owen Barfield: Common (and Uncommon) Ground', *Seven* 21 (2004): 11–30.

natural world is derived from the supernatural. The support system for the natural world is from the supernatural world. Sayers's and Barfield's comments reflect the intermingling of the natural and the supernatural with the fullness of the moment—'the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!'

c. Influence on people. I have found that men and women from all walks of life have had the experience of being helped spiritually through Williams's work. His novels can make the reader personally sensitive to the religious content of the narrative. Morton Kelsey touched by reading Williams's novels, says, they give reality to unconscious motives.[149] After reading *The Place of the Lion,* Lewis was personally affected by the story and identified with the character of Damaris Tighe.[150] Immediately after reading the novel, Lewis wrote a letter to Williams (one of many to follow) confessing that he had been on his way to becoming like Damaris:

> I have just read your *Place of The Lion* and it is to me one of the major literary events of my life, comparable to my first discovery of George MacDonald, G. K. Chesterton, or William Morris.… Substantial edification both theological and philosophical.… I know Damaris very well, in fact I was in course of becoming Damaris.[151]

Lewis demonstrates a common experience with Williams's narratives, they touch people and that dramatically is the point of Williams's characterizations; they are theological masks to spiritual self-discovery.[152] The Damaris in the story caught Lewis like the parishioner who says, 'The preacher was talking straight to me this Sunday and yet he knows nothing of my personal circumstances'. Damaris Tighe is a characterization about *Metanoia*.[153]

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[149] M. Kelsey, *Companions on the Inner Way*: *The Art of Spiritual Guidance* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 97. See also D. R. White, 'Priestess and Goddess: Evolution of Human Consciousness in the *Greater Trumps*', *Mythlore* 14, no. 3 (Spring 1988): 15–19.

[150] Carpenter, 99.

[151] Lewis's letter to Williams. March 11, 1936, Wade Center. Lewis invited Williams to come to Oxford and be part of a small group of men discussing literary subjects. These conversations became known as the famous Inkling meetings. At the same time Williams was reading Lewis's *Allegory of Love*. See also A. N. Wilson, C. *S. Lewis: A Biography* (London: W. W. Norton, 2002), 149–51. See also *CWX*, 164; Duriez and Porter, 182; Carpenter, 99–101.

[152] C. Williams, *The Place of the Lion* (1931; Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1950), 73. See also Duriez and Porter, 182–85.

[153] K. Brew, '*Metanoia*: The Hero's Change of Heart in C. S. Lewis's Space Trilogy and Charles Williams' *The Place of the Lion'*, *The Lamp-Post* 21, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 11–17. See also R. Abrahamson, 'Est In Re Veritas: Models for Sacramental Reading in *The Place of The Lion', The Charles Williams Quarterly*, no. 129 (Winter 2008): 27–29.

Lewis also notes that he was strongly affected by another of Williams's novels. When asked by *The Christian Century* magazine, 'What books did most to shape your vocational attitude and your philosophy of life, excluding the Bible?', Lewis responded. Number nine on his list was *DIH.*[154] Williams's works can be a means of grace to the searching and honest reader.

Eliot also observes Williams's ability to expose the reader to more than he or she may be willing to acknowledge. In referring to *The Place of the Lion* and *War in Heaven,* Eliot says in a letter to Williams,

> It is surprising how few people seem to have any awareness of other than material realities, or of good and evil as having anything to do with the nature of things—as anything more than codes of conduct. I suppose it is because there is something so terrifying, like a blast from the North Pole, in spiritual reality that just natural cowardice and laziness makes us all try to evade it as much of the time as we can.[155]

I think Eliot is testifying to the fact that Williams's work can be frighteningly self-revealing and honest.

d. Pagan religion and the fool. Huttar explains that the theological concerns of *The Greater Trumps* are very different. He demonstrates how Williams interweaves Christian themes in his narratives.[156] All the world's mythologies await a coming deliverance. The character Sybil in this novel represents the sybils of the pagan world. They (Greek oracles, prophetesses) represent the bridge on the Sistine Chapel ceiling and acknowledge the pagans who seek God without knowing who He is. In the century before Christ, a sybil is the universal pagan prophetic messianic oracle of the Mediterranean world.[157]

Barry Spurr notes that Eliot comments on the same novel, saying about himself, 'He [Eliot] searched for an absolute point outside "the flux of history", the epiphanic moment to be symbolized, in his poetry the "still point of the turning world", was found in Williams's *The Greater Trumps,* "The Fool"'.[158] The culmination of 'The Fool' is

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[154] *The Christian Century* 79, no. 23 (June 6, 1962): 719. This work is not an article but Lewis' response to the question, 'What books did most to shape your vocational attitude and your philosophy of life, excluding the Bible?'

[155] Letter from Eliot to Williams, 7 October 1934, Wade Center.

[156] Huttar, 'Charles Williams's Christmas Novel', 68–83. For another perspective see E. Hinz, 'An Introduction to *The Greater Trumps'*, *English Studies in Canada* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1975): 217–29.

[157] Huttar, 'Charles Williams's Christmas Novel', 72.

[158] B. Spurr, '*Anglo-Catholic in Religion': T. S. Eliot and Christianity* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2010), 21. See also note 128, p. 272. See C. Williams, *The Greater Trumps* (1932; Grand Rapids,

Jesus Christ, love incarnate.[159] Von Balthasar also praises this novel, and he writes that the theological sensitivity of Williams in *The Greater Trumps* has produced a work similar to *Meditations on the Tarot*.[160] In his *Theological Aesthetics*, Von Balthasar speaks of 'the image of the Gospel's Humiliated Fool, an image which captivates no one and which nevertheless in a later age breaks forth radiantly from its hidden centre in order to impress itself on the world'.[161] Obviously, Von Balthasar and Eliot were very familiar with Williams's 'Image of the Fool' as Christ, the unnumbered one, in *The Greater Trumps*.

2. The Poetry

Williams says,

> Poetry one way or another, is 'about' human experience; there is nothing else that it can be about. But to whatever particular human experience it alludes, it is not that experience. Love poetry is poetry, not love; patriotic poetry is poetry, not patriotism; religious poetry is poetry, not religion. But good poetry does something more than allude to its subject; it is related to it, and it relates us to it.

Through the sad heart of Ruth when, sick for home, she stood in tears amid the alien corn:

> Those lines relate us to an experience of exile. They awake in us a sense of exile; more accurately, a realization of our own capacity for enduring exile.
>
> Let this immortal life, where'er it comes, Walk in a cloud of loves and martyrdoms;
>
> That awakes in us … a sense that we are capable of love and sacrifice. It reminds us of a certain faculty for that experience. We are told of a thing; we are made to feel as if that thing were possible to us; and we are so made to feel it—whatever the thing may be, joy or despair or what not—that our knowledge is an intense satisfaction to us; and this knowledge and this satisfaction are for some

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MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1976), 86. Williams says, '… Then the most ancient tale of the whole human race is true, and the Fool does move', 86. This is a symbolic figure for Christ and his sovereignty. See also G. Smith, *T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 321–22. Also Robert Wilson Peckham, 'The Novels of Charles Williams' (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 1965), 111: 'To the person on the road to sanctity, then, the fool is everywhere at once, indulging in a perpetual exchange with all the figures,… it is perpetually arriving at the quiet center every fraction of a second, and always appears to be there; only the sharp eyes of Holy Wisdom can see it dancing everywhere, sustaining all things'. See also Carpenter, 98.

[159] R. Powell, trans., *Meditations on the Tarot* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher Edtion/Penguin, 2002), 587–621. Thought to be written by Valentin Tomberg.

[160] U. Von Balthasar, Afterword to *Mediations on the Tarot: A Journey into Christian Hermeticism*, trans. R. Powell (1985; New York: Tracher/Penguin, 2002), 664.

[161] U. Von Balthasar, *Seeing the Form,* vol. 1 of *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, trans. Erasmo Levia-Merikakis, ed. Joseph Fessio and John Riches (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 24.

> period of time complete and final; and this knowledge, satisfaction, and finality are all conveyed through the medium of words, the concord of which is itself a delight to the senses. This sensuous apprehension of our satisfied capacities for some experience or other is poetry of the finest kind.[162]

There are four things to discuss in the following section: Williams's poetic cast of mind, the early work, his literary criticism of poetry, and his later Arthurian volumes. It is important to look at each of these specifically for what they reveal theologically.

a. A poetic cast of mind. Williams says that poetry is a thing that explains itself by existing, *sui generis*.[163] Poetry extends the boundaries of thought and helps to engage imagination in a fresh theological perspective. It could be said, and has been said, that this cast and quality of imagination is poetic.[164] Jay Parini writes, 'Poetry offers concrete images that draw into their figures a reflection and embodiment of our lives'.[165] Williams's work applies a poetic cast of mind theologically to all of life, especially to human personhood.[166]

Eugene Peterson comments on Williams's crafting of words 'as poets do', even in prose—instead of pinning down a meaning, he lets it loose. Peterson compares Williams's prose to that of the Apostle Paul, who, as Williams said, 'regenerated words'.[167] Brian Horne says,

> His real genius lay in theology, in exploring and interpreting the propositions of the Christian faith with more originality and profundity than almost any of his contemporaries. This originality and profundity will be recognized, however, only by those who are willing to suspend their conventional expectations of what theology should be and to accept his belief that the art and skill of theology can be practised by the poetic imagination.… His prose constantly, and willingly, surrenders to the pressure of the poetic impulse, which is to reorder the movement of thought from the analytical and logical to the imaginative and the suggestive. The result is not less precision; on the contrary, it is a different kind of precision.[168]

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[162] Williams, *English Poetic Mind* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), 3.

[163] Ibid., vii.

[164] A. Nichols, *Chalice of God: A Systematic Theology in Outline* (Collegeville, MD: Liturgical Press, 2012), 15–17.

[165] J. Parini, *Why Poetry Matters* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 9.

[166] Adian Nichols explains that poetic intelligence is a key to a proper ontological openness to the hypostatic nature of personhood in *Chalice of God*, 15–17. Gigrich has a very good dissertation on Williams' contribution to poetic theory.

[167] E. Peterson, 'Pastor Paul'; S. Soderlund and N. Wright, eds., *Romans and the People of God: Essays in Honor of Gordon Fee on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday* (Cambridge: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1999), 289, quoting from *DOD*, 8.

[168] Horne, *Imagining Evil*, 107–08.

Horne's explanation of Williams's giftedness is a demonstration of Williams's creativity and vision.

A further clue to understanding Williams's thinking and theological sensitivity comes from a phrase he borrowed from Wordsworth's *Prelude*—'the feeling intellect':

> In that work of transmutation and union, as expressed in English verse, a phrase of Wordsworth's is of peculiar value. In the last book of the *Prelude* he speaks of 'the feeling intellect'. He has been saying that the work of the Imagination is a solitary work; it is the work of 'intellectual love'….
>
> He whose soul has risen Up to the height of feeling intellect Shall want no other tenderness.…
>
> [He goes on to speak of] the expression of the state of mind … of an intellect so swiftly capable of ordering its emotions that it may itself be said to 'feel'. It knows and it feels as it knows.[169]

Williams also explains what he means by comparing the feeling intellect to what Pascal said: 'Le Coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connait point'.[170] Williams is also assuming that the feeling intellect is assisted by grace. The feeling intellect calls for imagination, which Williams says is the companion of spiritual love, as Wordsworth taught us.[171] He refers to the feeling intellect as giving an experience of power, 'meaning the growing faculties of the soul'.[172] He further says,

> This power 'of action from without and from within', of realizing an identity in two categories is the glorious faculty, and the 'highest reason' of passion—'the feeling intellect'. It is a state not without premonitions of beatitude, and Wordsworth meant no less.[173]

Williams calls these experiences of the 'feeling intellect', 'syllogisms, which are as much of the blood as of the brain'.[174] He uses other people's examples to explain the theological sense he employs: 'Donne spoke of the lady whose body thought; but his own mind felt. His own intellectual emotion discovered her corporeal intelligence'.[175]

Williams is also aware that this poetic intelligence is not and could not be just part of his sensitivity and style. He borrows a line or an explanation from another and gives it a richer, fuller definition that in his opinion fills the word, expression, or what

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[169] *IOC*, 64, 101–02.

[170] C. Williams, *Rochester* (London: Arthur Barker, 1935), 51. See B. Pascal, *Penses,* trans. and rev. introduction A. J. Krailsheimer (London: Penguin Classics, 1995), 127.

[171] Ibid., 51–52.

[172] C. Williams, 'The Figure of Power' essay, n.d., MS 405, 1, Wade Center.

[173] Ibid., 4.

[174] Williams, *Rochester*, 52.

[175] Williams, *English Poetic Mind*, 205f. See also *TRL*, 143–46.

he is trying to say with more accuracy and a theological sublimation of meaning. But Williams is also aware that this enrichment of meaning, which flows from the individual poet, takes root and grows in a community and its language. It is more than a harmony of reason and passion in oneself; it must also have the experience of companionship with others.[176]

Williams believes that the theological themes to which he repeatedly refers are not dry doctrinal jargon for the clergy. Rather, they seek to deal with the very essence of reality, and for him they are analogical expressions that go to the heart of human and divine life.[177] His poetic mind does not just create another genre; it shapes even his approach to life and is formative throughout the varied types of his work. Williams extends the boundaries of thought, rendering new images of reflection and embodiment in our lives. The result is not only a more adequate linguistic symbolization, but also a richer theological expression of human experience.

During the Second World War, he was a lecturer in the English School at Oxford University. His lectures were crowded and he was enthusiastic.[178] Humphrey Carpenter describes Williams as a lecturer:

> He did not really *discuss* the poetry at all. What he did was to communicate his feelings for it, or even his ability to participate *in* it. His lectures were full of quotations, always done from memory and never from notes or a text; or rather, they were not so much quotations as incantations, a kind of ritual chanting of lines from the poem he was talking about—or very likely from a totally different poem, for he might use a phrase from Milton to illustrate an ode of Keats, or a line of Wordsworth to comment on something in Dante. He seemed to be able to express his own thoughts best by taking phrases from the great poets, and seemed to think largely in poetry.[179]

Carpenter gives a good example of Williams's style as a lecturer.

Anne Ridler says, 'I remember Dylan Thomas saying to him [Williams] after a literary party: "Why, you come into the room and talk about Keats and Blake as if they were *alive*?"'[180] In his life and in his approach to life, he thought of himself as a poet. This fact impacted his expression even in his non-poetic work. Charles Huttar writes,

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[176] Williams, *Place of the Lion*, 187. See also *DOD*, 38, 193; *TRL*, 145.

[177] *HCD*, 82–94.

[178] Carpenter, 187–88. Carpenter's italics.

[179] Carpenter, 74.

[180] Ridler, xx.

'The nature of Williams's fiction is to tend toward poetry'.[181] His headstone in Holywell Cemetary, Oxford, reads, 'Charles Williams "Poet Under the Mercy"' Williams says about poetry, 'It possesses a reality which continually persuades us to repose upon it even in practical things of everyday life'.[182] Geoffrey Hill thinks *The English Poetic Mind* is Williams's critical masterpiece. He commends Williams's aphorism: 'The chief impulse of a poet is, not to communicate a thing to others, but to shape a thing, to make an immortality for its own sake'.[183] Eliot says about Williams, 'What … he had to say, comes near defying definition. It was not simply, a philosophy, a theology, or a set of ideas: it was primarily something imaginative.[184] Charles Huttar says that Williams's work 'is not a view on life, or a set of ideas, rather, primarily something imaginative, for which vision is the aptest term'.[185] Giving shape gives vision, and that is what Williams does best.

b. Early poetry. Romantic love as a vehicle for theological reflection runs throughout Williams's works. His early poetry is very theological: 'Never was a poet more concerned with doctrine.… The more doctrinal the content, the more clearly Williams's authentic voice is heard'.[186] His first five books of poetry are religious in nature, but they are most of all romantic love poems.[187] In Williams's earliest volume *The Silver Stair*, he titles the following poem ,'That we know not yet what it is indeed to love':

> I love her. O! what other word could keep
> In many tongues one clear immutable sound,
> Having so many meanings? It is bound
> First to religion signifying: 'The steep
> Whence I see God', translated into sleep
> It is: 'Glad waking', into thought: 'Fixed ground;

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[181] Huttar, 'Charles Williams's Christmas Novel, 68.

[182] C. Williams, *Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), vi.

[183] G. Hill, *Collected Writings* (London: OUP, 2008), 563. See also S. Barber, 'Charles Williams as a Literary Critic', *Charles Williams Quarterly*, no. 133 (Winter 2009): 21. See Williams, *English Poetic Mind*, 5.

[184] *TSEAH*, xiii. New research has found that Williams influenced Eliot more than had been previously thought. See B. Newman, 'Eliot's Affirmative Way: Julian of Norwich, Charles Williams, and Little Gidding', *Modern Philology* 108, no. 3 (February 2011): 427–61.

[185] Huttar and Schakel, *Rhetoric of Vision*, 16.

[186] *POT*, 9. See also *ORT*, 15–19.

[187] C. Williams, *The Silver Stair* (London: Herbert and Daniel, 1912); *Poems of Conformity* (Berkeley, CA: Apocryphile Press, 1917); *Divorce* 1920 (Berkeley, CA: Apocryphile Press, 2007); *Windows of Night* 1924 (Berkeley, CA: Apocryphile Press, 2007); *Heroes and Kings* (London: Sylvan Press, 1930).

A measuring-rod', and for the body: 'Found'.
These know I, with one more, which is: 'To weep'.[188]

Early in his writings he related religion to romantic love with an intimate physicality.

Charles Baker says that, in Williams's second volume, *Poems of Conformity,* the thematic content changes from the analogy of God pursuing man as his beloved, to the marital sexual relationship as sacramental.[189] Baker thinks these early volumes follow Williams's own experience: not just falling in love and the honeymoon phase but also the problems that arise between the lover and the beloved due to domestic concerns and the arrival of a child.

In the third volume, *Divorce*, Williams begins to examine the stress, anxieties, and disappointments inherent in marriage.[190] The fourth volume, *Windows of Night,* Baker says, is an expression of 'matured love,… accepting the fact that in our union with Christ we are subject to the same betrayal and death as He'.[191] Romantic love has to accept the crucifying realities of tough love in normal domestic life. It requires a maturity that goes past the initial flames of passion and the honeymoon phase, one that is built on many mutual exchanges and substitutions.

c. The Arthuriad. In the Arthurian material, Williams makes his most extensive and creative poetic development of theology.[192] He wrote two volumes of poetry using these legends as background: *Taliessin through Logres* (1938) and *The Region of the Summer Stars* (1944). In addition, he began a third unfinished prose work, *The Figure of Arthur*. The prose work was Williams's history of and commentary on the legends. Lewis said of Williams's Arthurian poetry, 'I must here content myself with saying that they seem to me … to be among the two or three most valuable books of verse produced

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[188] Williams, *Silver Stair*, 44. It contains 84 love poems that he gave to his wife-to-be. See *ORT*, vii. See also *CWX*, 16–19.

[189] C. R. Baker, 'Charles Walter Stansby Williams', in *British Writers: Supplement IX*, ed. J. Parini (New York: Scribner's and Sons, 2004), 274. This is also one of the main points of John Paul II's argument in *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* trans., introduction, and index Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006), 203ff.

[190] Baker, 274.

[191] Baker, 274–75.

[192] A. M. Hadfield, 'Charles Williams and His Arthurian Poetry', *Seven* 1 (1980,): 62–80. See also J. McClatchey, 'The Diagrammatised Glory of Charles Williams's *Taliessin through Logres*', *Seven* 2 (1981): 100–25; J.-M. Andriote, 'An Introduction to Charles Williams's Incarnationalism and the Taliessin Poetry', *Seven* 6 (1985): 73–78; S. Gottlieb, 'A Reading of Williams' Arthurian Cycle', *Mythlore* 4, no. 2 (1976): 3–6.

in the century'.[193] His statement may be an exaggeration, but they are a significant example of the interweaving of theology into an adaptation of a known story. Lewis combined Williams's posthumous fragment of *The Figure of Arthur* and his own commentary on Williams's Arthurian work to produce and publish *Arthurian Torso*.[194] Lewis reminds the reader that Williams shapes the story to his own purposes; he says that Williams takes the old fragments and creates a whole new story.[195]

The central focus for understanding Williams's work is the mystery of the Incarnation and the mystery of the imaging derived through it. The Eucharist is secondary to that, being a re-presentation of that mystery. A case for the focus on the mystery of the Incarnation and its imaging can be made if the Athanasian Principle, of the lesser taken into the higher, is seen as the symbol not only of the Incarnation but of salvation as well.[196] Williams makes the Arthurian story an image of the Fall, the regenerate person, and the community. He demonstrates the breakdown of coinherence and its renewal.

The imagistic focus is the mythical grail, the cup that held the blood of Christ. Williams calls the grail the grand material object of the Christian Arthurian myth.[197] Williams says, 'The poetic inventiveness of Europe found itself presented with the image of a vessel much more satisfying to it—merely as an image—than any other'.[198] He also says the grail is at the heart of the Eucharist and the unifying act of Christendom.[199] Williams gives a history of the literature and explanation of the grail in

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[193] C. S. Lewis, Preface, to *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1966), vi–vii.

[194] C. S. Lewis, Introduction to *Arthurian Torso* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 1–2. Lewis and Tolkien had heard Williams read and discuss part of his fragment in private. Williams had given Lewis a letter explaining a great deal more, which Lewis had copied in his copy of *Taliessin*. Lewis's commentary is taken from those lectures Lewis had given at Oxford in the Fall of 1945. See D. H. Fitzgerald, 'Arthurian Torso: Lewis's Commentary on Williams's Arthuriad', *The Bulletin of the New York C. S. Lewis Society* 15, no. 11 (September 1984), Whole No. 179. See also D. Jones, 'The Arthurian Legend: A Study of the Posthumous Fragments by Charles Williams', *The Tablet* 192, no. 25 (December 1948): 419–20; *Epoch and Artist: Selected Writings*, ed. Harman Grisewood (New York: Chilmark Press,1959). 202–11.

[195] C. Williams and C. S. Lewis, *Arthurian Torso* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 95.

[196] *AT,* 23.

[197] Ibid., 60.

[198] Ibid., 23, 79. Williams refers to the power of the Eucharist in the development of Europe, and the grail myth building upon that base.

[199] Ibid., 13.

his posthumously published prose fragment.[200] Williams transforms the cup into 'Le Saint Graal', the imagistic center of the story.[201]

The grail cannot be separated from the Eucharist, and the blood of Christ shed on the cross, because it represents the cup of the Eucharist.[202] In my opinion the blood of Christ represents the life of God in the believer (the grail). Williams and others extend and redefine the grail image and its achievement as an analogue of Christlikeness as opposed to self-centeredness.[203] Cornelius Crowley says, 'The Grail is a symbol of the exact relationship which man may have to Christ'.[204] And Crowley argues that Grail achievement is Williams's personal way of expressing the Beatific vision and the Pauline transformation, 'I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me'.[205]

Rolland Hein says, 'The Eucharist symbolizes the union that is experientially effected in the godly life'.[206] The Eucharist, the grail, together with a person's intentions and behavior are one of the ways Williams develops and expresses Christian perfection—love. Crowley thinks Williams's symbolism has given the Arthurian material new life, vigor, and a contemporary value, while expressing a traditional religious belief in fresh idioms.[207]

Williams's adaptation of the Arthurian myth is also about the legend of Britain, its beginnings, and its significance.[208] In Williams's mythology of Britain, the nation has a Christian responsibility to the Faith, embodied in the role of the monarch, as was the case with Arthur. This thesis does not have the space to discuss the extension.

d. Poetic criticism. In addition to his own poetry, Williams wrote five major literary critiques and many essays on poetry.[209] He actually wrote more literary criticism

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[200] *AT*, 13. See Williams's Chapter V on 'The Coming of the Grail', 60–90. The earliest works referring to the Grail are *Le Conte du Graal*, later called *Perceval*, by Chrétien de Troyes and a second group of poems by Robert de Barron.

[201] Ibid., 66–67.

[202] Ibid., 70.

[203] See J. McClatchey, 'Charles Williams and the Arthurian Tradition', *Seven* 11 (1994): 60–61.

[204] Crowley, 'Grail Poetry', 485.

[205] Gal. 2:20.

[206] Hein, 152.

[207] Crowley, 'Grail Poetry', 492–93. See also N. Starr, 'The Spiritual Land of Logres in *King Arthur Today*', *Mythlore* 6, no. 22 (1979): 144–88.

[208] Curtis, 'Byzantium', 28–54.

[209] C. Williams, *Poetry at Present* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931); *English Poetic Mind*; *Reason and Beauty*; *Figure of Beatrice; The Figure of Arthur* (unfinished). See his literary essays in *IOC*

than theology or novels and even these works and essays touched on poetry at many points.[210] Geoffrey Hill has drawn attention to the importance of Williams's critical work.[211] Hill says, 'Williams was a good theologian and at his best, a great critic both formally and informally of English poetry'.[212] Horne's essay on Williams's literary criticism is an early precursor, supporting Geoffrey Hill's conclusions about the significance of Williams's literary criticism.[213] Horne mentions again the interweaving of poetry and theology: 'Williams's books of criticism revolve around themes that are as familiar and as important to theologians as they are to poets and critics'.[214]

Lewis dedicated *A Preface to Paradise Lost* to Williams, thanking him for 'the recovery of a true critical tradition after more than eight hundred years of laborious misunderstanding'.[215] Among other things, Williams made his suggested corrections to the popular literary current of his days, as for instance concerning Milton's Satan who Williams said suffered from wounded pride.[216]

Another example of Williams's poetic criticism is demonstrated while he is reviewing a book on Shakespeare. Williams takes the author to task for trying to Christianize some of Shakespeare's characters, and while critiquing the author Williams demonstrates considerable literary and theological sensitivity:

> So with even deeper problems. The trouble with Shakespeare is that he is both Christian and non-Christian, and it is fatal to call him either.… O let us leave that ambiguous figure, his own ambiguity! 'It seems more than likely that, in this constant association of Cordelia with Christian doctrine, Shakespeare wished to suggest the fore-shadowing of Christ in pure natures before His coming'. I cannot but feel (asking Mr. Bethell's pardon), that we are in grave

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and others not included there, his detective fiction reviews and his editorial works for OUP, and many other literary articles in *Time and Tide* and the journal *Theology*.

[210] Barber, 'Charles Williams as a Literary Critic, 7–8. Williams lectured for the London County Council at the Holloway Literary Institute, teaching evening classes from 1924 until 1939. Many of those lectures related to poetry. See Baker, 275.

[211] This has been noticed in both the theological community and in literary circles. See R. Williams, 'Not Really Human', *Times Literary Supplement* 20 June 2008. See also G. Lindop, 'Charles Williams and His Contemporaries', in *Charles Williams and His Contemporaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), 2. Lindop writes, 'Hill quotes extensively from *The English Poetic Mind* in the 2005 Epson Lectures at Cambridge', 562.

[212] G. Hill, 562.

[213] Horne, 'Known in a Different Kind', 83–92.

[214] Ibid., 91. See section B.3.d. on Impossibility and Contradiction in this Chapter.

[215] C. S. Lewis, Dedication to *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (London: OUP, 1942), v. Lewis is referring to Williams's Preface in the work Williams edited, *The Poetical Works of Milton*, *The World's Classics*, 1940. Williams Preface is in *IOC,* 26–36. See also Carpenter, 180–81.

[216] *IOC*, 26–36.

> danger when we talk so; we do better to confine ourselves to Shakespeare's own line, —these are 'unpublished virtues of the earth' and their publication in him had better be left to his own terminology.… It would be truer to say that, while reading Shakespeare Christ is an illustration of Cordelia—and out of the 'Penetralium of mystery' at that. We ought to remain content with 'half-knowledge'; the 'irritable reaching' after identity of doctrine is as dangerous on one side as on the other. The plays are the cloudy frontier where much meets, and their definitions are always and only in themselves.[217]

Williams is very sensitive to authorial intention.

Williams, in his discussions of the great poets, makes clear, there is also a greater poetry, and it is the poetry of the reality of the Incarnation of Christ:

> Poetry is a good game—let us take it lightly. But it is also 'liberty and power'—let us take it seriously. *Ad maiorem poetarum gloriam*—there is but one ascription more worthy than that, and in the tradition of Christendom it was amid a cloud of songs as well as of seraphs that the Divine Word accepted incarnation.[218]

The Incarnation of Christ is the poetry of heaven and redeemed humanity. The semiotic and poetic expression of God through the Incarnation of Christ is extremely important for understanding Williams's work; again the key is the Incarnation, taking the lower into the higher. It is the poetry of an image. Christ in Himself gives man a poetic image of what God is like and of what man can be in grace. Other examples of Williams's theological sensitivity in literary criticism are interwoven throughout the thesis.

3. The Plays[219]

Williams weaves theology, history, and fantasy together in all his plays. The following description considers two examples: *Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury* and *The House of the Octopus,* his last play.

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[217] C. Williams, 'Shakespeare', *Time and Tide 25* 8 July 1944, a review of S. Bethell, *Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition*, Wade Center.

[218] Williams, *English Poetic Mind*, vii.

[219] Seventeen of Williams's plays are published. He also has several unpublished plays, such as *The Chapel of the Thorn, The House of David, Balthazar*, and a few others. Copies are available at the Wade Center. He also wrote three Masques. See B. Bosky, Introduction to *Charles Williams: The Masques of Amen House* (Altadena: The Mythopoeic Press, 2000), 17–30. Williams wrote them while at OUP at Amen House in London, and only two have been performed: *The Masque of the Manuscript*, written in 1926 and performed in 1927, and *The Masque of Perusal*, written in 1928 and performed in 1929. *The Masque of the Termination of Copyright* was written in 1930 but never performed or printed. The first two masques have been performed subsequently in 1955 and even in 1998.

Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury covers the religious and political intrigue of the last twenty-eight years of Cranmer's life. The play is known for an enigmatic character, the ambiguous Skeleton, *Figura Rerum*, which means the shape of things, 'who is both a commentator on the action and the mainspring of it'.[220] The Skeleton is one of Williams's most original and successful character images.[221]

Not only does the play deal with Henry VIII's and Cranmer's problems, but it is even more complex because it discusses the differing theological views of the Eucharist.[222] Again, theological ideas, rather than the action of the characters, become the real substantive meat of the story. The play also includes a deeper theological dialogue, intimately personal, which exposes the inner issues of Cranmer's soul:

> In order to reach God, Cranmer must cut through a faith of words and find the essential.… It is only when Cranmer discovers the way of the Cross that he enters into the peace he had prayed for all his life, but never fully discovered.[223]

In Williams's missionary play, *The House of the Octopus*, he dramatizes the Japanese conquest of the Pacific during the Second World War.[224] The intermingling of the natural and the supernatural is demonstrated together with the conflict of good and evil. The Japanese leaders are emissaries of the devil (the octopus) from P'o-l'u. Williams describes P'o-l'u as being as much of Hell as a human can imagine. It is the house of the octopus.

The play has some similarities to Lewis's *Screwtape Letters.* Here is a discussion from the play between two of Hell's or the Octopus's commanders:

> *The Marshal*. I have studied all my life, my dear Prefect, the religious mind. Every pious man—and of course, woman—has one—just one—surface where religion and he are so delicately mixed in his soul as to be indistinguishable; he is never quite sure—and does not (believe me!) ever want to be sure—whether his religion or he is being soothed into a lascivious spiritual delight.[225]

A contrasting example of the interpenetration is the Athanasian nature of the chorus of the little suffering church, which is a pervasive recurrent theme: 'We take

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[220] J. Heath-Stubbs, Introduction to *Collected Plays* by C. Williams, ix.

[221] Ibid.

[222] C. Williams, *Collected Plays* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2005), 198–204.

[223] K. Pickering, *Drama in the Cathedral: A Twentieth Century Encounter of Church and Stage*, 2nd ed. (Worcestershire: J. Garnet Miller, 2001) 216–17.

[224] Heath-Stubbs, Introduction, xi.

[225] *CP*, 276–77.

refuge in the Maker of all and the Flesh-Taker; we believe that his deeds are enough for our needs; we believe that we are in him and he is in us'.[226]

Professor Philip Jenkins recently reviewed both of these plays in *Books and Culture*. He says that *The House of the Octopus* provides a highly developed system of Williams' theological views. Jenkins thinks that Williams aids our understanding of the communal nature of salvation and that he especially extends our understanding of the communion of the saints by demonstrating the permeable nature of life (and death) and time revealed in Romans 8:38–39.[227]

In addition to his two verse plays, *A Myth of Bacon* and *A Myth of Shakespeare,* the other plays are historical, biblical, and filled with theological dialogue. *Three Plays: The Witch*, *The Rite of Passion* and *The Chaste Wanton* deal with the death of love as their subject.[228] These plays are interspersed with five poems and have not been performed. Their recent republication is fresh evidence of a growing interest in Williams's work by younger scholars, coming along and reintroducing older works to new audiences. These plays speak to man's condition.

Not as much is written on the plays as on his other works, perhaps partly because they are so complex and cryptic. His plays were performed and appreciated by a biblically literate audience; the plays needed an audience well versed in Bible and theology.[229] Ridler says that his plays were written more for reading than for acting and John Heath-Stubbs agrees.[230] One will prosper more by reading them slowly and thinking through the theological themes.

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[226] Ibid., 262.

[227] P. Jenkins, 'Charles Williams, Playwright,' *Books and Culture* May/June 2013: 22–24.

[228] Glenn, 5. The *Three Plays* have recently been republished with a helpful foreword by Arthur Livingston. See A. Livingston, Foreword, to *Three Plays: The Early Metaphysical Plays of Charles Williams.* Livingston also wrote his PhD dissertation in 1982 at the University of Chicago on 'The Systematic Philosophy and Theology in an English Novelist: The Survival of the Franciscan Tradition in Charles Williams'.

[228] For many years there was only *CP*, which did not contain his early plays: *Three Plays* and *The Masques of Amen House*. There are only four dissertations (none comprehensive) on the plays and a few articles.

[229] *CP*, 247. *The House of the Octopus* was written at the request of the United Council for Missionary Education. A 'Plays Group' under the leadership of Miss Margaret Sinclair performed in churches.

[230] Ibid., vi.

4. The Biographies

Perusing most of Williams's other work, even in some of the biographies, one will find his recurring theological themes. *Rochester* is a story of conversion, and *Flecker of Dean Close* is the story of a respected Anglican priest. His volume *Stories of Great Names* is a collection of biographies of seven well-known historical figures, two of which are Joan of Arc and John Wesley.

5. Major Theological Works

Classifying his work is especially difficult because one group of his theological discussions is interspersed throughout his many works. A second group includes his focused theological discussions and they are a genre in their own right. These focused theological works include *He Came Down from Heaven*, *DOD, The Forgiveness of Sins*, *ORT*, and many essays, some of which are collected in *IOC*. *FOB*, although already classified as literary criticism, is also included because it is a prime example of what Williams calls The Way of Affirmation of Images. Williams also wrote two devotional books: *The Passion of Christ* and *The New Christian Year*. Both these books are inspirational and being used today.

He Came Down from Heaven, dedicated to his wife, is a preeminent work. In it, he discusses the Creation, the Fall, man's responsibility for his neighbor, the precursor's (the Baptist) significance, and the Incarnation of Christ whose importance is central to all that he has to say. His theological understanding of romance is developed in the chapter on 'The Theology of Romantic Love' followed by 'The Practice of Substituted Love' with Christ as the example of the 'greater love'. He closes with his corporate understanding of the City.

The Forgiveness of Sins is now published together with *He Came Down from Heaven.* Williams dedicated *Forgiveness of Sins* to his fellow Inklings; it explores the practical application of forgiveness in the life of man in relationship with God and his fellow man. To be forgiven mandates the offer of forgiveness to others. Forgiveness involves the individual, the Church, and the State and involves offering forgiveness even to those who are unaware of their need. He especially deals with the issues relating to forgiveness in World War II.

FOB examines Dante's work through Williams's theological lens of romantic love. Williams follows Dante's Beatrice as an example of the way God's love is mediated from Himself through one person to another.

ORT, not published until 1990, is Williams's early exposition of the spousal image of romantic love in which, quite ahead of his time, he connects spousal love, the Eucharist, and Christology.

DOD was his own unique understanding of church history in what he called the coinherence of history. The Church is the coinherent web of the continuing life of Christ and of the City in the Spirit. This volume historically and theologically follows *HCD* because it flows from the Incarnation and begins with Pentecost and the early church. These major theological works and the essays in *IOC* will be discussed at length throughout the remaining chapters of this thesis.[231]

[231] There are also unpublished essays in manuscript that will be cited as needed.

CHAPTER III
THE TWO WAYS

A. Introduction

After examining Williams's major repetitive themes throughout his varied genres, we can begin to penetrate, explore, and show some pattern in his theology through what he sees as the two classical approaches to God. He makes little use of technical theological language. He is not trying to systematize theology, nor is he consistent in keeping his definitions and distinctions clear.[232] He is pursuing, in his own way, a re-orientation into the mystery of the implications of the humanity of Christ.[233]

The purpose of this chapter is, first, to discuss what Williams calls the 'Two Ways', second, to clarify what he means by each 'Way', and, third, to explain how they interrelate and function with each other. Why did he choose to emphasize what he calls the 'Way of Affirmation', the 'Way of Affirmation of Images', or the 'Via Positiva'? What does he mean by these expressions? What is he affirming, and in what sense? What does he mean by the 'Way of Rejection', the 'Rejection of Images', or the 'Via Negativa'? Both *ways* include a surprising variety of practices and a depth of theological complexity.

Clearly, for Williams, Creation is not so thoroughly fallen that all goodness is gone. In some sense he is saying that Creation is still good and usable by God and man for man's and God's benefit.

By affirmation, Williams means that God would have all mankind appreciate the good that exists in the world. He makes a correction that he believes is crucial for a healthy expression of Christianity, affirming love, marriage, friends, food, rest, and poetry. He emphasizes the small normal things of life. Sharing a meal or tea with friends can be an act of communion. He affirms the good things of Creation and God's use of them. God uses Creation to bless man. Williams then affirms man's enjoyment of them.

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[232] *POT*, viii.

[233] *IOC*, 68–75.

James King acknowledges that both Williams and Lewis constantly force their readers to confront Christian reality afresh.[234] King thinks their work in the Affirmative Way represents a significant ordering of human experience with God.[235] Without any sentimentality the Christian can express a sense of joy in the creation. Thomas Howard explains what he understands by Williams's view of Affirmation in *Shadows of Ecstasy*:

> The title points us to the idea Williams had for this story.… Every good thing in our world is a sort of hint, or shadow, of the joy for which we were made in the first place and which is our destiny if we do not refuse it.[236]

Williams also sees the specific use of things and persons as images. With God's help, persons can function as images of love. In grace, man is pedagogically a vessel of revelation and redemption. Persons as images are part of the variety in what he means by the affirmation of an image. For Williams, images are vehicles that *re-present* their original sources from which they derive. These vehicles are part of creation, and they play a significant role in his theological understanding. In Chapters IV, V, and VI we will continue to explore in-depth his use of persons as images.

However, his emphasis on Affirmation of Creation and images should be discussed in conjunction with his opposite idea of Rejection. He makes a correction to the Church's praxis. However, to my knowledge no one has clarified the importance (to Williams) of understanding the Two Ways as complementary and coinherent to each other and that both ways are a necessary part of everyone's pilgrimage with Christ. Williams's explanation of 'The Way of Rejection', 'The Rejection of Images', and 'The Via Negativa' consists in his understanding of apophaticism, asceticism, mysticism, and his unique perspective on self-denial. Some things are denied for good reasons and some for bad.[237] The Ways of Rejection will be more fully discussed later in this chapter.

Williams believes man lives, and expresses his relationship with God, through these 'Two Ways'.[238] They are his interpretative lenses of two classical approaches to God. Williams weaves together these Ways of understanding life, as iconic vehicles in

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[234] J. R. King, 'Christian Fantasy in the Novels of C. S. Lewis and Charles Williams,' *The Journal of Religious Thought* 11, no. 1 (Autumn/Winter 1953–54): 60.

[235] King, 60.

[236] T. Howard, 'Shadows of Ecstasy', *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 14, no. 2 (Fall 1981): 73.

[237] Some expressions of self-denial are counter to the Spirit of love. See 1 Cor. 13:3.

[238] *DOD*, 57. Williams expresses his views within the bounds of classic orthodox Christianity.

man's apprehension of God. Obviously, man can only apprehend what God allows him to perceive. For Williams, the 'Way of Affirmation' is led by the artist and the poet. He is also aware that rejection and denial are part of the interrelations of ordinary existence. The Two Ways are integral and interdependent, combining to nourish man's natural and spiritual life.

The Ways are means of grace, and they are most helpful when kept in proper balance. Williams discusses that some people are called to accentuate one particular Way as their means of being a gift to others. However, everyone is forced by life to use both Ways, whether they are aware of doing so or not. Each Way may be appropriated at different times into one's life as one sees the necessity of an affirmation or a rejection.

Williams calls the Way of Affirmation and the Way of Rejection 'ways of the soul' that shape the vocation of one's life.[239] He contrasts the Two Ways by pointing to the different emphasis to be seen in the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus:

> It was once suggested—and the suggestion was made neither profanely nor scandalously—that among all the Orders of the Christian Church there lacked one to our Sacred Lord as 'a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber'. Considering that the very term Christian rose as a term of abuse and was then adopted, these other terms of abuse may not be without their own value and instruction for us. Food and wine are here the definite symbols of the 'creature', more so as a divine Way than the locusts and wild honey of the Precursor. It is the following of our Lord in this knowledge of the creature which has been a part of the work of Christendom and may well be a greater part in the future.[240]

Even within his asceticism, John the Baptist had to affirm the need for nourishment. Williams is not suggesting gluttony or intoxication. He is affirming the Creation and its usage. These indications show a distinction between the lifestyles of Jesus and John the Baptist. Christ displays an obvious use of the good things of this world and his relation to them. Christ keeps these things together, within the social web of life. Christ is showing that good things in the world still exist and that John the Baptist embraces the ascetic Way for reasons of his own calling.

The Christian scriptures declare that Creation is full of God's glory, that man (male and female), in particular, is created in His image, and that Creation in some

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[239] *IOC*, 155.

[240] Ibid.,156. Also see *FOB*, 10.

measure still reflects this reality.[241] The world, even fallen, and the confusion brought about by evil still provide a sense of good that God and man can use.

In writing about the Two Ways, Williams demonstrates his familiarity with certain important historic theological documents, their relation to his interpretation, and to his particular emphasis on the Two Ways:

> There are two documents,… which present the division between the Ways in the world of definitions, and as regards the Nature of God. One is … Creed of St. Athanasius'; the other is the *Mystical Theology* of Dionysius the Aeropagite.[242]

Williams remarks that although Dionysius is known for his examination of the Way of Rejection, he understands and also uses the Way of Affirmation to express man's relationship to God.[243]

Williams's controlling reference point for an illustration of the Way of Affirmation is the Incarnation. One major feature of his view of the Incarnation is captured in a line from the Athanasian Creed, which he repeats throughout his works and calls his maxim for understanding the Way of Affirmation: 'Not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh but by taking of the manhood into God'.[244] The Athanasian Creed is specifically affirming God's use of humanity. Williams supports his understanding of the humanity of Christ from the declarations of scripture, the liturgy, the sacraments, and, especially, the creeds of Christendom.[245] This particular line from the Nicene Creed, 'he came down from heaven', and the line just mentioned from the Athanasian Creed are at the very heart of Williams's understanding of affirmation. Williams wrote a short book with the title from the Nicene Creed, *He Came Down from Heaven.* But in such maxims, too, there is complexity.

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[241] Gen.1:26–31; Ps.8:4–6; Ps. 19; Isa. 6:3; Rom.1:19–20.

[242] *DOD*, 58.

[243] Ibid., 62. Dionysius employs the romantic love term 'true sweetheart' to express the affirmation of the relationship between man and God. Williams is quoting from Dionysius the Aeropagite, C. E. Rolt's translation. See also C. Luibheid, trans., *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist, 1987), 81ff; see also '*Divine Names*' Chapter 4, section 12.

[244] *DOD*, 59. See also *FOB*, 9; *Book of Common Prayer of 1662* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 29.

[245] *DOD*, Nicene 13, 48–49, 51–53, 63, 129; Athanasian 58–60, 235; *FOB*, Athanasian 9; *HCD* is a line from the Nicene Creed, Athanasian 60–61. The Region of the Summer Stars, Athanasian 36. War in Heaven, Athanasian 56. *IOC*, Athanasian 73–74, 76; Apostles' Creed 110. See also *TRL* has a full discussion of Williams's emphasis of the Quicunque Vult, 67–72, 76, 80–81, see index Quicunque Vult; Nicene Creed 67, 70, 79.

Williams's understanding of affirmation draws also on positive statements about God that he bases on what he thinks can be said from Scripture concerning God's relation to Creation. He sees God using Creation, especially humanity, to accomplish and to communicate his love.

This usage of humanity opens the door to investigate why Williams thinks the Way of Affirmation of Images is so important. Christ as a human person is the perfect image of God. God is affirming the use of flesh and blood to communicate his presence and love. Mankind regenerated in his humanity is then to be an image of Christ. Williams would agree that the significance of the Incarnation, 'manhood taken into the Godhead', and its implications for man have been officially affirmed by the Church, but they have not been explored as much as the divinity of Christ.[246] They need to be explored and emphasized for a more adequate theological anthropology. Without diminishing the Divinity of Christ, Williams also insists on the significance of the humanity: 'All these things are worked out in terms of flesh, and must be; our Lord Himself deigned to work out the conclusion of the whole matter in terms of flesh'.[247]

B. Williams's Argument with the Church

The Church, as Williams sees it, has emphasized one of the Ways far more than the other. He would say that Rejection has been carried to the point where theology is being infected by the dualism of Gnosticism and, particularly, Manichaeism, not in its official language but in its practice.[248] Manichaeism undermines the significance of the Incarnation's emphasis on the human body being a vehicle of Redemption.

Williams perceives the overemphasis as a bias and an imbalance in the praxis of the Church between the Way of Affirmation and the Way of Rejection:

> The records of Christian sanctity have on the whole stressed the rejection. This indeed can hardly be avoided in any religion—nor perhaps outside all religion; the mere necessities of human life … and death—everywhere involve it. But even more within religion the discipline of the soul, ordinary or extraordinary, enforces it. The general praise of ascetic life and even the formal preference of

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[246] *IOC*, 156.

[247] Ibid., 103. Gen. 17:13.

[248] F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (London: OUP, 1997), 1027. Manichaeism is a severe ascetic form of Gnosticism beginning in the late third century. Williams uses the term loosely for a whole range of views without clear definition and with a variety of spellings. His best explanation is an in-depth discussion in *DOD*, 22–26.

> one good (such as virginity) to another good (such as marriage) have themselves imaged that enforcement.[249]

He insists on the obvious need for discipline and a healthy self-denial. Rejection is one form of what he calls part of the normal fabric of life. It is part of the multitude of decisions that must be made daily to accomplish success or faithfulness in any area of endeavor.

The church stresses the Way of Rejection, or the Via Negativa, for several reasons. First, Williams thinks that the Way of Rejection is easier to understand. It makes sense to employ certain restrictions in order not to hinder or encumber reaching specific goals or to maintain certain boundaries. Second, finding examples of Rejection in the literature of the church is easier. Third, in his opinion a problem, which is a driving force behind his argument, is that the church also wrongly overemphasizes asceticism, another form of Rejection, which he thinks can lead to a continual, if often subtle, expression of Gnosticism. Out of balance, the Way of Rejection can develop in people an arrogant moral attitude of superiority, invested in legalism and a prideful pseudo spiritual perfectionism that even Christ could not tolerate. A dualism is created, spirit is elevated, and flesh is denigrated. Similarly, without the checks of a healthy Rejection, Affirmation can lead to a voracious greed and an egregious licentiousness. Out of balance, each Way can degenerate into a self-destructive narcissistic idolatry.

1. Gnosticism, Especially Manicheaism

Williams writes, 'The Church has always … been haunted by a Manicheaism which, driven out by dogma, has returned as a vaguer but pervading influence'.[250] Williams's theological emphasis is a counter-balance to the slippage of the Church back into a subtle Gnosticism, which he also calls an unofficial Manicheaism.[251] Auden believes Williams's concern is accurate:

> Most contemporary writers, whatever their beliefs, show a Manicaean bias,… if they are professing Christians, the only road to salvation they can imagine is the

[249] *FOB*, 10; *DOD*, 55–57; *IOC*, 68–75.

[250] *ORT*, 9.

[251] *IOC*, 69. This is an obvious recurrent theme especially in his essays 'Sensuality and Substance', 'Natural Goodness', 'The Index of the Body', 'The Redeemed City', and 'Anthropotokos'. See *DOD* 22–26, 35–36, 40, 45, 55, 105, and 112.

> Negative Way of ascetic renunciation.… In the work of Charles Williams I detect no [bias] whatever.[252]

What Williams sees as a Manicaean bias is dualistic and undermines the physicality and humanity of the Incarnation. This particular problem is further discussed in Chapter IV.

In response to this type of Gnostic bias, Williams indicates at certain points a theological perspective other than that of Augustine's or Aquinas's bias and over emphasizing on the Way of Rejection. [253] Arthur Livingston suggests that Williams is insisting on 'another ordering of the Church's Dogma', referring to Duns Scotus' position on the reason for the Incarnation. Williams emphasizes more than the rational, intellectual, and philosophical aspects of human life.[254] He sees the body as a significant part of the image of God. Pope John Paul II also sees the human body as significant and deals with the problem of Manichaeism in the Church.[255]

The Incarnation is not God's plan B—God's rescue plan. God was uniting himself with his Creation before the Fall occurred. The Incarnation of Christ was coming regardless because God wanted to be in intimate fellowship with man. The emphasis is kept on the coinherent nature of God's love as the foundation of the Creation and the Incarnation. Man's redemption is obviously central to the fulfillment of the Creator's will for man, but God's principal motive of the Incarnation is His love even though man is fallen. This is discussed at length in the chapter on the Fall.

2. The Clergy's False Spiritual Dichotomy

Another major reason why the Way of Affirmation is not as recognized within the Church as much as the Way of Rejection is because the clergy creates a false dichotomy of higher and lower spiritualities. Glen Cavaliero notes that the ordinary life of the laity is not judged to be as holy as the religious vocation of the clergy. He writes,

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[252] Auden, 'Charles Williams, 553. See also Enright, 'Charles Williams and His Theology of Romantic Love: The Novels' (PhD diss., Drew University, 1986), 20.

[253] *HCD*, 119.

[254] A. Livingston, 'Systematic Philosophy', 34–35. This case is similar to that on which Fergus Kerr comments in *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians: From Neo-Scholasticism to Nuptial Mysticism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 162–82. Kerr suggests that John Paul II demonstrates another perspective in *TOB* with his emphasis on the importance of the human body as a vehicle of the image of God.

[255] *TOB*, see sections 44: 5–6; 45: 1–5; 46: 1, 4; 49: 6; 55: 3; 62: 5; 77: 6; 78: 1; 82: 6; 83: 3; 85: 5; 117b: 2.

'There has appeared the false dichotomy of the dual standard, one for the avowedly 'religious', the other for the layman'.[256]

Obviously certain particular distinctions follow this double standard of holiness. It fits amazingly well with the gnostic-manichaeistic picture of a privileged spiritual class.[257] This Gnostic thinking subtly also leads to the Church's long-standing, incorrect, and injurious attitude towards sexuality and marriage.

3. The Church's Derogations of Sexuality and Marriage

Williams believes that the church did not value the physical body, or sex, as it should, and he criticizes the Church's attitude:

> It is due to Manichaenism that there has grown up in Christendom … the vague suggestion that the body has somehow fallen farther than the soul. It was certainly nourished in the Church by the desert ascetics—especially in their ingenuous repudiation of sex.[258]

The problems concerning sexuality and marriage also correspond with the wider implications in theology, in neglect of the physical body and the humanity of Christ. Williams's particular emphasis on sexuality is an important aspect of his criticism of the Church's view of humanity. Williams sees the derogations of sexuality as part of the Gnosticism problem.[259] He writes that the Church's emphasis has been fundamentally problematic in its practice.[260]

Asceticism has its uses and misuses. It needs to be balanced with the affirmation of God's good gifts in ordinary life. Without the balance of the affirmations, the spiritual life ends with abuse and pride in a twisted pseudo-spirituality.

Williams says, 'But for long, affected by her early passion of devotion and her later passion for Reason, she depreciated sexual passion altogether'.[261] He also finds support from Lewis concerning the Church's depreciating view of sexuality:

> The Medieval theory finds room for innocent sexuality; what it does not find room for is passion, whether romantic or otherwise.… In its Thomist form the

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[256] *POT*, 139.

[257] *DOD*, 24. See also Cross and Livingstone, 1027.

[258] *DOD*, 56.

[259] Ibid., 55–57.

[260] *ORT*, 9–10.

[261] *DOD*, 130.

> theory acquits the carnal desire and the carnal pleasure, and finds the evil in the *ligamentum rationis*, the suspension of intellectual activity.[262]

Williams comments on the *ligamentum rationis*: 'Saint Thomas Aquinas long ago stated that physical intercourse, even in a married Christian couple, caused a submergence of the rational faculty, which was an evil though no sin'.[263]

Williams and others disagree with Aquinas's view regarding sexual intercourse in marriage. Especially on the issues of romantic love and sexuality, Williams believes that the church has not been very helpful. He says, 'It is a pity that the clergy as a whole are so often among the disparagers. A natural hesitation over the un-covenanted graces leads them not so much to say wrong things as to say right things in the wrong tone'.[264] Williams insists that the very nature of the rejections cannot contradict the related nature of the affirmations. He draws strong support from second and third-century church canons that prohibit clergy or laity from what he calls to 'inveigh against the creation'.[265] The canons warn that if clergy or laity disdain what God calls '*valde bona'* marriage, meat, or wine, they are to be corrected, or turned out, with the exception for one's own personal discipline.[266]

4. Lack of Nuptial Theology

In Williams's opinion, very little theological work is written on the Sacrament of Marriage in comparison to the Sacrament of the Eucharist.[267] Williams wants to draw out and develop a positive theological understanding of romantic love and marriage. He calls the Church's attitude and practice an 'evasion of the problem' of the theology of marriage.[268] In the past, the church has failed to address the positive values of marriage

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[262] C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (New York: OUP, 1960), 16–17. See also *DOD*, 130.

[263] *FOB*, 37. See also St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, vols. II, I-II, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1981), Question 34, 'Of the Goodness and Malice of Pleasures'. 'Thus is conjugal intercourse, though the pleasure be in accord with reason, yet it hinders the use of reason, on account of the accompanying bodily change. But in this case the pleasure is not morally evil;… However that although this fettering of the reason through the pleasure of conjugal intercourse has no moral malice, since it is neither a mortal or a venial sin; yet it proceeds from a kind of moral malice, namely, from the sin of our first parent." In other words, sexual intercourse is the result of sin rather than God's good gift to us'.

[264] *HCD*, 78.

[265] *DOD*, 57; Williams is quoting from Hefele's *History of the Church Councils*.

[266] Ibid.

[267] *ORT*, 9.

[268] Ibid., 9–11.

theologically. He argues that the Church has focused on morals, birth control, and divorce but has not dealt with the deeper issue of the theological image of romantic love in marriage. [269] Ridler says, 'Williams had a life long attempt to develop an adequate theology of Marriage'.[270] *ORT* was written for that very purpose.[271]

In recent years the issues of sexuality and marriage have been significantly elevated and discussed, especially in the Roman Catholic Church. Pope John Paul II's text *TOB* has had an impact globally, in both Roman Catholic and Protestant circles. *TOB*'s most substantial material supports Williams's ideas on sex and marriage as a sign, an image of the Trinity, and a vehicle of the love of God.

5. Virginity and Celibacy

Two examples of the Way of Rejection, virginity and celibacy, have sometimes been promoted as having a higher spiritual value than marriage. Augustine saw marriage as a second-class spiritual state compared to the excellence of the virgin state.[272] He apparently understood marriage, and especially sexual intercourse, to be a necessary low-level permitted evil, necessary to take care of childbearing and to harness lust. Augustine's view depreciates sexuality. For Augustine, being married and deciding not to have sex was a 'higher degree of Holiness'.[273] The Way of Rejection is here changed into asceticism and is seen as the pseudo-pietistic high road to holiness. If one really wants to be holy, he or she will become a priest, a pastor, a nun, a missionary, or a monk. Nothing is wrong with any of these Church-related vocations. However, a clerical vocation does not elevate a person's relationship with God. Glen Cavaliero writes that the Holy Spirit has raised Williams up to teach the Way of Affirmation because we have been too exclusively under the influence of the great masters of the negative way, especially concerning the subject of sexuality.[274]

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[269] *IOC*, 156–57.

[270] Ridler, xxv.

[271] *ORT*, 14–15.

[272] Schaff, P., ed., *A Select Library of the Christian Church: Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 'Of The Good of Marriage' (par. 15, 405–06). Marriage became a way of controlling lust, and in 'The Excellency of The Virgin State' (417–38), virginity is promoted to be the most holy state, and much better than marriage.

[273] Schaff, 'Of the Good of Marriage', Par. 15, 405–06. The only reason for sexual intercourse is to have children and keep lust at bay.

[274] G. Cavaliero, 'The Way of Affirmation: A Study in the Writings of Charles Williams', *Church Quarterly Review* 157 (January/March 1956): 27–28.

C. Further Exploration of the Way of Affirmation

In the Introduction, we have discussed the two main branches of the Way of Affirmation: the Affirmation of the good of Creation and the Affirmation of the use of the good of Creation as images by God and man. Each branch has its own variety and complexity. More will be said about both branches, and their particular complexities will emerge.

1. The Affirmation of the Good of Creation

The Way of Affirmation in Williams's thought is one way through which God comes to man by way of Creation. First, it affirms the existence of some good things following the Fall. Some goodness, pleasure, and joy are still available in and from Creation—relationships, marriage, family, sexuality, food, beauty, work, play, other activities, institutions. We could go on and on about the many good gifts that God has given man to enjoy: 'In every novel and in all of the poems, Williams conveys a sense of joy in the creation of God'.[275] These good things are to be enjoyed. The affirmative emphasis is on the good of creation in the here and now.

Williams would also agree that God is not only working in the midst of all these things and activities, but they are part of what Williams calls the *web.*[276] God is supportive of the vitality and order of life. Hospitals, institutions of learning, social justice, and all the many people and vocations enrich and protect civilization. These varied occupations and institutions bring stability, creativity, and fulfillment into our lives.

Often God also uses things and people that are seemingly outside of the kingdom to be an aid in the redemption of others. Virgil represents this role for Dante and Williams's understanding of the usefulness of the good of Creation. He symbolizes all that is naturally good outside of revelation.[277] Virgil's role is in contrast to Bunyan's

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[275] Enright, 'Charles Williams: The Novels', 22–25.

[276] Williams uses the term *web* to explain that whatever is part of the good in society is part of what he calls the web of glory with God at its centre. See *HCD*, 33, 51, and 120–21.

[277] *DOD*, 135. See also Wiliams, *FOB*, 174, 179–80. Virgil takes Dante as far as Creation can go without saving grace then disappears because he does not represent the salvific relationship. He represents God's use of the pagan scandal that guides Dante. See R. Hollander, *Dante: A Life in Works*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 115–21.

Pilgrim's Progress due to its strong Protestant reformed perspective of total depravity, but Dante, of course, (and Williams) recognizes the Catholic sensitivity to the cooperation of nature and grace.[278]

But Nature also brings suffering and is discussed in the final section on Suffering and in the chapter on the Fall: 'Nature, "a terrible good" as Williams calls it, is not a sweet comfort but a mighty reminder of God's power, sustenance, terror, and beauty'.[279] Sometimes man needs to be silent and become aware: 'The Heavens declare the Glory of God'.[280] Nature is good but not in man's control. Williams would add that Creation and life are not all rosy; sometimes life is very painful and hard. The ultimate image for the painful realities of life is the Cross of Christ. Affirming the good of Creation leads to another positive aspect of Williams's Way of Affirmation—God's use of the good of Creation as images for God to encounter man through the Affirmation of Images.

2. God's Work through the Affirmation of Images

Rowan Williams recently wrote,

> And it should also be remembered that Lewis had, by the time he wrote the Narina books, digested many of the theological ideas of his close friend Charles Williams, who had underlined so strongly the importance of the 'way of affirmation of Images'—the belief that our positive images of God represent more than we can otherwise speak of, so that the divine reality must not be thought of only in terms of what it is not, of what our language cannot ever capture, but imagined also as that which contains, in infinite 'excess', all that we say about what is good or beautiful in the immediate objects we experience.[281]

The usefulness of images is an affirmation of the usefulness of the good of Creation. For Williams, the affirmation of an image is a way of the soul in God's grace making

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[278] Sayers, *Introductory Papers,* 120–21. See also D. Sayers, *Hell*, *The Divine Comedy,* II, Images—Virgil's Mission. She says that for some people, who are too lost to pay attention to religion, poetry and human reason may be used under Grace to help lead a person to God as represented by Michelangelo's paintings on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel depicting the Sibyls from Virgil's Fourth Ecologue. See H. Hibbard, *Michelangelo*, 2nd ed. (London: Harper and Row, 1974), 113–15, 128–29.

[279] *DIH*, 21. See also *DIH*—The terrible good of God and nature discussed, 16ff; D. Carter-Day, '"Coinherence" and "The Terrible Good": A Soul's Journey to Awareness and Responsibility', *Mythlore* 7, no. 4 (Winter 1981): 27–30. Her article recounts from the novels Williams's understanding of one's responsibility in love for one's neighbor.

[280] Ps. 19:1.

[281] R. Williams, *The Lion's World: A Journey into the Heart of Narnia* (London: SPCK, 2012), 120.

possible another step towards the 'ingodding of man'.[282] Other theologians share Williams's broad sensitivities.

Antony Barrow and David Brown particularly see the variety of activities God may employ to engage man. In Barrow's discussion of Williams's Way of Affirmation, he says, 'Affirmation is … the way of acceptance, that sees the things of the world not as objects only, though they are also that, but as … one means through which He may be known'.[283] From Williams's point of view, God reaches out to man in so many ways, including the common activities and experiences of everyday life.

David Brown thinks we need to pay attention to the malaise that affects theology in general with 'very limited horizons' and leaves us with the impression that 'something important still seems lacking'.[284] He calls for a renewed emphasis to reclaim human experience as a place to encounter God. He wants to correct and open up the circumscription of God from certain areas of life (e.g., the religious, the political, the moral, and the philosophical):

> Something important still seems lacking, and that is any sense of relevance to those large tracts of human experience where a religious view was once seen to be essential. Sport, drama, humour, dance, architecture, place and home, the natural world are all part of a long list of activities and forms of experience that have been relegated to the periphery of religious reflection, but which once made invaluable contributions to a human perception that this world is where God can be encountered, and encountered often. The reduction of the relevance of such areas to the moral, political, or philosophical is what I want to resist as I seek to expand and transform what used to be called 'natural religion'. In such areas to discern and meet God through grace was once what was meant, and could be again.[285]

All people, events, places, times, and experiences are opportunities for man to experience grace and to change accordingly. God employs Creation to speak to men,[286] and men employ images to communicate with each other. The fundamental invitation and mediation of God's love comes through Christ who is the perfect image of God. The Incarnation is the ultimate example of the Way of Affirmation of Images. [287]

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[282] *FOB*, 16.

[283] A. Barrow, 'The Affirmation of Images: An Examination of the Novels of Charles Williams', *Nine* 3 (Summer-Autumn 1952): 328.

[284] D. Brown, *God and Enchantment of Place: Reclaiming Human Experience* (2004; London: OUP, 2008), 9.

[285] Ibid.

[286] Ps. 19.

[287] Heb. 1:3.

The Eucharist is also communicated through the symbolic natural images of bread and wine. For Williams the Eucharist is not only an illustration of the redeeming nature of God's love but also an expression of the nature of life. Life is vicarious and sacramental in its very nature and it is communicated by images, living and otherwise.

John Paul II believes the work of God through images can be revelatory and redemptive. He has a heightened sensitivity to the Way of Affirmation of images and to its usefulness as a vehicle of revelation. He was a playwright and an actor and involved in several acting troupes at an early stage of his priestly life.[288] He wrote in the last lines of his *Letter to Artists* concerning the purpose of their work: 'May your art help to affirm that true beauty which, as a glimmer of the Spirit of God, will transfigure matter, opening the human soul to the sense of the eternal'.[289] He understands the mediation through the Way of Affirmation of Images. In their theological anthropology, Williams and John Paul II refer predominantly to human persons in romantic love as icons or images of God's love. John Paul II uses Christian marriage as his primary image. Williams does the same thing, but he also broadens the images to include all relationships of love. He applies his understanding to the complete range of love in relationships, even the love of enemies.[290]

The Affirmative Way uses language, metaphors, and imagery to communicate what can be known about God. Williams's images are vehicles for God to speak to man and redeem him. The use of nonliving images (primarily icons, statues, and paintings) has caused problems for the Church. John Paul II and Williams go a step further: They both add, and emphasize, 'living images' in their response to the iconoclast controversy:

> It was for centuries accepted in Christendom … that the Affirmation of those actual images was good and just. Men must use their piety and intelligence to avoid idolatry; they could not and must not be saved by the Rejection of Images, except as their private devotions might dictate. But private vocations are not to lay down the law to Christendom; images—one may add, living images also—were to receive 'proskunesis', particular honour.[291]

Pope John Paul II refers to this same issue in his *Letter to Artists*:

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[288] K. Wojtyla, *The Jeweler's Shop: A Mediation on the Sacrament of Matrimony, Passing on Occasion into a Drama*, trans. B. Taborski (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 9–11.

[289] John Paul II, 'Letter of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to Artists', April 4, 1999, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_23041999_artists_en.html (accessed December 23, 2013), Section 16, last two lines,

[290] *HCD*, 190–200.

[291] *DOD*, 95.

> The decisive argument to which the Bishops appealed in order to settle the controversy was the mystery of the Incarnation: if the Son of God had come into the world of visible realities—his humanity building a bridge between the visible and the invisible.… The icon is venerated not for its own sake, but points beyond to the subject which it represents.[292]

The Pope appeals to the Incarnation to support the use of images. Christ's humanity bridges the gap between the visible and the invisible. The human body is a sign and an image of the divine.[293] Williams has more support in this arena today than when he wrote about his concerns. John Paul II writes,

> The body, in fact, and only the body, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine. It has been created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the mystery hidden from eternity in God, and thus to be a sign of it.[294]

D. The Ways of Rejection

Williams includes several different things in the Way of Rejection.[295] First is the classic intellectual rejection of making positive statements, ideas, analogies, or images to explain God—a form of apophatic theology.[296] Second is a rejection, to some degree, of the use and celebration of the good of creation—asceticism, abstinences, or some exclusions of lifestyle. These rejections become the habit and discipline of life. Galahad and Percivale are two of Williams's poetic examples in the Arthuriad.[297] Another common lifestyle example is the adoption of celibacy instead of marriage as exhibited by Taliessin also in his Arthuriad. Third is the way of the mystic. Williams remarks on the journey of the mystic—purgation, illumination, and union with God,[298] which often involves a one-to-one contemplative, searching relationship with God. All other things are then diminished or excluded in their significance. For Williams, Julian of Norwich

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[292] John Paul II, 'Letter', Section 7.

[293] *TOB*, 201–04.

[294] Ibid., 203.

[295] *DOD*, 57–58.

[296] 'Apophatic theology … or negative theology, [is] a way of approaching God by denying that any of our concepts can properly be affirmed of Him. The term is first used by Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite in contrast with cataphatic, affirmative theology, and symbolic theology. In apophatic theology the soul rejects all ideas or images of God and enters the "darkness that is beyond understanding", where it is "wholly united with the Ineffable".… Apophatic theology can be seen as an assertion of the inadequacy of human understanding in matters Divine, and therefore a corrective within theology'. Cross and Livingstone, 88.

[297] *DOD*, 116.

[298] Ibid., 36–37.

fits the role of a mystic quite well.[299] Fourth, for Williams rejection and negation have a unique sense of vicarious self-denial, which he calls *pietas*. Each of these four categories of rejection covers many variations and the overlaps among them.

Williams refers with little distinction, often almost interchangeably, to the Way of Rejection, the Way of Rejection of Images, the Negative Way, the Via Negativa, or the Way of the Mystic.[300] Other representatives whom Williams mentions as followers of the Negative Way are St. John of the Cross,[301] Kierkegaard,[302] and Augustine.[303] In Williams's opinion, Evelyn Underhill is a twentieth-century example of the Negative Way.[304]

1. Apophatic Theological Mysticism

The apophatic intellectual approach is often combined with the way of the mystic, as seen for instance in St. John of the Cross. Williams's intellectual example of the Negative Way is from Dionysius the Areopagite, in his *Mystical Theology*:[305]

> It is an accepted fact that there have, on the whole, been two chief ways of approach to God defined in Christian thought. One, which is most familiar in the records of sanctity, has been known as the Way of Rejection. It consists, generally speaking, in the renunciation of all images except the final one of God himself, and even—sometimes but not always—of the exclusion of that only Image of all human sense. The great intellectual teacher of that Way was Dionysius the Areopagite.[306]

Williams comments on Dionysius's explanation, which he says 'provided the definition of the negative way and would satisfy a certain type of mind who contemplates

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[299] He was influenced by her work and he introduced others to it. See Newman, 427–61. See *DOD*, 137, 143–44, 224; *HCD*, 120, 185; *FOB*, 91, 152, 228. Julian was also one of his theological masters. See also *POT*, 148.

[300] *DOD*, 57–62, 141, 180.

[301] Ibid., 179–81.

[302] Ibid., 215.

[303] Ibid., 64.

[304] C. Williams, Introduction to *The Letters of Evelyn Underhill* (London: Longmans, Green and Co.), 1943.

[305] *DOD*, 60–62. He also includes the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* who uses the same quote from Dionysius as an example of the Way of Rejection. He quotes the same long difficult passage from Mystical Theology in *FOB*, 8–9.

[306] *FOB*, 8.

intellectually the Divine Principle'.[307] The rejection of images, concepts, and positive sayings about God is apophatic theology.

2. From Asceticism to Purposeful Discipline

Apophaticism is the removal of all things, even good things that might hinder the contemplation of God. In Williams's presentations of historical figures and in his portrayals of characters' living and thinking, he mentions the removal or rejection, in varying degrees, of certain good things for specific purposes. Obviously, this sort of way encourages a certain degree of asceticism. However, many of the great lights of the church are representatives of this Way, and their lifestyles are varied. In his novels, Williams also illustrates the Way of Rejection in his 'Sybliline' characters, as good examples of this Way.[308] Judith Kollmann comments on these as follows:

> In the novels these are older women who exist in a self-chosen apartness and contemplative peace, in balance between the natural and supernatural worlds. They serve as teachers and guides for younger women who are emergent Beatrician figures. Examples are Margaret Anstruther, *Descent into Hell* and Sybil Coningsby, *The Greater Trumps*, in the Arthurian Cycles: Brisen and Nimue. Joanna, in *The Greater Trumps*….[309]

These characters Kollmann mentions are not extreme ascetics, but they are disciplined, and among other things they demonstrate a certain modesty. They are more ordinary yet display a high degree of spiritual maturity. They are able both to affirm and to reject, as needed.

Negation in order to affirm and to give—*Pietas*. Williams also discusses yet another branch of the Way of Rejection. It is seen in his understanding of St. John of the Cross's exercise of contemplation and seeking union with God. St. John compares the giving of oneself to God to that of the bridegroom and bride, completely surrendering themselves as a gift to God and to each other. St. John of the Cross gives himself to God in Williams's words, as a 'vicarious sacrifice', but St. John expresses himself in nuptial terms.[310]

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[307] *DOD*, 61.

[308] J. Kollmann, 'The Figure of Beatrice in the Works of Charles Williams: A Keynote Address', *Mythlore* 3, no. 48 (Winter 1986): 3. Sibyls were Greek prophetesses. They were a mixture of pagan, Jewish, and Christian revelations. See utterances of the pseudo-sibylline oracles from second century BC to late Middle Ages. See Virgil's Sibyls in his Fourth Ecloque and see Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel's sibylline paintings.

[309] Ibid., 3.

[310] *DOD*, 179–81.

Williams sees vicarious surrender as a deepening in the development in the Way: When the rejection is done for another person, it becomes a positive gift of oneself to another. It is for the other's welfare and is not in any way self-motivated. Surrendering one's life for another is critical to what Williams understood as 'self-denial'. He expresses that gift to another as *pietas*.[311] He means the love of one's neighbor, to be understood to involve the acceptance that we are, in fact, our brother's keeper. In the following passage he refers to Cain and Abel:

> The first breach in humanity, the first outrage against *Pietas*, (and more importantly) the first imagined proclamation of *Pietas* from the heavens,… 'Am I my brother's keeper?' 'The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground'.[312]

Pietas thus express what Williams understands about the Way of Negation or Rejection as a means to convey the vicarious sacramental nature of love. He develops his view of *Pietas* also from Christ's self-sacrifice for man in life and in death.[313] Denying of oneself is not for oneself or for what one might gain from any sacrifice of oneself for another but completely for the welfare of another. The welfare and the burden of another then becomes your own. Williams contends, 'Good deeds are not enough; even love is not enough unless it is love of a particular kind'.[314] It must be that 'Greater Love'.[315]

Williams also connects this type of sacrifice with Saint Paul's thought: 'though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor … and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing'.[316] This love is the *eros* crucified by God's *agape*; it is not something that man can produce on his own, though man has a part to play. Williams connects his understanding of self-denial to what he calls 'the commerce of love' initiated by Christ's great sacrifice for us and Williams's view of the practice of substituted love.[317]

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[311] *HCD*, 23.

[312] Ibid., 23; Gen. 4:10.

[313] Ibid., 93–94.

[314] *HCD*, 54.

[315] John 15:13, NIV says, 'Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends'. 1 John 3:16 says, 'This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers'.

[316] *HCD*, 54, and 1 Cor. 13:3, KJV.

[317] *HCD*, 88. 2 Cor. 8:9 says, 'For we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich' (KJV).

John Paul II also pursues some of these same complexities. He describes what Williams expresses here as a *disinterested gift of self*[318] because one is not interested in anything for oneself but only in the welfare of the other. John Paul II teaches that finding oneself is impossible without giving oneself away. True communion with man and God involves this type of love—true self-denial. Williams's understanding of mature love involves exchange and substitution—burden-bearing for one another. Lewis recognizes that Williams caught this important perspective on self-denial.[319]

John Paul II says that giving our lives as a gift to others is part of what brings about real communion. He points to a vital aspect of what Williams calls coinherence:

> Communio … refers rather to the very mode of being and acting of persons, which is a mode of being and acting in mutual relation to one another (not just in common with one another) such that through this being and acting they mutually confirm and affirm one another as persons.… The human being 'cannot fully find himself or herself except through a disinterested gift of himself or herself'.… In the communal relationship that occurs between persons, this self-fulfillment is realized through the mutual gift of self.[320]

This perception of self-denial involves affirmation, especially of other persons; it also involves rejections and negations of various kinds of one's wants and interests. Both Pope John Paul II and Williams see that the proper image of giving oneself to God and to another emerges as a sacrifice similar to a spousal gift. Interestingly, they both use St. John of the Cross's understanding of that gift as an image of marital love.[321] Obviously both Ways need the other for life, including collaboration, cooperation, and integration in the nature of their function.

E. Complementarity and Coinherence of the Ways

Williams brings the Two Ways into a close, if sometimes paradoxical relationship. He relates the Two Ways as aids, both to nourish one's own spiritual journey and to nourish the lives of others we serve in community. We have a responsibility in love to our neighbor, and both Ways are needed to express that love.

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[318] K. Wojtyla, *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, vol. 4 of *Catholic Thought from Lublin*, trans. Theresa Sandok, ed. A. N. Woznicki (New York: Peter Language, 1993), 321.

[319] C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 263. Lewis refers to Williams's interpretation of the Cain and Abel story and how God works (*HCD*, 25). See also C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964), 117.

[320] Wojtyla, *Person and Community*, 321–22; italics his. See also *TOB*, 23–29.

[321] *DOD*, 180.

We find meaning and fulfillment as we learn to love others by appropriating both Ways as needed. Both Ways exist interdependently within each other. Diogenes Allen also recognizes a similar connection between the classical Two Ways as does Williams.[322] He also uses the same authors, terms, and sometimes the same manner of expression: 'Together they represent two aspects of the same reality; neither can stand apart from the other. Every positive statement about God has within itself an implicit negation, and every negative statement an implicit affirmation'.[323]

Shideler concluded in her important book *TRL* that she could not discuss the relationships between the Way of Affirmation and the Way of Rejection because the nature of the Affirmative way needed to be thoroughly understood before the Negative Way could be adequately handled.[324] However, this approach leads to considerable omissions and misunderstandings, and the reasoning offered is mistaken. Her book is dedicated to Williams's unique expression of the Way of Affirmation through the image of romantic love. However, in Williams's own view, the Way of Affirmation cannot be properly understood without its interdependent relation to the Way of Negation. By not discussing the relationships between the Two Ways one misses significant anthropological and theological realities. A full understanding of both Ways, which invites also an understanding of their interdependence, is vital in Williams's understanding of life and theology.

Williams also demonstrates his sensitivity to the distinction between God and Creation, and he shows how the Two Ways relate to the Church, to God, and to one another:

> It may be that that way [affirmation of Images] could not be too quickly shown to the world in which the young church lived. It was necessary first to establish the awful difference between God and the world before we could be permitted to see the awful likeness. It is, and will always remain, necessary to remember the difference in the likeness. Neither of these two Ways indeed is, or can be, exclusive. The most vigorous ascetic, being forbidden formally to hasten his death, is bound to attend to the actualities of food, drink, and sleep which are also images, however brief his attention may be. The most indulgent of Christians is yet bound to hold his most cherished images—of food, drink, sleep, or anything else—negligible beside the final Image of God. And both are compelled to hold their particular Images of God negligible beside the universal

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[322] D. Allen, *Spiritual Theology: The Theology of Yesterday for Spiritual Help Today*, 2nd print. (Boston: Cowley, 1997), 141. He refers to the cataphatic as the way of affirmation, or *via positiva*, and the apophatic as the way of negation, or *via negativa*.

[323] Ibid., 143.

[324] *TRL*, 6.

> Image of God which belongs to the Church, and even that less than the unimaged reality.[325]

The Two Ways are not as contradictory as they may seem on the surface. They can be discussed and described as opposites. The tension of the Two Ways coming together in one another, and relating paradoxically, expresses some of the complexity of what Williams means with his idea of *Coinherence*.[326] Glen Cavaliero says that the two ways represent two methods of living within the coinherence.[327] But in life the Ways do not stand alone; they are interdependent and coinherent. In fact, they depend on each other. You cannot have one without some degree of the other. Because they are as Williams says, the keys to each other, they coexist and, one might say, co-inhere in each other.[328] Ridler says, 'The importance of Charles Williams's thought … lies, I think, in his perception of the relation between the two Ways: he never divorced them…'. [329] Williams also links his view of their complementarity and coinherence to his understanding of the Eucharist, the Incarnation, and Redemption.

1. Both Ways Expressed in the Eucharist

Williams writes that the Eucharist has a double coinherence of rejection and affirmation.[330] Such is the nature of the Two Ways and the nature of an image: 'The Communion of the Eucharist, at once an image and a Presence, was common and necessary to both'.[331]

2. Both Ways Demonstrated in the Incarnation and Crucifixion

In Williams's view, Christ uses both Ways in the Incarnation. Christ's healing ministry is an act of Affirmation. The Crucifixion represents the Way of Rejection and the Way of Affirmation; the Resurrection also represents the Way of Affirmation. Cavaliero says that the Crucifixion is an example of what Williams calls an impossibility: 'The way of affirmation leads to a point of negation and there is no by-

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[325] *FOB*, 9.

[326] Coinherence is discussed in detail in Chapter VI.

[327] *POT*, 139.

[328] *DOD*, 57.

[329] Ridler, xl.

[330] *DOD*, 224.

[331] Ibid., 57–58.

passing the Cross where the Two Ways are bound together'.[332] Supporting evidence for Williams's insistence on the interdependence of the Two Ways is an observation that Williams 'never allows the separation of the categories of Incarnation and Atonement in his theological system'.[333] Williams confirms and connects the Two Ways:

> Our Sacred Lord, in his earthly existence, deigned to use both methods. The miracle of Cana and all the miracles of healing are works of the affirmation of images; the counsel to pluck out the eye is a counsel of the rejection of images. It is said that he so rejected them for himself that he had nowhere to lay his head, and that he so affirmed them by his conduct that he was called a glutton and a wine-bibber. He commanded his disciples to abandon all images but himself and promised them, in terms of the same images, a hundred times what they had abandoned. The Crucifixion and the Death are rejection and affirmation at once, for they affirm death only to reject death; the intensity of that death is the opportunity of its own dissolution; and beyond that physical rejection of earth lies the re-affirmation of earth which is called the Resurrection.[334]

3. The Two Ways in Redemption

The Ways also come together in another theological connection—man's redemption in Christ. These two complementary Ways are the paths by which we are to direct our human nature towards the goal of perfection in love.[335] In a letter Williams relates the Two Ways to 'the point at which they so meet would be the Spiritual Marriage, after which (they say) is the Beatific Vision'.[336] Williams also says,

> Such great doctrines as the Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting have continually recalled the Affirmation; with every act of charity towards others, every courtesy towards others, and even permissibly towards ourselves.[337]

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[332] G. Cavaliero, 'The Way of Affirmation: A Study of the Writings of Charles Williams', *Church Quarterly Review*, no 32 (1959): 25.

[333] B. Horne, 'He Came Down from Heaven: The Christology of Charles Williams', *Charles Williams Newsletter* 110 (Spring 2004): 15.

[334] *FOB*, 10.

[335] Ridler, xxxix.

[336] *IOC*, xl.

[337] *FOB*, 10.

4. Differences and Distinctions

Obvious differences and distinctions of emphasis exist between the Two Ways. However, Williams remarks that each application of a Way needs the emphasis of the other to maintain a certain degree of sanctity and sanity:

> The contention is always sharp. The Rigorous view is vital to sanctity; the Relaxed view is vital to sanity. Their union is not impossible, but it is difficult; for which ever is in power begins, after the first five minutes, to maintain itself from bad and unworthy motives. Harshness, pride, resentment encourage the one; indulgence, falsity, detestable good fellowship the other.[338]

He creatively presents the Two Ways as the two women in a man's life. A man's mother is the way of rejection, and his beloved is the way of affirmation:

> It's true the Rejection a little tends to brag itself, even some of its nicest devotees. We have known of that for centuries; it is our Mother. The Affirmation we have not so well known; it is our Beloved. But they are both (let us say) women; and there is a commonalty.… We call it the Way and the other Way; but each is included in the other.[339]

F. Suffering, Sin, and Evil

Looking particularly at Williams's Way of Affirmation, some may believe that even if we take into account his full recognition of and insistence also on his Way of Rejection, he suggests an overall picture of our world and human condition that is too optimistic and too easy. Critics may say at this point that he does not maintain a proper balance of the extent of suffering, evil, and our fallenness. The following comments help balance these issues.

The Fall is a major part of Williams's understanding of life. He lived through two horrific wars and experienced the loss of many friends. Those consequences arose as the direct result of man's wickedness. Unable to serve in the military because of his physical incapacities, he worked as a volunteer on the fire brigades during the incendiary bombings of London. He thus became well acquainted with the screams and panic from the sudden destruction of life and home.

He does not explore systematically the breadth of the darkness of the world and our fallen circumstances. He does deal with the individual's, the Church's, and the

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[338] *DOD*, 31.

[339] *IOC*, xl. From a letter he wrote in March 1945 about two months before he died.

state's responsibility for evil and suffering, especially in war.[340] But he does not deal specifically with the pain and suffering from natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, violent storms, famines, or floods.[341] Nor does he attempt to discuss at length the tragedy of accidents, diseases, and birth defects. He does mention them, and for him they give rise to a part of man's burden-bearing responsibilities as his brother's keeper.[342] Those sufferings and the related responsibilities are assumed in his understanding of substituted love, as discussed in Chapter II and further explored in Chapter V.

Williams particularly mentions the fear of loss, betrayal, and economic insecurity. When he was a young boy, his father's firm closed and his father lost his eyesight. This situation put a tremendous strain on the family. They had to move from London to St. Albans. Williams was not able to finish University because of a lack of funds. These fears and experiences seem to be a symptom of his own psyche: 'That question of ways and means which is never far from the minds of the vast majority … at any one moment, which poisons their sorrows and modifies their joys'.[343]

He also experienced firsthand the love from extended family and friends helping to ameliorate many dire situations in his childhood family. The early care he received from others aided in the development of a deep sense of co-inherent love. Friends helped him find employment and a career. They assisted in publishing his books. Others saw that he was recognized academically. He also felt a profound sense of gratitude and debt for his friends who vicariously gave their lives as soldiers in the wars so that he could live. He identified with those he knew and those he did not know and saw that he benefited from their sacrifice.[344] He believed their sacrifice substituted for his life and freedom. He thought their substitution was an image of the greater substitution of Christ.[345] He sensed deeply the co-inherence of life and suffering. As Horne believes, no

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[340] See *HCD*, Afterword's discussion of The Present Time.

[341] He does mention these types of suffering and God's choice to allow suffering to be maintained as part of the groaning of Creation in his essay on 'What the Cross Means to Me', *IOC*, 134–38.

[342] *HCD*, 90–91.

[343] C. Williams, *War in Heaven* (1930; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1989), 165–66.

[344] Horne, 'Co-inherence', *The Charles Williams Society Newsletter* 86 (Spring 1998): 13, 17–18.

[345] Ibid.

one's sadness or joy is his or her own; it is a shared experience due to the nature of life.[346]

Williams responds to the questions of theodicy in his own nonacademic and non-systematic way. His novels, plays, and Arthuraid are not too rosy. In suffering, his two orienting reference points are his interpretation of Job and the Cross of Christ. Williams calls the raging demands and accusations of Job 'epigrams of high intelligence'.[347] Even if Job did not have all the correct information, and some of his ideas about God and the world were wrong, he knew that God was responsible and his friends were wrong. Integrity was in Job's questions and God responded. God not only answers Job but also allows Himself to experience the worst deprivations of man. In the final sense, the Cross of Christ is the ultimate obscene injustice and God is ultimately responsible for suffering, but He is credible in that He also bears to suffer Himself.[348]

The closing chapters of this project return to these aspects of theodicy. They consider more fully the consequences of the Fall. However God also holds man accountable for man's responses to suffering regardless of the circumstances. Suffering is a clarion call to be our brother's keeper. Williams's redemptive response would involve an exchange and a vicarious substitution, demonstrating man's coinherence with his fellow man. Whenever man becomes aware of evil, he must step up and do all in his power to aid his brother or sister. Job's friends failed not only in their moralistic orthodoxy but also in their behavior. They did nothing to relieve his suffering. Words, even when correct and in their way helpful, are not enough. Vicariously helping others is the foundational pattern for Williams's repetitive scriptural quotations: 'Others he saved, himself he cannot save' and 'Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ'. Regardless of the cause, suffering must be treated as an occasion of love—the pattern of the glory in Christ.

Brian Horne suggests that Williams's answer to the pain and suffering of the world is found in Williams's idea of co-inherence. Horne says, 'Pain becomes bearable when it is shared'.[349] God is co-inherent not only in the Godhead but also with man through the Incarnation of Christ and in man's Redemption. God submits himself to the

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[346] Horne, 'Co-inherence', 17–18.

[347] *HCD*, 30.

[348] *IOC*, 133–34.

[349] Horne, 'Co-inherence', 17.

conditions and will of his Creation. The Incarnation of Christ as represented in the Eucharist demonstrates the central exchange, substitution, and God's co-inherence with man. Sharing in the consequences of sin and suffering of others must be lived out not only through Christ for man but also through man for man with his fellow man.

Not all experiences in life are good or pleasant and many tend toward evil and suffering. Williams's approach to pain and suffering is an opportunity—'to know evil as an occasion of heavenly love'.[350] Suffering must always be understood as an opportunity in the present within the larger frame of eternity. It is Williams's way of seeing reality in relation to 'all things work together for good'. There can be no denial of suffering, but it must be accounted for in the fullest context of Redemption. The resurrection of Christ did not remove the scars, but they are present in a different mode. There is no fact that is not included in His glory.[351]

For the moment, we may reflect again on Williams's Two Ways. He seeks to draw out and emphasize what he sees as an over expression and stressing of the Way of Rejection in the history and praxis of the Church. He seeks to re-balance the overall picture, including understanding of the Incarnation and the nature of God. In his fullest perspective, Williams is always inclusive of the centrality of the good, which is an aspect of the foundation of the Way of Affirmation. We, too, will focus most on the good and affirmation of it in Chapters IV through VI. Chapter VII returns to the Fall, Suffering, and Sin. Chapter IV begins by exploring in a fuller sense Williams's understanding and use of an image as a vehicle of God's grace.

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[350] *HCD*, 59. He also says all luck is good or holy Luck. All experiences are opportunities for a demonstration of the vicarious nature of love, 87. See also *CP*, 211; *Witchcraft* 30–31; *TRL*, for more discussion 86, 90, 104–05, 178.

[351] *IOC*, 110.

CHAPTER IV
THIS ALSO IS THOU, NEITHER IS THIS THOU: WILLIAMS'S HERMENEUTICS, EPISTEMOLOGY, AND METAPHYSICS OF AN IMAGE

> I must indeed confess to having many times felt an emotion of envy for the way in which skillful imaginative writers who are instructed Christians are able, by the deft handling of the appropriate image and the evocative phrase, to get some important theological truth across to the reader in a way that eludes the professional theologian with his well kept armoury of conceptual weapons. The novels of Charles Williams provide one example of this.
> —E. L. Mascall

> The artist, no matter how unbelieving, celebrates in his art a mystery whose ultimate raision d'être can only be called religious, and to whose metaphysics the Christian dogmas hold the key. In the Incarnation, the infinite is presented with, through, and in the finite. The English poet and critic Charles Williams wrote, 'The Incarnation, had it not been necessary to man's redemption, would have been necessary to his art'.
> —A. Nichols

A. Introduction

From a Christian perspective, Aidan Nichols clarifies an important observation concerning the semiotics of our world. The nature of an image is hidden in the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ. As Nichols notes, Williams understood this idea. Understanding Williams's use of an image is a major key in interpreting his art and his theology. After having examined Williams's interpretation and use of the two classical ways of approaching God, we now turn our attention to his explanation of the function of images. He primarily uses persons as images, in relationships with people and God, and, with them, ways of living, romantic love, and the community. These all become possible icons of revelation. As seen in Chapter II, throughout his fiction, whether in prose or poetry, he demonstrates the repeated use of the themes of love and its refusal, through the characters who are also images of good and evil. These characters are a further development of his Affirmation of Images, which is, as we have seen, somewhat complex.

The purpose of this Chapter is to comprehend Williams's understanding and use of images. First, we will discuss the sources of his most powerful ideas and then how those ideas became the vehicles to communicate what he wanted to say theologically. Williams borrowed Coleridge's metaphysics of a symbol, which he chose to call an

image. He also further developed the ontology of his imaging of a human person by adopting Dante's methodological approach.

Second, Williams grounds his understanding and use of an image in Christian experience. Human experience with all its varied aspects is to be regarded from a theological perspective and treated as a possible theological resource.

Third, Dante's Beatrice is his prime example of an image's mediation of God's love, which unfolds over time in ways of living.[352] He shapes his primary vision of an image using Dante's own development of Beatrice as an icon of God, Christ, the Church, and love. She becomes an example of God reaching out to man through another person—a God-bearer, an ectype of Christ, who was the archetype of an image.

Fourth, he emphasizes the value and function of the embodied human person as critical to the Incarnation and to the mediation of grace. We should note again, however, that Williams also has other categories of images than the individual person, a man or a woman: the married couple, the Church, and the City. But his most repetitive is the person, often in romantic love, which will be examined in the next chapter.

After beginning one of Williams's works, one immediately notices that the material comes from an astute Christian theological writer, skilled in various forms of literature. E. L. Mascall, who in his own words was a fervent admirer of Charles Williams, has already alluded to Williams's skill in his use of images.[353]

But Williams's use of images is deeper and more complex. 'This also is thou, neither is this thou'[354] is one of many enigmatic statements he applies to all the categories of images he uses. He also says that it is a principle he found invaluable for living, expressing how he understood his Christian context.[355] He calls it his and Dante's maxim, which Dante uses to explain Beatrice as an image.[356] Horne believes that Williams's concept of an image grew out of Dante's interpretation of his experience

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[352] See Chapter V.A.2. Romantic Love Relationships as a Way to God. See also John 14:9ff.

[353] E. L. Mascall, *Corpus Christi: Essays on the Church and the Eucharist*, 2nd impression (London: Longmans, Green, 1955), 42.

[354] For discussions about this aphorism, see *STCW*, 63–66. Horne gives a possible source in the Chandogya Hindu Writings, *Upanishad.* See also Philip Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1964), 173. See also *POT*, 180. Williams also admits in the Preface of *DOD*, viii, that he is not sure where it is from, but he says, 'It is invaluable as a maxim for living', and it explains what he wants to say in summarizing the history of the Church.

[355] *DOD*, viii.

[356] *FOB*, 8.

of the Beatrician vision.[357] Williams also uses the same maxim in explaining the Incarnation of Christ and the Church as images.[358] The combination of all these various uses serves to guide us in understanding Williams's images.[359]

Lewis explains Williams's view as an expression of the Two Ways, discussed in Chapter III.[360] Thus, the full expression, 'This also is Thou, neither is this Thou', covers for Williams, among many other things, the expression of God as a human person, living a human life, in his function as an image. It also serves as a description of the Church in its function as an image. In applying the expression to the Church, Williams brings out the different aspects of the Church—as the body of Christ, as the Bride, as the City of God—and what it is not—God. In general, the maxim is at the heart of Williams's understanding and use of an image, which carries with it a rich ambivalence and ambiguity.

B. Williams's, Coleridge's, and Dante's Use of Symbol/Image

1. Coleridge and *Translucence*

Coleridge forms his ideas of symbol from his understanding of the Bible. For him, what is going on in history is the result of what is happening in the heart of man. He believes that the Scriptures reveal and symbolize the events of the heart by man's consequent actions in history. The symbolization produced by the Scriptures 'gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truths of which they are the conductors'.[361] In a passage of critical importance to both Williams and Coleridge, Coleridge says, concerning his understanding of the function of a symbol in the context of Scripture and in our personal context,

> A symbol … is characterized by a translucence of the special in the individual, or of the general in the especial, or of the universal in the general. Above all by the translucence of the eternal through and in the temporal. It always partakes of

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[357] B. Horne, 'Charles Williams, Dorothy Sayers, and Dante', *Charles Williams Society Newsletter* 63 (October 19, 1991): 11.

[358] Ibid., 8–9. This is discussed in Williams, *Reason and Beauty,* 54–55; *TRL*, 14.

[359] *ORT*, 14. See also Enright, 'Charles Williams and his Theology of Romantic Love: A Dantean Interpretation of the Christian Doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity', *Mythlore* 16, no. 2 (Winter 1989): 22.

[360] *AT*, 151.

[361] S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria, or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions and Two Lay Sermons,* Elibron Classics, replica ed. (1984; City: Adamant Media, 2004), 321.

> the reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that unity, of which it is the representative.[362]

Coleridge reveals a sense of incarnation within the symbol. F. W. Dillistone discusses a sense of incarnation in relation to Coleridge's use of the prefix *trans.* Dillistone thinks that Coleridge here brings out his most important idea and its significance for what Coleridge was attempting to communicate about the function of a symbol.

Dillistone says,

> The prefix *trans* … occurs in other significant words—translation, transference, transfiguration, transcendence—and is the Latin equivalent of *meta* occurring in metaphor, metamorphosis, metaphysics.… Coleridge believed that a symbol can transluce, that is, bring into vivid light the eternal not simply by way of illustration but by being a living part of that unity of which it is the representative. This is a large claim, for it means that certain words or objects may actually become living parts of that which they symbolize.[363]

Rowan Williams says that he is reminded of Coleridge as he reads Jacques Maritain on the truth-telling and revelatory dimension of imagination. The ontology of art has something to say about the fundamental nature of being-in-the-world.[364]

2. Williams's Development of Coleridge's Symbol, and Dante's Image

'Of course, the word "image" is part of the lingua franca of literary criticism, but in Charles Williams's thought it is initially, and fundamentally, a theological concept'.[365] As we have begun to see, an image, for Williams, is something much richer and more complex than a literary device. To give a better understanding of its functioning, he borrows and modifies Coleridge's understanding of a symbol and uses it in giving an account of Dante's understanding of an image. The following quotation encapsulates a critical piece in understanding Williams's development of Coleridge's and Dante's contributions to Williams's use of images:

> A symbol must have three characteristics (i) it must exist itself, (ii) it must derive from something greater than itself, (iii) it must represent in itself that greatness from which it derives. I have preferred the word image to symbol,

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[362] Ibid., 322.

[363] F. W. Dillistone, *The Power of Symbols* (London: SCM, 1986), 196.

[364] R. Williams, *Grace and Necessity: Reflections on Art and Love* (London: Morehouse, 2005), x.

[365] B. Horne, 'Charles Williams, Dorothy Sayers', 11.

> because it seems to me doubtful if the word symbol nowadays sufficiently expresses the vivid individual existence of the lesser thing.[366]

Williams follows Coleridge's understanding of a symbol and applies it to his own living images. He demonstrates his use of Coleridge's ontology and Dante's understanding of Beatrice in framing the content of *FOB.* He explains his interpretation of Dante's Beatrice:

> The image of Beatrice existed in his own thought; it remained there and was deliberately renewed. The word image is convienient for two reasons. First, the subjective recollection within him was of something objectively outside him; it was an image of an exterior fact and not of an interior desire. It was sight and not invention. Dante's whole assertion was that he could not have invented Beatrice. Secondly, the outer exterior shape was understood to be an image of things beyond itself.… Beatrice was, in her degree, an image of nobility, of virtue, of the Redeemed Life, and in some sense of Almighty God himself. But she also remained Beatrice right to the end; her derivation was not to obscure her identity any more than her identity should hide her derivation. Just as there is no point in Dante's thought at which the image of Beatrice in his mind was supposed to exclude the actual objective Beatrice, so there is no point at which the objective Beatrice is to exclude the Power which is expressed through her. But as the mental knowledge or image of her is the only way by which she herself can be known, so she herself is (for Dante) the only way by which that other Power can be known—since, in fact, it was known so. The maxim of his study, as regards the final Power, was: 'This also is Thou, neither is this Thou'.[367]

Another reason Williams prefers the term *image* to the word *symbol* is that the living images to which he is predominately referring are persons in relationships. He holds, as does Coleridge, that the symbol or image functions in a mediatorial role, incarnating and participating, to some degree, in whatever it symbolizes. Similarly, George MacDonald supports the second characteristic of a symbol: It must derive from a source greater than itself, which for him is the Creator.[368]

As previously noted, Coleridge believes that a symbol enables the *translucence* of the eternal.[369] The *translucence* of a symbol (for Williams an image) refers to the third characteristic: It must represent in itself that greatness from which it derives.[370] The partaking in the greater reality, as the greater abides in the lesser, enables the

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[366] *FOB*, 7. See also Coleridge, 322.

[367] *FOB*, 7. See C. Day Lewis, *The Poetic Image* (New York, OUP, 1947) changes symbol to image and calls images metaphors because the word symbol to him is also a faded metaphor.

[368] G. MacDonald, *A Dish of Orts*, reproduction ed. (1893; Whitehorn, CA: Johannesen Family, 1996), 320–21.

[369] Coleridge, 321–22.

[370] *FOB*, 7.

translucence in the eternal. The image has to partake in the greater by allowing the greater to live in the lesser, and for the lesser, the image, can in this way represent the greater, the source. This semiotic function is also a factor in the ontology of being a Christian. We are to abide in Him and He in us, partaking or participating in the divine nature.[371] But obviously that participation does not make one divine. The greater living in the lesser is a significant aspect of theological anthropology.

3. Mary Shideler's Modification

Early in *TRL*, M. McDermott Shideler remarks on her understanding of the nature of an image:

> The importance of the image's integrity is derived from its function as means for discovering the character of its basis. The imagist does not know, or knows only partially, that thing to which the image refers, and the image itself is his key to the unknown.[372]

However, later when she writes specifically about the three characteristics of Williams's and Coleridge's interpretation of an image, she changes the second characteristic: A symbol derives from something greater than itself. Instead of accepting that an image derives from its source, she holds that 'an image points to something greater than itself'.[373] She also replaces the expression *derives from* with the term *refers to* in the third characteristic of an image.[374] She notes that she makes this modification deliberately because she does not want to discuss the metaphysical and theological implications.[375] Although her amendment is also true as far as it goes, it undermines the fuller theological and anthropological dimensions involved in the nature of a human person as an image and as bearing the image of the Triune God. She gives no place to the incarnate and mediatorial nature of human personhood. The words *derives from* are critical; man is a derivative being, both physically and spiritually. Shideler's modifications would not represent the level of ontology that Williams, Coleridge, MacDonald, and Dante attain. The three aspects of Coleridge's symbol, Williams's and

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[371] John 15:4–7 and 2 Pet. 1:4.

[372] *TRL* 12–13. By basis she means the referent of the image, the object or subject from which the image derives, from beyond itself.

[373] Ibid., 21.

[374] Ibid.

[375] Ibid. Footnote 16 in *TRL* is discussed in her notes on page 213.

Dante's image, are all necessary for understanding the theological nature of Williams's and Dante's uses of persons as images.

4. Aidan Nichols

In his outline of systematic theology, Nichols shapes his approach to ontology with the same three ontological characteristics and refers to Coleridge.[376] He also adds a fourth characteristic that Williams and Dante in interpreting an image, in effect, assume to be foundational for their work—the use of poetic intelligence:

> I take my *fourth* step—poetic intelligence may be necessary for apprehending things in their substantial, participatory, dependent being. And this is so not least when the world's being is most basically described as 'beautiful receptacle'. In any case, the act-of-being of what exists—always lies beyond conceptual thinking and can best be gestured toward poetically.[377]

Poetic intelligence is that aspect of the poetic cast of mind discussed in Chapter II.C.2.a. A poetic cast of mind, and Williams refers to it as 'the feeling intellect'.

For Williams, Dante, Nichols, and Coleridge, the first characteristic is that the image is a real historical person or another real thing or object. Williams of course does not always insist on this aspect in his fiction, but his most important images are persons in relation to other persons. Biblically and theologically speaking, only persons in relation have the capacity to image God.

C. Experiencing the Image

Experiencing the image is central to Williams's epistemology and theology. In effect, he affirms that human experience is a place both for theological and phenomenological examination. Williams does not systematically address all arenas of human experience. His primary explorations are of interpersonal relationships, especially romantic love, married and unmarried; friendships; responsibility to others, our neighbor; ways of living as images of love; and, our corporate macro-responsibilities in the web of relationships of the City. Williams refers to many different things we can experience: marriage, sex, love, and everyday occurrences that move us

[376] Nichols, *Chalice of God,* 12–17. He includes, under ontology, epistemology and hermeneutics.

[377] Ibid., 15.

beyond ourselves, such as sharing tea with a friend. All of these experiences and hundreds more may be examined theologically.

Further, Williams wants to share the experience with you, and he wants you to understand the experience. Eliot says about Williams,

> His aim is to make you partake of a kind of experience that he has had, rather than to make you accept some dogmatic belief.… Williams is telling us about a world of experience known to him: he does not merely persuade us to believe in something, he communicates this experience that he has had.[378]

Williams says, 'It has been part of the work of Christianity in the world to make men aware of the spiritual significance of certain natural experiences'.[379] But he does refer to many different things that we can experience. John Heath-Stubbs says, 'The beginning of the soul's election of the Way lies in what Charles Williams termed the Romantic experience—a moment of vision, in which some image of the created universe is seen as embodying the transcendent Good'.[380] The initial experience for Dante and Williams was what Dante called 'The Stupor'.

1. The Stupor

In seeking to examine specific theological or religious possibilities in common experiences, Williams begins early on in his romantic love poetry and in his descriptions of marriage in *ORT*. Dante becomes his guide in this phenomenological and theological arena, and, in particular, he goes on to use and explore Dante's term 'stupor'.[381] Dante uses the term *stupor* to refer to a part of his initial experience of '"falling in love," with Beatrice as a possible occasion of grace …'.[382]

Dante describes and analyzes the effects he experienced from the experience of the salutation he received in the street:[383] 'I want to make it clear what her greeting worked in me':[384]

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[378] *TSEAH*, xiv-xv.

[379] *ORT*, 9.

[380] J. Heath-Stubbs, *Charles Williams* (London: Longmans, Green, 1955), 18.

[381] *FOB*, 7.

[382] Ibid. See also Dante Alighieri, *The Banquet* (*Il Convivio* or *Il Convito*), trans. Elizabeth Sayer, Dodo Press, 2009), The Fourth Treatise XXIII, 195.

[383] Salutation is a common greeting, and the word *salut* is still used today in French. It is an expression used by the young for greeting someone they know well. The old underlying meaning remains, although not implied.

> I say that when she appeared from any direction, in the hope of her miraculous greeting I was left with no enemy, but rather there arose in me a flame of charity that made me forgive whoever might have offended me; and if anyone had then asked me anything, my answer would have been only 'Love', with a countenance clothed with humility. And when she was … on the verge of the greeting, a spirit of love, destroying all other spirits of the senses,… spoke, 'Go honor your lady'…. And when this most gentle salutation greeted me, it was not that Love interposed so that he might shade me from the unbearable beatitude, but for his superabundant sweetness became such that my body, which was then wholly under his rule, often moved like a heavy, inanimate thing. Thus it plainly appears that in her greetings lay my beatitude which often exceeded and overflowed my capacity.[385]

Dante recorded these experiences as a significant part of the theological resources that Williams used to shape certain aspects of his understanding of an experience of love with a person as an image of God. Williams's theological interpretation of the salutation is that her greeting 'joins the theology of Romantic Love to the theology of the Church'.[386] Relationships of love become possible vehicles of grace. Dante describes Beatrice as a salutation in courtesy and blessedness, a description that the religious censors originally changed.[387] She is the image and foretaste of Salvation, and to know that is to be intelligent in love.[388] Therefore, from the initial salutation comes a steady tug for Dante to mature in love.

One of the best ways to help bring out what Williams is trying to say about the image of romantic love is for a trained theological mind to reflect upon Williams and his understanding of Dante. Mascall shares an important story and reflection. He recalls Williams telling him and several others about an event that had recently occurred to him:

> Williams told us that he had been having his hair cut and the barber had told him that he (the barber) had just got engaged to be married. 'He said to me, "Yer know, sir, it just makes yer feel fine. I felt that if a bloke 'ad dotted me in the eye I'd 'ave stood 'im a pint"'. I leapt out of the chair and seized him by the hand and said, 'My friend, do you know that's just what Dante said in the *Vita Nuova*: "Such warmth of charity came upon me that most certainly in that moment if anyone had done me an injury I would have forgiven him."?' What effect this produced upon the other occupants of the barber's saloon Williams did not tell

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[384] Dante Alighieri, *Vita Nuova: Italian Text with Facing English*, trans. Dino S. Cervigni and Edward Vasta (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1955), 63.

[385] Ibid.

[386] *HCD*, 76.

[387] *FOB*, 34. The censors thought Dante made Beatrice a little too beatific. Williams also believes that the salutation is the result of Grace, 25.

[388] Ibid., 28.

> us; I imagine that to him his reaction seemed the most natural thing in the world. For if there was ever a Christian to whom it seemed obvious that grace does not destroy nature but perfects it, that Christian was Charles Williams.[389]

Mascall's recollection of this story is not a sentimental story to remember about Williams. It has theological and philosophical substance. It supports Williams's point that a momentary taste of *real love* impacts the nature of man towards others, at first temporarily, but with the possibility of repetition and development. This story also expresses the possibility of the universality of the experience and thus gives it a broader theological significance. Williams believed that the experience of falling in love could happen to any one and is an opportunity for God to work in one or both of the person's lives.[390] However, sometimes Williams wanted to universalize the phenomenon of falling in love as means for interpreting Christian experience:

> The present business is merely the formulation of Christian theology.… Love … is a normal human thing, although its development and progress must be modified and defined by the particular habits, social and religious, of its environment.… It has been part of the work of Christianity in the world to make men aware of the spiritual significance of certain natural experiences.[391]

The experience of stupor can also be a feature of many more of life's experiences and not just of romantic love.[392] Williams closes *FOB* with some further discussion, reemphasizing this stupor. He says, 'Wherever the "stupor" is, there is the beginning of the art'.[393] The art is seeing, experiencing, understanding the image, perceiving the source, knowing the difference, and also living the way.

As Dante and Williams analyze the *Stupor*, Dante is the knower, God is the known, and Beatrice is the way that Dante comes to know God.[394] The event, the experience, and the stupor are the beginning of understanding the possibilities of what God is doing. Williams's way of understanding experience is that God is always up to

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[389] E. L. Mascall, 'Charles Williams as I Knew Him', *The Charles Williams Society Newsletter* 8 (Winter 1977); Horne, *Charles Williams: A Celebration*, 4–5.

[390] *ORT*, 9. Love can happen to anyone but Williams chooses to consider the experience of falling in love primarily with Christians.

[391] Ibid., 8–9. He includes a note with the Latin phrase that he says is a shortened version of St. Vincent of Lerins': '*Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus creditum est* [What is always, what is everywhere, what is by all people believed]'.

[392] See Heath-Stubbs, *Charles Williams*, 18–19. It can be the result of a religious experience or great art, etc.

[393] *FOB*, 232.

[394] Ibid., 231.

love: He is always working to redeem man, even when man is unaware of it.[395] The *stupor* can be a catalyst for man leading him into a sense of awe, reverence, humility, compassion, and especially forgiveness. This kind of experience is one of God's ways of getting us to pay attention; it can lead us to love and to Him.

Sometimes, but not always, *falling in love* starts with the *stupor* from a real personal experience similar to the one Dante had when he first saw Beatrice:[396] 'This experience produces a sense of reverence and a desire to know more'.[397] The stupor of falling in love can begin to open wide the doors of perception and give one a double vision of the other, 'seeing through his or her ordinary humanness to the glory of a restored Imago Dei in that person'.[398]

Falling in love does not always have to contain a *stupor* experience. The combination of a stupor experience and falling in love does not fit all contexts of love. Falling in love is an experience of the naissance of love. Williams theologizes falling in love as an image.[399] His analysis of falling in love, and repeated large references to Dante's work, are amply present in his works. Horne corroborates that Williams's work is influenced heavily by his admiration of Dante's experience of the Beatrician vision.[400]

2. The Pregnancy of Experience

Like Dante, Williams explores the relationship between the beholder and the image, which arises from looking at the image.[401] Looking is an active part of an experience, which leads to paying attention, then to analyzing the experience, and to continuing the pattern that begins there. Williams borrows Wordsworth's conception of the 'feeling intellect' to explain his (Williams's) analysis of the combination of cognition, emotion, and grace, which he calls the knowledge of 'the logic of the

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[395] *FOB*, 11.

[396] Ibid., 7.

[397] Ibid.

[398] Huttar, C.: 'Arms and the Man: The Place of Beatrice in Charles Williams's Romantic Theology', *Studies in Medievalism* 3, no. 3 (Winter 1991): 311. See also Trowbridge, 335–43.

[399] *ORT*, 8–9.

[400] Horne, 'Charles Williams, Dorothy Sayers', 13.

[401] *FOB*, 7, 11, 13–14.

intellectual heart', which was discussed earlier.[402] Dante says, '*Incipit Vita Nova*', here begins the new life springing from gazing attentively at Beatrice.[403] Williams connects this line from the *Vita,* Dante's *experience* in seeing Beatrice, using these words from Wordsworth:

> the bodily eye …
> Which spake perpetual logic to my soul,
> And by the unrelenting agency
> Did bind my feelings even as in a chain.[404]

Williams emphasizes several elements of an experience—emotional, intellectual, physical, and theological, in relation to looking attentively at an image.[405] The experience presents the lover with several choices or paths: marriage, celibacy, ignoring, denial, or perversion.[406] But Williams also emphasizes the possible pregnancy of an experiential moment of grace, as a theological event.[407] This pregnancy may also include an aspect of *theotokos*, which continues to grow in love and extends from the initial moment over a lifetime.[408] A pregnancy of a moment has a full potential forward and upwards. Williams calls this beginning moment 'the Celian moment':

> The Celian moment … had a double vocation.… It is the moment which contains, almost equally, the actual and the potential; it is perfect within its own limitations of subject or method, and its perfection relates it to greater things. It is the moment of passion, and it is described,… in Marvell's Celian poem, *The Match*.[409]

a. The Celian moment. For the life of love that can follow, the Celian moment is catalytic, the match that starts the fire. It also continues the fire, opening up new and greater possibilities. According to Williams, Dante shows more of the Celian moment

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[402] Williams, *Rochester*, 51. See also *FOB*, 13. See Chapter II.C.a., and see Chapter IV.B.4.

[403] Alighieri, *Vita Nuova*, 47.

[404] *FOB*, 7, 13–16.

[405] Ibid., 7, 11, 13–14.

[406] Enright, 'Charles Williams and His Theology of Romantic Love: The Novels', 43–47.

[407] Ernst Cassirer's understanding of symbolic pregnancy or good Gestalt gives Williams's interpretation of Dante's stupor a richer meaning because it is combined with an embodied human person as the symbol or image in the experience. See J. M. Krois, *Cassirer: Symbolic Forms and History* (London: Yale University Press, 1987), 53–58. Cassirer's Hebraic sense of personhood brings a more biblical perspective to the experience than the perspective of a Greek philosophical metaphysic, 149–50.

[408] See Section D. Persons as Living Images—Beatrice.

[409] C. Williams, Introduction to *The New Book of English Verse* (New York: Macmillan, 1936), 12–13.

than any other poet.[410] Dante's formative Celian experience begins and continues with his meetings with Beatrice—*Incipit vita nova.*

Williams also records accounts of what he calls Celian moments from the early Elizabethans by Donne and others.[411] They easily correspond to his understanding of the Eucharist or, in a more quotidian sense, 'He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me'.[412] This quotation has a very *Charles Williams* like sensitivity because of the anticipation and possibility of engaging with the supernatural or Divine in the common comings and goings of everyone's everyday life in relationships.[413]

b. Immanence and transcendence in experiencing the image. As already discussed in Chapter II, Eliot says Williams leads us into the pervasive sense of God's immanence.[414] David Brown also has an interesting perception of transcendence and immanence, which is similar to Williams's thinking:

> Certainly two worlds interconnect, but is the force of the interconnection to give us some sense of another, divine reality that draws us beyond our own, or is the experience rather one of the divine invading the material order and transforming it? One way of highlighting such a contrast is to talk of transcendence on the one hand and of immanence on the other. In the final analysis both words are only metaphors: God is neither quite 'beyond' the world nor 'in it'. More is really being said about how God is consequently perceived, and what that means for our relationship with him. It is my conviction that both perspectives are in fact essential for any adequate theology.[415]

Immanence and transcendence are usually separated to discuss them, but in reality they are not separated. Eliot says about Williams, 'For him there was no frontier between the material and the spiritual world'.[416] This statement is supported throughout Williams's canon and represents a glimpse of one of the elements in his understanding of what he

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[410] Williams, Introduction to *The New Book*, 16.

[411] See *CWX*, 74, 122. Williams calls Phyllis Jones his Celia. She became a muse and a source of inspiration.

[412] Matt. 10:40.

[413] One aspect of this is expressed in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, with the question, 'When did we see you'…. The Lord's response was, 'Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me' (see Matt. 25:31–46). There is a sense of connectivity to God and a fraternal responsibility that we will all be held accountable for which expresses a vital aspect in Williams's thoughts on what he calls coinherence. Each moment is a Divine opportunity because of the omnipresence of God.

[414] *TSEAH*, xvi.

[415] Brown, *God and Enchantment*, 37.

[416] *TSEAH*, xiii.

calls *coinherence*. The use of the term also gives a sense of the image, leading the beholder into a larger field of experience.

In the greater part of Williams's work with persons as images, a major feature for him is the ever-possible reality of encountering God in each moment, with each person, and in every place (whether we attend to the encounter or not). For Williams, the source of the image is transcendent and the immanence resides in the image. Williams wants to infect our thinking with the anticipation of the omnipresence of God. For him the question is, are we aware and paying attention to the encounter. Williams thinks that the possibility of theological interpretation exists widely in our experiences. In this interpretation, he has the support of Pope John Paul II.

John Paul II recognizes that experiences and interpersonal relationships go together with and play a part in the theological explanation of our lives. He says, 'Our human experience is in some way a legitimate means for theological interpretation'.[417] John Paul II's work supports Williams's interpretation of the use of some experiences and some interpersonal relationships as icons. They are historical, pregnant with life, and can continue being full of meaning throughout one's life. The theological significance of some of man's experiences will be further discussed in Chapters V and VI. The next section focuses on the individual person as an image.

D. Persons as Living Images—Beatrice

We have noted that human persons are the central images in Williams's work. Among these persons, Beatrice especially stands out, about whom he developed a whole book. Beatrice as a real human being is one of Dante's and Williams's icons of Christ and love.[418] We will concentrate on this example in order to draw out significant qualities of persons as images. This present chapter, looks at the importance of Beatrice as an image. She is also viewed from the perspective of romantic love in Chapter V, which examines romantic love as a context for his major images. Williams and Dante share a distinctive emphasis on persons as images and also an understanding of God's mediation of love through the vehicle of living human images—persons, their

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[417] *TOB*, 145.

[418] C. Huttar, 'Arms and the Man, 312–19. See also Trowbridge, 335–43; Kollmann, 'Figure of Beatrice', 8.

relationships, and their lives. Horne says that the theological purpose of Williams's romantic imagery is to open the heart of man to God's Heart.[419]

1. Beatrice as an Image

Beatrice in Dante's work is both a real woman and an image of Christ to Dante. She is not only a character for the story but a fact of history.[420] She exists as herself, fulfilling Coleridge's first function of a symbol. Dante and Williams extend their understanding of Beatrice as an image by identifying her with Salvation and its source, fulfilling the second and third functions of an image: 'But this is to identify Beatrice with salvation? Yes, and this is the identity of the Image with that beyond the Image. Beatrice is the Image and the foretaste of salvation'.[421]

For Williams the nature of an image is further explained by taking Beatrice as a clarifying example of his Way of Affirmation. Dante makes an accurate distinction, and Williams agrees with him, saying that it describes his own 'Way of Affirmation of Images':

> Once the voice of Beatrice had been the salutation of love; now her voice is but the sign of the salutation of love. The whole of Dante's life and work had been to achieve that distinction and to understand it. It seems but a very slight distinction, but it is the whole purpose of the Way.[422]

Williams shows the importance of the duration of time in living and working with images. Over time the distinction between the image and its source should become clearer to the beholder. Over a period of time an image can be seen for all it is, and all it is not, in relation to the reality it images.[423] Williams suggests that recognizing this distinction requires being 'intelletto d'amore'.[424] Being intelligent in love involves the awareness of two identities: knowing the difference between the image and its derivative source and, thereby, discerning the true nature of the image.[425] However, in

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[419] Horne, 'Charles Williams and Dante Alighieri: A Reading of *The Figure of Beatrice*', *Inklings-Jarbuch* 5 (1987): 260.

[420] Hollander, 35. Most scholars accept Beatrice as a historical person, but some believe she is only symbolic.

[421] *FOB*, 28, 123. He uses the term *identity* in his own way.

[422] Ibid., 219. See also Dante Alighieri, *Paradise*, vol. 3 of *The Divine Comedy*, trans. Barbara Sayers (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1969), XXX, 14ff.

[423] *ORT*, 109–11.

[424] Ibid., 19, 28. A phrase Williams borrowed from Dante's *Vita Nuova*, 19: 2, 4.

[425] Horne, 'Charles Williams and Dante Alighieri', 259.

the course of Dante's life, Beatrice had at first been love incarnate, but as time and the relationship progressed she became more—the icon of love.

Horne comments about this critical insight of both Williams's and Dante's use of an image. He suggests that they universalize, taking each person as a possible image of Christ.[426] This assertion is not new, and many suggest that we relate to others as though we are relating to Christ. Horne writes, 'The transfiguration of all human life into the life of God is for Charles Williams, the true meaning of salvation'.[427] Horne suggests that Williams's reading of the *Comedy* is intensely romantic and, at the same time, profoundly theological: 'The romantic vision in no way replaces or contradicts the beatific vision. The sight of God, conversely, does not nullify the sight of Beatrice. The Beatrician experience is an intimation and an image of the experience of the Divine'.[428] The imaging between persons develops because God primarily images himself through the Incarnation of Christ[429] as well as through others.[430] The theological anthropology of a person (image) leads to a richer understanding of identity.

a. Natural identity. As Beatrice is always herself, we all have our own identity, and, like her, we also inherently image the natural identity of others from whom we derive. Our identity normally refers back to our parents, others in our family lineage, and others recognize those traits and features in us. We say sometimes that you are the spitting image of your father, a chip off the old block. We carry our own identity and incarnate some likenesses of their identities, although we are not them.

b. Identity in Christ. In addition to bearing our natural identities as regenerate persons in Christ, we have another identity within that we bare in our imaging function—Christ. [431] We carry another within us, by the Spirit. As Christ is not the Father and yet is in the Father and the Father is in Him, we are not Christ, but we are in Him, and He is in us. We are to be imitators of Christ to whatever degree is possible in

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[426] Horne, 'Charles Williams and Dante Alighieri', 259..

[427] Ibid., 264.

[428] Horne, 'Charles Williams, Dorothy Sayers', 14.

[429] Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:1–4. NIV.

[430] Matt. 10: 40 says, 'He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me' (NIV). The apostle Paul makes the same claim about himself to the Galatians as Dante does about Beatrice. Gal. 4:14 says, '… you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus Himself' (NIV).

[431] Col. 1:27.

grace.[432] Incarnation is part of the process of mediation and imagization, so the scriptural understanding of a person as an image has a sense of pregnancy. Like Beatrice, as Christians, we are ourselves and more.

He says, 'Beatrice is not only a type of the love-relationship; she is a type of every relationship'.[433] He concludes that love is about a choice and salvation.[434] For Williams, natural relationships are opportunities of grace. Dante's Beatrice is Williams's archetype of an image of Christ. Robert Hollander calls Beatrice 'figura Christi'.[435] But Williams continually warns that a human symbol for Christ is an image of Christ and is not Christ, but an ordinary person. This also is he or she and not Thou. Lewis makes an important distinction that anyone experiencing the stupor of love should keep in mind that the icon can become an idol.[436]

2. Beatrice as a Mediatorial Pattern

Perhaps the most important function of an image in Williams's work is that of human persons, in a mediatorial role, as images of Christ. Williams discusses the imaging potential in the nature of man that the divine can often only be seen through the lesser.[437]

Beatrice's role in Dante's life is ultimately to be an icon of God's love. Williams's interpretation of Dante's Beatrice further illustrates the 'is' and the 'is not' of Williams's maxim: 'This also is thou, neither is this thou'. This largesse of personhood is another aspect of Beatrice as a mediatorial pattern and what Horne says is the theological purpose of Williams's imagery. He further says: 'Beatrice, the image, must lead … to God, the origin; the created to the uncreated. The romantic sight must be exchanged for, or rather changed into the contemplation of God'.[438] For Williams, the image of Beatrice demonstrates the nature of the mediatorial pattern that God uses in all

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[432] Eph. 5:1-2 says, 'Be imitators of God;… live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God'.

[433] *FOB*, 190. See also *POT*, 59, 61.

[434] *FOB*, 123.

[435] Hollander, R.: *Dante: A Life in Works* 36.

[436] *AT,* 117.

[437] *IOC*, 141.

[438] Horne, 'Charles Williams and Dante Alighieri, 260.

relationships. She carries God's redemptive concern for Dante throughout her life but also remains herself at all times even when she represents God.[439]

A person being himself or herself can be at the same time laden with more than himself or herself. He or she is himself or herself and an image that incarnates to some degree the greater derivative source. Beatrice is an analogue of Christ's love mediated to Dante. Williams uses Beatrice as an image of redemption, love, and God's very presence. All heroes and heroines in Williams's works are 'Beatrician' in nature—they vicariously give themselves for the good of others.[440] Further aspects in the pattern of the mediatorial nature of life, used by God to draw man to Himself, are the many exchanges, substitutions, and vicarious sacrifices that demonstrate His love through the beloved. We shall discuss these aspects more in the following chapters.

3. Beatrice as an Epistemic Vehicle

This section is Williams's answer to the question, 'Is Beatrice Theology?'[441] She is an epistemic medium, a way of knowing and a vehicle of truth, partly because she also remains herself:

> She is, of course, Theology, but she is only Theology because she is Beatrice; unwomaned, she is also untheologized. 'The glorious and holy flesh' is, in some sense, the exhibition of Theology incarnate; as, because of the Incarnation, it is and must be.[442]

Beatrice is an epistemic vehicle for Dante, his way of knowing God. These statements may be among Williams's most important concerning Beatrice's role as an example of the Way of Affirmation (and any regenerate person), which for him is also a Way of coming to know God: 'The eyes, face, and smile of Beatrice are Dante's way of knowing God. She is the knowing, he is the knower, and God is the known'.[443] He goes on to write.

> She is … his very act of knowing. It is in this sense that … an image … is the great Romantic way, the Way of the Affirmation of Images,… the entire work of

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[439] *FOB*, 7–8. See also Alighieri, *La Vita Nuova*, 49, 195. The text refers to Beatrice throughout as the bearer of salvation to Dante.

[440] Trowbridge, 335–43. See also R. Woods, 'The Figure of Taliessin in Charles Williams' Arthuraid,' *Mythlore* 10, no. 1 (1983): 11–16.

[441] *ORT*, 109. Beatrice as theology involves epistemic possibilities.

[442] Ibid.

[443] *FOB*, 231.

> Dante,… is a description of the great act of knowledge, in which Dante himself is the Knower, and God is the Known, and Beatrice is the knowing.[444]

Through Beatrice Dante comes to know God. By knowing her he has the opportunity to know Christ, yet she, the image, is seen for what she is—a normal young woman—and the reality beyond can be perceived—Christ: 'Williams sees that Dante … is enunciating … theology'.[445] Horne comments further,

> In Dante's world religion and love cannot be separated: they explain each other in the total human experience, the love of Beatrice and the love of God belong together. The romantic vision (falling in love) is, for Dante, the means by which the eyes of the lover are opened to the religious truth that the beauty and splendour of God manifest themselves in ways of which the individual is ordinarily oblivious.[446]

Horne goes on to describe Dante's statements as one of the clearest expositions of a medieval catholic thought expressed best by Thomas Aquinas: that grace perfects nature without destroying it.[447] Not all romantic relationships could carry the full weight of this description. Lovers might not, as Williams says, be up to love.[448] Not all lovers are vehicles of revelation.

4. Beatrice as a *Theotokos*

Williams says that by grace the glory of God is renewed in the human body with its full meaning and possibilities and re-identified as the place of His Presence.[449] Allchin says, for Williams, Beatrice also carries the extended theological sense of *theotokos*.[450] Beatrice is the mother of love to Dante. Part of our imaging function is that we, like Israel, become a light to others by God's grace. The Church takes on the female role and a double pregnancy. First, the Church is the Body of Christ (not members but

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[444] *FOB*, 231–32. Beatrice is a relational exposition of 'He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me' (Matt. 10:40, NIV).

[445] Horne, 'Charles Williams and Dante Alighieri, 257.

[446] Ibid., 257–58.

[447] Ibid., 258.

[448] Ibid., 232.

[449] C. Williams, 'The Divine Realm', *Theology* February 1945, book review of *The Divine Realm* by Evgueny Lampert, MS 311, 2, Wade Center.

[450] A. Allchin, 'Poet under the Mercy', *Charles Williams Society Newsletter*, no. 4 (Winter 1976): 9. Allchin says that Williams extends the language from the Incarnation of Christ in Mary's womb, being overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, to the lesser sense carried on by all Christians, being overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, as 'God-Bearers'. This carries the thought of 'Christ in me the hope of Glory' (Col. 1:27)—we become the bearer of someone else's hope of Salvation, as Beatrice was for Dante.

its *membra*[451]) becoming God-bearers pregnant with the indwelling presence of Christ—*theotokoi*. Second, the Church is pregnant with the concerns of man—*anthropotokoi*.[452] Therefore, we, the Church, become Beatrice to others: 'We are Beatrice'.[453] Williams emphasizes on two occasions the following line, which he says has been called almost the greatest line in all European poetry.[454] Beatrice said to Dante, 'Look on us well; we are indeed, we are Beatrice'.[455]

Beatrice is Williams's most enduring and substantial treatment of *theotokos*. The Virgin Mary carried Christ. Christians also are to carry, as burdens, Christ and others. Williams saw Dante's image of Beatrice as representing these important aspects of Christian thought in relation to God and man, which he derived first from his understanding of Christology.[456]

In the *Commedia* Beatrice is enlisted by St. Lucy at the instance of the Virgin Mary to assist in Dante's salvation.[457] As the Virgin Mary carried and gave Christ to the world, God is carried by one person to another, through the body of the other. Love is born in another through the mother of another's soul, by the work of the Holy Spirit. Beatrice has become the mother of love for Dante. Love is Christ—'life being the medium by which love is manifested'.[458] Thus, Beatrice becomes a God-bearer to Dante. She is a demonstration of the Virgin Mary's purpose as *Theotokos.*

Williams and Dante refer to the Virgin Mary as *'figlia del tuo figlio*', daughter of thy son,[459] which is also the Church's state of being and responsibility. The Church physically and mystically carries Christ to the world in some sense similar to the way in which Mary carried Christ and as Beatrice is a vehicle of God's grace to Dante.[460]

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[451] *IOC*, 151, 'members one of another'. Original italics with Williams's particular sense of the coinherent relation among those making up the Body of Christ.

[452] Ibid., 111.

[453] Dante Alighieri, *Purgatory,* vol. 2 of *The Divine Comedy* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1955)*,* XXX, 73–74.

[454] *HCD*, 75. Williams says it again in 'Religion and Love in Dante: The Theology of Romantic Love', now published as part of *ORT*, 105. The context is Beatrice speaking to Dante with her pageant the Church.

[455] Alighieri, *Divine Comedy: Purgatory,* XXX, 73–74.

[456] *ORT*, 14.

[457] Alighieri, *Divine Comedy, Hell*, II.

[458] *ORT*, 17.

[459] *DOD*, 103, 135, 138. See Alighieri, *Divine Comedy, Paradise,* XXXIII, 1.

[460] *FOB*, 29–30, 61.

5. Beatrice as The Church, The City, and Coinherence

Dante and Williams see Beatrice both as an image of the Church and an image of the City.[461] All the multitude of exchanges that are part of sustaining life and coinherence of any natural city are also images for the Life and Coinherence of the Eternal City. These vicarious exchanges and substitutions, which Williams calls *pietas,* are initiated by God for the welfare of others. They are then the bricks and mortar of love. The natural exchanges and substitutions that occur in the body of a woman to bring forth natural life are also images of those exchanges and substitutions that occur mystically in the body of Christ, the Church, and the City. Horne suggests that the pattern of the god-bearing image is part of the construction of the natural city and an analogy to the Eternal City and to the Coinherence of life within the Trinity.[462]

Williams combines his own thoughts with Dante's words in analyzing the communal nature and purpose of the Virgin Mary, Beatrice, the Incarnation, and the Church with his understanding of the function of man:

> The chief reason for mentioning co-inherence here is that it is an idea similar to that carried by the Beatrician and Marian title: 'figlia del tuo figlio'. Being theirs, it is also all mankind's; it is the intended principle of our being; it is the function for which we were created, and not it for us. The Incarnation, or rather the motherhood of the Incarnation, is the function for which we were created, and not it for us—or say, not primarily for us, but primarily that the Divine Being might itself fulfill those functions it had … decreed itself to fulfill.[463]

Love, because of its very nature, is life-engendering—fruitful. Williams's understanding is a poetic expression of the biblical metaphor of the romantic vision suggested in both testaments that the feminine beloved of God (man) is referred to as a spouse, a bride, and as a city—the Church.[464] Williams's idea of the theological relationship of the city, the woman, and coinherence is further discussed in detail in Chapter VI.

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[461] *FOB*, 14–16.

[462] Horne, 'Charles Williams and Dante Alighieri', 263–64. See also *FOB*, 199.

[463] *FOB*, 92–93, 231–32. He refers to Dante's *De Monarchia* and G. L. Prestige's *God in Patristic Theology* (London: Williams Heinemann, 1936). Prestige's Chapter XIV is titled 'Co-inherence' and deals with the history and understanding of the perichoretic nature of the divine persons.

[464] God's relationship to his people is many times imaged as spousal. Israel is His bride and they together become the City. See Isa. 62:4; 66:10; Jer. 2:2; Eph. 5:32; Rev. 19:7–9; 21:1–3. Evil is also sometimes referred to as a woman and a city (Rev. 17).

6. Beatrice Dies, and the Image Remains[465]

In time, the image will be withdrawn to give the person the option to grow in love[466] and move toward God, becoming more like Him.[467] One has to grow past the smile, the snub of Beatrice, or the death of the image.[468] If Christ goes away, the Comforter will come.[469]The revelation must be withdrawn because the 'Godhead is not to be imposed upon the flesh; rather, the manhood is to be lifted into God'.[470]

Beatrice dies, but the image is still envisioned in a bodily form, albeit a different body. She lives in Christ, in a body, as promised: 'My covenant shall be in your flesh'.[471] After her death the other appearances occur in *The Comedy*: She comes from heaven at the end of *Purgatory* and appears numerous times in *Paradise*. Williams refers to her death as 'the dark night' that must be gone through as part of the romantic way.[472] This phrase is a reminder of St. John of the Cross and, thus, of the way of Purgation, the Way of Rejection of Images. The Negative Way is present in the way of romantic love along with the Way of Affirmation of Images, and discussed in Chapter V as an aspect of romantic love. For those who are married the inevitability of death will occur: Their spouses will die as they themselves will also die. But while alive, their earthly spouses serve as images of love, ectypes, to lead him or her to their heavenly spouse.

Our earthly loves are pedagogical in the way of an image. Lewis suggests that part of the history and nature of the image is: the image must be lost, sacrificed, or die so that the greater reality might be understood and appropriated.[473] In time they all fade, but the acceptance of that loss brings the Two Ways together.[474] Lewis also suggests that the acceptance of this earthly loss relates to the *kenosis* of Christ, and a deeper trust

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[465] This topic is also discussed in Chapter V as it relates to romantic love.

[466] *ORT*, 33, 46, 68, 107.

[467] Ibid., 107–11.

[468] Ibid., 97.

[469] *FOB*, 36–37.

[470] Williams, *English Poetic Mind*, 142. See also *TRL*, 116–17.

[471] Gen. 17:13.

[472] *ORT*, 97.

[473] *AT*, 180.

[474] Ibid., 181.

in the work of Christ.[475] The image of Beatrice is then also brought back to Dante after Beatrice's death. It comes from Heaven. Beatrice returned as Christ did with her image an envisioned body. We will return to this temporal purgation of the *Via Negativa* in the next Chapter.

E. The Medium of the Image: The Human Body

1. God's Covenant in Man's Flesh

Canon Allchin says,

> The Spirit speaks now, so that his words may find a place in us … so that in our world there may continue to be both an *incarnatio Dei* and an *inspiratio hominis,* in the meeting of man's freedom with the wholly unlooked-for gift and act of God. To speak of spirituality is to speak of that meeting of eternity with time, of heaven with earth; it is to recover a sense of the holiness of matter, the sacredness of this world of space and time when it is known as the place of God's epiphany. Above all it is to know that man's life, man's body, is to be the place of God.[476]

For Williams, the emphasis on the body signifies the critical importance that Salvation happens in the human body because Redemption happens for man in the human body of Christ.[477] The body is first and foremost the space, the place, and time of the actions of the Incarnation. The visible and the invisible, imperishable and perishable, the eternal and the temporal, heaven and earth now share space, time, and action. In time and in the body is the when and where of God's activity in man. 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven' is absolutely true in the Man Christ Jesus where body and soul, God and man, and natural and supernatural abide as the prototype man. Spiritual life and natural life develop and unfold here. Therefore, the body of Jesus Christ is at center stage both in the Incarnation and in the life of the redeemed. Christ is a double derivation of His Father and His mother' and by her He derived from that which derived in Him and became the Second Adam.[478]

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[475] *AT*, 181.

[476] A. Allchin, *The World is a Wedding: Explorations in Christian Spirituality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 20.

[477] *HCD*, 26. See also *FOB*, 188. He refers to Genesis 17:13: 'My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant' (NIV). See also Col. 1:22: 'But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body …' (NIV).

[478] C. Williams, 'I Saw Eternity…'.

As previously noted in Chapters II and III, in many of Williams's works he mentions repeatedly The Athanasian Creed, *Quicumque Vult.*[479] He refers often to a particular line, which he calls the very maxim of the Affirmative Way: 'Not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh but by taking of the manhood into God'.[480] Thus, the in-fleshing of God, the Incarnation of Christ, secures that there can be an 'in-othering' and an 'in-Godding' of man.[481] This Creed for him is 'the definition of salvation, it lays down a primal necessary condition—that one shall believe in the existence of salvation and its own proper nature'.[482]

The importance of this line in the Creed is that God has taken human flesh into the Godhead, in direct contrast to the Gnostic view that devalues the flesh. The second Person of the Trinity, already being a divine person, has a body like ours and lives in a bodily way. Salvation and love, spiritual life and physical life are communicated in, through, and by the human body. The bodily incarnation of Christ, and its relation to the possibilities of man as a living analogue imaging Christ, represents a key to Williams's understanding of the incarnating function of an image.

The human body must be kept in center focus because it is God's temple, His dwelling place, where salvation is worked out, from Christ's body to ours. For that reason it is a significant component of a living image. Horne says that for Dante and Williams the spiritual is inseparable from the material.[483] Through the body man demonstrates his nature. Williams calls the body, borrowing Wordsworth's expression, '"an index of delight", Wordsworth says: "the human form, to me became an index of delight, of grace and honour, power and worthiness"'.[484]

Williams pushes beyond Wordsworth's interpretation to see the human being as an image of divine reality when the image points beyond itself to its source. Williams says, 'The structure of the body is an index to the structure of a greater whole'.[485] The person in his or her inherent imaging capacity as a living image is what he calls, 'a

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[479] *Book of Common Prayer*, 27–30.

[480] Ibid., 29.

[481] *FOB*, 92. Williams refers to Dante for this expression and also to Prestige, chaps. XI and XIV.

[482] *DOD*, 59.

[483] Horne, 'Charles Williams and Dante Alighieri, 258.

[484] *IOC*, 80ff. See also W. Wordsworth, *Prelude* Book VIII, 11, 279–81.

[485] *IOC*, 80–81.

living epigram'.[486] More importantly, the imaging reality of an embodied person is an aspect of what he calls the 'Pattern of the Glory'.[487] Stephen Medcalf describes an aspect of Williams's mysticism of the human body as a place of God's work. He quotes from Williams's *Witchcraft* that the body is 'a thing, being wholly itself, is laden with universal meaning'.[488] Huttar saw that Williams believed in the union of flesh and spirit in art, as in theology. He aimed to proclaim explicitly the spiritual reality abiding in the flesh.[489]

Williams also ponders whether the body is an epigram of virtue and suggests that we fall in love with the operative synthesis of its pattern.[490] He is thinking of all the good that our body enables us to do. He states that Christ's Sacred Body is itself virtue, the archetype of all human bodies, the plan upon which physical human creation was built.[491] He also extends a connection to the love of God manifested to man through the Eucharist. He suggests that we can receive and demonstrate that operative synthesis of love through our body.[492] For Williams the Eucharist and the human body are the central images, indicating both beyond and deeper, to a more important reality transpiring in our bodies—Salvation. God's and our use of the body is part of Williams's argument; the body is vital to who we are as human beings and to our Redemption. In this theological understanding of the body, John Paul II provides support for Williams's view: 'Human persons do not just merely have a body. The human person is a body'.[493]

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[486] *IOC*, 80–87.

[487] *CP* 171.

[488] S. Medcalf, 'Charles Williams as Natural and Preternatural', *Seven* 8 (1987): 103. See also C. Williams, *Witchcraft*, 78.

[489] Huttar, 'Charles Williams's Christmas Novel', 68.

[490] *IOC*, 84.

[491] Ibid., 86.

[492] Ibid.

[493] *TOB*, 346. See also Michael Waldstein, Introduction to *Man and Woman He Created Them* by John Paul II (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006), 103–04, 135.

2. The Bodily Person and Sexuality

The emphasis on the body also includes an attention to sexuality. Williams sees help from D. H. Lawrence and the English mystic, Lady Julian.[494] His theological contribution in this area can also be supported from the work of Pope John Paul II and currently David Brown. R. Williams writes, 'Williams' most original contribution to twentieth century Christian thought was his theological evaluation of the erotic'.[495]

C. Williams suggests that the Church has actually not appreciated the body and how the body helps us: 'The help which the body gives the soul has been far less seriously examined than the help which the soul gives the body'.[496] Williams calls the Church's attitude, as noted in Chapter III, an 'unofficial Manichaeism'. He attacks Manicheism and describes it as a spiritualizing and devotionalizing of the body and sexuality, thus reducing the body's sacredness to an imitation of substance resulting in docetism.[497]

a. D. H. Lawrence. Williams says that Lawrence was right in directing us towards the significance of sexuality and our physical nature even though Lawrence was also wrong in some of his emphasis.[498] Williams demonstrates his awareness of the docetic inclinations within the Church, and he finds help from Lawrence's over-statements: 'He felt desperately the cheapening all around him of words, of sex, of life. And he conceived (like the church) that the redemption lay in something other than morals'.[499] Williams says, 'The church owes more to heretics than she is ever likely . . . to admit; her gratitude is always patronizing'.[500]

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[494] Williams says that Lady Julian of Norwich emphasizes the help the body gives the soul. See *IOC*, 68. He says, 'Whatever the Lady Julian meant by "sensualite", she certainly meant nothing less material or less vital than the whole physical nature; she was not weakening or refining it away. She followed the Church,… committed to a realistic sense of the importance of matter: "our soul with our body and our body with our soul, either of them taking help of other"'.

[495] R. Williams, 'Not Really Human', 31.

[496] *IOC*, 68.

[497] Ibid., 69.

[498] Ibid.

[499] Ibid., 71.

[500] *IOC*, 69. Williams considered Lawrence a heretic.

In Williams's opinion Lawrence had the misfortune of being influenced early on by some Christians who had a rather negative attitude towards the body and sexuality.[501] Sadly, that attitude is still being held today in some Christian groups. Further, Lawrence was looking for meaning, serious meaning, in our flesh and blood. Williams says that Lawrence searched for it all his life. Williams thought that if Lawrence had encountered Christians who understood the implications of the Athanasian Creed, he might have been helped because much of the truth for which he was searching is described there. Williams goes on to say about the Athanasian Creed, 'It does insist precisely on what he [Lawrence] was always emphasizing: that the life of "sensuality" and the life of "substance" cannot be separated and must not be confused'.[502]

Williams sees ordinary bodily contact as carrying a significance beyond itself. Williams, noting Lawrence's emphasis and avoiding his missteps, makes a plea for a deeper look at the orthodoxy of the human body. He makes a correlation with the Eucharist and emphasises that overstating the significance of one aspect does as much harm as ignoring another:

> The wonder, the thrill, of a shoulder or a hand awaits its proper exploration. At present we have simply nothing to say to anyone in a state of exaltation, watching for 'meaning', except something which sounds very much like: 'Well, don't look too intently'. The hungry sheep look up for metaphysics, the profound metaphysics of the awful and redeeming body, and are given morals. Yet they are encouraged to receive the Blessed Sacrament which is defined to be for the body and the soul. Lawrence was a heretic—good; but he was concerned with Christian orthodoxy—the orthodoxy of the blood of Man.
>
> How to discover that?… We might certainly consider what has been done—there is the Lady Julian, there is Dante, there are Donne and Patmore. There is Lawrence. It is urgent that we should do it; it is even more urgent … that we should take care of our style.[503]

b. Pope John Paul II. Recent serious improvements in theological writings support Williams's perspective, especially in John Paul II's *Man and Woman He Created Them.* He also sees this problem and addresses it: 'The Manichaean way of understanding and evaluating man's body and sexuality is essentially foreign to the

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[501] *IOC*, 72. Williams says, 'The Christians of Lawrence's day did not care for the exploration of the body; he reacted against them with a natural but undesirable violence. Mr. Ford Madox Ford has said: "Lawrence had the misfortune to become conscious of life in London and in a class in London that by a sort of inverted Puritanism insisted that a sort of nebulous glooming about sex was a moral duty and a sort of heroism". But the Christians had driven them to it by a kind of nebulous gilding of sex and the body; they had refined the body into an unreal phantom of dim light and called it the Resurrection. Their morals aimed at a docetic Christ'.

[502] Ibid., 74.

[503] Ibid., 74–75.

Gospel'.[504] John Paul II also thinks that the body has been devalued by modern thought and culture in various ways.[505] He sees a correlation in meaning from the simplest of physical realities to the vital Divine realities. He, like Williams, sees that sex has more to it than we are ordinarily aware:

> The anthropological reality whose name is 'body', human body … is not only anthropological, but is also essentially theological. The theology of the body, which is linked from the beginning with the creation of man in the image of God, becomes in some way also a theology of sex. [506]

For Williams, the coinherent nature of the married couple is also an analogue of the coinherent nature of the Godhead, Christ, and the Church. This feature will be discussed further in Chapter VI.

John Paul II calls sex in marriage the Primordial Sacrament, the Sacrament of Creation and sees the body as a sacramental sign:

> Thus, in this dimension, a primordial sacrament is constituted, understood as a *sign that* efficaciously *transmits in the visible world the invisible mystery hidden in God from eternity*. And this is the mystery of Truth and Love, the mystery of divine life, in which man really participates.… The sacrament, as a visible sign, is constituted with man, inasmuch as he is a 'body', through his 'visible' masculinity and femininity. The body, and only the body, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine. It has been created to transfer into visible reality of the world the mystery hidden from eternity in God, and thus to be a sign of it.[507]

The body functions as an image, and John Paul says, 'Thus the purpose of the body: The body has been created to transfer the mystery of Divine Trinitarian Love into the visible world'.[508] Pope Benedict XVI shares his predecessor's theology and refers to Christ as 'that all powerful love', as he interestingly reminds us of Dante's description of Him in flesh, with a 'human countenance'.[509]

c. David Brown. David Brown's works make a considerable contemporary contribution, which has the effect of connecting Williams's picture of the wide extent of

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[504] *TOB*, 309. For more of John Paul II's discussion of Manichaeism see 303–09.

[505] Waldstein, 96. See also note 226, John Paul II, 'Letter to Families from Pope John Paul II', 1994, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_02021994_families_en.html (accessed December 23, 2013), 19. John Paul II saw firsthand the ravages of the Holocaust, the Soviet occupation of Poland, and the secular devaluing of human life by modern culture.

[506] *TOB*, 165.

[507] Ibid., 202–04.

[508] Ibid., 681.

[509] J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, trans. J. R. Foster (San Francisco: Communio Books, Ignatius Press, 2004), 194.

God's presence with Williams's concerns about the body. Brown, as Williams does, connects this bodiliness through the Eucharist:

> The activity of God is everywhere in the material world that is his creation, and not at all an isolated and occasional phenomenon. That is why it seems to me no accident that Christianity's central sacrament focuses on body and on a human body at that. It is no mere 'spiritual' presence that is on offer in the eucharist but one envisaged in definitely material terms. Earthly reality is present not just in bread and wine but also through the whole humanity of Christ being once more made available, however transformed it has become through entering a new type of existence.[510]

Brown also sees sexuality as an essential feature of humanity that is a means of mediation of truth and of the image of God. Brown shows, as Williams does, how an overreaction in the church and the associated repression have led to a great loss in understanding the gift of the body and sexuality.[511] What has been lost thereby is any real sense of a symbolic or mediating role, of how such beauty might be suggestive of a grace that is ultimately derived from elsewhere.[512] This truth is exactly what John Paul II, Williams, Patmore, and others suggest. Brown says,

> If one starts from a belief in the divine as creative (the source of the world's fruitfulness), then not only does sexuality become a natural image for divinity at work, it also becomes less a subject of embarrassment in other contexts, as well as potentially more multivalent. Sex is viewed as potentially rich in meaning because the divine is seen as already present within it, reaching sacramentally beyond its immediate meaning. Even if now less willing to use such language, Christianity has of course long recognized this in the context of married love.[513]

In Williams's thinking, the physical body is a means in and through which the Holy Spirit operates to draw man beyond himself and Creation to the Creator. This emphasis is one of the obvious threads that runs throughout *DOD* and is highlighted in the subtitle *A Short History of the Holy Spirit in the Church*. The preposition *in* is significant here. It is a clue to one of the ways God works in our world: the Holy Spirit working in and through the bodies of persons. Two commentators on Williams write, 'CW provides theological backing for his belief that for Christians, God is to be found, under the tutoring of the Holy Spirit, as much in the physical, known present as in the supernaturally spiritual, unknown future'.[514] Thankfully, today there is ample proof of a

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[510] D. Brown, *God and Grace of Body: Sacrament in Ordinary* (London: OUP, 2007), 4.

[511] Ibid., 36–37.

[512] Ibid., 20.

[513] Ibid., 41.

[514] Duriez, and Porter. See *IOC*, 154–58.

healthier attitude in the Church towards the body and sexuality. The Church now has a more adequate theological anthropology.

CHAPTER V
ROMANTIC LOVE:
AND OTHER GOD-USED RELATIONSHIPS AND ACTIVITIES

> This is the claim that Dante makes for Beatrice. The thoroughly earthly love of the *Vita Nuova* is carried as far as the heights of heaven; indeed, it is extolled as the motive power for the whole journey through the hereafter. The love, which began on earth between two human beings, is not denied, is not bypassed in the journey to God. It is not, as was always, naturally enough, hitherto the case, sacrificed on the altar of the classical *via negative*. Instead, it is carried right up to the throne of God, however transformed and purified. This is utterly unprecedented in the history of Christian theology. As Charles Williams rightly saw, it transcends the whole neo-platonic scheme of via negativa, negativa, *eminentia*. *It is true … the figure of the beloved is a young Florentine girl of flesh and blood. Why should a Christian man not love a woman for all eternity and allow himself to be introduced by that woman to a full understanding of what 'eternity' means? And why should it be so extraordinary—ought one not rather to expect it—that such a love needs, for its total fulfillment, the whole of theology….[515]
>
> —H. U. Von Balthasar

A. Introduction

Chapter IV explored Williams's understanding and use of an image. It also surveyed his use of persons as images and the theological significance of Beatrice as his prime example. It examined the various and multivalent aspects of her imagization. It also analyzed the initial experience, the stupor of falling in love, and the important theological functions the human body plays, being the vehicle of an embodied image. The present chapter focuses on interpersonal romantic relationships of love, blossoming over time, and their life counterparts—the romantic and loving patterns of life and the ways of the soul, which develop from these relationships. The chapter also looks at these romantic relationships, as Williams does, as possible analogues of divine love.

Some of this material overlaps with Chapter IV, but Chapter V's focus is different. This chapter examines Williams's understanding and use of romantic love relationships as a primary theological image; however, as just noted, the emphasis is not so much on the person as an image but on the relationships and life-ways. Williams uses the stories of these relationships as they develop over a lifetime. Nancy Enright writes

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[515] *Von Balthasar makes a footnote and refers in his footnote to the complete books *FOB* and *POT*.

that the theology of romantic love is Williams's attempt to explore this way of love in the light of Christian theology.[516]

His early five books of love poetry have already been examined in Chapter II. This chapter discusses *ORT* and his lifelong interaction with Dante's works, which develop the image of Beatrice in a context of romantic love. What Williams begins in his early poetry develops thoughtfully in *ORT* and continues in his novels, plays, and Arthuriad. This stream of work culminates in *FOB*, which is one of Williams's finest critical volumes, analyzing Dante's major works. It is an illuminating theological masterpiece, showing how God uses romantic love as a means of grace.

In *ORT* Williams first examines Christian marriage as a romantic theological image of Christ and the Church. For Williams, Christ is to be identified with love and His life with marriage.[517] He also extends the principles of romantic love beyond the marital relationship to any relationship and seeks to extend them even further to any activity that gets one out beyond oneself. In *FOB*, too, he extends his thinking to any romantic relationship and to any relationship of love. The concluding sections explore some of the problems that arise in the extensions and in the development of Williams's thinking.

1. What Williams Means by Romance or Romantic Love

As already noted in Chapter IV, *FOB* is more than literary criticism. It is Williams's theological interpretation of Dante's story of the romantic relationship between Beatrice and Dante. It is also an explanation of what Williams means by romance or romantic. Alice Mary Hadfield, his biographer, writes,

> He meant … by 'romance' what John Buchan once called 'strangeness flowering from the commonplace',… making the ordinary extraordinary. For sex, love, and marriage are commonplace and ordinary; they can also and at the same time be strange and extraordinary. Romance, he felt, does not stand by itself; it is an aspect of the multiform relationship of men, women, and God, the study of which is theology's business. Romantic theology is … the working out of ways in which an ordinary relationship between two people can become one that is extraordinary, one that grants us glimpses, visions of perfection.[518]

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[516] Enright, 'Charles Williams and his Theology of Romantic Love: A Dantean Interpretation', 22.

[517] *ORT*, 31–33.

[518] A. M. Hadfield, Introduction to *ORT*, viii.

In Williams's perspective, romantic love between a man and a woman, and other relationships of love, are possible arenas for the revelation of God's love, for getting one out beyond oneself and having a foretaste of divine love. And he extends what he includes in romantic love far beyond marriage, to any and all ways that God might be trying to encounter a person. For Williams, romance can cover seeing God as initiating His love through another person, activity, event, or experience.

Edith Alward says that Williams believes that humans who are in love are a visible sign of the redeeming love of God.[519] Horne writes,

> Love is not a 'function' which exists for the sake of the lover or the beloved: it is a 'function' of God of which the lover and the beloved are the embodiments. So Williams writes: 'To love is to love and serve the function for which the loved being was created, whatever that may mean or involve; this is the definition of the Way, the end of which is in that point from which heaven and all nature hangs': 'depende il cielo e tutta la natura'.[520]

Williams's goal is to show us 'what love is up to'[521] and how human love is to become an intimation of God's love.[522] Nancy Enright writes,

> Charles Williams saw in romantic love, more than a shadow of theological truth; of Divine Love itself.… He saw it as a way, not the way, but a preparatory path for the soul to take on its journey to salvation and also at the same time part of the Way as a soul begins to open up to God by experiencing His love in another.[523]

2. Romantic Love Relationships as a Way to God

Williams links relationships intimately with the way they unfold and are demonstrated in life. Love relationships have the potential to last and to develop in different directions. Patterns of life evolve over time and are woven into the fabric of a relationship. For him, all relationships are about love or the lack of it, and whether one is aware of it or not, all real love is a movement in some degree towards salvation.[524] The experience of love and the continuation of the romantic relationship—'the

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[519] Alward, 18.

[520] Horne, 'Charles Williams and Dante Alighieri, 260–61. This is a reference from Dante, *Paradise*, *Divine Comedy*, XXVIII, 42. See Barbara Reynolds' notes in her and Sayers' translation of *Paradise* (p. 306), which refers to Aristotle's first mover, *Metaphysics*, xii. 7, 1072, b. See also *FOB*, 51.

[521] *FOB*, 232.

[522] Horne, 'Charles Williams, Dorothy Sayers', 14.

[523] Enright, 'Charles Williams and his Theology of Romantic Love: A Dantean Interpretation', 22. Persons in love may not be aware of the greater sense and opportunity that is opening up to them both.

[524] *HCD*, 58. 'All things are known as occasions of love'.

fundamental idea was salvation'—provide the opportunity for man to experience the grace of God and to continue to grow in that grace.[525] His understanding of romantic love is that it is a way of the soul to God.

The merging and integration of romantic love, the image of a woman, the City, and the Incarnation, with Christian experience form the nexus of Williams's theological contribution. In the Introduction to *FOB*, he notes three themes that express his view:

> … (i) the general Way of the Affirmation of Images as a method of process towards the inGodding of man, (ii) the way of romantic love as a particular mode of the same progress, (iii) the involution of this love with other images, particularly (a) that of the community—that is, of the city, a devotion to which is also a way of the soul.… [526]

He goes on to say that the images of human learning, poetry, and even the city, do not get Dante's attention in comparison to the sight of Beatrice.[527] She is the catalyst not only for the initial experience but also for the relationship—*Incipit Vita Nuova*.

Romantic love relationships are one of the branches of the Way of Affirmation of Images. They are also, as already mentioned, one of the ways God reaches out to man, through other people in relationships.[528] So in human relationships, romantic love can be a way in which people not only get to know others but also get to know God. A further implication of Williams's stories is that God is the silent lover behind all real affairs of love.

Early in his writings, Williams notes the theological significance of God's imaging His love to man in and through Christ's relationships with His disciples over time. For example, in the prefatory quotation of *ORT*, Williams frames the semiotic context for the whole volume: 'Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?' [529] Christ asked Philip if he had been paying attention to the relationship over many months. The emphasis in this passage is not on any one

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[525] *HCD*, 63.

[526] *FOB*, 16.

[527] Ibid.

[528] Matt. 10:40 says, 'He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me'.

[529] John 14:8–10 (KJV) says, 'Philip saith unto him, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us". Jesus saith unto him, "Have I been with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works"'.

experience but on the relationship of living with one another over a significant period, increasing the possibilities of the imaging function through the relationship.

3. Williams's Sources

a. The scriptures and theology. Nancy Enright writes that the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation provide the foundational source for Williams's understanding of romantic love.[530] Williams's theological interpretation is that God, true to His own nature, appears as the first and everlasting, faithful lover of man.

In the Old Testament, the high point of Creation is God making man, male and female, in His image and bringing them together. Both Testaments contain testimonies of God's people becoming His offspring,[531] His friend,[532] then His spouse.[533] Some of the prophets refer to Israel as His spouse and sin as adultery.[534] God's love for man is reflected in the Hosea and Gomer narrative. Ezekiel describes Israel's history in nuptial terms.[535] Even the Promised Land is referred to as Beulah or married.[536] Israel's relationship with God is to be a way for God to bring Salvation, not only to Israel, but also through them to the world.[537]

In the New Testament, Christ refers to Himself as the bridegroom.[538] The New Testament shows the same development in relationships as the Old Testament: People become God's children,[539] then His friends,[540] then His spouse—His bride, the Church.[541] His first miracle was at a wedding.[542] Significant parables refer to the

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[530] Enright, 'Charles Williams and His Theology of Romantic Love: The Novels', 36.

[531] Exod. 4:22; Isa. 30:1.

[532] 2 Chron. 20:7; Jas. 2:23.

[533] Jer. 2:2, 32; 3:1, 8, 14.

[534] Jer. 2–5; Hos. 7:4; Ezek. 16:32.

[535] Ezek. 16

[536] Isa. 62:4.

[537] Isa. 49:6.

[538] Matt. 9:15, Mark 2:19–20, and Luke 5:34–35. John the Baptist also refers to Jesus as the bridegroom, John 3:29.

[539] John 1:12.

[540] John, 15:15.

[541] Rev. 19:7; 22:17.

[542] John 2:1–11.

wedding feast and the ten virgins.[543] Paul interprets Christ's life and ministry in spousal terms.[544] The spouse of the first Adam is the mother of all living and the spouse of the second Adam, the Church, is the mother of all spiritually living in Christ. The imaged apex of history is pictured as the marriage supper of the lamb.[545] This nuptial romantic language is not to be dismissed, nor to be used sentimentally, but to be taken as a theological aid to explore and discover aspects of the nature of God's love and of His ways with man.

As already seen in Chapter IV, at the core of Williams's work is an imagization of persons, with the Incarnation of Christ as the orienting source and archetype. Williams's work is not a series of stories with Christian background material; rather, he is writing with the same teleology as Dante in *The Divine Comedy*, to bring persons to God.[546] Glen Cavaliero says that most of Williams's work is Christology.[547] I agree with Cavaliero and would also say that it brings an understanding of how God's grace comes to us through Christ and through others. Christ in Mary as *Theotokos* is a pattern of the way God normally comes to us through another. 'Christ in me the hope of glory' is not only my hope; He in me is God reaching out through man to man.[548] However, from Williams's picture, God also uses other channels. Thus, for example, the common things of life can also be vehicles of God's love. [549]

Horne says that the Incarnation is for Williams the key for understanding humanity and divinity in Love.[550] He writes, 'Humanity reaches its purpose and end in the Incarnation'.[551] Horne also asserts that Williams's understanding of the nature of man coupled with the nature of the Incarnation is at the heart of *FOB*.[552] Horne further

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[543] Matt. 22:1–14, 25:1–13, Luke 12:35, and 14:8.

[544] Eph. 5:25–33.

[545] Rev. 19:7–9.

[546] See Dante Alighieri, *Hell*, vol. 1 of *The Divine Comedy,* trans. and introduction by Dorothy Sayers (1949, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books), 1984. See letter written to Can Grande della Scala by Dante, 14–15.

[547] G. Cavaliero, "A Jest in Heaven: The Comedic Element in the Theology of Charles Williams', *The Charles Williams Quarterly*, no. 135 (Summer 2010): 7–18. See also Horne, 'He Came Down from Heaven'.

[548] Col. 1:2; 2 Cor. 5:20.

[549] *ORT*, 70.

[550] Horne, 'Charles Williams and Dante Alighieri', 262.

[551] Ibid.

[552] Ibid.

says, 'Only the personal quality of a human image [in a relationship over time] can reveal the full possibilities of God's nature for it is only in humanity that God fully gave Himself'.[553] In a somewhat similar way, Wayne Meeks interprets the biblical story as a romantic love letter from God to man.[554] The Christian story is a living love letter from God, with the history of His affection for man. Williams sets out to read it more fully and interpret it from the perspective of a poet.

b. Correlations and parallels. Williams's intent, especially in romantic love relationships and in their ways, is to help us glimpse the love of Christ—the 'pattern of the glory'.[555] He begins studying this pattern in his relationship with his wife, based upon the sequence of events from the Incarnation, which is the fullest and true pattern of love.[556] He sees his wife and Dante's Beatrice as sources of reflection and vice-gerents of salvation—human examples of the 'pattern of the glory'. For Williams every affair of true love is in correlation with God's love. In some degree it should reflect His nature, in a living relationship as an opportunity of grace.

Due to our fallenness, love is refracted and distorted, but even so, a greater love exists behind the lesser. Shideler says that for Williams, romantic love is 'an exact correlation and parallel of Christianity'.[557] Our natural lives in marriage are to be an icon of God's nature and love.[558] God is always working in the center of the web of human relations, and the foundation of that work is the very nature of God—Love. Real love is an expression of the coinherent reality of the relationship between the three persons of the blessed Trinity, and God desires that man may share in that fellowship.[559] As we explore *ORT,* he sees marriage, sex, love of family, friends, the mass, liturgy, and the life of Christ in the New Testament with his disciples as correlating with and paralleling the romantic love of God for man. We should pattern our lives with the same

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[553] Horne, 'Charles Williams and Dante Alighieri', 262–63, brackets mine.

[554] W. Meeks, *Christ is the Question* (Louisville: Westminster-John Knox, 2006), 140. Man is also analogously called to be God's letter to his fellow man, 2 Cor. 3:3.

[555] *HCD*, 36.

[556] *HCD*, dedication, 8. See also C. Williams, 'Seed of Adam', *CP*, 171.

[557] *TRL*, 1. She quotes Williams from T. Maynard, *Our Best Poets* (New York: Henry Holt, 1922), 36. See also *DOD*, 131.

[558] *ORT*, 14ff.

[559] John 17:20–23, 26.

vicarious love for others as Christ commands: 'Love one another as I have loved you'.[560]

c. Other literary sources. Williams further derives and develops his understanding of romantic love from the Arthurian legends, Dante, and other romantic writers who relate romantic love to Christ. He calls these literary witnesses to substantiate his views of romantic love as an image and a witness of God's love.[561] He highlights Malory's *Morte D'Arthur,* the works of Thomas Carew and Robert Herrick, and John Donne's poetry.[562] He also draws upon insights from his editorial work on Gerard Manley Hopkins' poetry.[563] Coventry Patmore's[564] and Dante's work are particularly singled out because they have given substantial support to Williams's thesis of romantic theology as an aid to the soul.[565]

Ideas about romantic love and its relationship to Christianity have been readily available from the Scriptures, Dante, and other great literature for centuries. Williams's interpretations of Dante's work will be discussed at length in section C, The Figure of Beatrice, of this Chapter.

4. Stories as Literary and Theological Mode

Williams uses the medium of well-known stories for the ground of his theological discussions and interpretations. As already mentioned in Chapter II, his early poetry books were romantic love sonnets corresponding to the theological themes he described throughout his career. Regardless of the mode—poetry, plays, or novels—even when he adds to the story and adapts it to his own use, as in his Arthuriad, he still writes stories about romantic love. Further, in all of his narratives he consistently uses the Christian story as the framework interweaving his theological views between the lives and romantic relationships reflected in the stories. So too, Dante's and Williams's

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[560] John 15:12.

[561] Especially Malory, Dante, Coventry, and C. Patmore, *Poems: The Unknown Eros* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1878); *The Rod, the Root, and the Flower* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1907); *The Angel in the House* (Middlesex: Echo Library, 2006). See also *ORT*, Chapter VI, 55–66.

[562] *ORT*, 58–63.

[563] *POT*, 7, 12, 98, 102, 116, 132, 157. Also see B. Horne, 'Charles Williams and Gerard Manley Hopkins, Poetry and Theology', *Charles Williams Society Newsletter*, 17 (Spring 1980): 4ff.

[564] *ORT*, 64–66.

[565] Ibid., ix, 64–66. See also *FOB*, 13, 49, 69, 90, 188; *POT*, 9–15, 133; references in the index of *CWX*. Ridler agrees that Patmore was an important complementary source for Williams's work. See *IOC*, xliii-xliv. See Patmore, *The Rod*, 113, 122.

use of story combine with the biblical story. This connection is also in keeping with the fact that they have many narrative sources.

5. A Romantic Theologian

We have already commented in subsection 1 about Williams's use of the terms romance and romantic. Here, he describes himself as a 'romantic theologian'. He writes about what he thinks are the most important things in life, and he thinks romantic love should be examined theologically in the spirit of the poet. Lewis supports Williams's understanding of his vocation:

> He was a novelist, a poet, a dramatist, a biographer, a critic, and a theologian: a 'romantic theologian' in the technical sense which he himself invented for those words. A romantic theologian does not mean one who is romantic about theology but one who is theological about romance, one who considers the theological implications of those experiences which are called romantic. The belief that the most serious and ecstatic experiences either of human love or of imaginative literature have such theological implications, and that they can be healthy and fruitful only if the implications are diligently thought out and severely lived, is the root principle of all his work.[566]

Williams is concerned with the meaning of falling in love and of following and growing in the love, which draws one forward beyond oneself, not only to the other person but eventually to God. He thinks that the structure of romantic love is based on a sacramental understanding of life, which includes the same elements of exchange, substitution, and the resulting coinherence as other expressions of vicarious love demonstrated in the life of Christ.

B. Outlines of Romantic Theology:[567] Williams's Early Interpretation of Christian Marriage and Romantic Love

ORT is a presentation of Williams's thoughts on romantic love early in his career. The predominant focus of *ORT* is Christian marriage, but he extends the

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[566] Lewis, *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1966), vi.

[567] See Hadfield, 'Introduction' and 'Sequel' to *ORT*. *ORT* was written in 1924 and not published until 1990 together with Williams's reprinted essay, 'Religion and Love in Dante: The Theology of Romantic Love' (first published in 1941). Faber & Faber wanted to publish *ORT* but requested Williams to make some changes, and before these could be worked out, Britain's general strike occurred and an economic depression was looming. He was asked to resubmit the following year. He did not. Some have thought that the problems of his marriage after the birth of their son and a budding love affair with a young woman brought a loss of interest. See *CWX*, 40–46, 56. See also Duriezand Porter, 175.

principles beyond the marital relationship. In his opinion, the same principles apply to all relationships of love and even to other activities within their appropriate boundaries.[568]

As mentioned in Chapter IV, Williams believed that the experience of 'falling in love' could happen to anyone, anywhere, and is an opportunity for God to work in one or both of the persons' lives.[569] He generalizes the phenomenon of 'falling in love' and examines the experience theologically.

In *ORT,* Williams affirms that his point of view is that of an orthodox Christian. He interprets, in the light of romantic love, the rites and the dogmas set forth in the *Book of Common Prayer*.[570] In Chapter IV of *ORT,* he works out in detail the connections between romantic love and the Mass, as well as other liturgies. Williams saw the Anglican Liturgy as ample help in romantic love. He says, 'All the collects have an application to romantic theology as well as dogmatic; from all of them the devout lover may extract instruction and aid'.[571] In making these connections, he shows and develops his beliefs that romantic theology is part of Christian theology but that it has been neglected by the experts and left to poets and artists.[572]

1. Marriage

As has been previously said, Williams believes that the Church reduced marriage and its life to duty rather than doctrine and that the Christian view of marriage remained arbitrary and inexplicable.[573] He wants a deeper understanding that identifies marriage and romantic love with Christ and the operation of His life. He sees romantic love in marriage as an opportunity for God to work in a relationship and for that marriage to symbolize the life of Christ:

> The Principles of Romantic Theology can be reduced to a single formula: which is, the identification of love with Jesus Christ, and of marriage with His life.… Whether they are conscious of it or not,… they are, His Symbols, and that their

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[568] See section D. Failures and Dangers of Romantic Love for a discussion dealing with both the extensions and the boundaries.

[569] *ORT*, 9. Falling in love can happen to anyone, but Williams chooses to consider the experience primarily with Christians.

[570] Ibid., 8.

[571] Ibid., 76. He wrote five collects for marriage that are in the appendix to *IOC*.

[572] Ibid., 7.

[573] 'An Essay on Romantic Theology,' unpublished, MS 405, Wade Center.

> marriage is His life.… It is His manifestation of Himself in marriage which is the subject of Romantic Theology[574]

Williams's view is closely relatable to Pope John Paul II's statement interpreting Ephesians 5:29–30: 'The sacramentality of the Church remains in a particular relationship with marriage, the most ancient sacrament'.[575] For John Paul II the natural sacrament of marriage is a visible sign of the Church and *agape*.[576] This type of theological anthropology was the kind of theological integration for which Williams was looking from the Church of his day, but it was not available then.

Williams also warns that marriages can be overrated but still maintains that love in marriage is perhaps the most illuminating experience people can have.[577] But Williams also acknowledges that not all romantic lovers experience revelation, but the possibility is there. However, marriage is not the only way to God.[578] This issue will be further discussed in Section D. Failures and Dangers of Romantic Love.

2. Sexual Love

Referring back to Chapter IV, we have already discussed sexuality and its role as a symbolic mediating image expressing love through the body. And we have noted that Williams's emphasis on sexual love is reinforced with certain perspectives of D. H. Lawrence, John Paul II's *TOB*, and David Brown's recent work.

Charles Williams believes that part of the sacramental grace of marriage is sexual intercourse and that very little of the significance of this topic has been explained by the church.[579] He refers to the chief experience of romantic love as sexual love between a man and a woman, 'appearing to its partakers one of the most important experiences in life—a love that demands the attention of the intellect and the spirit for its understanding and service'.[580]

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[574] *ORT*, 14–15.

[575] *TOB*, 491f.

[576] Ibid., 474ff., 202–10, 502–14.

[577] *ORT*, 28.

[578] Ibid., 26. But he says further that marriage is only one of the means of Christ's revelation, 41.

[579] This issue has recently been remedied, to a degree, with *TOB*.

[580] *ORT*, 7.

Williams believes that sexual intercourse is part of the sacrament and sanctity of marriage.[581] I would add that for it to be so, an active, lived relationship of love and an appropriate sense of love must be there.[582] The act on its own demonstrates the sanctity in addition to the attitude in one's heart and the life that surrounds the act. Similarly, he also says that the preeminent moment of romantic love is not necessarily confined to the moment of romantic sexual love.[583] And for him and for Dante, romantic love does not necessitate physical consummation.[584] Diana Paxson writes,

> Charles Williams is the only one of the major Inklings who focuses on romantic love, both as a metaphor and as a means to spiritual union.… Erotic attraction is used to direct attention to something for which the feeling for the Beloved is a roadsign. In none of the novels does 'getting the girl' provide the major plot impetus, and in none of them would the hero's love have meaning if there were no greater context. The romantic connections between the characters, however genuine are less an end than a foundation which support other kinds of loving.… And the real consummation is the character's union with the Divine.[585]

Thus, for Williams, sex has to be set within a context of a relationship of marital love. As we saw both with John Paul II and Brown, though in different ways, they too connect sex within a relationship of love and ways of life, not treating it as an isolated experience.

3. The Song of Songs

Williams refers to *The Song of Songs* as a Scriptural example of the theology of romantic love, which has not been explained well by the Church:

> The intense passion of the *Song* is a mortal passion moving and sustained by an immortal principle: it needs for its full perfection just the identification of Christ and Love which this theology proposes.[586]

The Church tends to allegorize this text, and make it about Christ and the Church, instead of about erotic love between a man and a woman. For Williams *The Song* is God's gift to man; and it is meaningful beyond itself.[587]

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[581] *ORT*, 24, 44–45.

[582] See section D. Failures and Dangers of Romantic Love.

[583] *HCD*, 65.

[584] Enright, 'Charles Williams and His Theology of Romantic Love: The Novels', 38–39.

[585] D. Paxson, 'What I Did For Love', *Mythlore* 16, no. 63 (Autumn 1990): 5.

[586] *ORT*, 66. See also a theologian who agrees with Williams about the Song: D. Kinlaw, 'Charles Williams' Concept of Imaging Applied to the Song of Songs', *Wesleyan Theological Journal: Bulletin of the Wesleyan Theological Society* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1981): 12.

In recent years some scholars in the Church have expressed a view different from the common traditional perspective and close to that of Williams. John Paul II quotes from J. Winandy: '*The Song of Songs* is thus to be taken simply as what it manifestly is: a song of human Love', and he endorses this reading himself.[588] Fresh contemporary theological and exegetical support now exists for this part of Williams's view on married love, and his use of the couple's iconic imaging.[589] To allegorize the *Song of Songs* is to miss the good of erotic love and the point of its being entered into the canon.[590]

4. Purgation in Love

However, Charles Williams also sees that there is more to erotic love than pleasure. Among other things, he also thinks that sexual intercourse in marriage is capable of being a symbol of the Crucifixion, suffering, and giving oneself to another.[591] He says, 'There is no other human experience, except Death, which so enters into the life of the body; there is no other human experience which so binds the body to another being. The central experience of sanctity is to be so bound to another'.[592] He thus sees the sacrament of marriage, and the delights of marriage, as only parts of the blessing; another part is a purgation, or a refiner's fire:

> … It is a place of purgation as well as joy; it is in truth a little universe of place and time, of earth, of purgatory, of heaven or hell. The companion in this experience is to him or to her the instrument of fire which shall burn away his corrupt part.… Love is Holiness and Divine Indignation; the placidity of an ordinary married life is the veil of a spiritual passage into profound things. Nor is this all; the lover knows himself also to be the cross upon which the Beloved is to be stretched, and so she also of her lover … by the grace of that Crucifixion which includes it but is so much more than it alone, it becomes itself a purgation and a redemption. This is … the annihilation of the selfhood which the saints have sought and the end of it is union.[593]

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[587] *HCD*, 97.

[588] *TOB*, 548ff. The Pope supports this exegesis with a long list of scholars and sources.

[589] See *TOB*. The body and the couple are signs, and the couple a natural primordial sacrament of the invisible mystery, 202–03. See also Scola, 50–52. The male and female couple is seen as an analogical key to the *Imago Dei*.

[590] Kinlaw, 10–13.

[591] *ORT*, 24.

[592] Ibid.

[593] *ORT*, 23–24.

The Via Negativa or the Way of Purgation is clearly seen in this quotation, coming together and integrating with the Way of Affirmation in the primordial natural sacrament. Again, the purpose of *ORT* is to show primarily that Christian marriage is a 'way of the soul' concerned with the whole complex of the regeneration of man.[594]

As already emphasized, Dante's works are a substantial source for and influence on Williams's literary and theological development. This influence culminates in Williams's interpretative vision in *FOB*. It is crucial to examine the idealized imaginative romantic relationship between Beatrice and Dante as a vehicle of grace, which is precisely how Dante and Williams regarded the relationship. What is immature in *ORT* blossoms in *FOB*.

C. The Figure of Beatrice: Williams's Mature Interpretation of Dante's Romantic Relationship with Beatrice

This section examines Williams's use of Dante's works, especially those that develop the image of the romantic love relationship between Dante and Beatrice. Lewis, commenting on Dante's influence on Williams, says, 'His master is Dante'.[595] Early in his career, Williams sees Dante as the great example of someone who understood the theological significance of romantic love, and Williams repeatedly relies on Dante throughout his major theological works.[596] Williams interprets the love between Dante and Beatrice as a type of all true love relationships and sees its purpose as beatitude, which is the proper relationship between men and women and men and God.[597]

In various works, Dante focuses on different aspects of their relationship, also relating them to other contemporary issues of his day. For example, in *De Monarchia* he discusses the relationship between Beatrice and the City and how a person is a representative of the community. And *Il Convivio* includes an in-depth discussion of the possibilities of the romantic relationship as an icon.

In *FOB* Williams examines *La Vita Nuova*, *Il Convivio*, *De Monarchia*, and *La Divina Commedia*. As he does, he consistently uses Dante to interpret and support what

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[594] *ORT*, 10, 12, 14, 92.

[595] *AT*, 116.

[596] 1924 *ORT*; 1938 *HCD*; 1939 *DOD*; 1941 'Religion and Love in Dante: The Theology of Romantic Love'; 1943 *FOB*; he also wrote three reviews of new editions of *The Divine Comedy*.

[597] *FOB*, 190.

he, himself, is saying about romantic love as theology.[598] These examinations and interpretations of Dante's works are important guides to Williams's mature epistemology and his interpretation of romantic love. *La Vita Nuova* begins with Dante falling in love with Beatrice, and *Il Convivio* is a philosophical reflection on *La Vita,* as well as a discussion of other issues. Since we will not be discussing *De Monarchia* at length, we may note here a few relevant points pertaining to our focus.

In Williams's analysis of *De Monarchia,* he examines Dante's political perspective on distinctive responsibilities divided between the religious powers and the secular powers. He relates these powers to the City and to Beatrice in her own way, as 'the soul-in-largesse'.[599] One person is a representative for the whole, as Christ is for the Godhead and Beatrice is for the Church. Her relationship with Christ and with man is a micro-picture of the Church—the City. *De Monarchia* is crucial to Williams partly because it plays an important role in explaining how Dante relates the girl to Florence, Rome, and Christendom—the City. Williams says, 'The balance and contrast of the girl and the City is important to the whole of Dante's work'.[600] Williams further develops and projects the nature of those relations into similar relationships between Christians and the Church, and the individual and society. These and other aspects of coinherence presented in *De Monarchia* are further explored and discussed in Chapter VI.

1. Affirmations of Williams's Interpretation of Dante

Nichols has a high regard for Williams's theological contribution as critical for the twenty-first century and for anyone wanting to grow in love with his neighbor and with God.[601] Nichols also affirms Williams's influence on Von Balthasar's understanding of Dante's Beatrice.[602]

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[598] See Hadfield's analysis in Sequel in *ORT*, 74–88; Williams *ORT*, 55–66; *HCD*, 67–81; 'Religion and Love in Dante'; *DOD*, 47, 79, 103, 122–23, 129, 132–39, 140–41, 169, 212; *FOB*. This list does not include other essays and articles, published and unpublished.

[599] *FOB*, 96–97. Biblically, the feminine image can represent both the City and the Church. Beatrice can also be an image that represents the glory of God, in her arch-natural self that re-emanates the invisible light of God's presence because she is in the center of God's will.

[600] *FOB*, 88. See Horne, 'The City and the Girl', 1120.

[601] Nichols, *A Spirituality for the Twenty-First Century*, 11. See Nichol's discussion of Williams's ideas of coinherence 95–110.

[602] A. Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad: A Guide through Balthasar's Aesthetics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 95.

As already noted in the opening quote of Chapter V, Von Balthasar agrees with Williams that Dante's Beatrice is the key to the *Commedia.*[603] Von Balthasar also agrees that romantic love between lovers can lead them, under the influence of God, to a proper relationship with each other and that they can become an appropriate vessel for drawing one another, and others, to God.[604]

Sayers's whole life changed after reading *FOB* and it became for her 'The Burning Bush'.[605] She thought that Williams had grasped the 'essential nature of Dante's allegory'.[606] She, like Von Balthasar and Williams, believed that understanding the role of Beatrice as a *theotokos* was an interpretitive key to the *Comedy*. She dedicated her English translation of *The Divine Comedy* with the inscription, 'To The Dead Master Of The Affirmations CHARLES WILLIAMS'.[607] Williams was to write the Introduction and the notes for her translation, but he died before she started. She did not ask anyone else to do it. What is unique about Sayers's commentary, and distinct from other translations and commentaries, is her section at the end of each canto on understanding the significance of the major images included in that particular canto. These sections are in addition to her notes on each canto. These critical sections on images are a further indication of Williams's influence on Sayers through his understanding, and her use, of images and his interpretation of *The Comedy.*

2. *La Vita Nuova*

We have already discussed some aspects of *La Vita Nuova* in section C. Experiencing the Image of Chapter IV. It focused on the stupor and the other initial experiences of a person falling in love. We analyzed the nature of these phenomena, seeing them as various aspects of the experience of the person as an image. The present focus is different: It considers the initial experiences only as one element among many

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[603] H. Von Balthasar, *Studies in Theological Style: Lay Styles*, vol. 3 of *The Glory of The Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, trans. Andrew Louth, John Saward, Martin Simon, and Rowan Williams, ed. John Riches (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 34.

[604] Ibid., 32.

[605] B. Reynolds, *Passionate Intellect*, 168–78.

[606] Ibid., 170–71.

[607] Sayers quotes from the text of Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, Hell XV 86–87 in talking about her gratitude for Williams's influence on her: 'I am so grateful, that while I breathe air. My tongue shall speak the thanks which are your due'.

other elements within the continuing development of the relationship of romantic love. It takes in the whole history of that relationship.

La Vita Nuova is the beginning of the story of Dante's love for Beatrice Portinari and also contains his analysis of that love for her as a vehicle of his salvation. Williams says. '… Dante first showed us what may be called the religious spirit in Love, [and the statement that] … it's heaven to be with her' may not be an exaggeration.[608] *La Vita Nuova* gives eleven 'remembered accounts' of Dante with Beatrice: six real occurrences and five visions or dreams, ranging in time from when he was nine to his eighteenth year. These dreams and visions are written and interpreted as though they were from God. In them, God comes to Dante as Love, the Lord Christ, and through Beatrice. These experiences are revelatory to Dante, and Beatrice is the initial subject of adoration. God has also told him that Beatrice is the vehicle of his salvation.[609] These experiences, as we saw earlier, are taken as an unsought for gift of grace: 'for a moment he had been transfused',[610] '… she has unknowingly communicated to him an experience of *carita*s',[611] and 'the *caritas* which was, by God's will, awakened in him at the smile of Beatrice'.[612] Then Dante has to decide how he will respond to this experience of grace.

For Williams, the story of Dante's love of Beatrice, as recounted in *La Vita Nuova,* is the match that set the late Middle Ages ablaze with love. The first flame began when Dante was nine years old and Beatrice almost nine. After seeing her at a party, Dante said, 'Behold a god more powerful than I who comes to rule over me.… Now has appeared your beatitude'.[613] Nine years later, in the streets of Florence,

> She turned her eyes to that place where I stood in great fear, and in her ineffable courtesy, which today is rewarded in life everlasting, she greeted me with exceeding virtue, such that I then seemed to see all the terms of beatitude.[614]

In another vision in his sleep, immediately following this salutation, Christ came to him with Beatrice asleep in his arms and made her eat Dante's heart. Then she went back to sleep. Presumably this event was a foretelling of her death shortly to come and

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[608] *ORT*, 56.

[609] Alighieri, *Vita Nuova*, 10, 49, 51, 63, 65, 83.

[610] *ORT*, 95.

[611] Ibid., 96.

[612] Ibid., 97.

[613] Alighieri, *Vita Nuova*, 47.

[614] Ibid., 49.

of God's implanting in her His love for Dante.[615] We have no known record of her falling in love with Dante.[616] Her later love for Dante, after her death in Heaven, is motivated by a concern for his spiritual welfare, communicated by St. Lucy from the Virgin Mary.[617] The initial experiences took place over a period of nine years, but Dante further developed from them his long, continuing, and evolving love for her.

3. *Il Convivio*

A few years later, Dante renders in *Il Convivio* a fuller reflection, expanding on what the salutation meant in *La Vita Nuova.* Williams copied part of this developed reflection from *Il Convivio* into his text of *HCD.* Lewis says that these passages, with others in *FOB*, are Williams's 'most systematic statements in prose' concerning romantic love.[618] Dante's theological reanalysis of the Beatrician experiences became part of Williams's understanding of how God can work over a period of time through a relationship of romantic love. We may want to reflect on our own initial romantic experiences before we disregard the salutation, the stupor, and the explanation as a gifted poet's psychological and theological projections. However, I think that both Dante and Williams tend to exaggerate some of the theological consequences of their experiences when they attempted to generalize them. I do not think that Beatrice's beauty can renovate nature, but she can definitely be a vessel of Christ's presence.[619] These claims and other problems are examined at the end of this section, and in sections D. Failures and Dangers of Romantic Love and E. Questions and Problems for Further Discussion.

4. A Little Death

Williams discusses the progression in the romantic relationship. Later, after the salutation experience discussed in subsection 2. *La Vita Nuova*, Dante had another meeting with Beatrice in the streets of Florence, and she snubbed him. He had betrayed

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[615] Aligheirei, *Vita Nuova*, 49–51. In 1290 she died, having only been married for three years.

[616] *ORT*, 93.

[617] Alighieri, *Divine Comedy*, Hell, II.

[618] *AT*, 116. See also *HCD*, 68–71. Williams uses sections 3-8 from the third treatise of Dante Alighieri's *Convivio*, trans. W. Jackson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901). He explains in-depth the possible consequences of the experiences upon the beholder in the light of the pregnancy of grace. See discussion in Chapter IV.C. Experiencing the Image.

[619] *HCD*, 70.

love in some undisclosed fashion. Afterwards, the Lord Love came to him in another vision and told him, 'I am like the center of a circle, to which all the points of the circumference bear the same relation; you however are not'.[620] The Lord Love is Christ. The problem here is that Dante, although experiencing this revelation, is not at the center with Love; he is somewhere on the margin. If we have wronged our neighbor, we have sinned against God and our neighbor; therefore, we are not where we need to be with the Lord of Love.[621]

Dante is lost in sin. He has been unfaithful in some unexplained way to Beatrice, Love, and God. After seeing Beatrice and her pageant at the end of his journey through Purgatory, he repents for this transgression.[622] God's love for Dante in his lostness is the reason for the journey of the *Comedy*: Dante is spiritually lost because he has not followed Love. He is on the margin of love with Beatrice and on the margin of love with God and, as a result, in grave danger. Williams repeatedly refers to the circle of God's will and to Dante's marginal relation to the Lord of Love who is at the center.[623]

Williams refers to Beatrice's snub as 'the second stage on the way'.[624] It is a grieving of the Holy Spirit and an opportunity for a purgation of his love. Dante is not relating s to Beatrice, and Dante's unfaithfulness bring relational and theological consequences. Williams refers to this refusal of salutation as a 'little death'.[625]

5. *The Divine Comedy*

As Williams notes, the *Comedy* changes emphasis: '*The New Life* is about the love of Dante for Beatrice, but the *Comedy* is about the love of Beatrice for Dante'.[626] Indeed, it is even more about God's love for Dante through Beatrice. Williams follows the change in emphasis in Dante's further development of Beatrice as a *theotokos* and the development in Dante's spiritual growth as a result of Dante continuing in their relationship.

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[620] Alighieri, *Vita Nuova*, 65.

[621] If we sin against our neighbor, we have sinned against God. See Matt. 25:31–46.

[622] Alighieri, *Purgatory*, *Divine Comedy*, XXXI. See also discussion in *FOB*, 186.

[623] *FOB*, 24–25. This circle of God's will is further discussed in Chapter VII.

[624] Ibid.

[625] Ibid., 25–26

[626] *ORT*, 98.

The Divine Comedy is the culmination of Dante's work. Williams's interpretation of it in *FOB* is the high point of his theological contribution. In *FOB,* Williams traces and analyzes Dante's long visionary journey. The love that develops from the first experiences of romantic love becomes a way of the soul in Dante's pilgrimage. Later his love blossoms into a beautiful response to God and to Beatrice. As already noted, Von Balthasar agrees that Williams and Dante demonstrate that romantic love under the guidance of the Spirit can be a means of grace. Williams writes, 'Eros is often our salvation from a false agape, as agape is from tyrannical eros'.[627] Enright states, 'Williams does not imply that the romantic way or romantic love can save anyone.… It is simply an instrument, among other instruments, used by God to lead people to Himself; He alone can save'. [628]

We have already examined, in Chapter IV, Beatrice's redemptive roles: as an image of Christ, as a mediatorial pattern, and as a *theotokos*. In the *Comedy,* Beatrice appears only a few times, all of them in a salvific capacity. *La Vita Nuova* initiates an experience of romantic love in flesh and blood as a revelation of God's love as the primary theological theme fully developed in *The Divine Comedy*.[629] The moments of grace, if present, must be followed with attention and built upon with proper structure and boundaries. This theme continues throughout *The Comedy* to the very end. Horne writes,

> The spiritual wonder cannot be communicated without the presence of the material vehicle: the classic instance is the case of Beatrice. Dante starts in The New Life with the glimpse of a girl in the streets of Florence and ends in the closing canto of the Divine Comedy with a vision of the Blessed Trinity; and the two moments are different points of the same experience. The beginning of the revelation is at a particular point in time with an identifiable sensual experience: the salutation of Beatrice leads to the salvation of Dante. Williams takes up this pun and emphasises the connection, thereby attributing to romantic love a value that no other theologian has dared to suggest.[630]

Throughout his lifelong work, Williams matures in his thinking about romantic love. Many times love begins with an experience and develops only into infatuation and, sadly, stays on the circumference of real love. But, if we pay attention to love, we can move by grace towards the center to Him who is real love, and we can begin to become

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[627] *FOB*, 182.

[628] Enright, 'Charles Williams and his Theology of Romantic Love: A Dantean Interpretation', 23.

[629] Ibid,. 28, 123.

[630] Horne, 'Charles Williams and Dante Alighieri', 258–59.

'adult in love'.[631] Williams does not stop with the first fires of 'falling in love', or even the 'in-godding' of man; he goes further. We must finally come to 'exhibit beatitude'.[632] We must come to live in a proper relationship with man and God. The way of heaven can become the way of earth, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven'.[633]

Williams clarifies the full implications of what he is saying: 'It is the business of lovers, as of the visible church, to attain perfection, by being wholly united with their Lord, by "growing" in St. Paul's phrase, into "the stature of the fullness of Christ"'.[634] Love keeps drawing us beyond ourselves to others and to Him, who is Love. Even 'the disappearance of the glory forces man's intellect and will into action'.[635] As we have seen through these various changes in a love relationship, even the loss of earthly love is part of the further development of man's beatitude, in becoming like Christ—in becoming love.

6. Following the Vision

For Williams, the experience of love is also related to a present and a future vision. Man is called to respond to and follow the vision, both in the present and in the future. At first, man is given a temporary glimpse of a person in a glorified state of being, which is a present vision, but with it man is also given a vision of a relational state for the present and a fuller one to come in the future. Williams says that, in love, Beatrice is an actual exhibition of heavenly glory.[636]

This is also a present vision and a prayer expressed weekly by the Church in the 'Collect of Purity': 'Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy Holy Name'.[637] The vision of beatitude is again expressed in the Lord's Prayer: 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.' Looking at the role of love, being 'adult in love' is expected on earth

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[631] *ORT*, 106–07.

[632] *FOB*, 190.

[633] Matt. 6:10.

[634] *ORT*, 33. See also Eph. 4:13.

[635] *TRL*, 116.

[636] *FOB*, 27.

[637] See *The Book of Common Prayer*, The Collect.

as well as in Heaven.[638] These prayers correspond with another aspect of the vision, which relates both to the present on earth and the future in heaven. Williams paraphrases Dante in describing how God puts His will and His love in us: '… If you recall the nature of love … we are in-willed to will, in-loved to love'.[639]

Williams further describes what Dante calls the proper vocation in every relationship formed by God, putting His love in those triumphing in Christ—'imparadise—in-paradises' the mind that has already been 'innamorata—in-amoured'.[640] Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Christ, and St. John spoke of this reality both as a present experience and as a future reality. These descriptions are all predicated on the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God that Dante infers.[641] Man is called to follow this vision into its fullness in the future. If he does not follow the vision, then, as Lewis observes, the relationship to the image becomes idolatrous. Following the vision is the key to whether one is growing or not. Williams refers to Dante's description of men and women who are 'adult in love' and who 'are those who have handed over the self to become another self'.[642]

7. The Dénouement

Dante looked into Beatrice's eyes, those eyes he had wanted to look into for so long, and found another's eyes revealed gazing at him.[643] This experience is the ultimate peak of the interpenetration of the Spirit of God in a person in love with another person. God uses the love that Dante has for Beatrice and makes His appeal to Dante; since Dante continues to respond, the journey goes on. Williams's challenge at the close of *FOB* addresses an important question to all of us, especially as lovers. The beloved can be an incarnate image that leads us to God, but we must continue in love: 'That way is

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[638] *FOB*, 118. Paulo and Francesca were in Dante's Hell because they refused the opportunity to be adult in love and perverted their affections into the lust of adultery.

[639] Ibid., 196. He is quoting from Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, Paradise III, 70–87. See Sayers' notes at the end of the canto p. 78–79.

[640] Ibid., 227. He is quoting from Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, Paradise, XXVIII 3 and XXVII 88.

[641] See Jer. 31:33, Ezek. 36:26ff, and John 14:20; 15:7–11; 17:13, 20–26, and 1 John 4:7–21.

[642] *FOB*, 202. He is quoting from Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, Paradise, VII 60. Williams uses Dante's expression 'adult in love' in *TTLRSS*, 'The Founding of the Company', as a present expectation, 36.

[643] Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, Purgatory, XXXI, 109–23.

not only what the poem is 'about'; it is (according to it) what Love is 'about'. It is what Love is 'up to', and the only question is whether lovers are 'up to' Love'.[644]

At one moment in the *Paradiso*, Dante, while worshiping God, forgets Beatrice, and she laughs. Later, she wants him to look at her, and she is still Beatrice, the Florentine girl, only with Heaven in her. He seemed to see God in her face. Again, as discussed in Chapter IV, Williams makes a beautiful theological analysis of the image of the romantic relationship between Beatrice and Dante: Once her voice had been the salutation, and now he realized it was only the sign of the salutation of love.[645] Beatrice leads Dante to God. Then she smiles at him and turns her face to God. She, like all lovers, should lead the other beyond themselves to Love, to God Himself. Our lives and loves should possess that double relevance in Him.[646]

D. Failures and Dangers of Romantic Love: Hell's Attacks— False Assumptions, Distortions, and Refusals of Love

For Williams, the purpose of romantic love is not about 'getting the woman or man', but about seeing the pattern of God's love, continuing to follow that pattern, and then, through grace, becoming love. We can fail in love in many different ways, and love is easily distorted. Williams mentions many dangers to romantic love.[647]

Williams and Schideler both emphasize that the most serious danger to romantic love is a refusal to love.[648] She says that the refusal to participate fully in the love relationship by refusing to give love, or to receive love, is a perversion of love.[649] That asymmetry can go either way: Some choose only to give and others only to receive.[650] One form the refusal of love takes is the desire not to receive anything from anyone, and Williams describes this perversion in pride in his poem 'Apologue on the Parable of the Wedding Garment'.[651]

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[644] *FOB*, 232.

[645] Ibid., 219. See Chapter IV.C. Experiencing the Image.

[646] Ibid., 215. See also Alighieri, *Purgatory, The Divine Comedy*, XXXI, 136–38; Paradise XXIII, 46ff.

[647] *ORT*, 49f. See sections D and E.

[648] *TRL*, 121–38.

[649] Ibid., 126.

[650] Ibid.,130.

[651] *IOC*, 166–68.

Williams discusses three dangerous assumptions that he calls attacks made by Hell related to the journey of romantic love.[652] He reminds us that the peril of Hell opens up even along the way to Heaven.[653]

The first, of attacks comes through the assumption that the experiences and feelings of falling in love will last forever. But they do not last; they wane. The love may be eternal, but the feelings and experience are temporary and, afterwards, are not any more visible than the earthly life of Christ.[654] These first temporary experiences can lead to marriage, which is a more advanced state of love.[655]

The second type of attack comes through the assumption that this state of love is a personal adornment of the beloved, and that the beloved is a personal possession of the lover:[656]

> The fallen state of man produces a tendency to regard the revelation and the glory as one's own private property.… Love does not belong to lovers but they to it. Idolatry is a desire to retain the glory for oneself, which means that one is not adoring the glory, but only one's own relation to the glory.[657]

The third type of attack develops through the failure to grow in love—no maturation. Love must become a way of life. Man has to go beyond the initial experiences and grow in grace to become the love he has experienced from God through the beloved:

> A kind of Calvinism seizes the emotions; the heart has recognized the attributed perfection and stops there. It feels as if of the elect, and it goes on feeling that till it ceases to feel anything. To be in love must be followed by the will to *be* love,… to be love to all, to be in fact (as the Divine Thing) perfect.… The beloved—person or thing—becomes the Mother of Love; Love is born in the soul.… It has its own Divine nature united with our undivine nature. But that, by definition is the nature of the Kingdom.[658]

Giving in to these dangers develops into worshiping the means, the beloved, and neglecting the reality beyond the image—the Creator.[659] Lewis warns that in romantic

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[652] *HCD*, 78–81.

[653] *ORT*, 52. He is referring to Bunyan's and Dante's works; both describe a way to Hell that begins near the gates of Heaven. Williams's conceptions of Hell is discussed in Chapter VII.

[654] *HCD*, 79.

[655] Ibid.

[656] Ibid., 79–80.

[657] Ibid.

[658] *HCD*, 80–81.

[659] *ORT*, 49–50.

love relationships we can make an idol out of God's gift of the beloved image.[660] Idolizing the object of love and not growing further in becoming love is the same danger that the Apostle John warns about at the end of his first letter.[661] However, no matter how good something or someone is, it or they can never be a substitute for God Himself. One must move forward in love: One cannot stop when one has only begun though this recognition of love is where most romantic stories stop. One must grow in love to be able to give what has been given and to become what one has seen, an imitation of God's love.[662] God's ultimate aim is 'to exhibit beatitude; and that is a proper relationship between men and men and men and God'.[663] Williams agrees with Dante: 'Dante has to become the thing he has seen,… the *caritas* which was, by God's will, awakened in him at the smile of Beatrice'.[664]

E. Questions and Problems for Further Discussion

In *ORT,* Williams focuses primarily on the marital relationship. But as we have seen, he also seeks to extend his conception of romantic love to include any relationship of love and goes on to stretch the conception even further to include a whole heterogeneous range of activities and occupations. These attempted extensions produce difficulties, problems, and confusions even in his view of romantic love itself.

This section examines and explores some of these tensions and problems. First, subsections 1–4 develop an explicit critique of this central part of Williams's work. Second, subsection 5 tries to sketch, briefly, some ways of drawing out and using some of his best insights, avoiding unsupportable generalizations and, in effect, giving up trying to make romantic love cover all of Williams's extensions. Third, subsection 6 looks, briefly, at some possible developments growing from his work in this area. These criticisms and suggestions could occupy a thesis in themselves, so we will only be able to sketch some possibilities.

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[660] *AT*, 117.

[661] 1 John 5:21 says, 'Dear children keep yourselves from idols' (NIV).

[662] Eph. 5:1–2 says, 'Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God'.

[663] *FOB*, 190.

[664] *ORT*, 96–97.

1. Dante's and Williams's Complicated Romantic Relationships

We begin here with some brief observations of the complexities and diversity of the relationships in Dante's and Williams's lives. These observations already begin to reveal that what these two men write about romantic love is, in many ways, out of kilter with their own lives and relationships. It also becomes evident that, in light of the complexities of their own lives, their descriptions of romantic love seemed oversimplified.

Dante wrote for several decades about a romantic relationship with a woman to whom he was not married. Further, Beatrice was never in a romantic relationship with Dante. He loved and idealized her, but she did not reciprocate. Dante did not have any ordinary developed relationship with Beatrice. She was the impetus for his salvation, and her later envisioned concern for him was salvific. He then generalized theologically about the nature of that relationship. In a vision, he journeyed through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven, a journey prompted by Beatrice. But such a journey is not the normal pattern for romantic relationships.

Further, Dante married Gemma Donati, with whom he had several children, but he does not say anything about her helping him spiritually. Beatrice Portinari married Simone dei Bardi and died three years later at the age of twenty-four. Because of Dante's political affiliations, he was exiled from Florence, and his marriage suffered many long separations. Dante and his wife were apart during the most fruitful years of his life, and there is no record of any supportive relationship between them. In his writings, Dante also refers to a 'Lady at the Window'.[665] Whether there was a real woman or whether she personifies philosophy is a debatable issue for Dante scholars.[666] However, he does repent, at the end of *Purgatory,* about some unmentioned unfaithfulness.[667]

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[665] See *Sayers*, Introduction to *Hell,* vol. 1 of *The Divine Comedy*, 38–43. She is mentioned at the end of *La Vita Nuova* and discussed in *Il Convivio*. See also Williams's discussion in *FOB*, 52ff.

[666] See P. Dronke, *Dante's Second Love: The Originality and the Contexts of the Convivio*, The Barlow Dante Lectures, University College London, November 1–2, 1995, Occasional Papers, no. 2, The Society for Italian Studies. *Sayers* has a different opinion, see, Introduction, *Hell, The Divine Comedy,* 26–27, and Dorothy Sayers, Introduction to *Purgatory*, vol. 3 of *The Divine Comedy* (London: Penguin Books, 1955), 43.

[667] Alighieri, *Purgatory*, *Divine Comedy*, XXX, 48; XXXI, 60ff.

Williams considers his wife, Florence Conway (whom he called Michal and together they had a son), an image of Christ and a vice-gerent of Salvation.[668] He dedicated *HCD* to her, writing, 'To Michal by whom I began to study the doctrine of glory'. But he also had several inappropriate emotional, though nonsexual, relationships with other women. His relationship with Lois Lang-Sims and his relationship with Phyllis Jones has caused significant criticism of his life and work. Some critics see Phyllis Jones similar to Dante's woman at the window.[669] Because of Williams's behavior with these women, he opened the door for some critics to question, rightly so, his ethics, his commitment as a married Christian man, and his view of romantic love.[670] These issues are discussed further in Appendix C.

2. Tensions and Problems with Romantic Love and Other Relationships of Love

As we have already noted, in *ORT,* Williams stretches his views to cover his relationships far beyond what are normally thought of as romantic relationships. We will examine these attempted extensions in two stages in this subsection and in subsection 4.

First, he tries to include, in his work on romantic love, other relationships of love: those linking parents and children, siblings and other family members, friends, and given his Christian background and his writings, we must surely include neighbors, strangers, aliens, and even enemies.[671] In *The Forgiveness of Sins*, he examines in-depth the complexities of loving your enemies. In 1942, at the height of the war, he argues that Christians in Great Britain must come to love and forgive Germans. In *ORT*, he also includes virginal love as a type of romantic love though he says that its vocation is celibate and that it is usually discussed as a part of mystical theology.[672]

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[668] Williams called her Michal because she made fun of him reciting poetry out loud in public. See *CWX*, 33.

[669] C. Huttar, 'Arms and the Man', 319–36. Huttar uses the analogy of the 'woman at the window' to suggest that because Williams was having a midlife crisis, unresolved marital problems, and separation from his wife because of work, domesticity blurred the romantic vision. Phyllis Jones became the other woman until she cut it off, and Williams regained some renewed connection to his wife. Williams's response to the second image or the lady at the window is that it cannot be denied but that it can exist without concupiscence.

[670] See T. Howard, 'Shadows of Ecstasy', 73–94. See also R. T. Davies, 'Charles Williams and Romantic Experience', *Etudes Anglaises,* October-December 1955, 294–95; see also *FOB*, 49.

[671] *ORT*, 14, 70, and *HCD*, 81.

[672] *ORT*, 67.

These attempted extensions create tensions and problems because they do not fit the paradigm of a romantic relationship. We all have other loves, relationships, and activities that take us in different directions though these other loves do not necessarily have to be in conflict or competition with one another. One may argue that the nature of love is the same in all these relationships but the expressions of it are different in its various dimensions and contexts. Williams does not even try to classify, compare, or contrast the loves, as Lewis does in *The Four Loves*. His extensions stretch the conception of romantic love beyond its properly intelligible limits. His claims will have to be explored critically; we will do this in stages, examining some parts of the problem.

3. Problems with the Paradigm of Romantic Love

We must assess critically the paradigm for romantic love. It is not necessarily marriage, according to Dante and Williams. We will also research other relationships of love that can be considered romantic. If other relationships are considered part of the romantic paradigm, we must explore the meaning of their differing disciplines and boundaries. Some specific difficulties and differences between cases and the difficulty and impossibility of finding any simple paradigm becomes even more evident if we consider some further critical points and questions:

1. The experiences of 'falling in love' and 'stupor' do not occur even in all contexts of romantic love. Romantic love does not necessarily begin with, or even include, a 'stupor' experience. Even some young lovers, or married couples, have never experienced a 'stupor'.

2. Other relationships of love do not normally involve such experiences. However, something like a 'stupor' of *agape* can occur, for instance, in moments of intense passion about others and their needs.

3. Not all cases of what are called by some people, sometimes, 'falling in love' do turn out to be cases of real love, nor are they cases of *agape*, nor do they all involve a 'stupor'.

4. 'Falling in love' does not seem to be as universal or as comprehensive as Williams takes it to be.

5. Falling in love', or more generally, 'romantic love', does not seem to be an appropriate description to cover many instances of self-denying love, nor of being your

brother's keeper, nor when an act of substitution, or as Williams calls it, *Pietas*, is the demonstrated mode of love.

6. Williams's Sybilline characters do not demonstrate the 'stupor' or 'falling in love'.

4. Tensions and Problems Arising in the Attempt to Extend the Conception of Romantic Love to Activities, Occupations, and 'Great Images'

Williams seeks to extend the conception of romantic love even beyond personal relationships.[673] He wants, for example, to take in various occupations, other activities, and what he calls 'great images'. These extensions are a further layer of complexity, and they raise yet another group of problems and they create more tension in the paradigm. Heath-Stubbs notes, from a lecture he heard Williams deliver at Oxford in 1943, that Williams distinguishes five principal modes of the romantic experience.[674] In this lecture, Williams speaks of these modes as great images of the romantic experience: the religious experience, the image of a woman, the image of nature, the image of the city, and the experience of great art.[675] How very diverse these images are, and the first one and the last one he describes not as images, but as experiences, which is also the general term he uses for all of them in his lecture. Surely he is reaching out for a conception broader than romantic love.

Here is another example from *ORT,* early in his career, confusing the paradigm of romantic love and he gives us a clue as to the reason for his extension—moving beyond oneself:

> The term 'romantic love' has been used throughout to mean sexual love; but there are other manifestations of it—learning, art, sport, nature, politics, stamp-collecting. Of these we are generally willing to admit that love of learning, art, nature, perhaps politics, has something divine about it. We are not so willing to admit football or stamp-collecting. If the astronomer is recognized as partaking in the Morning Joy with which the redeemed contemplate God in His Creation, may not the stamp-collector share it like-wise? Any occupation exercising itself with passion, with self-oblivion, with devotion, towards an end other than itself is a gateway to divine things.[676]

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[673] *ORT*, 17.

[674] Heath-Stubbs, *Charles Williams*, 18–19.

[675] Ibid., 18–19.

[676] *ORT*, 70.

But such a passage pushes the conception of romantic love to a breaking point. Despite its opening claims, these are not manifestations of romantic love. One wonders if Williams is reaching towards a different and diverse conception with a broader framework. But this conception would remain to be suggested and determined. We cannot carry the search much further here, but we can make a few suggestions.

5. Two General Themes: Moving Beyond Ourselves to a Possible Encounter with God

Kierkegaard writes,

> The imagination is what providence uses in order to get men into reality, into existence, to get them far enough out, or in, or down in existence. And when imagination has helped them as far out as they are meant to go—that is where reality, properly speaking, begins. Johannes V. Muller says that there are two great powers, around which everything revolves: ideas and women. That is quite true, and is intimately connected with what I have said about the importance of the imagination: women, or ideas, are what tempt a man out into existence. Naturally there is this great difference, that among thousands who run after a skirt there is not always one who is moved by ideas.[677]

Kierkegaard's quote illustrates a common thread in both Williams's and Dante's personal lives, and in their works. They were both captivated by the idea of romantic love and its integration with Salvation. They were also both helped by women and ideas in their journeys with God. Their devotion to this idea and to the women they loved got them out into reality, but they left many unanswered questions. As we have already mentioned, both their writings and their personal lives present us with a variety of difficulties to explore in relation to romantic love.

Williams's explanations and analysis of the romantic love between Dante and Beatrice is a marvelous piece of theological anthropology. And he does show that parts of the analysis can be extended to many different, but relatable, cases. However, the problems and tensions arise when he attempts to stretch elements of the analysis too simply and generally to many types of cases that seem too different. Here, to do a more adequate job, each would need its own specific treatment.

However, one could draw out from this diverse complex of different cases some characteristics, a few themes, and some principles that run through all of them and are of special importance to Williams.

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[677] S. Kierkegaard, *The Journals of Kierkegaard 1834-1854*, ed. and trans. Alexander Dru (London: Collins/Fontana Books, 1960), 243–44.

First, for Williams, the romantic experience and relationship are vehicles to draw a person beyond himself or herself. Both in and through this experience and relationship, the romantic couple may at the same time come to open their hearts to God. The experience and 'way' can then become catalytic for redemptive purposes and a journeyed 'way' of the soul. Such cases can then be included under two captions: getting a person out beyond himself and opening a person to God and to the beginning of a life with God.

But we can go further with these themes and principles. The first of them—of getting out, or being drawn out, beyond oneself—can be extended from love relationships between a man and a woman to other relationships and even to other activities and occupations. But Williams goes even further. He also assumes that in this process God is all the while acting on man's behalf: The heart of man reaches out beyond him without his full comprehension of what he is doing and what is happening to him, but he is, in fact, getting out beyond himself with God's help. So any time a person gets out beyond himself or herself, God has an opportunity to reach him or her, sometimes through relationships but sometimes in other ways. The second principal theme is, thus, in Williams's thinking, connected with and dependent on the first principle.

Thus, in Williams's broadest picture, what he calls romantic love includes at least these two major features: whatever it takes to get one out beyond oneself and whatever can draw one towards God. These two factors seem to be at least two general themes and principles that remain even when we have taken into account the many differences among the types of cases included in Williams's widest extensions. So we have located at least two common threads running through Williams's most extended view of romantic love. Others may be there and could be drawn out in other ways.

However, as we have seen, many deep differences are to be accounted for and analyzed. Many activities, occupations, and great images, do not carry a sense of *theotokos* or *pietas*, and they cannot carry the image of God except in a tenuous sense. The analysis of these different types of cases would then have to go beyond Williams's work even if it might begin there.

6. Some Dimensions for Further Analysis of Relationships, Activities, and Occupations: Disciplines, Boundaries, and Training in Love

Each of the various types of love relationships—marital, parental, sibling, friendship—and the various types of occupations require their own kinds of sensitivities, disciplines and skills, training in these commitments, trust, freedoms, and responsibilities. Each relationship or activity also has boundaries that specifically appertain to the nature of the relationship or activity in order to maintain its proper functions. Relationships and occupations also normally require time, in different ways, such as time to know someone well or time to grow in the appropriate disciplines.

Williams describes many of the responses to different kinds of love, in detail, especially in his novels and poetry. And in other writings he also deals with responses to love in a more general fashion.[678] We all need training and discipline in the 'ways' of love, but these, too, vary from case to case. As already mentioned, he does not categorize and examine the different kinds of love relationships as Lewis does in *The Four Loves.* He does not, for instance, clarify how spousal love is different from the love of friends nor how all these relationships are different from work-related relationships. Nor does he explore the role of love in occupations (except for his friends who were soldiers) or the variety of responsibilities in love these occupations entail. He does not take up further cases such as the commitments and opportunities for the benefit of their fellow man, of for example: politicians, artists—and a myriad of others.

War is another case to which Williams gives some sustained attention. In *The Forgiveness of Sins*, he discusses the relationships of the state to its citizens and to the citizens of other states. He examines the need in such relationships for forgiveness for the individuals involved, the Christian's responsibility for the justice of others, and the trust in Christ for one's own justice. Williams calls forgiveness 'the renewal of love'.[679] Forgiveness comes to be seen as the weight of glory, which is the carrying of the cross for others.[680]

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[678] See *ORT*, Chapters II-IV; *HCD*, Chapters V-VII; see also Williams's notes: 'The Companions of the Coinherence', MS 77–78, Wade Center; Hefling, *Charles Williams*, 149–50; *CWX*, 174. For a full discussion see Appendix E.

[679] *HCD*, 166.

[680] Ibid., 200.

CHAPTER VI
THE COINHERENCE IN REALITY AND IN LIFE

> Our ultimate goal is to share in the life of that city transfigured, in the City of God. In the Church, which is the sacrament of that City, we rehearse the life that will be all the vitality of the final City by learning to bear one another's burdens. Charles Williams is the mystic of this. It is no mere social Gospel we have to deal with, but a vision of co-inherence that goes right back through the substitutionary sacrifice of the Atonement into the heart of the Holy Trinity.
> —A. Nichols

A. Introduction

One purpose in this chapter is to explore and understand what Williams means by, and how he uses, the term coinherence. This term permeates his work and forms around it a complexity of theological themes and understandings. One primary use of the term is in explaining his understanding of the way man is supposed to be in relation to God and to his fellow man—a reflection of Trinitarian life. Looking more broadly, coinherence is Williams's poetic vision of a pattern extending what systematic theologians call perichoresis or circumincession. Williams considers this pattern not only in the Divine life but also analogously in the life of man and in the whole of Creation.

Williams presents many diverse examples of coinherence in many different circumstances: in the Trinity, in the Incarnation of Christ, in the Church, in the sacrament of Infant Baptism and in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, in the exercise of praying for others and in carrying their burdens spiritually, in the sexual process and childbearing, in the economics and labors of everyday life, in the responsibility of being our brother's keeper, and communally in the earthly city of man, and in the City of God. However, listing of these items gives no indication of the sheer complexity of vision and thinking as he brings them together. And Williams does not give a neat, orderly exposition of these multiple interrelating cases of coinherence; let us consider this point more fully.

When investigating Williams's understanding and use of the idea of coinherence, a text such as this one faces two kinds or levels of difficulties. First, the reality that Williams envisions here is, as already indicated, all embracing, and it is very diverse and complex. For Williams, coinherence is a vast aspect of all reality, a multiple

complexity of connectedness in God and in Creation. Thereby, all things have an order together in connectivity, interpenetrating each other. At the theological center, Williams sees that the fundamental design pattern in God and Creation resonates in all the different parts and relations of reality, beginning with the pattern or connectivity of the Trinity and the Incarnation of Christ and spreading throughout Creation. Williams wishes to capture and understand, as far as possible, this vision of the design pattern.

But how is he, and how are we, to present all of this in a text? In practice we cannot take it in as a whole. So we are forced to focus on the different parts and connections, constantly shifting our attention so as to bring out both the nature of the pattern and Williams's exposition of it.

Second, then, we have to deal with the difficulty of Williams's scattered presentations of this complex structure and its themes and with the unique character of his theological writings (as discussed in Chapter II). Williams does not treat these realities and themes in a full way in one place. Instead, his comments and insights are scattered across many passages in different works. He also does not give a sufficient or systematic order to his exposition of these examples and their patterned relationship, which he so vividly sees. We will not attempt, then, to impose any highly systematized order on his vision. In the next section, we will sketch out something of his whole vision of coinherence, and then we will consider the linked and central ideas in which he brings together the closely connected themes: exchange, substitution, and coinherence.

Some might try to define these terms as a contribution to bringing some order and clarity, but Williams himself does not do this. This is his visionary poetic impressionistic strength and his unsystematic weakness. Often he runs these terms together without clear demarcations. He mentions their differences but does not keep them clearly or consistently distinct. Thus, here, too, we encounter the two basic difficulties: the complex and varied spread of these ideas throughout his work and the unsystematic character of his presentations of them.

Let us consider these difficulties a little further. It is hard to separate the ideas of exchange, substitution, and coinherence because both the ideas and their realities intertwine, and on many occasions interpenetrate one another, depending on the nature of the relationships in which they manifest. Because of the intertwined nature of these three ideas, even Williams admits the difficulty of trying to separate them for

discussion.[681] For Williams, exchange, substitution, and coinherence function to produce and sustain life both supernaturally and naturally. He thinks that understanding them in the natural world could help better comprehend in some sense their connectivity to the nature of God's love.

For him the original source of these three realities—exchange, substitution, and coinherence—is the Trinity. They are, secondly, manifested in the Incarnation and, thirdly, in the Body of Christ and, to a lesser degree, in the natural life of man. He wants then, further, to demonstrate that whether we are aware of it or not, we all participate in and benefit from the natural exchanges, substitutions, and resulting coinherence. These realities are part of the economics of life, whether natural or supernatural. This is the only way man can live.

Thus, for Williams, exchange, substitution, and coinherence are a part of being a person. The coinherence of God in Christ is the superstructure for the coinherence of the iconic and image-bearing nature of man—the *imago dei.* They are also part of what is meant when we speak of love. Williams proposes that these themes are at the root of theological anthropology:

> If this principle of exchange, substitution, and co-inherence (inhering in each other) is at all true, then it is true of the whole nature of man. If it is true, then we depend on it altogether—not as a lessening of individuality or moral duty but as the very fundamental principle of all individuality and of all moral duty.[682]

Evelyn Underhill says that Williams sought to answer Eliot's question, 'What is Man?' with the word coinherence, which she says is the deepest secret of man's life.[683]

The two following sections discuss each of these terms, with Williams's illustrations, so that they can be distinguished from one another without, for the reasons given, attempting formal definitions. We must also show, as best we can, how he sees them working together as a whole without imposing a systematic order on them. Sister Mary Anthony Weing captures much of Williams's intent:

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[681] *IOC*, 150.

[682] Ibid., 150–51.

[683] E. Underhill, 'Poet-Prophets', *Time and Tide*, November 4, 1939, a review of Eliot's *The Idea of a Christian Society* and Williams's *DOD*, Wade Center. See also *Time and Tide*, another review of *DOD*, November 18, 1939, Wade Center: 'A brilliant historical revelation of the continuous regenerative activity of Love through "co-inherence"—the fullest connotation of the dogma of the Incarnation'. Other reviews are not so positive, especially when the reviewers expected the historical standard fare. See M. Relton, 'Review of *DOD*', *The Church of England Newspaper* November 17, 1939, Wade Center; 'Review of *DOD'*, *Manchester Guardian* November 21, 1939, Wade Center.

> Exchange, complementarity, correspondence, bearing one another's burdens, substitution, co-inherence—the idea that each of these terms approaches is not just a recurrent theme or an underlying principle, but a total context in which all of Charles Williams' writings have their real significance. He comes at the notion from all sorts of angles, stressing its 'naturalness' in preparation for claiming it as a means of actualizing the articles of the Apostles' Creed that deal most literally with human relationships and with the divine reality they are analogues for: the communion of saints and the forgiveness of sins.[684]

Two other sections discuss *DOD* and The City, taking different approaches to parts of this area of his work.

B. Coinherence—'The Pattern of the Glory'

This research seeks to build up the overall vision of the pattern of coinherence by moving from one locus to another while also trying to bring out and show the many connections between them.

1. The Trinity

Williams develops his primary understanding of the patterns of coinherence from his study of the patristic discussions concerning the nature of the Divine Persons interpenetrating each other in the Trinity.[685] Patristic theologians have used the term 'coinherence' for centuries in explaining the perichoretic nature of the Godhead.[686] Williams would agree with T. F. Torrance 'that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity constitutes the fundamental grammar of Christian Theology'.[687] Central to that grammar is coinherence. He understood the structure of coinherence (perichoresis or circumincession) to involve the interdependency and interpenetration of persons within the Trinity. And from the Athanasian Creed, he learned that each person of the Trinity exists coinherently with the other two persons of the Trinity without confounding the

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[684] M. Weing, 'Exchange, Complementarity, Co-inherence: Aspects of Community in Charles Williams', *Mythlore* 7, no. 2, iss. 24 (1980): 27.

[685] Williams refers to G. L. Prestige's *God in Patristic Thought*, especially Chapter XIV 'Coinherence'; see *FOB*, 92. Williams's uncle Charles Wall was a scholar and well versed in patristic studies; he would have been of some help in directing Williams. See Lindop, 3.

[686] T. F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 10, 12, 15, 32-34, 92, 97, 117–18, 121, 135, 140–41. See also Prestige, 282–301. And 1950 edition, xxix, 168f, 188f.

[687] Ibid., 4.

persons nor dividing or confusing the substance: being coequal, coeternal, and consubstantial.

2. The Analogical Coinherence of Creation: 'Vestigium Quoddam'

A major part of Williams's fundamental metaphysical-theological understanding of coinherence is that if God in His own nature is coinherent, then the Creation must also represent in some sense and to some degree a derived coinherence. Thus, Creation is by design coinherent. We do not have the time and space to discuss this fully except to say that life is by nature coinherent and man is exceptionally coinherent. This has already been mentioned in Chapter IV, and the concept is important for Williams's understanding of the coinherent nature of the world (especially man). Borrowing again from Dante, he extends and applies the usage of coinherence analogically to certain aspects of creation, the natural order, and of regeneration, as analogues to the coinherence of God:

> But there is another possibility of likeness to the divine unity,… which consists in a likeness to the manner by which it exists. That manner is said to be by the 'co-inherence' of the Divine Persons in each other, and it has been held that the unity of mankind consists in an analogical co-inherence of man with each other; so that the great sentence which Dante here quotes: 'Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostrum', has this particular significance. He adds that we may say 'ad similitudinem' of anything, since the whole universe is 'vestigium quoddam', a certain footprint of the divine goodness … and it is with the image of the coinherent Godhead which is in mankind that we have to deal.[688]

For Williams, the way man naturally lives is at least partly an analogous icon of the coinherent nature of God. The remainder of the chapter explores the development and the extensions of coinherence in the Incarnation, the Church, the unborn child living within its mother, the nature of man's interdependence on his fellow man, the exchange of labors in economics, and the City of God and Man.

3. The Incarnation of Christ

Chapter III has already discussed Williams's great interest in the humanity of Christ as expressed in one line from the Athanasian Creed: 'not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh: but by taking of the Manhood into God'. Williams thinks that more

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[688] *FOB*, 92–93. Williams is referring to Dante's *De Monarchia* I, 8. See *Dante: Monarchy*, ed. by Prue Shaw (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), 13.

emphasis should be placed on the humanity of Christ because His Divinity was already infinitely studied and discussed, and he believed that the Church had not emphasized and studied the nature of His humanity in sufficient depth. Williams is particularly interested in the meaning of the preposition *in* and the *in-ness* of Christ's phrase, 'I am in the Father, and the Father is in me'.[689] For Williams, this phrase is a key to understanding the coinherent nature of God and of Redemption. For him, Christ being coinherent 'in the flesh' with other members of the Trinity serves not only as a way to know the coinherent nature of God but also serves as the way to know the redeemed coinherent iconic nature of man functioning as the *Imago Dei.* The semiotic nature of the Incarnation is the archetype for the Body of Christ.[690]

4. Coinherence and Pneumatology

The Incarnation is followed by Pentecost. He came down from heaven as 'The Holy Thing' coinherent as God and man and then ascends. A few days later, the Holy Spirit descends at Pentecost and tabernacles co-inherently in the Body of Christ. This will be discussed further, for it is central to *DOD*.

5. The Coinherent Relationship between God and Man in Redemption

Williams borrows Dante's terms 'in-godding' and 'in-othering' throughout his works to describe part of the process of salvation as the coinherent union of human nature with God's Divine nature.[691] For Williams, the restoration of the person into the coinherence with God is Salvation, an aspect of the restoration of the *Imago Dei,* what theology calls regeneration, and the beginning of the process of beatification.[692]

Williams shows how God and man are coinherently brought together through forgiveness.[693] He elaborates that the fellowship of the supernatural coinherence of God is extended to man in grace because of the coinherence of Christ with the Father:

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[689] John 14:10. This statement is Jesus' answer to Philip's question in the previous verse, and Williams used it as his introduction to *ORT*. He also refers to the preposition *in* in John 17:20–26, see *IOC*, 149.

[690] This focus was discussed at length in Chapter IV.

[691] *FOB*, 16, 92, 190, 223. See Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, Paradise IV, 28.

[692] *HCD*, 132–33. See also *FOB*, 92.

[693] Ibid.

> The doctrine of the Christian Church has declared that the mystery of the Christian religion is a doctrine of co-inherence and substitution. The Divine Word co-inheres in God the Father (as the Father in Him and the Spirit in Both), but also He has substituted His Manhood for ours in the secrets of the Incarnation and Atonement. The principle of the Passion is that He gave His life 'for'—that is, instead of and on behalf of—ours. In that sense He lives in us and we in Him, He and we co-inhere. 'I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me' said St. Paul.…[694]

In this quote Williams focuses on coinherence as fundamental to a regenerate state of being: a state of redemption, the coinherence of God in man, made actual by Divine grace. He cites, '"He in us and we in him", as partly interpreting this meaning'.[695] As previously described, a person sometimes and in some sense is contained within another person, a reality found in different contexts (e.g., the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Church, childbearing, and in the economics and exchanged labors of fellow man). Our lives are very much wrapped up in the lives of others.[696] Coinherence is thus at the center of the nature of God, Christ, the Church, and man. For Williams, being in another and another in us is the nature of life and love within the Trinity, demonstrated through the Incarnation. By God's design, being in another and another in us is also the nature of the life and love between God and man in the Church and also naturally between man and his fellow man.[697] Christ prayed, '… that they may all be one. As you Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me'.[698]

Williams mentions several times that a young unknown woman awaiting martyrdom demonstrated the reality of the coinherence of Christ that exists between God and an individual believer:

> She was Carthaginian; she lay in prison; there she bore a child. In her pain she screamed. The jailors asked her how, if she shrieked *at that*, she expected to endure death by the beasts. She said: 'Now *I* suffer what *I* suffer; then another

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[694] *IOC*, 152.

[695] *DOD*, 10. John 17:21. He also used John 14:9, which leads into the coinherence of the Incarnation, in *ORT*'s Prologue. The next verse says, 'Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?'

[696] *IOC*, 149.

[697] *DOD*, Coinherence in the Trinity 39, 52; in and through Christ 10, 28, 62, 69, 87, 103, 162, 217, 235; in the faithful/the Church 37, 46, 55, 87, 106, 117, 138, 163, 174,177; natural 69, 131–32, 142, 162, 234.

[698] John 17:21.

> will be in me who will suffer what I suffer for him'. In that, Felicitas took her place for ever among the great African doctors of the Universal Church.[699]

For Williams, Felicitas's cry epitomizes what is meant by Christian co-inherence and reaches more deeply into the mystery of creation and redemption than millions of words uttered by thousands of others.[700] Clement of Alexandria spoke of Felicitas's cry as more piercing than the philosopher's doctrine.[701] Her words clarify Williams's understanding of exchange, substituted-love, and the resulting coinherence—the Church.

6. The Church and Coinherence

The coinherence of the Church is a union of God and man and man with man without either losing individual identity or nature. This double union of God with man and man with man is a unity in community and a community in unity. Williams emphasizes that coinherence is an expression of our lives in the life of Christ and His in ours, and that this union is at the heart of the Church:

> Certainly the great Christian doctrine applied first to the 'household of faith'. Our Lord promised to the members of His Church a particular and intense union with each other through Himself. He defined that union as being of the same nature as that which He had with His Father. The later definitions of the inspired Church went farther; they existed co-inherently—that is, that the Son existed in the Father and that the Father existed in the Son. The exact meaning of the preposition there may be obscure. But no other word could satisfy the intellect of the Church. The same preposition was used to define our Lord's relations with his Church: 'we in him and he in us'. It was in this sense that the Church itself in-lived its children: 'we are members of one of another'.[702]

Williams always places an importance on the Church functioning as a living image, being at the same time the Body of Christ it is also itself (men and women) and not Christ.[703] The coinherence of God and the Church, as presented in *DOD*, will be further discussed in a later section.

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[699] *DOD*, 28.

[700] *STCW*, 193.

[701] *DOD*, 37.

[702] *IOC*, 149.

[703] The Church also embodies Williams's aphorism, 'This also is Thou, neither is this thou'.

7. The Sacraments

Nichols says that Williams's idea of coinherence is demonstrated in the Christological doctrines of the Incarnation, Atonement, and Eucharist.[704] The great coinherence of the Incarnation and Atonement occurs in and through the actual physical Body of Jesus Christ.[705] It is memorialized, and mediated, through the Eucharist to be actualized in the praxis of the Church. Williams emphasizes that the Eucharist accentuates that salvation is communicated through matter.[706] The elements are still bread and wine, which *re-present* more than their material reality. Horne says about Williams, 'He chooses to describe the mystery in his own terms of "image" and "coinherence"'.[707]

In the same discussion, Williams connects and mixes the supernatural coinherence of the Church in the Sacrament of Infant Baptism with the natural analogous coinherence of the child within its mother's body. Shortly after the child's birth, he or she is baptized into the body in the three names of the persons of the Trinity. At the end of *DOD,* Williams enlarges upon the Sacrament of Infant Baptism to demonstrate the nature and praxis of coinherence both natural and supernatural.[708] The baptized child is welcomed into the largesse of the Church universal, both triumphant and militant, whose members are companions together in the coinherence within the Body of Christ. In this and other ways, the coinherence of Spirit and flesh in Christ and in believers is critical to orthodoxy and to understanding Williams's work.[709]

8. The Coinherence of Man's Interdependency upon Man

Whether redeemed or not, man is by nature inter-dependent upon his fellow man. This natural coinherence is manifested and held together in a multitude of exchanges of labors and substitutions that go on daily throughout the world, in economic commerce. The exchange of money or goods is an observable and verifiable action of coinherence. Someone pays another for merchandise or services while another

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[704] Nichols, *Spirituality*, 104.

[705] Col. 1:22.

[706] *DOD*, 114.

[707] Horne, 'Dove Descending', 5.

[708] *DOD*, 234–35.

[709] W. H. Auden, 'The Co-Inherence', *The National Review* November 5, 1990: 130–34.

carries out whatever work needs to be done. These examples of exchange and substitution will be more fully discussed in the next section.

A further product is sometimes, in some cases, a mysterious shared bond between the one who has accepted the burden and the one who has given it up. Some terms that describe specific coinherent roles of people in various cases are: buyer, seller, purchaser, consumer, patient, client, partner. Sometimes the people who make the exchange are united with the people who receive the exchange and carry the burden or do the labor. This union may produce a fuller coinherence between the people involved, and as the nature of the relationship becomes more intimate, the coinherence becomes more developed. Moving from a natural economic exchange of external burden bearing for another to the internal sexual process of natural life and childbearing, and to participation and union with God, the nature of the coinherence has become more intimate and interpenetrating.

The processes that Williams discusses, as building up and developing coinherence—exchange and substitution—need to be examined further to determine what he means by these terms. He believed that the principal pattern of God's nature and the world was anchored in these three realities. His understanding of love was also partly built upon these themes. He extended his understanding of these three themes into examples from everyday life, such as, the economy, the sexual process resulting in childbirth, the city, the creeds, and liturgies of the church. Williams also uses the term *coinherence* to explain his thoughts on the City of God and the earthly city of man.

9. The Coinherence of the Child within Its Mother

Man cannot exist without another who is like him but also different. In becoming one flesh, man and woman do not lose their individual identities, but their natural giving and receiving of each other in trust is iconic. As already mentioned, Pope John Paul II says that the sexual act in marriage is the primordial natural sacrament.[710] As a result of the natural sexual exchange between a man and a woman, each gives to the other; however, the woman carries the burden of life—the child lives from and coinheres within its mother. All human life comes through the body of a woman. Naturally, the child lives and comes through the body of its physical mother. The child coinhering within its mother is Williams's most repeated example of natural

[710] *TOB*, 202–04.

coinherence. This process of birth is later discussed at length because it also includes the developing nature of coinherence through the acts and processes of exchange and substitution.

10. Coinherence and a Woman's Body

Williams analogously links the coinherence of Christ and His Body with the iconic natural coinherence of a mother and the child within her. For him, the body and image of a woman is also a more general pedagogical vessel for natural and supernatural life. Her body is the place of coinherence. Williams's most developed example explaining the nature of coinherence is Dante's Beatrice. The other major God-bearing images of coinherence are the Virgin Mary as the earthly archetype and Christ as the heavenly archetype.[711] He thinks that the body of a woman is both *anthropotokos* and, as the mother of the Church, *theotokos*, and both of these functions are to be considered aspects of coinherence.[712] Persons are created in the image of God, so they have a capacity, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to reflect certain aspects of Christ's coinherent nature. But women have special roles in this iconic aspect.

11. Good Works[713]

> Williams quotes from the prayer after the communion ritual:
>
> O heavenly Father, so assist us with thy Grace, that we may continue in that Holy fellowship, and do all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in; through Jesus Christ our Lord.…[714]

He goes on to say,

> The 'good works which thou hast prepared for us to walk in' are those that belong to 'that holy fellowship'; they are those peculiarly of exchange and of substitution.… A little carrying of the burden, a little allowing our burden to be carried; a work as slow, as quiet, even as dull as by agreement to take up or give up a worry or a pain—a compact of substitution between friends—this is the beginning of the practice. [715]

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[711] D. Sayers, 'Dante and Charles Williams', in *Christian Letters to a Post-Christian World: A Selection of Essays* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969), 165.

[712] *IOC*, 110–13.

[713] *DOD*, 154.

[714] Ibid.

[715] Ibid.

Williams further emphasizes that coinherence is also a fellowship between man and God. Throughout his works, Williams repeatedly refers to man's responsibility to be his brother's keeper and draws out what that idea implies for relationships that involve constant acts of exchange and substitution.[716] He believes that those good acts (vicarious acts of love) done for another are part of the pattern of coinherence.[717] This is reflected in St. Anthony's line, 'Your life and death are with your neighbor!'[718] Williams reminds his readers that they are not members of a club or a society but 'members one of another', *membra* in one body.[719] We must help, share, carry, and participate in bearing others' burdens in our own soul and body, as others carry our burdens. He recommends that this bearing of other's burdens be carried out not only interiorly as in our private prayers but also exteriorly by little compacts of substitution and exchange for others, unannounced, without a lot of noise.[720] These small vicarious acts of *pietas* are the means in ordinary life of the great coinherent principle of a sacramental life lived for others:

> Our natural life begins by being borne in another; our mothers have to carry us. This is not (so far as we know) by our own will. The Christian Church demands that we shall carry out that principle everywhere by our will—with our friends and with our neighbors, whether we like our neighbors or not.[721]

The carrying of the burden in our body and soul is a mystery fulfilling the scriptural mandate, 'Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ'.[722] Williams says 'to consider how we live *from* others may be even more profitable at times than to consider how we should live *for* others'.[723] Man will be held accountable by how well he manages those responsibilities.[724] Thus, we are living for another and from another as well as in another.

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[716] See Chapter II. Substituted Love.

[717] *HCD*, 24–25, 82–83.

[718] *DOD*, 46.

[719] *IOC*, 151.

[720] These are the many small daily acts that we might do for others (acts of love) without applause. See the section on The Covenant of Coinherence in Appendix E about Williams' Order of Coinherence, which he started in 1939.

[721] *IOC*, 152–53.

[722] Gal. 6:2.

[723] *IOC*, 107.

[724] Gen. 9:5.

The sacramental pattern of life may be hidden, but it is there. God by His Spirit initiates it in and through our lives for others, from others, and with others. Another assists us as we assist another. The sacral pattern may be a part of what is meant by, 'I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is the church'.[725] This adds a deeper dimension to our sharing in the ministry of reconciliation, as God makes his appeal through us.[726] This pattern also touches on the implied coinherent reality between God and man expressed in the parable of the sheep and goats.[727] If we have done good or bad unto the least of men, we have done it unto God. Whatever we do, or do not do, we do unto the Lord. However, in this whole area, those outside the Church also do good works.

12. The Covenant of Coinherence

Williams also developed a covenant for believers in which they were to put into practice the principal elements that produce a state of coinherence—exchange and substitution. He calls the covenant 'The Order of Coinherence' and its members 'The Companions of Coinherence'; both are discussed in Appendix E.

13. Coinherence Challenges Gnosticism

Coinherence challenges the Gnosticism that cannot accommodate or even tolerate either the perichoretic union of the Incarnation or the perichoretic union of regenerate man with the Holy Spirit. By contrast, Williams sees as fundamental truths that man in the flesh and the Spirit of God can dwell together and that man in the flesh is not diminished but enabled to be an image of Christ. As previously discussed, Williams's anti-gnostic thinking and views of coinherence greatly affected W. H. Auden.[728] Auden takes Williams's views on coinherence straight from Williams's texts and affirms them. The interdependency of all life, from God to his Creation, and the emphasis on the body manifest Williams's and Auden's anti-manichean position.

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[725] Col. 1:24.

[726] 2 Cor. 5:18–20.

[727] Matt. 25:31–46.

[728] See Chapter III.B.1. Gnosticism, Especially Manichaeism.

Williams put so much emphasis on the Incarnation, the Eucharist, the Way of Affirmation, and the Athanasian Creed because they elevate and bring together the coinherence of matter, humanity, and The Holy Spirit, and for him this has significant implications for regenerate man.

C. The Development of Coinherence

This section explores acts of exchange and substitution in man's life and in the divine realm and sees how these actions develop and maintain the coinherence of life. The acts may be carried out for sustaining life or for profit. Still, other motives and other consequences come into play: these acts can benefit many others beyond the initial givers and receivers. Thereby, coinherence is built and maintained. Nevertheless, more is involved in Williams's developed picture of coinherence: it also involves another element—love. These actions, then, become, in the overall picture, acts of love, and the persons carrying out these acts are agents of love. This new element (i.e., love) brings in a different kind of motive. Love changes the nature of the relationship between those carrying out the actions and those receiving the benefit of those actions.

1. Exchange

a. Natural exchange by man's actions. As discussed, for humanity all natural life begins with the mutual surrender of one person to another, in giving and receiving of seed, an exchange with one another, in one another. Williams also observes examples of natural exchange in commerce, economy, social relations, and many other labors—all fundamental to life:

> The whole natural and social world depended, then as now, on some process of exchange. Human life … depends on an exchange of labors. The most obvious medium of that exchange is money. Money has been called, by the economists, 'the means of exchange'. Our social system exists by an unformed agreement that one person shall do one job while another does another. Money is the means by which those jobs are brought into relation.[729]

Williams says, 'It is the law of exchange that advances, of the keeping of one life by another'.[730] Williams thinks these natural exchanges of commerce could be easily understood and that they also point to a more important exchange that Christ makes for

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[729] *IOC*, 149.

[730] *HCD*, 28.

man. Even when the exchanges of economics and commerce are for the profit and benefit of those making the exchange, they can also nurture the natural life of others. Exchange is necessary for human life to exist, and it is central to the life of the City:

> What is the characteristic of any City? Exchange between citizens. What is the fact common to both sterile communication and vital communion? A mode of exchange. What is the fundamental fact of men in their lives? The necessity of exchange.[731]

More in-depth discussion of the City follows in a later section.

Williams develops other examples of exchange and substitution in the natural concerns and cares of life. He uses the Cain and Abel story in Genesis 4:9, where God poses the question, 'Where is Abel your brother?' Williams sees God linking to exchange an inherent responsibility for the welfare of others, as an exchange of burdens that builds love.[732] The denial of this responsibility exposes the fallen condition—a lack of love. When we refuse to be our brother's keeper, the cry of our brother's blood exposes our irresponsibility and culpability as well as our refusal of love. Williams asserts, 'Cain saw and could not guess that the very purpose of his offering was to make his brother's acceptable'.[733] Williams does not give a thorough explanation of this, but he makes it clear that a vicarious sacrifice is given for the benefit of others and not for oneself. This motive is substantiated by Williams's often used scriptural quote: 'He saved others; himself he cannot save', and in his own words, 'All life is to be vicarious—at least, all life in the kingdom of heaven is to be vicarious'.[734]

Sacrifices are vicarious acts of *pietas,* gifts, when they are given for the welfare of others and not for self; they are examples of *disinterested love*.[735] The acceptable sacrifice is a vicarious one:

> It [God] proclaims a law: 'At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man'. It is a declaration of an exchange of responsibility.… but the web of substitution is to that extent created.… The first pattern of order is introduced; every man is to answer for the life of his brother.[736]

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[731] *HCD*, 112.

[732] See discussion in Chapter III.D.3. Negation to Affirm and to Give—*Pietas*; see also Gal. 6:2.

[733] *HCD*, 25.

[734] Ibid., 83, 86. See also Mark 15:31.

[735] See John Paul II's discourse on disinterested love, discussed in Chapter III. Negation to Affirm and to Give—Pietas.

[736] Ibid., 24; Gen. 9:5.

Williams uses exchange and substitution together without explaining them, or the difference between them, believing that the context would explain their usage.

Kallistos Ware comments on Williams's use of the natural exchange of money as an analogue to teach the way of Heaven.[737] The use of money is not only Williams's understanding of exchange but also a partial glimpse of an aspect of his understanding of Christian love. For Williams, when the exchange of burdens is made completely for the benefit and welfare of another, it is an act of love. Thus, exchange at this level is an extension of romantic love and an icon of Divine love, as discussed in Chapter V.

Exchange is a pedagogical aspect of life: God is requiring man to be responsible for his fellow man as a viable image of love. This early required responsibility may be an aspect of the commencement of what the apostle Paul would later say: 'Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God'.[738] This type of love is expressed in an exchange of burdens as urged by the Apostle Paul: 'Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ'.[739]

The understanding of an exchange of burdens can also be a beginning of the understanding of the great exchange of the Atonement: 'For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich'.[740] Christ also calls man to be an icon of love: 'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends'. And The Apostle John further says, 'We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another'.[741] Love and exchange are intertwined in this discussion.

b. Divine exchange. The great exchange of history is the economy of Christ. This a major element appears in the interpretation of Williams's understanding of

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[737] K. Ware, 'Heaven and Hell in Charles Williams', unpublished paper presented to the Charles Williams Society, June 21, 2003. Stephen Barber documents that Ware used Williams's poem 'Bors to Elayne: On the King's Coins', taken from Taliessin through Logres. See S. Barber, 'Heraclitus on the Way of Exchange', *The Charles Williams Society News Letter* 112 (August 2004): 18; *TTLRSS*, 44–45: 'for the wealth of the self is the health of the self exchanged. What saith Heraclitus?—and what is the City's breath?—dying each other's life, living each other's death. Money is a medium of exchange'.

[738] Eph. 5:1–2.

[739] Gal. 6:2.

[740] 2 Cor. 8:9.

[741] John 15:12–13; 1 John 3:16.

exchange. Williams describes the Christological exchange as God's Divine courtesy towards man and adds further that God expects man to show a similar courtesy towards our neighbor.[742] C. S. Lewis notices the 'unexpected extension' that Williams gives to courtesy, taking it beyond the law, morality, ethics, and duty.[743] Lewis also develops Williams's idea further by connecting it with St. Paul's view that the law exists to be transcended by *agape*.[744]

The question, 'What can a man give in exchange for his soul?'[745] is rhetorical: Man cannot give anything in exchange to save himself. Williams often says that another must save you, in view of the fact that Christ functioned under the same maxim: 'He saved others; himself he cannot save'.[746] However, Williams also uses this reference repeatedly to point to Christ's great exchange in the Atonement.

Here, too, is a connection between love and exchange. It is never in Christian teaching, or in the nature of love, to try to save oneself at the expense of others; according to Williams, to do so would be a perversion of love. This understanding of exchange thus also connects with love as other-oriented and not self-centered.

c. Further comments. Of course, Williams did not invent the theological idea of exchange, nor is he the first to use it. Theologians have discussed it for hundreds of years. T. F. Torrance demonstrates that all of these ideas of exchange are developed from patristic and biblical sources, especially those from a Nicene perspective: the reconciling exchange, the wonderful exchange, the atoning exchange, the sweet exchange, the sacrificial exchange, Christ's exchange, and the soteriological exchange.[747] Williams moves up and down the ladder of exchange, from the natural world to the supernatural in God. The same principle of exchange occurs within the theme of substitution. When there is an exchange of burdens for another, substitution also occurs.

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[742] *HCD*, 161.

[743] C. S. Lewis, *On Stories and Other Essays on Literature* London: Harcourt, 1982 26-27.

[744] Ibid., 27.

[745] Matt. 16:26; Mark 8:37. Also implied in Luke 9:25.

[746] Mark 15:31.

[747] T. F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 146–90.

2. Substitution

a. Natural substitution in daily life. This second aspect of coinherence, following exchange, is substitution. We all have to have work done for us that we ourselves cannot perform. The most common and natural act of carrying of a burden for another has already been several times noted and discussed: childbearing by the mother:

> At the beginning of life in the natural order is an act of substitution and co-inherence. A man can have no child unless his seed is received and carried by a woman; a woman can have no child unless she receives and carries the seed of a man—literally bearing the burden. It is not only a mutual act; it is a mutual act of substitution. The child itself for nine months literally co-inheres in its mother; there is no human creature that has not sprung from such a period of such an interior growth.[748]

The woman bears the work, labor, and pain for the child, the husband, and herself. Williams calls all the many natural sacrifices of burden bearing, and being our brother's keeper, applications of the first canon of substitution.[749] Making daily exchanges and substitutions for others is a natural observable law of existence. The required burden bearing flowing from being responsible for a brother points further to the archetype of exchange and substitution in the Atonement.

Substitution is at the very center of the nature of man's ontology. Williams borrows Gerard Hopkins' phrase, 'inscape of our hearts'; he says that the 'inscape' of the heart can only be discovered by acts of burden bearing for others.[750] Burden bearing for others is the inherent principle of, for instance, the priesthood, marriage, and the City. And all the life of the City is by nature vicarious. Williams then applies Hopkins' 'inscape of our hearts' to the principle of substitution in both nature and grace:

> It was by an act of substitution that He renewed the City; this He commanded as the order in both nature and grace. This is (to borrow Gerard Hopkins's word) the 'inscape of our hearts', and if the Infamy (in us and in others) has ruined that inscape by outrage, as war ruins landscapes and cities, still this is the inscape of the Divine City.… There is no other way to live. We are simply, utterly dependent on others, and it may seem that to stress it so much is to make us over-conscious of a natural inevitability, to make our very breathing unctuous with a revolting piety. So perhaps it would be, if it were not for two things: (i)

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[748] *DOD*, 234.

[749] *HCD*, 24, 83. See also Gen. 9:5: '… And from each man too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man' (NIV).

[750] *IOC*, 107.

> the universal nature of the application, (ii) the supernatural nature of the principle.[751]

Thus, he moves from a focus on substitution to a focus on dependency on others.

b. Divine substitution. Williams calls substitution the central mystery of Christendom; it is the root of a universal rule. Small daily substitutions are analogues of Christ's great substitution, though substantially different.[752] As he explains more about substitution, he moves from a general burden bearing by the individual person to the burden bearing for the world through the Crucifixion and Atonement of Christ.

He also weaves the themes of substitution and love integrally together, and his supreme interpretive example of substituted love is the 'Greater Love' of laying one's life down for others.[753] This example provides a fundamental way to recognize love: 'This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers'.[754]

Laying down one's life does not necessarily mean martyrdom.[755] Living for others may more often be the way of love rather than an act of dying for them. Clarifying his understanding and interpretation of substitution, Williams refers to Christ and St. Paul:

> 'Whosoever will lose his life for my sake and the Gospel's, the same shall find it'.… Martyrdom might or might not happen. Saint Paul … denied any value at all to martyrdom unless it were accompanied by *caritas*.… 'It is no more I that live, but Christ that liveth in me' is the definition of the pure life which is substituted for both.… Earth had to find also that the new law of the kingdom made that substitution a principle of universal exchange.[756]

Christ has chosen to live by the patterns of His own creation; in this manner, too, Christ is the demonstration of love itself. Therefore, being true to the supposed mockery, 'others he saved, himself he cannot save', He waits in faith for another to save Him—'Father into your hands I commit my spirit'.[757] He embraces the evil He has not done, in order to undo it. Christ then shows that evil is an opportunity for good. The

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[751] *IOC*, 105. As already seen, the demand for substitution can be extended too far. See Chapter II. Substituted Love.

[752] *DIH*, 189. Also see the discussion in V. Hill, 'The Christian Vision of Charles Williams', *The Charles Williams Quarterly*, no. 131 (Summer 2009): 17.

[753] *HCD*, 82.

[754] 1 John 3:16

[755] 1 Cor. 13:3.

[756] *HCD*, 82–83. In this quotation, Williams again links together exchange and substitution.

[757] Luke 23:46, NIV.

pattern of exchange and substitution in His body is the foundation of love for the new life. Exchange, substitution, and love are intertwined.

c. Further comments. Gisbert Kranz says, 'Some think that the doctrine of substitution was an idiosyncrasy of Williams. But in fact it is in the centre of the Christian faith, and it is central in the literary works of other poets too'.[758] Kranz notices that Williams's ideas on substitution are similar to Paul Claudel's and to those of Gertrud von Le Fort.[759] Nichols and Ernest Beaumont also mention the similarity of Claudel and Williams on the subject of substitution, and (relatedly) on burden bearing being an icon of love.[760]

The significance of Kranz's article is increased by the comprehensiveness of his examination. He traces the theme of substitution throughout the different genres of Williams's work—poetry, novels, and theology—and compares Williams's treatment of substitution to that of other Christian poets. A striking agreement appears in their main points.[761] Kranz makes another astute observation:

> In the writings of Christian divines the idea of substitution has been just of marginal importance. Only after 1950, theology begins to reflect on substituted love. The thought of the poets Williams, Claudel, and Le Fort was far in advance of recent developments in theology.[762]

D. The Descent of the Dove: A Short History of the Holy Spirit in the Church—Williams's Pneumatology

DOD demonstrates Williams's view of Church history, incorporating his examples of coinherence as examples also of man's collaboration with the work of the Holy Spirit. He thus brings together his understanding of pneumatology with the doctrine of coinherence. A. M. Allchin thinks that Williams has an important perspective on the Holy Spirit's work in history. He says, 'Charles Williams is in some special way a theologian of the Holy Spirit, of the descent of the dove. He is a spiritual

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[758] G. Kranz, 'Stellvertretung: Ein Zentraler Gedanke bei Charles Williams, Paul Claudel und Gertrud von Le Fort', *Inklings-Jahrbuch* 3 (1985): 108. English translation included in publication.

[759] Ibid., 87–108.

[760] A. Nichols, *The Poet as Believer: A Theological Study of Paul Claudel* (Surrey, UK: Ashgate Studies in Theology, Imagination, and the Arts, 2011), 158. See also E. Beaumont, 'Charles Williams and the Power of Eros', *The Dublin Review* 233 (1959): 65, 72.

[761] Kranz, 108.

[762] Ibid.

flame, whose spirit leaps up in response to the Spirit's call, to the Spirit's coming'.[763] Williams gives the reader a new framework and a corresponding new perspective from which to develop fresh ways of thinking about familiar material. Williams also involves the coinherence of man in his examination of sin and its consequences..[764]

1. A New Framework

What Williams began in *HCD* is continued and extended in *DOD*. *DOD* further extends and develops what he means by *coinherence* in relation to the work of the Holy Spirit in man. He also analyzes and encapsulates the eras of Church history ideologically, within a theological frame, in relation to pneumatology, rather than simply recording the chronology of people and events. Both Brian Horne and Glen Cavaliero agree that in this work, coinherence is Williams's overriding concept.[765] W. H. Auden says, 'The coinherence of the Spirit and flesh in Christ, and in believers is critical to orthodoxy and to understanding Williams's work'.[766]

A further purpose of this section is to understand what Williams is trying to demonstrate with his seemingly idiosyncratic choices of historical events, people, and periods for discussion. Cavaliero says that *DOD* is a masterpiece because of Williams's unique interpretation, choice of people, and events.[767]

Williams brings his own theological concerns to bear on the typography of history. We have already discussed his example of Felicitas, who for him illustrates the pattern of exchange, substitution, and coinherence as being at the centre of life, and that is why he says more about Felicitas and Dante than Calvin. Who knows about Felicitas? And who does not know something of Calvin? But as Horne calls to attention, Calvin did not say:

> 'Now I suffer what I suffer; then another will be in me who will suffer for me, as I shall suffer for him' and the African slave girl did.… Williams … was trying to reveal some hidden mystery of the Church's life and it seemed right to draw attention to the martyrdom of a virtually unknown second century saint in the way he did. Her utterance about her martyrdom was a demonstration of the

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[763] A. M. Allchin, 'Poet under the Mercy,' *Charles Williams Society Newsletter*, no. 4 (Winter 1976): 9 (sermon preached at St. Katharine's Foundation, London, 26 October 1975).

[764] *HCD*, 124.

[765] *STCW*, 188 and see *POT*, 137–38.

[766] W. H. Auden, 'Co-inherence', 130–34.

[767] *POT*, 137.

> activity of the Holy Spirit drawing the citizens of the Holy City into a life of co-inherence.[768]

In *DOD,* Williams's theology of history also incorporates the Church and the City in his picture of the macrocosm of the Body of Christ. He often used the image of the City to explain how coinherence was to be seen in redeemed man in his corporate sense as the multiplicity of the interwoven web of relationships between man and God.

C. V. Wedgewood thinks that *DOD* brings a fresh approach to Williams's epistemology of history:

> The importance of this book is that it forces on the historian a view of his material which is different from that to which he has grown accustomed. A new framework is established in which the crowded catalogue of human action has been placed.[769]

Horne affirms this fresh perspective in a more significant way:

> Much of the writing in *The Descent of the Dove* is revelatory, in the real sense of that word. He has the capacity to reveal in a precision of phrase and a vividness of imagery, what one had never seen before or had only dimly perceived as though in a half-light. Above all, he has the capacity to discover connections between apparently disparate and distinct phenomena which have gone unnoticed before.[770]

Obviously, Williams is bringing in what he thinks might be lacking in the theological analysis of a given era found in standard histories of the Church.

Williams gives some clues to help readers understand his framework, perspective, and content. First, the book is addressed and dedicated: 'For the Companions of the Co-inherence'. These companions are found in the present and also in the communion of saints stretching through time. The City of God, like the Church, 'is contemporary and future at once. It is to be … but also it is now'.[771] Second, Lodovico Brea's picture just before the Preface emphasizes the Church militant and the Church triumphant in union as the whole redeemed City.[772] This painting represents the coinherence of the Church in different worlds, both visible and invisible. Nichols claims that *DOD* is Williams's most successful theological work and he observes that Williams demonstrates that coinherence is at the foundation of Christendom and anticipatory of

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[768] Horne, 'Co-inherence', 11.

[769] C. V. Wedgewood, 'Notes on the Way', *Time and Tide* 38 (April 22, 1950): 387, review of *DOD,* Wade Center.

[770] Horne, 'The Dove Descending', 3.

[771] *HCD*, 101.

[772] *DOD*, vii.

the City to come.[773] Third, in the Preface, Williams explains that a reversal of the phrase, 'This also is thou; neither is this Thou', is a description of the history of the Church. Fourth, in the Postscript, Williams explains that the Church recognizes the natural coinherence of the child within its mother as an analogue to the supernatural coinherence within the Trinity and to its own mystical coinherence as the body of Christ. As soon as it is possible, the Church directs that the child is to share in the supernatural coinherence of the Body of Christ, being baptized into the body of Christ. At the end of *DOD*, the reader possesses these clues as bookends to give a partial framework to comprehend Williams's purposes and his themes.

Due to space limitations, I have chosen what I consider to be particularly significant themes in relation to Williams's desire to demonstrate the coinherent work of God in man by and through the Holy Spirit.

As we might expect, *DOD* seeks among other things to show how Gnosticism (in one form or another and at different times in the Church's history) sneaks into the Church, and often under the guise of spirituality, attempting to devalue and destroy the coinherence of the Holy Spirit in human flesh. Williams seeks to counter this subtle movement. The Church exists in matter, as it should be, as God's everlasting covenant is in matter.[774] Auden reread *DOD* annually for sixteen years before he came to write the introduction for the 1956 edition, giving a poet's analysis of Williams's artistic theological contribution.[775] In his introduction, Auden also agrees with Williams and acknowledges Williams's concern for a more positive sense of the body in the work of the Holy Spirit in redemption. In *DOD,* Williams, as no other historian, fervently emphasizes the Way of Affirmation in the work of Dante. He also shows many different means of God working through the lives of a variety of people: critics, heretics, and great lights of the Via Negativa.

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[773] Nichols, *Spirituality,* 98. See also *DOD*, vii.

[774] Gen. 17:13.

[775] W. H. Auden, Introduction to *The Descent of the Dove*, by Charles Williams (New York: Meridan Books, 1956), xii. This has already been discussed in Chapter III.B.1. Gnosticism, Especially Manichaeism.

2. A New Historical Perspective: The Coinherence of Regenerate Man with the Holy Spirit in History

Williams first sets up a broad theological-metaphysical framework. Christ came down from Heaven and He ascended; the Holy Spirit came down from Heaven; and, the Church in the future subsequently returns to Heaven. The framework for the Church is outside of time: Christendom begins outside of time and ends outside of time. Williams then defines the work of the Holy Spirit and theology 'as the measurement of eternity in operation':[776]

> The beginning of Christendom is, strictly, at a point out of time. A metaphysical trigonometry finds it among the spiritual Secrets, at the meeting of two heavenward lines, one drawn from Bethany along the Ascent of Messias, the other from Jerusalem against the Descent of the Paraclete. That measurement, the measurement of eternity in operation, of the bright cloud and the rushing wind, is, in effect, theology.
>
> The history of Christendom is the history of an operation. It is an operation of the Holy Ghost towards Christ, under the conditions of our humanity; and it was our humanity which gave the signal, as it were, for the operation. The visible beginning of the Church is at Pentecost, but that is only a result of its actual beginning—and ending—in heaven. In fact, all the external world, as we know it, is always a result. Our causes are concealed.[777]

Earlier parts of the story appear in *HCD,* leading up to the pinnacle of the Incarnation. *DOD* briefly notes the Incarnation and the fact of the Atonement: 'The fact then had happened'.[778] From there Williams places 'the fact' into the larger historical and spiritual context of Pentecost. Regenerated living images, patterned after the Incarnation, fill out Williams's pneumatology: Living images empowered by the Spirit of God to be vessels of His presence are to regenerate mankind.[779]

Later, Williams mentions a particular sentence that arose in the Council of Jerusalem, a sentence that he says is from one point of view absurd and from another point of view ordinary: 'It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us'.[780] However, he

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[776] *DOD*, 1.

[777] Ibid.

[778] Ibid., 9.

[779] Ibid., 3–4. See Chapter II.B.5.

[780] Acts 15:28; *DOD*, 6.

says that this sentence is a serious implicit declaration by men that a union exists.[781] It expresses the shared coinherent nature of the union with man and with God.[782]

Williams projects the historical developments of the growing union beyond the boundaries of the early church. 'Grace was to be mediated universally', breaking down many barriers, whether to Jew or to Gentile and regardless of race, gender, nationality, class, sins committed, creed, experience, or philosophy.[783]

And so, too, early in the history of the Church, Williams thought that the Spirit led in accomplishing the spread of the faith through the life and ministry of St. Paul. Of him Williams further says, 'He used words as poets do; he regenerated them. And by St. Paul's regeneration of words he gave theology first to the Christian Church'.[784]

Williams says, further, regarding the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit,

> The doctrine of grace was the statement of fact; the fresh morality was the adjustment of the individual to the fact. The fact was … that the law—the law of right living, of holiness, of love—which could not be obeyed by man had discovered a way of obeying itself in every man who chose. Man perished if he did not obey the law. Yet the law was impossible, and it could not be modified or it would become other than itself, and that could not be. What then? How was man to find existence possible? By the impossibility doing its own impossible work on man's behalf, by the forgiveness (that is, redemption) of sins, by faith, by eternal life; past, present, future states, yet all one, and the name of that state 'the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord'…. [He goes on to quote several New Testament Passages]
>
> 'He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him'…. In such words there was defined the new state of being, a state of redemption, of coinherence, made actual by that divine substitution, 'He in us and we in him'.[785]

Then Williams says that, for a while, in the earliest period of the Church, 'the exact pattern of the Glory was discernable'.[786] Presenting a similar picture, Dillistone remarks how clearly the power of God was demonstrated through His Spirit upon His Church in its early days following Pentecost. Dillistone uses Williams's own words, describing the

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[781] *DOD*, 6.

[782] Ibid.

[783] Ibid., 7.

[784] Ibid., 8.

[785] Ibid., 9–10.

[786] Ibid., 10. As noted earlier, 'The Pattern of the Glory' was the expression that Williams uses to explore the larger picture of what he is trying to address: Believers should be demonstrating the pattern of the glory, centering on love, Christlikeness: 'Christ bring us all to the sight of the pattern of the glory which is only he', 'Seed of Adam', *CP*, 171.

[786] *DOD*, 10–11.

'discernable Glory', to make the emphasis he wants.[787] Williams's characterizes the Spirit's power and work: 'the Spirit in the Church sent through every power a double power beyond their functions and their offices'.[788]

Due to space limitations we must move on to a later period. In the seventh chapter, Williams presents the Holy Spirit as the initiator of correction and sanctification in the life of the Church, precipitating the Reformation, which he puts under the heading 'The Renewal of Contrition'.[789] Williams observes the life-transforming work of the Holy Spirit to add lives by the conversion of multitudes to Christ. And he uses a phrase repeatedly throughout the book: 'it pleased Our Lord the Spirit'. He says,

> … It pleased our Lord the Spirit violently to convulse these souls with himself. Grace seized on those centres for its own campaign. It struck suddenly outward, as its most divine way is—since the wise Pharisee collapsed outside Damascus—and now in a German, a Frenchman, a Spaniard—and many others after them. It had done so, often enough, in the Middle Ages, as since; its business is always to restore contrition to man. But now, when contrition, admitted as a theory, had largely disappeared as a fact, it renewed contrition.[790]

This is an example of Williams's way of interpreting the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, seeing them as needed and called forth, since 'Christendom had betrayed itself again',[791] and grace and contrition were needed. This movement resulted not only in conversions but also in renewal of the revelation through the spoken word. Through these voices, the sermon came again into its own: 'the salvation communicated in the sacrament of the spoken word'.[792] In addition, Williams notes, 'And besides the sermons there were other tongues,—tongues of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, but especially of psalms'.[793]

Speaking of another time, he goes on to defend critics such as Voltaire, D. H. Lawrence, and others, who pointed out the Church's hypocrisy. In Voltaire's time, as in

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[787] F. W. Dillistone, *The Holy Spirit in the Life of Today* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947), 58.

[788] *DOD*, 10–11.

[789] Ibid., 162, 167–68.

[790] Ibid., 172.

[791] Ibid., 155.

[792] Ibid., 176.

[793] Ibid.

some others times, 'the Church was an evil parody of herself'.[794] In such passages, Williams writes like a prophet, calling the Church to be honest about her sins, and he argues that her lack of honesty about herself is a cause for her own spiritual anemia and a reason that she is sometimes attacked by unbelievers.[795]

In relation to the seventeenth century, he interprets the Enlightenment, Chapter VIII, under the heading 'The Quality of Disbelief'. He presents some unusual and unexpected views about how some ideas of doubt and unbelief in the Christian life can be constructive. Then, referring to the eighteenth century in Chapter IX—'The Return of The Manhood', he mentions the work of Wesley, Wilberforce, Newton, and the world missionary efforts, as work that the Spirit has done for man through man. Williams treats 'The Return of the Manhood' largely as a response to the seventeenth century's problems. Williams saw that in both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there was also a return of the concern for the physical and spiritual welfare of man. The result of personal spiritual awakenings thus also touches social concerns, such as slavery, and goes beyond that to developments such as the world missionary movement.[796] Williams mentions the spiritual 'coincidences' of the Holy Spirit in the relationships between Wilberforce, the Prime Minister, and John Newton.[797]

Showing his critical and yet affirmative attitude towards the Church, Williams closes *DOD* with the 1920 public confession of the Church of England:

> For the first time a 'great synod', formally convoked, formally speaking, admitted its own spiritual guilt, saying, 'It has seemed good', they said,… 'to the Holy Ghost and to us' that we should confess that we have sinned.[798]

Throughout *DOD* Williams demonstrates that the Holy Spirit operates His life through the life of man, whether or not he is aware of it, and through the curate, the laity, and the critic. The following material looks at Williams's culminating vision of coinherence in the communion of man—The City.

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[794] *DOD*, 201f. See also *IOC*, 68–75.

[795] *IOC*, 157. See also C. Williams, 'The Conversion of the Heathen,' address, January 25, 1945, MS 16, Wade Center.

[796] *DOD*, 205–07.

[797] Ibid., 209–10.

[798] Ibid., 232–33.

E. The City of God and the Earthly City of Man

> Out of us poor in spirit shall God make
> New earth and heaven; there shall of us be built
> The city whose name is over all names else,
> Rome, Salem, Sarras, Zion, City of God![799]

The image of the City is, among other things, an extension and further development of Williams's complex understanding of coinherence. He thought about writing a sequel to *DOD* and calling it 'The Two Cities' or 'Christ the City'.[800] This sequel presents the natural human city in the midst of the supernatural City. He writes, 'The book might contribute to helping the imagination, and even the production, of the union'.[801] Elsewhere he further states, 'There is no final idea for us but the glory of God in the redeemed and universal union—call it Man or the Church or the City'.[802] He would also refer to the 'state' of the Church as the 'state' of the City.[803]

A number of commentators have written about Williams's image of the City. Stuart Kenny writes, 'For Williams, the image of salvation is the City'.[804] Nichols says that the City is Williams's vision of the Church in her plenitude.[805] Glen Cavaliero portrays Williams as fundamentally a man of the city:

> Charles Williams was a Londoner. City life was the perennial inspiration of his work; a vision of diversity in unity, of the interconnection of innumerable parts within a living whole. Houses, streets, subways, shops, churches provide the background … while the way in which they functioned was to be the mainspring of his interpretation of literature, history and religion. At the root of everything he wrote is his feeling for community.[806]

1. Signification and Amplification

a. Diverse descriptions. Williams describes the city in a variety of ways, for example, Christ, Union, Christendom, Salvation, the web of glory and the web of

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[799] C. Williams, 'Chapel of the Thorn', unpublished play, August 24, 1912, MS 39, Wade Center.

[800] C. Williams, 'The Two Cities', unpublished notes, n.d., MS 76, Wade Center.

[801] Ibid., 2.

[802] *IOC*, 102. Williams usually capitalizes City when it refers to Christendom interwoven with its multiple relationships.

[803] *DOD*, 38.

[804] S. Kenny, 'The Now of Salvation: Thoughts on Charles Williams' Et in Sempiternum Pereant', *Mythlore* 17, no. 4, iss. 66 (Summer 1991): 43.

[805] Nichols, *Spirituality*, 99.

[806] *POT*, 1.

relationships, and the city of man and the City of God. And he uses a variety of names: New Jerusalem, Logres, Byzantium, Camelot, London, Zion. He creates a very flexible image for a community. Borrowing from Jeremiah and Dante, Williams sometimes encapsulates and personifies the City of God in even one person, such as Beatrice, Galahad, Taliessin, or Christ as an icon of the heavenly vision.[807] We see this encapsulation the following words:

> What is the highest level of Christian dogma? Exchange between men and God, by virtue of the union of Man and God in the single person, who is, by virtue again of that Manhood, itself the City, the foundation and the enclosure.[808]

Ridler brought together many of Williams's significant essays and articles in *IOC* because so much of his work relates to the larger vision of the City of God. In addition to the Bible, Williams reinforces his ideas of the city from Virgil, Dante, the Arthurian legends, and English verse.

Williams begins with and sees the building blocks of exchange and substitution developing, the coinherence expressed naturally in commerce, the everyday life of people bearing others' burdens, childbearing, and supernaturally in the liturgy of the Church. Coinherence is the life and the pattern of the City of God carrying on, in, and through the city of man.

Sometimes Williams mixes his images together to allow glimpses of the analogues and the largesse of the coinherent grace in the union of God and man:

> The Holy Ghost moves us to be … the Images of Christ, the types of that Original.… It is the intercourse of those free Images which is the union of the City. The name of the City is Union.… The process of that union is by the method of free exchange. The methods of that exchange range from childbirth to the Eucharist—the two primal activities of the earth and the Church. There is, in the first case, a mutual willingness between the father and mother which results in the transference of seed.[809]

The following sections look at a variety of central aspects in Williams's image of the City and at some of his diverse examples.

b. The web of relations. Mariann Russell says, 'Relationship is for Williams a natural image of a supernatural fact'.[810] He sees the entire web of human relationships as the city: 'I mean by the City the whole complex of human relationships of all kinds

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[807] See Lam. 1:1; Alighieri, *La Vita Nuova*, XXVIIIff.

[808] *IOC*, 112.

[809] Ibid., 103–04.

[810] M. Russell, 'The Idea of the City of God' (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1965), 51.

regarded as a whole, and its parts regarded in relation to the whole'.[811] Many times he also uses the term *web* to mean 'the web of humanity' or 'the web of glory' to express the city of man, the City of God, and the pattern of the glory.[812] In these and other phrases, and the pictures they convey, Williams points to the coinherence embedded in the nature of relationships:

> There are in English verse a certain number of recurrent images. One of these is the image of the City; it is built up by many descriptions, similes, metaphors, and maxims. These images, making altogether one greater image, show the City both ideally and actually (even historically), in schism and in concord, as in heaven and as on earth. I do not propose here to define that image further than to say that it is the sense of many relationships between men and women woven into a unity; and it is the poetic hints of that unity which make the image to be discussed. The best single image of the heavenly City is perhaps in the prose sentence from the Apocalypse: 'I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God'.[813]

On earth, the City of God lives in the midst of the city of man. Exchange, substitution, and coinherence occur within the Church. Williams believes that coinherence includes the enemies Christians are called to love:

> Hostility begins to exist,… whenever and wherever we forget that we are nourished by, that we live from—whomever; when we think that we can choose by whom we shall be nourished. If *anthropos* has any meaning, if the web of humanity is in any sense one, if the City exists in our blood as well as in our desires, then we precisely must live from, and be nourished by those whom we most wholly dislike and disapprove. Even the Church,… has too often spoken as if it existed by its own separate life. So, no doubt, sacramentally and supernaturally, it does; but so, by the very bones and blood of its natural members, it very much does not.… There is but one dichotomy: that between those who acknowledge that they live from the life of others, including their 'enemies', and those who do not.[814]

Williams is trying explain some of the mystery of the web of interrelatedness with all men and God. These webs of relationships are closely related to coinherence, and they are at the heart of the City. We live from these bonds and unions via the relationships of coinherence: marriages, families, friendships, and work and commercial relations. Living for another, from another, and in another are formative characteristics of any city. And they are all precursory to, and embodied in, love.

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[811] C. Williams, 'The Alteration of Passion', address, January 1928, MS 7, Wade Center.

[812] *HCD*, 33, 51, 87, 101–02, 120–22. See also *IOC*, 112–13.

[813] *IOC*, 92.

[814] Ibid., 112–13.

W. H. Auden expounds Williams's primary sense of the City in his introduction to *DOD,* drawing on Williams's thinking about man's responsibility for his fellow man:

> The first law of the spiritual universe, the Real City, is that nobody can carry his own burden; he only can, and therefore he must, carry someone else's.… Choosing to bear another's burden involves at the same time permitting another to carry one's own, and this may well be the harder choice, just as it is usually easier to forgive than to be forgiven. The motto of the City is: 'Your life and death are with your neighbor'.[815]

c. Love and the city. As with exchange and substitution, love has a central role in the City. For Williams, love produces a type of bonding in the relationship between the participating parties, which can be a vehicle for renewal of the corporate union. Love is integral to the City, and Williams calls this bond a union. The process of that union is, he says in one place, by the method of free exchange.[816] Williams's examples are the ones already discussed: commerce, childbirth, and burden bearing for others.[817]

As already noted in Von Balthasar's quote at the beginning of Chapter V, romantic love can by its relationship lead to the City. Nancy Enright agrees: 'If properly pursued, the Romantic Way can lead lovers to a state of "incarnate love" on earth so that their very union is a microcosm of the City of God'.[818] Coinherence is also extended further. The heart of any city is relationships. The exchanges and substitutions of life, whether arising from love or from commercial interests, are the building blocks of coinherence in any city.

Evidently, for Williams, the City is a place where the essence of humanity, including love—does not have to be lost, but man can be renewed in Christ. It is significant to remember Von Balthasar's comment:

> Why should a Christian man not love a woman for all eternity and allow himself to be introduced by that woman to a *full understanding of what 'eternity' means?* And why should it be so extraordinary—ought one not rather to expect it—that *such a love needs, for its total fulfillment, the whole of theology*.[819]

The whole of theology is important because the individual, in nature and in grace, is always an incarnate representative of more than himself or herself. Individuals always represent themselves, their derivative sources, and the larger communities in

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[815] Auden, Introduction, vi. See also Auden, 'Charles Williams', 552–54.

[816] *IOC*, 103.

[817] Ibid., 102–10.

[818] Enright, 'Charles Williams: A Dantean Interpretation, 22.

[819] Von Balthasar, *Studies in Theological Style*, 32; italics mine.

which they participate.[820] Salvation is a doctrine of the community as well as the individual, so Williams says, 'The Doctrine of: the Trinity, the Church, the Atonement, and the individual, is a doctrine of largesse'.[821] As in the example of Beatrice being both an image of the City and an image of Christ to Dante: God uses Dante's love for Beatrice to draw him to her, to God, and to the communion of the saints—The City. Horne comments on this love affair:

> In other words we have to discover the meaning of this love—and its meaning is much more than the love affair itself. The meaning which we missed in the initial experience reveals itself later but only if we are vigilant and intelligent. Beatrice, however real she may be as a person, a girl of flesh and blood, is also an image that points beyond herself: to the City and to God.[822]

All relationships need to be purified, but Horne suggests that *eros* and *agape* do not have to be separated; *eros* can be purified and not lost.[823] Any acts of love are done in, and are a part of, a union with all other acts of love and derive a unique validity from and with Christ's supreme act of love.[824] The doctrine of this union is a part of the doctrine of the individual in Christendom, which is part of the doctrine of largesse.[825]

Nichols calls Williams a spiritual master, and Nichols thinks people can grow in love if they can understand and put into practice Williams's view of 'the corporate community as an icon of the City of God'.[826] Williams believes growth is possible by being our brother's keeper, by vicariously bearing the burdens of others. Robert Holder, like Nichols, notes how Williams is consistently interjecting in his work a demonstration of the nature of Christian love building up the community.[827] He keeps referring to the interwoven web of relationships that make up a community and the power of love to bring those relationships into communion. Similarly, Williams develops a theological vision of love in his novels and in the Arthuriad. He creates heroic characters that, in and through their love, play connecting roles in relation to the

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[820] See Chapter IV.B. Williams's Development of Coleridge's Symbol with Dante's Image and Beatrice as an Image.

[821] *IOC*, 141.

[822] Horne, 'The City and The Girl: Charles Williams's Dante', *The Charles Williams Quarterly*, no. 134 (Spring 2010): 18.

[823] Ibid.

[824] *IOC*, 141.

[825] Ibid.

[826] Nichols, *Spirituality*, 11, 15, 95.

[827] Holder, 82.

larger community. The image of the City develops a universal appeal through Williams's doctrines of love, coinherence, and largesse, all of which connect rather than isolate members of a community.[828]

d. The woman and the city.

> From Beatrice to the City: the City which is both earthly and heavenly, and recovery of Beatrice in the City. The meaning of the sight of the girl experienced in the streets of Florence has to be discovered and explored. It is a meaning that moves the lover out of the enclosed world of erotic attraction into the wider world of the city … it becomes, if it is followed with integrity and courage, the vision of communal life as it is lived in sight of God.[829]

In the same way that Dante did with Beatrice, Williams uses the image of a woman functioning as 'the soul-in-largesse': as life, the Church, and the City. Brian Horne explains that Williams understood and interpreted Dante's work in the phrase,: 'From experience to meaning'. A man or woman in grace can be experienced and understood as an image of God and as a representative of the City.[830] An experience with a person in grace can lead to the City and to God. Chapters IV and V explain that the image of the love relationship can also be an icon of the larger relations in grace. It is the further implications of moving one beyond the natural relationship towards the largesse of the City that dominated Williams's understanding of coinherence in this context.

e. Christ and the city. For Williams, the very nature of Christ—living in others, for others, and from others—is exemplified in the City:

> The principle of that City, and the gates of it, are the nature of Christ as the Holy Ghost exhibits it and inducts us into it; it is the doctrine that no man lives to himself or indeed *from* himself. This is the doctrine common to nature and grace.[831]

From this quote one can infer that the building blocks (*Good Works*) of the City are the exchanges and substitutions made for others. Williams also sometimes refers to Christ in His passion as the City: 'It was uttered as a mockery by the incredulous when they saw the City in its agony; they said: "Others He saved; Himself He could not save"'.[832]

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[828] Nichols, *Spirituality* 83–84.

[829] Horne, 'City and the Girl', 17–18. See also B. Horne, 'Charles Williams and Dante Alighieri', 255–66; *FOB*, 199.

[830] *FOB*, 95. The Pope is one of the best examples of one person representing the whole communion.

[831] *IOC*, 104.

[832] Ibid., 107.

f. The Holy Spirit and the city. Williams believes that the work of the Holy Spirit in man brings about a relationship between God and people and a good relationship among people. Then, the work of the Holy Spirit among persons also creates communities. Williams sometimes speaks of a union of God with the great diversity of men:

> The Holy Ghost,… drives us towards a union with that Union. What He created, we must choose—accepting in the Re-creation the original creation. That Re-creation was presented to us, in the Apocalypse, under the image of a City. It is precisely the nations, and the races, which are to enter into it. The feast of Christ the King is also the feast of Christ the City.[833]

g. The kingdom—now and future. Williams discusses the City of God in its present form on earth—the Church; and in its future form—the New Jerusalem. At other times he addresses the City more prophetically when referring to Christendom's calling: 'The Kingdom—or, apocalyptically, the City—is the state into which Christendom is called; but, except in vision, she is not yet the City. The City is the state which the Church is to become'.[834]

Williams saw the natural city as an iconic model (though very imperfect) of God's kingdom on earth.[835] The earthly city, even in its fallenness, is an ever-present reality and, its imperfect way, an image of the City to come. The natural city in its imperfection functions as the macro-image for both unity and community, in the natural world and for the eternal City to come.

2. A Further Expression: The Arthuriad[836]

The Arthuriad is a different kind of presentation and quite a different genre. In it Williams demonstrates a further more sublime understanding of the communication of Christian doctrine. David Mahan recognizes Williams's giftedness in this arena. Recently, the Arthuriad has resurfaced in theological literary circles, largely due to Mahan's *An Unexpected Light: Theology and Witness in the Poetry and Thought of Charles Williams, Michael O'Siadhail, and Geoffrey Hill.* Mahan focuses on Williams's

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[833] *IOC*, 103–04.

[834] *DOD*, 15.

[835] Baker, 278.

[836] The Arthuraid has already been discussed for its poetic theological contribution in Chapter II. His Arthuriad consists of two books of poetry (*TTLRSS*) and one unfinished prose book (*The Figure of Arthur*) explaining the narrative, which Lewis finished and explained, now called *Arthurian Torso*.

Arthurian poetry to discuss Williams's exposition of grace and of the function of images. He demonstrates how Williams's adaptation of the Arthurian legends makes a fresh vision of Christianity by the re-enactment of doctrine in the commerce of humanity.[837]

In his Arthuriad, Williams intertwines poetic fantasy with the heart of Christian doctrine, which revolves around coinherence. One of his best expressions of Christian Doctrine is in his poem 'The Founding of the Company',[838] and it is also an attempt to share 'an expression of his own personal belief in the sacramental nature of reality itself'.[839] He is trying to make us aware that Christian dogma is an expression of the natural fabric of everyday life, and that coinherence, in particular, is a major part of the natural structure of our lives. A. M. Allchin, commenting on this particular poem, says that for Williams the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation are not seen as 'abstract intellectual formulas but patterns of life and understanding by which and through which we are to find our way in this world'.[840]

a. A coinherent community. In the fictional writings of Williams, Lewis, and Tolkien, the narratives all revolve around small bands of companions in which the relationships of love and the coinherent community are at the center of attention.[841] Williams's covenanted groups of persons are to be the 'unformulated Company' of the webs of relationships of those in Camelot, Caerlon, and throughout Logres:

> The company is a fellowship united by disinterested love or *caritas*. It is a 'web'—to use Williams' term—of various states of being personified in individuals. Its chief property is the practice of coinherence, its principle of existence and a quality which it shares with the larger communities that it epitomizes. [842]

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[837] D. C. Mahan, *An Unexpected Light: Theology and Witness in the Poetry and Thought of Charles Williams, Micheal O'Siadhail, and Geoffery Hill*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series (Eugene, OR: PickWick Publications, 2009), 83.

[838] C. Williams, *The Region of the Summer Stars* (London: Ebenezer Baylis and Son, 1960), 36–41.

[839] M. Russell, 'Idea', 49.

[840] Allchin, 'Charles Williams', 15.

[841] See M. Russell 'Idea', 1–3, 8–9, 49–55. This doctoral dissertation discusses these small communities in the fictional writings of Williams, Tolkien, and Lewis. She demonstrates that their underlying framework is constructed on the principles of the City of God—coinherence.

[842] M. Russell, 'Elements of the Idea of the City in Charles Williams' Arthurian Poetry', *Mythlore* 6, no. 4 (Fall 1979): 14.

Further Russell says that as the failure of the macro-city in Logres becomes evident, the Christian remnant exists in the company of believers as a derived image of the City to come.[843]

In discussing Williams's Arthuriad, Russell observes how Williams presents in this poetic work a very full picture of his thinking about the City. She sees that Williams takes the biblical and theological material from the scriptures, Augustine's ideas from *The City of God*, Dante's ideas from *The Monarchy*, the Arthurian romances and used them in 'his attempt to capture and communicate the moment-to-moment living of doctrine'.[844] In particular, the Arthuraid is Williams's fantasy to demonstrate the poetic nature of coinherence in the larger community, as love in action.

b. Extending Williams's poetic thinking and imagining about the community. Although Williams starts in the Arthuriad with a little group of committed souls, the whole work extends the covenanted coinherent community beyond the small fellowship and unformulated remnant of believers, to the City, to the Kingdom, and, further, to Civilization. We are enabled to move in our thinking and imagining from Camelot and its community to Britain, to Byzantium, and to Christendom. The Arthuriad is an extension of Williams's understanding and vision of coinherence, in a way in which thinking and imagining about Christ and the City unites with thinking and imagining about Christianity and Civilization.

c. The failure of Arthur. Williams describes Arthur's failure as, 'as a tale of the Fall—individual and universal'; and a 'turning of the most sacred mysteries to the immediate security of the self'.[845] Mariann Russell also comments on the fallen city:

> The opposite city of the perverted way is a union based on cupidity, a web of various degrees and kinds of egocentricity. Its chief property is the desire to appropriate the images of creation for self-aggrandizement—chiefly through power and lust.… There is a kind of elemental opposition between the two cities. Conflict does not arise from circumstances so much as circumstances embody a conflict whose true meaning has its roots elsewhere.[846]

d. Extrapolation to the twenty-first century. Charles Moorman projects further still Williams's thinking and imagining about communities, and society, which

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[843] M. Russell, 'Elements', 14.

[844] Ibid., 10.

[845] *AT*, 85.

[846] M. Russell, 'Elements', 14.

are built up in the Arthuriad in the way that has been indicated. He captures Williams's intent and ways and extrapolates them to society, making a contemporary application:

> Williams finds in the Arthurian myth an 'objective correlative' perfectly adapted to his particular conceptions of the nature of society and religion,… envisioning the whole myth as the story of a civilization destroyed by its failure to act upon religious rather than secular values. Williams is able to identify the failures of the Arthurian civilization with those of his own … expressing his concern at the dissolution of religious values in his time. The themes of Williams' remade Arthurian myth thus stem from and are re-applicable to contemporary problems.[847]

As suggested, Moorman uses Williams's descriptive terms and ideas about communities to describe societies and civilizations. But we have also seen that this application is in keeping with Williams's varied use and extension of the image of the City to other sorts of communities, and to civilizations notably in the doctrine of largesse.[848] Nichols makes a similar extension of Williams's ideas of the City. [849] He says that in the Arthuriad, 'the subject of the poetry is "the Matter of Britain"—the spiritual origin and destiny of a civil society—while the sequence is permeated by a wider vision of Christendom'.[850] Both Nichols and Moorman are able to propose that Williams's work on the City is significant for the twenty-first century and viable for understanding the present and the future.

Moorman and Nichols are not alone in their support for a larger vision and application of Williams's Arthuraid. Lewis, in his closing words in the *Arthurian Torso,* also suggests an application to the present and the future:

> It is in one way a wholly modern work, but it has grown spontaneously out of Malory and if the king and the Grail and the begetting of Galahad still serve, and serve perfectly, to carry the twentieth-century poet's meaning, that is because he [Williams] has penetrated more deeply than the old writers themselves into what they also, half consciously, meant and found its significance unchangeable as long as there remains on earth any attempt to unite Christianity and civilization.[851]

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[847] C. Moorman, *Arthurian Triptych: Myth Materials in Charles Williams, C. S. Lewis, and T. S. Eliot* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1960), 151–52.

[848] *IOC*, 102–10, 141.

[849] Nichols, *Spirituality*, 11. Nichols includes in this work a summary of Williams's understanding of the city as an icon of the Kingdom and claims that Williams is one of the master's of spirituality needed for the twenty-first century.

[850] Ibid., 105.

[851] *AT*, 200.

The Arthurian myth is still being adapted internationally for today's audiences. These adaptations are in a new television series entitled *Merlin* and in several movies dealing with the same material, for example, *First Night* and *Arthur*. In addition, various scholarly works are being produced, which Mahan's work so adequately exemplifies. My own opinion is that the material itself, in whatever particular form it appears, deals with the nature of man and is, therefore, timeless. The timelessness of the Arthurian Legend may be one reason why Dante also included some of it in his *Commedia.*[852]

Having examined what Williams means by coinherence and the City, we must also examine what he has written about the breaking down of coinherence—The Fall and the opposite of The City and coinherence, and Babylon, The Infamy and about consequences of both.

[852] Alighieri, *Hell*, *Divine Comedy*, V 136. See Sayers notes 103. Galleot or Galehalt is referred to as the go between for Lancelot and Guinevere in Lancelot du Lac. Francesca and Paolo were reading the story of Lancelot and Guinevere and committed the same sin. Williams said the book should be seen to pander to adultery. See *FOB*, 118.

CHAPTER VII
THE BREAKDOWN OF COINHERENCE: THE FALL—KNOWING GOOD AS EVIL

The choice which so many men have made,
the preference for the existence of their own will
as the final and absolute thing as against the knowledge
(whatever that may be) of some 'great commanded Good'.
The only choice which a man can make in such a crisis
is between submitting to that good or refusing to submit to it,
and if he refuses to submit he does so precisely
because so, and so only, he can hold
'divided empire with heaven's king'.
—Charles Williams

A. Introduction

Mascall recommends Williams's discussions of the Fall because they follow traditional teaching yet take full account of recent research and criticism.[853] The purpose of this chapter is to understand Williams's particular perspective on the Fall and its consequences as a part of his overall theological picture. We will see how seriously Williams treats evil and sin; and also understand more fully why this chapter comes last. In Williams, as in Augustine, evil and sin are a disintegration of humanity, a deprivation of the good, and a breakdown of the coinherence of God and man, of man and man, and thus of community.

Further, his view of the motive for the Incarnation plays a major role, and is crucial to comprehending his overarching theological framework. His understanding of the Incarnation is in contrast to the view that suggests that the primary motive for the Incarnation is to atone for the Fall and its consequences. His perspectives here are set in relation to a larger theological understanding of God's nature, including the fuller implications of divine love for His Creation, and especially for man.

1. Suffering—The Dark Side

Even though the Creator and the Creation are good, many things are horrible and many more are very painful. We have already briefly discussed in Chapter III.F.

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[853] E. L. Mascall, *Christ, the Christian and the Church: A Study of the Incarnation and its Consequences* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1946), 154.

Suffering, Sin, and Evil as part of the consequences of the Fall and obviously what is painful and not good in our world. Williams does not deal in any extended discussion of sickness, disease, birth defects, or natural disasters at either the individual or the group level. He is well aware of them, and some of them appear in his novels, plays, and poetry.

As discussed in III.F, when Williams was a young boy, his father began losing his eyesight, and the company his father worked for closed. This loss was a major blow to the family budget and necessitated a move to St. Albans. He felt the tension and fear his parents faced raising a family.[854] Charles's eyesight was also poor, and he was unable to serve in the military. He was deeply affected by the loss of many friends during two world wars and by the horror he witnessed from the incendiary bombings in London.

He was also aware of the multitudinous suffering in Europe produced by the German invasions. One of Williams's focused concerns is man's responsibility as his brother's keeper; he would consider the appropriate response, in love, to the overwhelming evil of these circumstances, for the individual, for the Church, and for the State. Again he relies on Job to situate much of the unexplained suffering; he puts the responsibility with God. But unlike Job, he also places God in the center of man's pain, sharing it with him in the Incarnation.

Suffering as a result of man's refusal of grace is described in detail in *DIH.* It is a textbook on damnation and the novel referred to most often by scholars and commentators discussing both the nature of vicarious love and the nature of evil. Williams describes how either love or evil develops in the soul as the result of either giving or receiving help from others—loving or refusing to do so—evil. All suffer, but those who refuse love bring pain not only on themselves but on the community as well. In this novel, suffering vicariously begins to reverse the degeneration of personhood and nurtures the coinherence of the community. Williams shows his awareness of the magnitude of man's suffering, and in several of his essays and in *The Forgiveness of Sins* he displays a sensitive grasp of the real problems raised in the context of war. However, his work primarily focuses on the interpersonal nature of our fallenness.

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[854] *CWX*, 12.

2. Incarnation, Fall, and Redemption

For Williams, the Incarnation is not just a rescue mission. He believed, as do others, that the Incarnation is an essential part of the very purpose of Creation. Further, the nature of the Creation itself was related to the nature of God, who is Love. God, true to His nature, wanted a relationship beyond Himself with creatures whose nature was similar to His. The Incarnation was coming with or without a Fall because God wanted to be in fellowship with man. God desired it, even though such fellowship was not necessitated. The Incarnate Son had to be in full likeness with the nature of man, as a man. Williams explains,

> The Fall therefore was not an affair which would necessarily leave the central and glorious Body unaffected.… The Incarnation was the Original from which the lesser living human images derived. It was to be, if it was not already, intimately connected with their flesh; for it was to derive—since he had so decreed—from their flesh; if indeed it did not already in their simultaneity so derive. He had determined to be born of a mother, and that she should be born of hers; and that physical relations of blood should unite him with all men and women that were or were to be. The Fall therefore took place in a nature which was as close as that to his own incarnate Nature.[855]

Williams drew support for this view from Duns Scotus and the Franciscans of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[856] Richard Cross discusses the difference between Aquinas's ascribed motive for the Incarnation (atonement for sin) and Rupert of Deutz's ascribed motive for the Incarnation. Deutz is the source of Scotus's view.[857] Williams says, explaining Scotus, 'The Incarnation is the point of creation, and the divine "reason" for it'.[858] Williams says, 'The world exists for the Incarnation rather than the Incarnation for the world. But the Incarnation became the Redemption for the sake of the World'.[859]

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[855] *HCD*, 130.

[856] *DOD*, 122. Williams does not give specific sources other than names, but this discussion can be found in Scotus' work, *Opus Oxoniense*, iii, Dist. 19 in Westcott's translation. Aquinas view of the motivation for the incarnation is in *Summa Theologiae* 3.1.3 c[1]:5.

[857] R. Cross, *Duns Scotus* (London: OUP, 1999). See chapter 10, 'Motive for the Incarnation' and 'Redemption', 127–32.

[858] *IOC*, 76. See also B. Horne, 'The Christology of Charles Williams', *The Charles Williams Society Newsletter* Spring 2004: 20–24. See also *POT*, 12, 132; *TRL*, 67–68.

[859] C. Williams, 'Fathers and Heretics', *Time and Tide* 21 (November 16, 1940): 1122–23. This work is a book review of *Fathers and Heretics: Studies in Dogmatic Faith* by G. L. Prestige.

Gerard Manley Hopkins also espouses this particular view of the Incarnation, drawing from the theology of Duns Scotus.[860] In this view, God through the Creation and the Incarnation expresses a more positive interpretation of the Incarnation—His own nature—love. God did remedy sin, but more, the Incarnation has provided a rich sense of God's largesse of love.[861] God is pursuing His bride, not just reconciliation with mankind.

Creation is good, but it brings with it the possibilities and problems of choice. For Williams, God has made man like Himself in the ability to choose, and, to some degree, even after the Fall, man is still free to choose good or evil.[862] Williams says that God is responsible for both the problem, which includes sin and suffering of all kinds, and the solution, which gives Christianity's most unique contribution to world religions—the Incarnation of Christ, but it also places a huge responsibility on God:

> It is natural to a doctrine which has not hesitated to make its God responsible for all; responsible in this sense—that knowing with a clarity inconceivable to man everything that would happen in his creation he yet ordained the creation.… There is no split second of the unutterable horror and misery of the world that he did not foresee.… The Omnipotence contemplated that pain and created; that is, he brought its possibility—and its actuality—into existence. 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 the Lord form the light and create darkness: I make peace and create evil: I the Lord do all these things'.
>
> But other religions have gone so far; Christianity has gone further. It has proclaimed that the Omnipotence recognized that responsibility in the beginning and from the beginning, and acted on it—not by infusing grace only but by himself becoming what himself had made, in the condition to which it had, by his consent brought itself. It is this particular act, done of free choice and from love, which makes the Faith unique.[863]

Vernon Hyles, in comparing and contrasting the work of Tolkien, Lewis, and Williams concerning the nature of evil, suggests that Williams (like Tolkien) uses power as the metaphor for evil or sin. But he notes that Williams says the ultimate power is grace. However, this grace also contains the terror that is inseparable from the

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[860] *POT*, 12.

[861] *POT*, 132. See also *HCD*, 119–20; *IOC*, 140–41.

[862] Man's ability to choose obviously has differing views within Christendom and it is one of the theological discussions that Williams illuminated.

[863] *HCD*, 98–99. See also Isa. 45:7.

good.[864] The terror of the good of grace is evident in the hymn writer's words: 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved'.[865] Hyles agrees with Williams's understanding of the good and of the reorientation of knowledge as a result of the Fall: 'For Williams, sin is perceiving the good as evil. If this [sin is perceiving good as evil] is true, then according to Williams's ontological structure, redemption is not just knowledge, but a reorientation of that knowledge'.[866] In Williams's view, as a result of the Fall, we do not just perceive good as evil but experience good as evil. For Williams, knowledge of good and evil is experiential as discussed in section B. The Nature of the Fall.

B. The Nature of the Fall[867]

Williams gives two reasons why we have come to believe in the Fall: 'One is the Judaeo-Christian tradition; the other is the facts of present human existence',[868] or, one might say, the nature of human experience. In an ironic twist, Williams says, 'If heaven is a name for a state of real perfection, we ourselves have most remarkably, "come down from heaven"'.[869] Williams discusses two falls. He notes, 'The Church has never defined the nature of the aboriginal catastrophe but has accepted the tale'.[870] Williams does not spend much time on any discussion of the aboriginal catastrophe, referring to the fall of some angels, which occurred in the heavens. He does say that our awareness of it has been explained and increased by Milton's poetry.[871] But before Milton, Williams says, the popularity of the legend advanced the excuse and pseudo-answer for the problem of the revolt in the good by the good (some angels in revolt against their creator), giving man a place to put his fears and hate rather than ascribing them to his

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[864] V. Hyles, 'On the Nature of Evil: The Cosmic Myths of Lewis, Tolkien, and Williams', *Mythlore* 13, no. 4 (Summer 1987): 13.

[865] John Newton 'Amazing Grace'

[866] Ibid. See also Carter-Day, 27–30.

[867] The discussion in the thesis will refer to the fall of man as the Fall.

[868] *HCD*, 18.

[869] Ibid.

[870] Ibid.

[871] Ibid.

own failures.[872] In Williams's opinion, ascribing our sin to the Devil has reintroduced into Christian emotions a dualism that the Christian intellect has denied.[873]

We will first examine part of Williams's description of the Creation: primarily, man's relationship with the Creator and Creation before the Fall. Second, we will explore the prohibition and temptation. Third, we will see what Williams picks out as the major consequences of man's decisions and their impact upon man.

1. The Good of Creation

At the Creation all is in a state of good; a wonderful coinherence exists between Creator and Creation. All Creation is in its proper relation to the Creator and to itself. The Creator acknowledges that all Creation is good. All that is known by man is good, even with the prohibition not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Further, Williams insists on a residual goodness in unregenerate man after the Fall. He believes that man still has remnants of the original pattern of goodness derived from the Creator. But he also insists that the unregenerate man is deeply corrupt at the same time:

> The Apostolic and Catholic Faith declared the Redemption of the fallen nature, but that Redemption was on the principles and to the principles of our first unfallen nature. Man could not longer be innocent; he was corrupt, and his best efforts were, but for the new grace, doomed to death. But his best efforts were, and are, of no other kind than had been decreed. His blood might be tainted, but the source from which it sprang was still the same. His natural life was still, and is now, a disordered pattern of the only pattern, a confused type of the one original; it is still full of glory and of peace, as well as of bloodshed and despair. It contends within itself. The most extreme goodness may be found in it and asserted of it—so long as the absolute invalidity of it apart from the new life is also declared. The absolute domination of the new life may be asserted, so long as the accidental goodness of the old is never denied.…
>
> Something very much like heroic sanctity exists.… Vigil, heroism, martyrdom, vicarious life, are common to man. In so far as they are possible outside the Church, they are elements of man's original nature operative within him in spite of, but under conditions of … the Fall.[874]

He sums up his view with an enigmatic statement: 'Nature and grace are categories of one Identity'.[875] For Williams, the good of the natural life of man is an analogous aspect

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[872] Ibid., 18–19.

[873] Ibid., 19.

[874] *IOC*, 78.

[875] Ibid.

of grace. It is not in itself salvific, but it is part of the architecture of man's ontology. Many acts of vicarious substitutionary sacrifice are not salvific. Soldiers, parents, and many others perform them routinely. Nature and grace are wholly different things, but they are derived from the same source in the Creator. Grace is divine and transforming, while nature is only analogous to the pattern of grace. Williams supports what he is saying by citing William Law, who presents the view that by grace God gives man the ability to make right and good decisions in many areas of life, though he is still unregenerate. Even with the unregenerate, 'Those principles [sacrificing vicariously] are in our nature because of His'.[876] This gift would be preparatory or prevenient grace, which is not saving grace. It is not Pelagianism but is distinguished from the extreme view of depravity of Augustinianism.

2. Antagonism in the Good

Sin and evil are grounded in the Good, determining the character of the Fall by which sin and evil enter the world. Williams has his own way of expressing the parasitical nature of sin and its derivation: 'Deep, deeper than we believe, lie the roots of sin; it is in the good that they exist; it is in the good that they thrive and send up sap and produce the black fruit of hell'.[877] Sin and evil can only live from what is real, alive, and good. They have no life of their own; they derive their nature from the good. They use, consume, and destroy the other, rather than enriching the other with life. Shideler observes that both Williams and Dante follow a version of the Christian faith that affirms sin as grounded in the good, constituting the perversion of the good.[878] She says that Williams's discussion of sin continually refers to the glory from which it is derived.[879] In his understanding, Williams also follows Aquinas and Augustine: 'Evil is a privation of the good', and 'evil can neither be defined nor known except by good'.[880]

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[876] *IOC*, 80. He uses William Law to support the view of a continued likeness to the nature of God remaining in man in his fallen state. Law suggests heroism, when one sacrifices his life for another. As already noted, these vicarious sacrifices explore Williams's view of exchange, substitution, and coinherence in the natural sense as analogous to the Divine life, but not salvific. For instance, economic affairs, childbirth, and burden bearing for others are in Williams's opinion examples of the sacramental nature of life.

[877] *DOD*,108.

[878] *TRL*, 113.

[879] Ibid.

[880] *HCD*, 20.

Horne further notes that Williams agrees with both Augustine and Aquinas that sin is located in the will of man.[881]

With the Fall came changes in both man and the universe as reflected in the variety of phrases that Williams uses to characterize the consequences of the Fall: 'schism in the universe',[882] 'antagonism in the good',[883] 'deprivation of the good',[884] and 'knowing good as evil'.[885] These are among the many changes that affect man's new mode of knowing; they all have ways of focusing on man because man is at the center of knowing (experiencing) good and evil.

Williams again refers to Augustine and Aquinas on how God knows evil intellectually and in holding that evil is not of itself knowable but is known by the privation of good.[886] This gain in knowledge (experiencing evil) is a loss and is bad for man.

As discussed in Chapter II.B.3.c. History, one of the largely negative *gains* of this schism is the psychological experience of the contradictions or impossibilities, which shatter man's existence. Horne observes how Williams's understanding of the experience of contradiction and impossibility is related to his understanding of the Fall.[887] The inner pain of this schism is what the contradiction or impossibility feels like in existential terms, as in Troilus's experience referred to in Chapter II.[888] It feels like loss, death, grief, betrayal, or extreme alienation.[889] The schism in the universe also carries with it a schism in reason and knowledge.

So Williams says, 'The contradiction in the nature of man is completely established'.[890] This antagonism also spreads throughout the Creation and the whole Creation groans:

> Sorrow and conception; the evil of the ground; the sorrow of life; the hardship of toil; all things in antagonism and schism; love a distress and labour a grief.…

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[881] Horne, *Imagining Evil*, 109.

[882] *HCD*, 20.

[883] Ibid.

[884] Ibid.

[885] Ibid., 22.

[886] *HCD*, 20.

[887] Horne, *Imagining Evil*, 111–12.

[888] Ibid., 120.

[889] Ibid.

[890] *HCD*, 22.

> He knows good and he knows good as evil. These two capacities will always be present in him; his love will be twisted with anti-love, with anger, with spite, with jealousy, with alien desires.… There is no corner into which antagonism to pure joy has not broken.[891]

When we turn to explore more fully man's place in the Fall, we see that at one level the most significant aspect was the loss of the Divine life from within man. For man, goodness was a derivative of his relationship with God. The loss of Divine life from within man brings with it other losses: a disintegration of community, and the social body; and of the coinherence of God and man. Williams says that when the description of the new creation in Ephesians 4:15–16 is reversed, it is a description of the Fall.[892]

Sooner or later we come to the matter of truth and knowledge. The increase in knowledge and man's inability to understand what had happened are part of Williams's perception of the Fall. Adam's preference for the lie is a telling reality. Knowing good as evil, man now has an innate preference for the lie. The acceptance of a lie is the acceptance of an illusion. Thus, when the way of knowing was changed by not trusting God, man altered and lost not only the relationship with God but also the corresponding appropriate relationship to the rest of creation. This change thus impacts the epistemic relationship with God and Creation. For man, choosing to know good in a way other than the way in which it was created to be known brought about experiencing the deprivation of good in some degree in all things.[893]

3. The Implied Increase in Knowledge

Williams's picture of the knowledge of the Fall is more complex. The nature of the Fall is related to the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and that it supposedly involves an increase in knowledge. Further, 'that increase … is not merely to know more, but to know in another method'.[894] With a serpentine deceitfulness, the serpent subtly insinuates an increase in knowledge. Mascall interprets Williams's view of man's desire for an increase in knowledge as 'the desire to know both good and evil from the inside, as it were, and therefore as the deliberate contravention of the will of

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[891] Ibid.

[892] *HCD*, 124. Eph. 4: 15–16 says, 'Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work' (NIV).

[893] *HCD*, 20.

[894] Ibid., 19.

God in order to gain this interior knowledge of sin'.[895] So, in a terrible sense, knowledge is increased by experiencing both good and evil. Until the Fall, Adam and Eve had only experienced good.

Many of the preceding paragraph's points are captured by Williams's following quotation. He also follows the Genesis story and portrays this occurrence (the increase in knowledge) as a coming to know 'as gods':

> The nature of the Fall … is clearly defined. The 'fruit of the tree' is to bring an increase of knowledge. That increase, however, is, and is desired as being, of a particular kind. It is not merely to know more, but to know in another method. It is primarily the advance (if it can be so called) from knowing good to knowing good and evil; it is (secondarily) the knowing 'as gods': A certain knowledge was, by its nature, confined to divine beings. Its communication to man would be, by its nature, disastrous to man. The Adam had been created and were 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. That relation was part of the good they enjoyed. But they knew also that the knowledge in the Omnipotence was greater than their own; they understood that in some way it knew 'evil'. [896]

However, it is not clear how we should interpret the phrase 'as gods'. Williams says that this knowledge is confined to divine beings. In my understanding, he is saying that man cannot be as God in that He is divine, so the communication of this knowledge would be impossible and the attempt to gain it would be disastrous to man. But man can be as God in the sense that Christ describes in reminding the Pharisees, 'Is it not written in your law, "I have said you are gods"'.[897] In a certain sense man is like a god yet not divine. According to Christ, there is an appropriate sense for man to be as god. Adam and Eve were already as gods in the right sense and were tempted to want something more, that would destroy that likeness. The serpent said, '… You will be like God, knowing good and evil'.[898] They were tempted to know evil in a way they were not meant to know it—by experience.

Christians are called to imitate God in love,[899] but seeking to *be* God leads to the drive for autonomy, which leads to an unwillingness to live submissively and

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[895] Mascall, *Christ, the Christian, and the Church*, 139–40.

[896] *HCD*, 19, 122. Williams frequently uses Patmore's interpretation of 'You shall be as gods' from *The Rod,* Homo XVII, 131.

[897] John 10:34–35. Ps. 82:6 says, 'I said, "You are 'gods'; you are all sons of the Most High"' (NIV).

[898] Gen. 3:5.

[899] Eph. 5:1.

interdependently, which renders one less and less capable of love. The drive for autonomy is a deadly illusion, as Bultmann says, 'The ultimate sin reveals itself to be the false assumption of receiving life not as the gift of the Creator but procuring it by one's own power, of living from one's self rather than from God'.[900]

Man chose to know good also as an opportunity for evil. In Williams's opinion, man now knows *as gods,* in a certain sense, but not in the single mode, intellectually, as God wanted him to understand the possibility of evil. Rather, he now knows both good and good in its privation (evil) after two modes: not only intellectually but also experientially. Williams says, 'All difference consists in the mode of knowledge'.[901] Man knows what good is like both in intellect and in experience. but he is not experiencing it consistently in the desired way because he has also chosen to know what evil is like both in experience and in intellect. He is enslaved to know this reality in this manner as a constant and ever-present antagonism within himself.[902]

Williams calls the Fall 'the myth or story of the alteration in knowledge'.[903] In his opinion, then, the Fall was not simply an act of disobedience. The idea that the Fall is a result of simple disobedience is championed by the Church, but Williams suggests it contains more, but he does not discuss it except that it has something to do with the deeper issues of trust. He has a much more complex view and yet unexplained, as Horne indicates, paraphrasing Lewis,

> The Story in Genesis is a story (full of the deepest suggestion) about a magic apple of knowledge; but in the developed doctrine the inherent magic of the apple has quite dropped out of sight, and the story is simply one of disobedience. I have the deepest respect even for Pagan myths, still more for myths in Holy Scripture. I therefore do not doubt that the version which emphasizes the magic apple, and brings together the trees of life and knowledge, contains a deeper and subtler truth than the version which makes the apple simply and solely a pledge of obedience. But I assume that the Holy Spirit would not have allowed the latter to grow up in the Church and win the assent of great doctors unless it also was true and useful as far as it went.[904]

Williams develops quite a full account in the change in knowledge, but he does not discuss the possibilities that lie behind the disobedience. His hints about the tree of the

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[900] R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1951), I, 232.

[901] *HCD*, 21.

[902] Ibid., 22.

[903] Ibid., 17ff.

knowledge of good and evil are not developed: somehow the tree of the knowledge of good and evil has not been fully explored.[905]

4. Ramifications of Experiencing Good as Evil

This section looks at some further extensions of experiencing good as evil and takes up others as it focuses on the character of sin in the following sections. As previously noted, Williams explores the understanding that this knowledge is existential and experiential and complex.[906] Three major ramifications come from experiencing good as evil: one, the deprivation of the presence of God within themselves, which is a breach in the coinherence of God and man,; two, the perversion of love; and, three, the attempted change of orientation. Adam and Eve have perverted the way of love. They were first oriented on God, not on themselves but now they are oriented on themselves.

Borrowing, interpreting, and fashioning from Dante, Williams further develops his own thinking on sin and the change in the mode of knowledge. The consequences of sin and the change in the mode of knowledge were not just the deprivation of the presence of God but the tainting of love and, thus, its perversion. Man's love was tainted with *luxuria* or *lussuria*—luxury, indulgence, self-yielding, which is a part of sin, and the opening of Hell.[907] Williams describes the adultery of Paolo and Francesca as a forbidden love or lust.[908] For Williams this transgression is not simply the formal sin of adultery; it is deeper, it is a betrayal of love.[909] He also calls it a 'shrinking from the adult love demanded of them, and their refusal of the opportunity of Glory'.[910]

The experience of good as evil has a further ramification—shame. As a result of losing their relationship with God, Adam and Eve lost, in part, the joy and delight of

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[904] *STCW*, 118f. See also C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: MacMillian, 1977), 59-60.

[905] Lewis and Patmore both make interpretative suggestions about the tree of knowledge of good and evil in their works, without much discussion.

[906] Cavaliero defends Williams's view of sin and knowledge and credits some of it to the influence of Milton. See *POT*, 130. Cavaliero says, 'Williams's exposition of *Paradise Lost* … reveals the debt he owed to Milton in his interpretation of the Fall, a debt clearly evident in his dictum that "Hell is always inaccurate"'. See *IOC*, 30.

[907] *FOB*, 118.

[908] Ibid. See also Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy,* Hell, Canto V.

[909] *ORT*, 100.

[910] *FOB*, 118. To be adult in love is not only expected in heaven but on earth as well. To be adult in love is to recognize and work out in life the affection for and from another and to keep the relationship within its appropriate boundaries.

their physical natures.[911] They began experiencing the expanded consequences of a new perspective and a feeling that was undesirable and as their nature changed, they came to know shame:

> They made themselves aprons. It was exactly what they had determined. Since then it has often been thought that we might recover the single and simple knowledge of good in that respect by tearing up the aprons. It has never … been found that the return is quite so easy. To revoke the knowledge of unlovely shame can only be done by discovering a loveliness of shame (not necessarily that shame, but something more profound) in the good.[912]

Williams also remarks that another new element was added to increase their experiential knowledge—fear and its attendant emotions:

> It is in the garden and they are afraid. As they have a shameful modesty towards each other, so they have an evil humility towards the Creator. They do not think it tolerable that they should be seen as they are.[913]

Man also loses, in some sense, his power of accurate reasoning. Williams borrows Dante's expression '"the loss of the good of intellect'.[914] These losses will be discussed further in the next section.

C. Sin

Williams says, 'Sin then had come in. But what then is sin? It is easier to talk about, to preach about, to rebuke, perhaps even to repent, than to understand'.[915] Williams has a subtle and multifaceted view of sin. Sin's destructive nature has many forms. First, he emphasizes a deeper self-centeredness that he thinks is uglier than immorality even though it includes it:

> They can introduce their own prudence and wisdom into the nature of the good. It is something deeper than impiety or immorality, though it involves them. It is the preference of their own wisdom; it is sin.
>
> Sin has many forms, but the work of all is the same—the preference of an immediately satisfying experience of things to the believed pattern of the universe; one may even say, the pattern of the glory. It has, in the prophets as everywhere, two chief modes of existence: impiety against man and impiety against God—the refusal of others and the insistence on the self.[916]

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[911] *HCD*, 21.

[912] Ibid.

[913] Ibid., 22.

[914] *FOB*, 113–14. See Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy, Hell* III 18.

[915] *HCD* 128.

[916] Ibid., 35–36.

Williams uses the phrase 'the pattern of the glory', which is one of his repeated thematic expressions and is at the heart of what he is trying to communicate throughout his work. In this phrase he points broadly to the way God does what He does and is what He is and to the working out of His will in Creation. The handiwork of God is all around, and sin is an antagonism to and a deconstruction of its coinherence—the pattern of the glory. The pattern of the glory is the image of the nature of God—love. The Pattern characterizes the inter-dependent perichoretic relationships of the Trinity, and the nature of the analogous relationships that man is supposed to have with God and with others, in the web of the city and in the world. Jesus is the pattern of the glory.[917] Sin destroys the pattern of coinherence between man and God, between man and man, and then in all relations to the creation.

Looking ahead, Williams focuses on what he calls the supernatural part of man as that which is responsible for sin. He suggests that the body is not the culprit for the decisions of the spirit of man. His emphasis then is on the more subtle and hidden aspects of sin. We will explore first the attempted change in derivation, second, the schism within man himself, and, third, the loss of the good of intellect.[918] We will also examine the corporate effect of man's decisions upon the community. Williams does not deal substantially or creatively with the transmission of sin.[919]

1. The Attempted Change of Derivation and Orientation

This attempted change relates to knowledge, and we will continue to explore it here as a central feature of sin. Man tries, without the power, to change the source of his ontology from God as the ultimate source to man himself as his own source. In trying to make this change, man loses God from his personhood and his resulting state of being is confusion because man lost the working of the web of diagrammatized glory—the exchanged derivation.[920] Man is lost. That confusion and disorientation goes with man's

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[917] Williams, 'Seed of Adam', *CP*, 171. He says, 'Christ brings us all to the sight of the pattern of glory which is only he'. See also *HCD*, 8, 51, 57.

[918] Williams borrowed 'The loss of the good of intellect' from Alighieri, *Divine Comedy,* Hell III, 18. He discusses the repercussions on man's reasoning as a result of willful sin. See *FOB*, 113ff. See also Rom. 1:21.

[919] Not to say that he does not mention it or have some interest, but the creative perspective is not there. See *FOB*, 94; *HCD*, 124; *CP*, 98; *IOC*, 77*,* 148.

[920] *HCD*, 121–22.

rejection of the fundamental facts of reality. These are the facts concerning the nature of God and all other facts of Creation as they relate to God.[921]

As Adam and Eve attempted to change the nature of their derivation, they began to know (experience) good in deprivation instead of in the way they should know it.[922] The deprivation is a part of and stems from their lack of a right relationship with God, which changes their relationship to the rest of the good of Creation. This change made their relationship to the Creation no longer good in the way it was before. Their decision was an attempted change of orientation and carried with it a change in relationship: 'This decision has, inevitably, changed the relationship of the Adam to the Omnipotence'.[923] Man attempts to divorce himself from his source, but that is impossible. Williams portrays man's attempted divorce from God as an attempt by man (as wife) to deracinate her life from that of her husband (God) and separate from her husband. She turns from Him, but He is still her root and still loves her.[924] Williams compares man's sin to Satan's: 'The sin of man is that he seeks to make himself God'; he will be, by himself, the centre of all the derivations. This, it has been said, is the sin of Satan.[925]

When we try to change the center of our orientation and our derivation from God to ourselves, we fail. We try, make a mess, and confusion and illusion result. Man does not gain a new derivation but produces a perverse distortion of himself: man turns in on himself—*homo incurvatus in se*.[926] Our nature becomes increasingly closed instead of open, and we attempt an impossible change—to derive ourselves, from ourselves. Williams writes, the attempt at self-derivation is a 'suicide in the soul'.[927] Reasoning is increasingly self-absorbed, and we become egotistical and narcissistic, in these ways exemplifying the loss of the good of intellect. This loss also results in the devaluation of others as persons and lessens our capacity for love. The resulting degeneration and

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[921] *IOC*, 154.

[922] *HCD*, 20.

[923] Ibid., 22.

[924] Ibid., 128.

[925] *IOC*, 145. He quotes first from Reinhold Niebuhr's *The Nature and Destiny of Man: I. Human Nature* and then from *Malleus Maleficarum* by Heinrich Kramer. God allows choice and its consequences, even if it makes us somewhat like Satan. Jesus tackled this issue face to face with some religious leaders when he suggested that their father was the devil, the father of lies (John 8:38–44).

[926] See M. Jenson, *The Gravity of Sin: Augustine, Luther and Barth on Homo Incurvatus in Se* (London: T & T Clark, 2006).

[927] *DIH*, 134.

distortion of the derivative nature of reality are a great shock. Williams says, 'The web loosed itself from its centre—also by free choice'.[928] And man forgot that all things derived from God.[929]

2. Apostasy in Spirit

Williams argues that in the garden or elsewhere the soul of man and his will sins. The body is not to blame as the will of man; it has to follow the will of man:

> We have, in fact, only lost proper comprehension of matter by an apostasy in spirit. Matter and 'nature' have not, in themselves, sinned; what has sinned is spirit.… The will of man sinned. But the will of man was a spiritual quality; it was in his soul. It was that power in him which we call the soul that sinned. It was not the power which we call the flesh. It was therefore the 'supernatural' which sinned. The 'natural', as we now call it, did not. They cannot, of course, be separated. But if, in terminology, they can be, then it is the matter of our substance which has remained faithful, and the immaterial which has not.[930]

Since man was unwilling to trust God, he sinned in his spirit and his flesh followed suit. Man is then redeemed in the flesh by the Holy Spirit and through the flesh and blood of Christ. Williams continues throughout his entire canon to emphasize the work of the Spirit of God in and through the flesh of man.

3. Distancing Ourselves from God: The Circle and Its Circumference

Williams frequently refers to a particular quote attributed to Bonaventura, which is an expression of the omnipresence of God: 'God is a circle whose centre is everywhere and the circumference is nowhere'.[931] He also borrows another analogy of a circle from Dante. This analogy expresses man's defiance of God's will: 'I [God] am like the center of a circle, to which all the points of the circumference bear the same relation; you [Dante] however, are not'.[932] Dante explains that the center of this circle is where God is, and man is not in the center with God. Thus, man, being on the circumference or margin of the circle, is out of a proper relation to God and his neighbor. Sometimes Williams combines the two references to explain man's

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[928] *HCD*, 122.

[929] Ibid.

[930] *IOC*, 76–77.

[931] *HCD*, 94, 98. See also *FOB*, 24, 48.

[932] D. Cervigni and E. Vasta, E., trans., *Vita Nuova: Dante Alighieri* 65, 12.4.

marginalization of God.[933] He describes the perversion of sin: 'The alternative to being with Love at the centre of the circle is to disorder the circumference for our own purposes'.[934] This perversion renders one self-centered and wounds others. These references suggest not only that God is everywhere but that man should also be in the center of God's will in order for man to be in proper relation to God and his neighbor.

Williams implies that marginalizing God is always the manner of going astray. Further, he says, 'This is the perversion of the image'.[935] When man is on the margin, he is a misrepresentation of God and truth, a perversion of the image, mis-communicating God's true nature—Love.

4. The Failure to Live for Others and from Others

Man enters a willful state of separation from others by refusing to help or be helped by others. Williams has an interesting interpretation of the Cain and Abel story, which relates to our failure of responsibility for other persons—of being our brother's keeper. This failure causes a breakdown in the coinherent nature of what Williams calls the city and the web of glory. The premise of the web is that life is sustained by the vicarious sacrifices of one for the other: 'All life is to be vicarious—at least all life in the kingdom of heaven is to be vicarious'.[936] Choosing not to live vicariously, not to live coinherently, with our neighbors, deliberately leads us to use people. This willful failure is a violation of the nature of God—Love. It is another example of the fundamental teaching given in several parables: the wicked servant, the sheep and the goats, and the priest and the Levite in the parable of the good Samaritan.

While discussing one's personal responsibility for others and the community's failure of responsibility for social justice, Williams cites several instances in the prophets where the people of Israel are found guilty of abusing their own poor and weak. He also brings to bear several passages in the prophets (most notably the passage that discusses Ezekiel's story of the hole in the wall of the temple courts), exposing the

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[933] *HCD*, 76–77. He also uses Bonaventura's reference to describe the presence of God in the new City; *caritas;* the web of glory; and the nature of the kingdom, *HCD*, 95–98.

[934] *FOB*, 48. See also *TRL*, 113.

[935] *FOB*, 48.

[936] *HCD*, 86. Williams says, 'So much Cain saw, and could not guess that the very purpose of his offering was to make his brother's acceptable'. See also *HCD*, 25.

hypocrisy of the religious community.[937] Horribly, the very people God delivered from slavery were enslaving their own people. The victim had become the victimizer. Williams says, 'The lucidity of "I am that I am" is to be carried into all relations'.[938] The God of the Bible is Lord and must be so in all the circumstances of interpersonal relations and dealings. The corporate failure to help others results in the extension of evil.

5. The Infamy:[939] Gomorrah—Corporate Evil[940]

Corporate evil as Williams calls it is '"the grand Infamy"—horror of human tyranny, cold and cruel. That Infamy has always been found both within and without the Church; it is always the enemy of the Church, and betrays it where it does not deny'.[941] We have so far dealt with the effects of sin on the individual. For Williams, the Infamy and Gomorrah are synonymous terms for the state, which results when sin and evil destroy the coinherence of the City. Victor Hill suggests that Williams uses Gomorrah as an allusion to a group who has rejected reality and has chosen to live in utter self-absorption and illusion.[942] Further, he writes, 'The Infamy then denies inclusion.… The Infamy proceeds to exclude, and then, so far as it can, to enslave or to annihilate'.[943] Williams says, 'There is, in the end, no compromise between the two; there is only choice'.[944]

Gomorrah has no vicarious exchange, no living for another, nor in another, and from another only in the sense of using the other for one's own profit. It nurtures no mutual interdependent giving and receiving, only manipulation and taking. This use of another perverts and destroys the coinherence. Since the acts and degeneration of sin remove, by degrees, our willingness and capacity to love, they will also have further consequences for the group—the city. Similarly, the *Infamy* can refer to any group—

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[937] *HCD*, 37. See Ezek. 8.

[938] Ibid., 38.

[939] The Infamy, set in contrast to the City, is one of the terms that Williams uses to describe the corporate destructiveness of sin. In Chapter VI we observed that vicarious life is the nature of the City. Sin is not vicarious but self-centered; it is a developing parasite. See *DOD*, 201–05.

[940] *DIH*, 211f.

[941] *IOC*, 102.

[942] V. Hill, 32.

[943] *IOC*, 105–06.

[944] Ibid., 103.

city, church, state, where the goods of coinherence have broken down. The Infamy is not a coinherence of persons. It is not an interdependent relationship or place of exchange. Williams says, 'When all is said and done there is only Zion or Gomorrah'.[945] The Infamy is cold, cruel. There is no compromise between the Infamy and the Church, and it is an outrage upon the physical Image of Christ.[946]

In history, the City of God and the Infamy temporarily coexist within the city of man, similar to the field in the parable of the wheat and tares.[947] This evil state is also referred to in scripture as a woman—Babylon the Great.[948] As Christ did, she also drinks a cup, but she devours those to whom she is in relation.[949] Babylon is the commodification of one's brother or sister. Babylon the Great City, the Infamy, has its roots in the behavior of Cain, who refused to give his offering vicariously, and thus entering into his brother's labor.[950] Jacques Ellul demonstrates how the roots of Cain develop into Babylon, which is everything that the Redeemed City is not.[951] War further extends corporate evil on a greater scale.

6. Extending Corporate Evil—War

Williams examines his contemporary situation during the Second World War. In this matter, some of Williams's most seminal thinking is found in his essay 'The Redeemed City' and in *The Forgiveness of Sins*. He sees different responsibilities for the Church and for the State, resulting in tensions that arise from the fact that a person has roles and duties in the Church that are different from those he has as a citizen of the state. The general responsibility is to love your neighbor, but the working out of that responsibility is very different for different groups in which a person may belong and bear responsibilities. These responsibilities and tensions place us in a paradoxical quandary. In order to love others, sometimes you must kill others:

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[945] *DIH*, 174f.

[946] *IOC*, 102–03.

[947] Matt. 13:24–30.

[948] Rev. 17:5; 18:16.

[949] Ibid., 17:4.

[950] *IOC*, 104.

[951] J. Ellul, *The Meaning of the City*, trans. Dennis Pardee (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 1ff.

> What is the duty of the church-folk as church-folk? Precisely the opposite of their duty as nationals. Their duty as nationals involves separation from and killing of German nationals. Their duty as church-folk involves union with and spiritual dependence on Germans. Both duties must be fulfilled. It is possible and probable that one duty should be fulfilled… But neither can be separated from the other; each exists co-inherently in the other.[952]

He goes on to point out the respective responsibilities of the State and the Church in relation to the Treaty of Versailles, the invasion of Poland, and the removal of Hitler from Poland. At the same time he wants to make his readers aware that they are both part of the problem and the solution.[953]

Shideler writes about the personal conflicts this quandary may create: 'There is no middle ground. The body cannot act both ways at once. The whole man can strike in grief and pity and compassion, but his arm strikes or it does not'.[954] Williams describes the dilemma:

> Must we … consent that men shall be killed and maimed? The answer to that is simple—we must. We may do it by ourselves inflicting death and torment on others (by bombs or however), or we may do it by abandoning others to death and torment (in concentration camps or wherever), but one way or the other we have to consent by our mere acts.… Is there any direction? Even to quote 'Thou shall not kill' does not finally help, for we have been taught that consciously to abandon men to death is, in fact, to kill. To hate is to kill; to kill is to kill; and to leave to be killed is to kill; yes, though (like the lawyer in the gospel) we do not know who our neighbor is.[955]

Williams goes on to try to deal with the conflicting and contradictory responsibilities one has in loving one's neighbor. He discusses at length the command of Christ to forgive and how our future destination depends on how we respond to Christ's teaching in the Lord's Prayer. In *The Forgiveness of Sins*, he explores the nature of forgiveness in-depth. He reflects on the actual difficulties of living a Christian life. He also wrote a few days before his own death, quoting Reinhold Niebuhr:

> 'Some of the greatest perils to democracy arise from fanaticism of moralists who are not conscious of the corruption of self-interest in their professed ideals.' 'Democracy requires religious humility.' Humility means not thinking yourself better than Germans.[956]

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[952] *IOC*, 116.

[953] Ibid., 116–17.

[954] *TRL*, 203.

[955] *HCD*, 172–73.

[956] C. Williams, 'The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness, *Time and Tide* 5 (May 1945), MS 312, 2-3, Wade Center.

D. Damnation and Hell

The inscription that the greatest European poet imagined over the gate of Hell declared that the place of 'the sorrowing city, eternal grief, and the people of the lost' was built by 'Divine Power, highest Wisdom, and original Love'.[957] Clearly, damnation and Hell must be the belief of Christians because Christians believe that all that exists was created by that Power, Wisdom, and Love. If Hell exists, Hell was so created. The question is whether Hell exists.[958]

Hell and damnation are still very popular. Interestingly and provocatively, on the front cover of the first issue of *The Economist* for 2013 is a colorful picture of many of our world's prominent leaders in a Dantean inferno. They are each labeled with what an editor thought was their particular sin. Following the front page is a rather lengthy article describing some of the major religions' thinking on the subject.[959] The unnamed staff writer says that the whole idea is absurd, but if it is merely absurd, then one wonders why an international business magazine spent four pages to elaborate on a fanatical lie. More interesting is that the major religions of the world all have a Hell, although holding somewhat different views about it.

Horne notes that Williams returns to the possibility of Hell repeatedly but not in a morbid way. For Williams, the universal sense of loss, futility, and horror also makes the conception of joy and beatitude a deep and clear realization.[960] Horne quotes Williams, 'Heaven and hell define each other, but heaven can exist without hell and hell cannot exist without heaven since heaven's free love is its hell'.[961] Horne says, 'The constant recurrence of the theme of damnation is evidence of the seriousness with which Williams viewed the fallen condition of man'.[962]

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[957] C. Williams, 'Miscellaneous notes on Heaven and Hell, n.d., MS 322, 1, Wade Center. See Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy, Hell* III 1-9.

[958] Ibid., 1.

[959] 'Into Everlasting Fire', *The Economist: Special Holiday Double Issue* December 22, 2012–January 4, 2013: 25–28.

[960] *STCW*, 121.

[961] Ibid. Horne (quoting from Williams, *Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind*) goes on to say that hell is significant for the implications of beatitude: 'Close attention to his work shows that just as, theologically, he believed hell to be "dependent on" and defined by heaven (and not vice versa) so his own conception of hell grows out of a clear and deep realization of the possibility of beatitude—the life of heaven'.

[962] Ibid.

Williams does not give much attention to imaging or to conceiving an actual place, although he does describe Hell as a state of void.[963] We will see that his theological contribution and focus is on the process of self-damnation as a chosen disintegration of personhood and the breakdown of coinherence. The novel *DIH* may be Williams's best theological presentation of damnation.[964] *DIH* is the novel to which theologians and biblical scholars most often refer concerning the issue of damnation. However, he describes Hell as

> … a place where one lives without learning, where no courtesy or integrity could any more be fined or clarified.… The fantasy of life without knowledge materialized… a shell of existence, it seemed that life, withdrawn from all normal habits of which the useless memory was still drearily sustained.… [965]

Williams uses a Dantean picture of the degeneration of personhood. He describes the diabolical nature of man, which comes into being by man's own actions, when he knows better, and refuses help, continuing to sin willingly. Sin not only affects the way man thinks and feels, but it also affects his whole ontology as a person and the structure of the web of interpersonal relations. Man as the image of God becomes less of a person as a result of sin; and the web of coinherence is torn apart.

1. People Choose, God Does Not Send: Second Chances

Choice is a critical issue for Williams. He says, 'This is the only method by which God can praise his creatures; if they are not to be allowed to choose, neither can they enjoy his will nor he theirs'.[966] Williams insists that God does not send anyone to Hell; man chooses his own way by his refusals of help from others and his refusal to give help to others. Auden also endorses Williams's view:

> Charles Williams succeeds, where even Dante, I think fails, in showing us that nobody is ever *sent* to hell; he or she, insists on going there. If, as Christians believe, God is love, then in one sense he is not omnipotent, for he cannot compel his creatures to accept his love without ceasing to be himself. The wrath of God is not *his* wrath but the way in which those feel his love who refuse it,

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[963] *DIH*, 221–22.

[964] Cavaliero says, 'There is no parallel for it in the English fiction' (*POT*, 79).

[965] C. Williams, '*Et in Sempiternum Pereant*', *The London Mercury* 33, no. 194 (December 1935): 155. He emphasizes the eternal significance of time, man's choices, and the danger of not responding to the simplest opportunity of grace.

[966] Williams, *Reason and Beauty,* 97.

> and the right of refusal is a privilege which not even the Creator can take from them.[967]

This choice is one that has to be made repeatedly: The road to Hell is protracted and takes time and many steps. At each step is a choice to be made. Auden goes on to say, 'I know of no other writer, living or dead, who has given us so convincing and terrifying portraits of damned souls as Charles Williams'.[968]

So, aided by grace, people can also choose to turn around and not continue in the direction they are going. In Williams's short story, *Et In Sempiternum Pereant*, Lord Arglay is on his way into Hell and remembers his sins but then he chooses not to hate. He turns around from descending and as the sickness grows inside himself he cries out, "Now".[969] Now is always a Divine moment of salvation:

> Before his voice the smoke of his prison yielded … two ways at once.… Two doors had swung, to his outer senses, in that small room. From every gate of hell there was a way to heaven, yes, and in every way to heaven there was a gate to a deeper hell.[970]

We can see here that we can go on or we can go back. By contrast to Arglay and others, Wentworth in *DIH* makes the opposite choice. He chooses to go on and refuses all help given. In fact, Wentworth willingly climbs down into the abyss.[971] Victor Hill writes,

> Charles Williams presents our choice between Zion—which is co-inherence—and Gomorrah—which is denial of the realities in the universe into which God has placed us, absorption into that isolation.… The idea of our constantly moving on a line, either in the direction of heaven or in that of hell is the choice of moving toward Zion or toward Gomorrah. And the direction of Zion is the direction of choosing *substitution, exchange, and co-inherence*.[972]

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[967] Auden, 'Charles Williams', 553. This point is made in St. Catherine of Genoa's statement, 'The fire of Hell is simply the light of God as it is experienced by those who reject it'. See Sayers, *Introductory*, 121.

[968] Auden, Introduction, viii.

[969] Williams, '*Et in Sempiternum Pereant*', 157. Williams usually has a person who has just received mercy to reach out in an act of love to someone. Arglay reaches out to another as soon as he himself received mercy. In *The Place of the Lion*, Anthony reaches out to Damaris, and she responds. For a further discussion of Williams's use of the 'Now of Salvation' see Kenny, 'The Now of Salvation', 43–44, 65.

[970] Williams, '*Et in Sempiternum Pereant*'. 157.

[971] *DIH*, 216.

[972] Hill, 32.

Barbara McMichael writes that Williams states that the descent into hell is a willed thing and not a sliding but a climbing down.[973] She explains Williams's description of the willful refusal of help (grace) and the resulting breakdown of personhood:

> Williams sees the process of damnation as intensification of self. The individual who consistently insists … on the 'intensification of his own separateness and selfhood'.… Such an individual by this insistence on self cuts himself off… He has chosen to do so, and his damnation comes as a result of his own choice.… Freedom of choice has been given him, and of his own free will, man is damned because he will not accept salvation. Cutting oneself off completely from the cosmos cannot, in fact, be done. The sense of individual separateness is an illusion.[974]

Williams also indicates a hint of a second chance offered to some. He believes some have not had an opportunity to respond to love. A second chance is open to those people and to others who are not believers and have not had an opportunity to hear or understand the Gospel in a way that speaks to them. Referring to the already dead, the nameless man in *DIH*, Williams says, 'Because he had never had an opportunity to choose love, nor effectively heard the gospel proclaimed, he was to be offered it again, and now as salvation'.[975] In *All Hallows Eve*, the second chance occurs again with the decisions of two dead ladies, Lester and Evelyn: one choosing to love and one refusing to love. In *The Great Divorce*, Lewis presents the same possibilities in his famous bus ride from Hell to Heaven where several passengers are having conversations with people in Heaven in which they could make a decision to stay in Heaven, and George MacDonald is one of the passengers.[976] Williams observes that the pathway out of this descent, and into grace, is always an offer of help coupled with the need for some sacrifice of self, and the timing of the offer is never in one's own control.[977] Each refusal of such an offer removes a person further from his humanity.[978]

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[973] B. McMichael, 'Hell Is Oneself: An Examination of the Concept of Damnation in Charles Williams *Descent Into Hell*', *Studies in Literary Imagination* 1, no. 2 (1968): 62.

[974] Ibid., 60. Williams refers to Wentworth climbing down the rope into the abyss of darkness. Wentworth will not take any help offered to him, and with each refusal of help from others he descends further. See also *DIH*, 214f.

[975] *DIH*, 118.

[976] Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, 64–83.

[977] McMichael, 63–64.

[978] Ibid., 65.

2. Separation from God and Others: The Breaking Down of Coinherence

Ben Witherington refers to a further repercussion to a continual refusal of love in Williams's description of Wentworth's damnation in *DIH* as 'the secret power of lawlessness'. He takes up Williams's description of the 'descent into destruction' as an example of sin punishing sin with each refusal of help. The situation worsens with each snubbing of grace. The continued resistance to humbling oneself and receiving mercy makes the heart harder, which Witherington says is a frightening portrayal of spiritual deterioration.[979] Each time Wentworth refuses Pauline's help, he slips deeper into his own damnation.[980]

Illusions are the chosen self-deceptions on the passage to Hell. Among others is the illusion that individuals can make themselves autonomous. But that fantasy does not prevent people from seeking autonomy and from cutting themselves off from others. Rosamond in *Shadows of Ecstasy* insulates herself from love and the humility it generates. Giving in to love would have meant shattering 'her vision of her unsubservient self'.[981] Hell and damnation are the culmination of a consistent denial that individuals can live only by being sustained by others. Refusing aid from others and refusing to help others is also a refusal of God's love and grace. It is a stubborn persistence in one's own pride. Robert Brown, commenting on Williams, emphasizes that the refusal of help from another is a refusal of God's love.[982]

Hell has no collection of people, no place of coinherence of relationships: Coinherence breaks down. Williams says of those moving towards Hell, '[They are] each driven by his own hunger, and each alone'.[983] They have no joy in relationships. They desire company. Misery loves company, craves company, but they have a greater desire to be autonomous despite the separation. No one has companions in Hell, only the empty disintegrated self. God said, 'It is not good for man to be alone'.[984]

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[979] B. Witherington, *1 and 2 Thessalonians: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary* (Cambridge: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2006): 226–27.

[980] Pauline is one of the Beatrician female characters in *DIH.* She and others have tried to help Wentworth, and he continually refuses their help, 213f.

[981] C. Williams, *Shadows of Ecstasy,* 136. See Shideler's discussion, *TRL*, 127.

[982] R. Brown, 'Charles Williams: Lay Theologian', *Theology Today* July 10, 1953: 223.

[983] Williams, '*Et in Sempiternum Pereant*', 158.

[984] Gen. 2:18.

Gwen Watkins observes that Williams and George MacDonald usually represent Hell as a state of being in separation and moving towards disintegration, but Heaven is always a place with others in interdependent exchange.[985] She also notes that Williams's clearest example of this disintegration is in *DIH,* in the character of Lawrence Wentworth. Wentworth really descends unto himself.[986]

The nature of evil, as Williams can see it, allows no interdependent coinherence nor exchange—no living in, for, or from one another. Kallistos Ware says that Williams shows in *DIH,* to devastating effect, that love cannot exist in isolation; hell is myself cut off from others in self-centeredness.[987] Sin continues the degeneration of being human (to live coinherently) into a monotonous lack of charity and so results in hate and separation.[988]

3. Self-centeredness Isolates to Self-destruction: 'Suicide in the Soul'[989]

The repeated refusal of love and its interdependence upon others damns us to our own willful self-destruction. Williams says that damnation is an intensity of the self in its own will, hostility, and a tyranny over others.[990] As Williams notes, with the refusal of grace one develops a deadly hunger, and gnawing starvation occurs in the soul as man pretends to nourish himself from his illusions of life:

> The faces—those that were still faces—were bleak with a dreadful starvation. The Hunger of years was in them, and also a bewildered surprise, as if they had not known they were starved until now. The nourishment of the food of all their lives had disappeared at once, and a great void was in their minds and a great sickness. They knew the void and the sickness.… Religion or art, civic sense or sensual desire, or whatever had drugged the spirit with its own deceit, had been drawn from them; they stared famished.…[991]

The person also then begins to devour himself or herself; a gnawing of teeth is described as one begins to bite himself or herself.[992] Could this self-cannibalization of

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[985] G. Watkins, 'Two Notions of Hell', Lecture at Charles Williams Society and George MacDonald Society, November 24, 1998, *North Wind* 10 (1991): 2.

[986] Ibid., 2.

[987] Ware, 28.

[988] *DIH*, 120–21.

[989] Ibid., 134.

[990] Williams, 'Miscellaneous notes on Heaven and Hell, 2.

[991] *DIH*, 206.

[992] Williams, '*Et in Sempiternum Pereant*', 56. See Matt. 9:18; Luke 13:28.

the soul be what Christ meant by weeping and gnashing of teeth? A spiritual autophagia takes place in man's soul. If a person refuses to live from others in exchange, then they choose to live from their own empty self, which is also another result of the refusal to live as a city.

'Suicide in the soul' is one of Williams's descriptions of the process of self-damnation that occurs little by little in a person who is continually too proud, refusing to be interdependent on others. Sin leads ultimately to a loss of person. Williams says, 'We are unable to rise out of our own enclosing desires. We begin to become the sepulchres of ourselves; the sin is already a living worm in us, and it bites us beyond our own capacities to satisfy it'.[993] Wentworth 'shrank into himself' and has 'no consciousness of himself'. He is 'in the blankness of a living oblivion, tormented by oblivion'.[994] His soul becomes the void he is inhabiting.[995] In *DIH* Wentworth climbs down deeper into his own abyss of aloneness:

> And Wentworth descends into hell precisely because he rejects all attempts at exchange; he refuses to be a part of the web, he lives only in relation to the succubus of his own creation; he can manage only self-love, and this is his damnation.[996]

4. Becoming Like Heaven or Hell and Spreading Heaven or Hell

A person becomes by degrees like the destination to which he is heading. He becomes somewhat 'hellish' or 'heavenish'. Judith Kollmann points out this development in the nature of Williams's characters and observes how, as they become more or less loving of others, they become more and more characteristic of either Heaven or Hell. In commenting on *All Hallows Eve*, she says, 'The environment not only reflects the person but becomes the person; wherever the damned are, Hell is; wherever the saved are, Heaven also is'.[997] Our environment (especially others) always affects us, but we also affect others with the direction and destination of our lives. We not only have the disease; we spread it—we infect others. Hell is also a disease we spread. Hell is a state of no love and no life.

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[993] Williams, 'Miscellaneous notes on Heaven and Hell', 2.

[994] *DIH*, 221.

[995] Ibid,. 221–22.

[996] R. Brown, 223.

[997] Kollmann, 'Figure of Beatrice', 6.

5. Living in Illusion: Loss of the Good of Intellect

The determination to exist in the illusion of living from one's self results in a collapse of intelligence. People who choose to exist in this state of denial are living in an infinite illusion. The denial and its illusion then bring with them a willful disintegration of personhood and a further development in the loss of the good of intellect. For Williams, being damned involves choosing to exist in a state of illusion.[998] Willfully choosing this illusion means in some sense a loss of the good of intellect.

This new alteration of knowledge, man's new condition, is deceptive, and it results not only in the loss of the abiding presence of God in man but also in a real loss in some degree of intellectual capacity to perceive reality as it is. Williams borrows an expression from Dante that describes this loss in intellectual and reasoning capacity, which is a part of the consequences of sin: '[a] people who have lost the good of intellect'.[999] Mascall remarks that Wentworth, in *DIH,* lost the good of intellect and, like the damned in Dante's *Commedia,* led himself into madness and, ultimately, Hell.[1000]

In *DIH*, Williams notes a further distortion of intelligence due to a loss in the capacity to evaluate sensory perceptions accurately, which further impairs the correct recognition of reality. This inaccuracy is similar to the neurological condition of dementia, although developed from non-psychological or medical reasons. He describes a loss of facial recognition of others and a loss in the recognition of the distinction between sounds for words and their corresponding meaning.[1001]

Thus, because of man's continuing loss of the good of the intellect his comprehension and perception of reality becomes more and more inaccurate. Williams says, 'Hell is always inaccurate'.[1002] So when we decide to live in the denial of right and wrong, we bring with that denial the inaccuracy of illusion. But Williams does not always take the time to explain exactly what he means by his maxims. Thinking more broadly, Watkins explains Williams's thinking thus: In attempting to make himself the

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[998] McMichael, 60.

[999] *FOB*, 21. Virgil says to Dante, 'We are come, where I told you you should see that unhappy people who have lost the good of intellect; il ben dell intelletto'. See Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy,* Hell, III, 18. See also Rom. 1:21.

[1000] E. L. Mascall, *Words and Images: A Study in Theological Discourse* (New York: Ronald Press, 1957), 74.

[1001] *DIH*, 220–21.

[1002] *IOC*, 30.

center of his own universe, man loses a proper sense of self and others. Reason is refracted and man's perception of reality becomes an illusion:

> Hell is the place of those spirits who wish to have their necessity in themselves. Since this is contrary to the holy Fact of creation, those who believe it possible are irrational. All those who believe in illusion are in danger of Hell.… Williams observes that 'Milton thought pride, egoism and a sense of one's own rights the greatest of all temptations,… and he thought it led straight to inaccuracy and malice, and finally to idiocy and Hell'.… All the characters in Williams' plays and novels who seem to be on the road to damnation cling to some illusion.[1003]

In many passages Williams does not take the time to distinguish between losses of knowledge and losses of intellect.

We are looking for the impossible. Horne addresses this *impossibility* as an opening of man's eyes. The change in knowledge does not involve an increase in knowledge because there are no more facts to be known, so it is called impossible.[1004] But while it is not an increase in the usual intellectual sense of fact gaining, it is another mode of knowing, that is, knowledge in the absence of good. Horne says that, in Williams's view, 'The Eden story is, then, a tragic description through illusion for it depicts the attempt to know what cannot be known; what is desired does not exist'.[1005]

Williams refers to this desire for something that does not exist as an aspect in the process of damnation—a 'sickness of heart'. The continual refusal of help brings a growing accompanying inability to discern accurate and natural communication—hearing but not understanding.[1006] He also compares this sickness to becoming blinded by the denial of one's own sins over the passage of years.[1007] He sees the central issue as a problem of the heart resulting in a further collapse of rationality.[1008] McMichael explains how in Williams's thinking the willful continuance to refuse help and admit reality leads to a further state of illusion—a void:

> For Charles Williams it follows, then, that being damned consists of choosing to exist in a state of illusion. Hell is composed of those who will not admit reality. From insistence upon oneself as the center of all things, one moves into the final

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[1003] Watkins, 5–6.

[1004] *STCW*, 120.

[1005] Ibid.

[1006] *DIH*, 219–21. See also Isa. 6:9–10.

[1007] Williams, '*Et in Sempiternum Pereant*', 157.

[1008] *DIH*, 220.

> illusion that only self exists. The insistence on the aloneness of the self, leads to the agony of hell, the complete void.[1009]

6. Insanity

Williams explores a further aspect in the process of damnation: 'insanity obvious in its definite existence'.[1010] In Wentworth's case, pride is the engine of insanity in his soul. Egoism is always spiritually, if not medically, pathological by nature.

McMichael compares the illusion of reality one experiences as a result of continual willful sin to the insanity of a medical infirmity. She says, 'Maturity, after all, consists in the ability to see the self as it is in relationship to things as they are.… Insanity or damnation consists in the refusal to admit the facts of existence'.[1011] Of course, the difference lies in how someone has come to be in the situation they are in. The insanity of damnation by one's own choice differs greatly from insanity due to one's own medical infirmity, which comes about and through no fault of one's own decisions. But medical insanity carries with it a sort of separation of oneself from others, as does damnation.

7. Final Damnation

Williams describes hell as a state of being, as the purposeless idolization of self, and it is a horrible end in itself.[1012] He does not have much of an interest in, or much to say about, Hell as a location, a place of torment, or a place of final damnation as Dante pictures it. He focuses primarily on the process of damnation: the deterioration of the coinherence of community, the degeneration of personhood, the destruction of interpersonal relationships, and the breakdown of the self. [1013] His hellish characters may seem to be on the way to, or already in, Hell, but they are descending into the hell of themselves rather than some Dantean Inferno.[1014] Given Williams's lifelong work on

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[1009] McMichael, 60. See also *DIH*, 221–22.

[1010] *DIH,* 196.

[1011] McMichael, 66.

[1012] *DIH,* 127.

[1013] Ibid., 213ff.

[1014] Watkins, 5–6.

Dante, surprisingly he does not spend as much time on Hell as a place of final damnation as Dante does. For example, Williams says, 'Sin is the name of a certain relationship between man and God. When it is fixed, if it is, into a final state, He (God) gives it other names; He calls it *hell* and *damnation*'.[1015] He also says, 'Hell is the place of those spirits who wish to have their necessity in themselves'.[1016]

Williams accepts the Church's views expressed by Charles Dickens in *A Christmas Carol:* 'Men's courses but prefigure certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead'.[1017] He does say 'that it is just possible that the diminution of power consequent on damnation might reduce the damned to a merely local existence'.[1018] Elizabeth Tilley notices that Williams's vision of Hell is of a world 'in which word and meaning no longer co-inhere and its characters are chasing Palomides' beast—nothingness'.[1019] She says this blank and nothingness is Williams's metaphorical Hell.[1020]

Watkins argues that MacDonald and Williams are similar in their views on final damnation. They do not understand why someone would willingly and continually choose damnation. Nevertheless, they allow for such an absurd choice. As we have seen in his writings, Williams describes the complete difference between the deteriorating life of damnation and the flourishing coinherent life. The contrast between spiritual life and spiritual death is demonstrated in fictional form in *DIH,* which describes the deteriorating process of damnation (i.e., refusing to live for others and from others) and the accompanying breakdown of the coinherent life maintained by living for others and from others. But Williams says, 'If God has character, if man has choice, an everlasting rejection of God by man must be admitted as a possibility; that is, hell must remain'.[1021] Final damnation, for Williams, is ambiguously left in God's hands.

[1015] *HCD*, 132.

[1016] *FOB*, 147.

[1017] Williams, 'Miscellaneous notes on Heaven and Hell', 4.

[1018] Ibid.

[1019] E. Tilley, 'Vitalizing Abstractions: The Fiction of Charles Williams' (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1988), 282.

[1020] Ibid.

[1021] *DOD*, 40.

AFTERWORD

> The feeling … is that he has not replaced one reality with another, but simply forced our eyes wider open, so that reality becomes a bigger word, and we recognize what has been there all along, but unseen because of our poor vision. It is no surprise that Williams … is a curious forerunner of what is going on today among young people … to a large extent among the youth of the entire western or westernized world. Some day the young will discover that if they distrust the computer and believe in the 'feeling intellect', Williams was there before them.
> C. Walsh

Williams is utterly distinctive. Some scholars think that Williams has something to say that both resonates with and challenges postmodernity. His work deals sympathetically with man's suffering, contradictions, and impossibilities, in addition to the accompanying skepticism. Many postmoderns can find some common ground with his sensitivity to suffering and skepticism, but he also challenges the inherent relativism of our day with a fresh perspective of orthodoxy, through his fictional narratives as well as his theological works. This perspective aids one to think from a new standpoint and gain a different frame of reference, centering in Christ's identification with man through His Incarnation and especially His Passion. Robert McAfee Brown writes,

> What Williams does … is to give us Christian theology in a new key, transposed to a fresh register, so that it appears as a new and exciting thing. He is aware of the dangers of encrusted doctrinalism.… He has recovered different modes for the expression of Christian faith just as they are most needed.[1022]

Nichols, and many other theologians and writers, not only believe that Williams's work is important but also that it is well disposed to aid the reader in the twenty-first century.[1023] Cavaliero says that the Arthurian poems call for an imaginative use of intelligence because they are ahead of rather than behind their time.[1024] Charles Moorman thinks that Williams's works 'speak more awesomely to one's condition' now than they seemed to decades ago because they 'were not rooted in the issues and ideas of their age or, in fact, of any age, but rather in images of life which, as Chaucer demonstrates, do not change in the way that our perceptions of the meaning of life

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[1022] R. Brown, 217.

[1023] Nichols, *Spirituality,* 11. Some of the others will be mentioned in the Afterword.

[1024] *POT*, 172.

do'.[1025] Heath-Stubbs says, 'Williams looked beyond the preoccupations of the 1930s and 1940s, anticipating what may be called a postmodernist vision'.[1026]

These scholars suggest an enduring quality about his work due to its identification with man's condition and an *inkling* that his response is an orthodox challenge to postmodernism.[1027] Sayers says that his work is freed from being bound by a sense of period because of his theological perspective. Williams, not being a historical or metaphysical relativist, has a different nonrelative view that stands in contrast with postmodernity:

> He was singularly free from that hypertrophied 'sense of period'.… Williams never forgot that every age is modern to itself, and that this fact, or illusion, links it to our own. Thus to all men in all ages he has the same direct approach;… the same charity, to which irony gives a certain wholesome and astringent edge. This freedom of judgement is not to be obtained except from the viewpoint of a theology which postulates an absolute truth, and which, moreover, sees in the material facts of history the symbol and expression of that truth.[1028]

Williams's perspective also challenges the fragmentation of postmodernism, as Horne writes,

> … Williams will be disliked by those of our contemporaries who have surrendered to the fashion of 'post-modernism', who have accepted the proposition that the only truth we possess is that there is no truth, the only surety we have is that there is no surety. His work, from first to last, is a challenge to the current, prevailing philosophy of multi-valence and fragmentation; but, as will be seen,… it is precisely because he experienced, inwardly, the possibility of fragmentation and dissolution so acutely that he was able to expose the dangers of this 'reading' of life so cogently.[1029]

As Horne suggests, Williams identifies with those who suffer and, at the same time, he shares a true deep sympathy with the honest questioning skeptic whose skepticism is often prompted by suffering. As noted earlier, Williams's identification with suffering and skepticism resonates close to postmodernism. But he has limits to his thinking

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[1025] C. Moorman, 'Sacramentalism in Charles Williams', *The Chesteron Review* 8, no. 1 (1982): 38.

[1026] J. Heath-Stubbs, Foreword to *The Rhetoric of Vision: Essays on Charles Williams* by C. A. Huttar and P. J. Schakel (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press; London: Associated University Press, 1996), 8–9. See also 17, 21–22, 101.

[1027] Williams' identification with man's inner suffering may be one reason for the continual republication of his work and a hint as to his viability today. My italics; he was an Inkling and his work fits the description.

[1028] D. Sayers, Introduction to *James I* by Charles Williams (1934; London: Arthur Barker, 1951), xii–xiii.

[1029] Horne, Introduction to *Charles Williams: A Celebration*, ix.

because he brings God and Christ into the picture. He wrote a poem in honor of The Feast of St. Thomas Didymus, Apostle and Skeptic.[1030] Williams allows his readers to ask, like Job, Mary, all innocent sufferers, and even critics, that God answer for the suffering and injustice in the world.[1031] God's words and the consequences of His acts must have an accounting. Williams makes Christianity plausible and credible for those who share such supposals. He develops a dialogue relevant to the impossibilities, suffering, and contradictions that man experiences, and questions, universally. His theological interrogation also allows the world to be narratable. He writes, 'A great curiosity ought to exist concerning divine things. Man was intended to argue with God'.[1032] For Williams, arguing means an honest dialogue and holding God accountable for the way things are. Williams says that the same philosophical curiosity accompanies the Annunication with Mary's question: 'How shall these things be?'[1033]

In her essay, Cath Filmer-Davies tackles these issues and demonstrates how 'Williams's approach, in *The Place of The Lion*, to skepticism is depicted as the nutrient agar of faith and faith is supported and energized by the constant challenge it receives from skepticism'.[1034] 'Williams believed that skepticism is not antithetical to faith but in fact informs and constitutes it'.[1035] She goes on to say,

> … Postmodernist skepticism can become, as it has for Williams, a way of faith. And that premise—that faith arises from doubt, that 'without contraries is no progression'—is at the heart of Williams's argument in *The Place of the Lion*.[1036]

However, in his overall understanding Williams goes to a different place than postmodernism and most postmodern scholars. He introduces Christ's role into the picture, which fundamentally alters the whole understanding of suffering and skepticism. Williams's response to postmodernity is in humility and trust. God expresses his definitive identification with all who innocently suffer, in answer to

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[1030] Williams, *Divorce*, 105–06.

[1031] Williams also uses critics such as Montaigne, Voltaire, Kierkegaard, Pascal, and D. H. Lawrence when they have exposed the hypocrisy in the Church.

[1032] *HCD*, 4, 30.

[1033] Ibid., 32. Luke 1:34.

[1034] C. Filmer-Davies, 'Charles Williams, a Prophet for Postmodernism: Skepticism and Belief in The Place of the Lion', in *The Rhetoric of Vision* (London: Associated University Presses, 1996), 103.

[1035] Ibid., 104.

[1036] Ibid., 112.

Abel's and Job's voices, in the cry of Christ's passion: 'My God, My God why hast thou forsaken me?'[1037] Williams expresses Christ's identification with man:

> There is no more significant or more terrible tale in the New Testament than that which surrounded the young Incarnacy with the dying Innocents: the chastisement of His peace was upon them. At the end … He too perished innocently.… He had put Himself then to His own law, in every sense.… *This* was the world He maintained in creation.… They crucified Him … He had shown Himself honourable in His choice. He accepted Job's challenge of long-ago, talked with His enemy in the gate, and outside the gate suffered (as men He made so often do) from both His friends and His enemies.[1038]

Williams's ultimate response to man's suffering and skepticism is Christ's response: 'Father into thy hands I commend my spirit'.[1039] As previously noted in Chapter II, Williams shares the conviction with Kierkegaard that, while experiencing these terrible impossibilities, man, in humility and trust, should leap into the arms of God.[1040]

[1037] Gen. 4:10; Heb. 12:24.

[1038] *IOC*, 133; Williams's italics. Herod ordered all children two years and under killed when he discovered that the magi did not return to him. See Matt. 2.

[1039] Luke 23:46.

[1040] Williams, Introduction to *Kierkegaard*, xii.

APPENDIX

A. What Williams Thinks about Jesus

As we have already observed in Chapter II.B.4., there is a strong sense of deliberate in-directness in Williams's approach to Jesus Christ. In most of Williams's works, he uses other names for Christ, trying to get the reader to think in fresh ways about Him. It is a strange and curious reflection that in his fullest discussion of witchcraft Williams makes two of his most developed affirmations about Jesus Christ.[1041] However, it is little read. What is unique in *Witchcraft* in the following two quotes is Williams's use of the name *Jesus* and his descriptions of Him. Here, he is being indirect and straightforward at the same time. Notice how the pronouns *its* and *it* change from referring to Christendom to referring to Jesus:

> What distinguished Christendom was (i) its relation to the Crucified Jew, and (ii) its assertion of a supernatural Will.… Substance was love, and love was substance. And that substance of love was disposed by conscious and controlling Will, which had yet so limited itself, by its own choice, as to leave the wills of men and women free to assent or not to assent to its own.… It was absolute; it had created all things; and in that historic being Jesus it had set itself in a special relationship of love to mankind. It had, by a sacrifice of what was more and more beginning to seem itself, operated to restore to men a state of goodness and glory of which they had miserably deprived themselves. It intensely and individually desired the salvation of all men. The one thing necessary, besides its own sacrifice, was the will of the creature to accept and unite itself with that sacrifice. And the death of Jesus, called Christ, had been that sacrifice.… What was not so common was the single absolute Will, the historic personality, and the intensely exclusive demands which the new bodies of believers promulgated. It was not the mysteries of Christendom but its definition that were alien to contemporary thought and feeling.[1042]

It is clear that the historical personality is Jesus Christ, the Creator. There is a supernatural Will and there are the natural wills of men and women. The supernatural Will willingly submits Himself to His creatures; the nature of that Will is love.[1043] God makes a choice to be a sacrifice for man and gives man the opportunity to respond. In the conclusion of *Witchcraft*, Williams writes another resounding declaration about Jesus Christ:

[1041] Williams, *Witchcraft*. It was first published in 1941 by Faber and Faber and now has been republished several times, most recently by The Apocryphile Press, Berkeley, California, 2005.

[1042] Williams, *Witchcraft* 13–15.

[1043] *HCD*, 11–12. Williams uses the word *Will,* capitalized, to speak of the Creator from the Apostle's Creed, 'maker of heaven and earth' and from the Lord's Prayer, 'Thy will be done'.

> 'Une grande esperance a traverse la monde', but that hope was by no means vague. It asserted itself more and more by definition and dogma. The single authoritative cry at the beginning was that Redemption came by Jesus Christ. Redemption was from all evil and from all deities except Jesus Christ. Man had, in fine, only the choice of that Redemption. The only futurity of importance was that which lived in him. Love of one's neighbor forbade venom; love of one's neighbor forbade love-philtres. Spirits there no doubt were; they were either angels and saints, whose control was in God, or devils, who were now overthrown. Sorcery and spells were done; the searchers after wisdom fell before the Child, and the searchers after vain profit fled from the Cross. Christ had harrowed hell every way.[1044]

B. Witchcraft and the Demonic

We have already discussed witchcraft as part of the Occult in Chapter II. But here, after having surveyed his entire canon, we want to clarify further Williams's position. In *Witchcraft,* Williams's largely historical discussion of this subject, he records among other things the common practice of blaming demonic spirits for our actions. His conclusion is that there are dangers in paying too much attention to witchcraft, the devil, and the demonic. These dangers are well documented and they include the high possibility of cruelty to others.[1045] He gives various reasons for this cruelty and for the over-attention to the demonic, including when the passion of the Church moves from focusing on the Redemption from all evil available in Jesus Christ to focusing on evil itself, a dangerous phenomenon occurs:

> The Church began not only to pay more and more attention to sin but to become more and more interested in sin. The world of images, in which at its lowest so much of mankind moves, threw up more and more often the image of the Devil. He was to be rejected and he was rejected. But he was more and more to be there in order to be rejected.[1046]

Stephen Dunning gives a good summation of Williams's explanation of the nature of witchcraft: 'This passion to invert the Creator-creature relationship, to have others live from oneself rather than from God, characterizes the heart of witchcraft, which Williams describes as a pseudo-organism'.[1047] Williams uncovers the suspicion,

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[1044] Williams, *Witchcraft*, 306–07.

[1045] Ibid., 308–09. A large part of his history of witchcraft is not really about witchcraft, but about the witch-hunts and the fabrications constructed and used against citizens and parishioners by the Church and State. The history is riddled with violent abuse of others. The organized church in its attempt to control believers and nonbelievers is responsible for a great deal of this abusive behavior. However, that does not alter the fact that Williams does leave room for real dark witchcraft and the demonic.

[1046] Ibid., 307.

[1047] Dunning, *Crisis and the Quest*. Dunning summarizes 126–31 from *Witchcraft.*

gossip, abuse, and heresy of the church in relation to witchcraft. His chief purpose is to expose the history of the church in its fear and fraudulent behavior towards the innocents and the guilty. He contrasts the nature of the real participants in witchcraft to the nature of those people who live out Christ's love.

However, Williams does not deny the existence of the devil, the demonic, or the real witch. But he adamantly resists an increased attentiveness about them.[1048] So, he minimizes their significance. Man tends to have a perverse interest in them that cultivates a fear that feeds the pseudo-importance of the demonic creating a false dualism that in reality does not exist.[1049] I think it is important to remember what Williams has written clearly about witchcraft, occult practices, and hermeticism in his theological books and let them be the guide for his epistemology rather than his novels.

C. Hermeticism, Inappropriate Relationships, and Questionable Orthodoxy

Two books include a combined analysis of Williams's hermeticism, his inappropriate relations with women, and his questionable orthodoxy, and they both use his first novel, *Shadows of Ecstasy,* as a methodological lens for examining and evaluating his life and work.[1050] These works are Gavin Ashenden's *Charles Williams: Alchemy and Integration* and Stephen Dunning's *The Crisis and the Quest: A Kierkegaardian Reading of Charles Williams.* Some new negative critiques follow Ashenden's and Dunning's approaches and combine these same issues (hermeticism, inappropriateness with women, questionable orthodoxy, and some also using *Shadows of Ecstasy* as their methodical approach) as a basis for their egregious assessment of Williams's life and work.[1051]

1. Questionable Orthodoxy

Gavin Ashenden's *Charles Williams: Alchemy and Integration* has well documented Williams's involvement in A. E. Waite's Fellowship of the Rosy Cross and

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[1048] Williams, *Witchcraft* 307–09.

[1049] *HCD*, 18–19. He suggests that much of our information for Satan is from Milton.

[1050] *Shadows of Ecstasy* was written first in 1925–26 and titled *The Black Bastard.* It was never published under that name. It was published in 1933 as the fifth in his series of seven novels under the new name—*Shadows of Ecstasy*.

[1051] See B. Newman, 'Charles Williams and the Companions of the Coinherence', *Spiritus*: *A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 1–26. And see A. F. Lowenstein, *Loathsome Jews and Engulfing Women: Metaphors of Projection in the Works of Wyndham Lewis, Charles Williams, and Graham Greene* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 188–240.

the hermetic sources to which he would have been exposed. Ashenden also examines Williams's mythologizing of interpersonal relationships (especially with women), the straining internal emotional tensions arising from these inappropriate relations, and his problematic marriage. He also goes on to explain the possible impact these issues might have on his fiction and theological views. Ashenden maintains that Williams's meta-narrative is alchemy and not Christianity.[1052]

Rowan Williams' review article on Ashenden's *Alchemy and Integration,* compliments Ashenden for correcting some of the past inaccuracies in accounts of Williams's life and pointing out the tensions with which Williams was living and their possible effect on him.[1053] However, Rowan Williams also points out that Williams 'was, despite oddities and even grotesqueries, a deeply serious critic, a poet unafraid of major risks, and a theologian of rare creativity'.[1054]

I disagree with both Dunning's and Ashenden's overarching conclusions. They both postulate that Williams is not orthodox in his theology and that he is an occultist. Various other scholars support Williams's orthodoxy.[1055] In *Shadows of Ecstasy*, the long final paragraph of *ifs*, according to Dunning, leave the reader wondering about the possibility of the resurrection of the evil character Considine and may include concerns about Williams's own orthodoxy.[1056] In Thomas Howard's opinion, 'Williams's attitude towards Considine … seems to invite the sort of speculation that arose long ago about Milton's Satan, namely that Satan was Milton's real hero'.[1057] However, in a little known unpublished lecture, Williams makes this particular issue clear. He writes in 'On the Devil in "Paradise Lost"' that 'Milton has confused the Devil and Jesus Christ'.[1058]

[1052]Ashenden, *Charles Williams: Alchemy and Integration*, 71–114. See also B. Bosky, 'Charles Williams: Occult Fantasies/Occult Fact', International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts, 1991, 176–85.

[1053] R. Williams, 'Not Really Human,' 31. See also David Llewellyn Dodds' review essay 'Ashenden's *Alchemy and Integration*', *The Charles Williams Quarterly*, no. 126 (Spring 2008): 30–49.

[1054] Ibid., 31.

[1055] See C. Hefling, 'Charles Williams: Words, Images, and (the) Incarnation'' in *C. S. Lewis and Friends*, ed. D. Hein and E. Henderson (London: SPCK, 2011), 110; T. Howard, *The Novels of Charles Williams* (London: OUP, 1983), 217. See also the complete work *STCW* and the list of supporting scholars in Chapter I.

[1056] Williams, *Shadows of Ecstasy*, 224. See Dunning, *The Crisis and the Quest*, 37.

[1057] Howard, 'Shadows of Ecstasy', 94. For another view see C. Huttar, 'Williams's Changing Views of Milton and The Problem of *Shadows of Ecstasy*', *Inklings-Jahrbuch* 5 (1987): 223–34.

[1058] 'On the Devil in Paradise Lost', MS 8, Wade Center.

In his works, Williams uses the rejection of magic and hermetic knowledge to make his case for orthodoxy, while at the same time revealing his opinion of magic as evil. I think most theological questions about Williams's orthodoxy are answered with a more comprehensive reading of Williams's work. Obviously, Considine is evil incarnate and it is important to remember that he does not come back to life; he dies.

2. An Occultist

One of the purposes of a total survey of works is to see to what extent certain influences flourish and how the author finally portrays certain themes or issues. The Arthurian myths already contained occult references at least several hundred years before Williams came along. He used, added, and adapted the stories to his own purpose. Even in his novels, plays, and Arthuriad, never does magic or any manipulation ever triumph over vicarious love. Magic is seen as manipulative, controlling, power grabbing, and evil. In Williams's work, the occult is at most background material, pivotal in demonstrating that God's love is sovereign and cannot be ultimately undermined by the forces of evil.[1059]

Dunning's *The Crisis and the Quest: A Kierkegaardian Reading of Charles Williams* also combines studies of Williams's hermeticism and his personal problems, analyzing them from Dunning's interpretation of a Kierkegaardian perspective. After reading *The Crisis and the Quest*, I agree with Horne that the Kierkegaardian reading is a forced imposition upon Williams's work.[1060]

However, Dunning's Kierkegaardian hypothesis does bring fresh insights to the questions regarding Williams's psychological states and their influence in the development of his work. It is not our purpose to examine these hypotheses in detail. But we may note one point in particular. As we have observed in Chapter II.B.3.d., Williams discusses the painful inner contradictions that arise when life does not go the way we think it should, and when we experience tragedy, the terrible impossible happens and it is the reality of my world. Glen Cavaliero wrote the Foreword to

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[1059] Some readers may react to the reality of Williams's view of evil and the moral implications that involves. He makes evil real. See Livingston, 'Systematic Philosophy', 84, 150; Howard, *Novels of Charles Williams*, 217.

[1060] See Horne's review of Dunning's *The Crisis and the Quest, The Charles Williams Society Newsletter,* no. 98 (Spring 2001): 30–32.

Dunning's *Crisis and the Quest* where he views positively the way in which Dunning opens up and deepens the discussion of Williams's 'Impossibility':

> Dr. Dunning's investigation of Kierkegaard's pertinence to Charles Williams, both in this context and in that of his hermetic studies, throws light upon the source of that experience of contradiction which he labeled 'The Impossibility', the result, not only of his personal crisis of a divided love between two women but also of his conflicting spiritual awareness. Recognition and exploration of such experience lie at the heart of his achievement as a religious writer. The quest for clarity and coherence within his overarching theology is matched by the frankness with which he faces the challenge to that coherence posed by the nature of the human imagination.… [1061]

Ashenden, Dunning, and a few others describe Williams as an occultist. However, as we saw in Chapter II, noting his temporary leadership in the Fellowship of the Rosy Cross, Williams demonstrates in his writings that the occult is always secondary and at most an elaborate background to convey the utter impotency of magic in the face of Divine Love even when carried by a frail humanity.

Ashenden and Dunning force another error in judgment when they make heremeticism, alchemy, and personal tensions the most determinative influences on his life and work. They are undeniably present. But hermeticism, witchcraft, and even Williams's own personal weaknesses and failures are trumped by his repeated and over-riding theological concerns, especially incarnational redemptive themes and patterns of vicarious substituted love. As we saw in Chapter II, although discussed at length in his theological works, these themes are repeated over and over, controlling the focus of his fiction. Throughout his fiction, nowhere does evil triumph over substituted love. In my opinion, substituted love is the icon of Christ, the *theotokos* of the priesthood of man for man. It is also the determining, overarching design, purpose, and focus underlying all his works. Substituted love opens the doors of possibilities for the regeneration of the coinherence of man with God and man with man. His biographer, Alice Mary Hadfield, thinks that by the time he wrote his last novel, *All Hallows Eve*, Williams had worked through his fascination with magic and had come to reject it totally.[1062] It may be remembered that his gravestone reads, 'Poet, Under the Mercy'. This is a fitting postscript to his life, his last surrender to his Lord.

[1061] G. Cavaliero, Foreword to *The Crisis and the Quest*, ix–x.

[1062] Hadfield, *Charles Williams*, 30, 104.

In contrast to Ashenden and Dunning, Rolland Hein has another point of view, especially basing his analysis on an examination of the other six novels and excluding *Shadows of Ecstasy*:

> While his knowledge of the occult is patently wide, his handling of it is not that of the facile magician, but rather that of the adept mythmaker with a profound vision of higher things. It is a necessary aspect of his vision: Zion would lack depth and plausibility without his startling images of the authority and power of evil. He has no simplistic illusions concerning the pernicious nature of evil, but he ultimately allows it no ground. Characters possessed of evil seek to wrest control and command evil power to self-centered ends; they enjoy a frightening momentary success. But they are overcome by those rare individuals who find complete repose in their adoration of God as Omnipotent Love and have come into league with His ultimate power and workings. Their lives are characterized by an equanimity of spirit balanced by daring, a meekness intermingled with authority; their involvement springs from their joyous participation in the patterns of exchanged love.[1063]

Hein's analysis of Williams's use of the occult demonstrates Williams's depth of understanding of the underlying nature evil: 'His novels show an intricate knowledge of occult attitudes and practices; they also show how thoroughly he saw them as self-centered quests for personal power, the essence of evil'.[1064] Hein observes that Williams's evil characterizations manifest perverted religious attitudes, they have a strong attraction to occult practices, and in their dedicated pursuit of these, sacrifice whatever vestiges of virtue and humanity they yet have.[1065] Hein says, 'In his Fantasy novels he created an original vision of both the fatal character of evil and the true beauty of mature Christian conduct'.[1066]

[1063] Hein, 141.
[1064] Ibid., 121.
[1065] Ibid., 152. For another view of his novels, see Beare.
[1066] Ibid., 119.

3. Internal Tensions From a Problematic Marriage and Inappropriate Relationships with Women

Williams's relationship with women outside his marriage leads too much of the criticism of his life and work. These relationships also prompt some important questions and demand further discussion, some of which are outside the realm of significance for this thesis. As discussed in Section E of Chapter V, there are many diverse relationships of love and that diversity has been further examined as it relates to Dante and Williams concerning romantic love. However, we must address some of them here, as relating to Williams's improper relationships with women, the tensions involved, and the possible affects on his work. These tensions likely arise from several possible sources: the need for money, which we do not have the space to discuss, and there is more going on here than has been mentioned by critics; tensions within his marriage that go with any marriage, even the best relationships have tough times; tensions internally within himself because of the condition of his marriage; and the added tensions on the marriage because of his improper relationships with other women in relation to his Christian ethic. As some critics suggest, these tensions can be compared to Williams's understanding of what he calls life's "impossibilities," which are discussed in Chapter II.B.3.d., and also in Chapter VII.B.2. We will briefly examine the criticism but without repeating the discussed material in Chapters II, V, or VII.

Charles Baker suggests that *Three Plays* reflect the problems in Williams's life, with the sublimation of forbidden love expressed in his 'duality of human experience'.[1067] In other words, Baker suggests that the plays are symptomatic to Williams's own state of being. Several critics make the same simplistic suggestion that Williams's work reveals his own problems. But as before, regardless of the biographical accuracy, the plays speak to man's condition, and may be the reason for recent republication.[1068]

Stephen Medcalf believes that Williams 'developed his Christianity in conformity with what had happened to him'.[1069] Medcalf suggests a symptomatic analogy among *The English Poetic Mind*, Trolius's and Cressida's experience, and Williams's own divided love between two women. Medcalf believes Williams's own

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[1067] Baker, 276–77.

[1068] *Three Plays* was republished in 2009 by Wipf and Stock, Eugene, OR.

[1069] Medcalf, 'Charles Williams as Natural and Preternatural', a review of Hadfield's *CWX*.

inner agony leaves him with a divided love and a divided conscience. Even if this is true to some degree, Williams's work goes beyond himself and his circumstances.[1070] The agony and ecstasy of our inner lives are similar enough that others may be identifying with what is common to all, even when the sources and particulars are different.

For a totally negative view of Williams's life and his work see, Andrea Freud Lowenstein's chapter on Williams in *Loathsome Jews and Engulfing Women: Metaphors of Projection in the Works of Wyndham Lewis, Charles Williams, and Graham Greene.*

In 2007 I had a conversation with Professor Lyle Dorsett, who was for many years the Director of the Wade Center, concerning Williams's relationships with women. While he was the Director of the Wade Center, he and his wife Mary came to England, and in the course of that visit taped interviews with several persons who personally knew Williams.[1071] Professor Dorsett and his wife told me that some of the women interviewed were in their nineties and were still quite infatuated with Williams. One consistent element reported in these interviews and in the conversations that were not taped was Williams's crossing of personal and emotional boundaries of intimacy with women outside his marriage.[1072]

In my opinion, Williams was wrong sometimes in his behavior with women. But, I have noticed that those who are seriously interested in Williams's theological contribution and are willing to examine the full range of his work are rewarded with significant spiritual insight. At least that has been the evident case for many of the noted theologians and scholars mentioned throughout the thesis. They may or may not be aware of his idiosyncrasies, faults, and failures as a man or his weaknesses as a novelist,

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[1070] It may be discerned at certain points in William's life, his work may have been better than the man, and at other times the man was superior to his work.

[1071] The interviews are videotaped and transcripts are available at the Wade Center. I read all the transcripts of the interviews.

[1072] Professor Dorsett also told me that he thinks Williams may have been practicing some type of sexual repression in order to be more creative. See also L. Lang-Sims, *Letters to Lalage: The Letters of Charles Williams to Lois Lang-Sims*, with Introduction and notes by Glen Cavaliero and commentary by Lois Lang-Sims, 67–70. Brian Horne calls him mildly eccentric in his review of *Letters to Lalage*, *Charles Williams Society Newsletter* 59 (1990): 8-10. Horne does not believe we learn much about his theology or poetry from Lang-Sims volume, but we do learn something more about the man. Also see Glen Cavaliero's address to the Charles Williams Society on Lois Lang-Sims' book *Letters to Lalage,* February 23, 1991. Cavaliero suggested that Williams failed his student of 30 years younger by his lack of judgement with such a vulnerable person. His personal mythology of which he was completely absorbed hindered his maturity, where was substituted love and courtesy? Even the saint failed from time to time. As she admits in her own autobiography, *A Time to be Born,* she was in a state of mental and emotional confusion. See *Charles Williams Society Newsletter* 60 (Winter 1990): 13–17.

theologian, and poet. However, they have been able to not be distracted by those, failures, and shortcomings; and have gleaned what is valuable and important from his work.

I do not doubt that the stress occurring in anyone's interpersonal relationships, regardless of the reasons, has some affect upon their life and work. But it may not be as dominant as people think. Williams's behaviour with these women has led to some of the undermining of the validity of his written works. However his work stands as a creative theological vision notwithstanding, at times, his poor behaviour. I do not think we can throw the *Psalms* out the *Bible* because of David's misbehaviour. I agree with Horne that we do not learn a lot about theology from his failures or from a psychological analysis imposed on his work, but we do learn about the man: Like the rest of us, we fail our brother and sister from time to time.[1073] There is no excuse, and we should ask for forgiveness.

4. Methodical Fault: Too Narrow Reading Base

Ashenden and Dunning make the same methodological error that several critics have made before; they limit their interpretation and assessment of Williams's work with their choice of *Shadows of Ecstasy* as the controlling lens to evaluate the man and his writings. As already mentioned, Dunning also used *Shadows of Ecstasy* as a primary lens to evaluate Williams and his work. In Dunning's opinion, the inner tensions in Williams's psyche, his hermeticism, and his lack of Christian orthodoxy are expressed and exposed by Dunning's analysis of the main design in the first novel.[1074] However, some inner tensions may be a part of everyone's life and psyche at one time or another. Indeed, most lives have unresolved inner tensions as already been discussed in Chapter II.B.3.d. In my opinion, it is possible that Williams's other novels are his own answers to the questions implied in *Shadows of Ecstasy*.

One major problem with Ashenden and Dunning's argument is that the rest of Williams's work does not support their hypothesis of *Shadows of Ecstasy* being the controlling lens and influence of Williams's work, fictional or otherwise. Clearly, after surveying the whole corpus of Williams's work, sacrificial love is at the heart of his

[1073] B. Horne, 'Review of *Letters to Lalage*', *Charles Williams Society Newsletter* 59 (1990): 8–10.

[1074] Dunning, *The Crisis and the Quest*, 18–38.

narratives and it triumphs against the power struggles of those involved in occult practices.

As we have already discussed, in a marked contrast to Dunning, Hein would disagree with Dunning's overall analysis of Williams's work by basing his conclusions on his analysis of *Shadows of Ecstasy*. Hein examines the other six novels, thus he has a more comprehensive approach and does not think that *Shadows of Ecstasy* is the narrative key to Williams's life and work. For Hein, God's vicarious love mediated through Williams's heroic characters demonstrates a repeated redemptive theme throughout his novels, which always prevails over those trying to manipulate others and the world through occult practices.[1075]

Another point needs to be considered, *Shadows of Ecstasy* was written first (1925–26) and the quality of writing and theological depth does not compare to some of the later novels: *Place of the Lion*, *Descent into Hell*, *All Hallows Eve*, and the *Greater Trumps*. Some of his Arthurian poetry plunges to the depths of Christian theology, especially 'The Founding of the Company'. In my opinion, picking the weakest novel seems to allow the reader to find what he's looking for and build his case without regard to the much larger literary thematic topography.

D. Weak Characterizations

Some of the strongest supporters of Williams's work are some of his best critics. They note a lack in depth in his characterizations and suggest that it may be due to his prioritizing purposes. These critics comment that Williams is more interested in describing the theological elements expressed by a character than in how well the character is described. Chad Walsh writes,

> His characters are believable enough, but not very individualized. We see enough of each to find it plausible when he turns toward the ultimate or rejects it. But we should not recognize many Williams characters if we met them in a secular drawing room. Their little peculiarities and idiosyncrasies are rarely mentioned. It is as though a divine light or a demonic light shines so brightly upon their faces that all accidental features are illumined out of existence.[1076]

[1075] Hein, 141.

[1076] C. Walsh, 'Charles Williams' Novels and the Contemporary Mutation of Consciousness', in *Myth Allegory, and Gospel: An Interpretation of J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, G. K. Chesterton, and Charles Williams* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1974), 76.

Walsh calls this the divine dance in Williams's purposes, and it has literary consequences.[1077] This criticism is similar to David Jones critique of a lack of 'nowness' or a lack of the 'particular' in Williams's Arthurian poetry. The image, content, and form are understood, but the character lacks the contemporary details.[1078]

Lewis also draws attention to Williams's difficulty in creating good characterizations in his fiction, though he also defends Williams against certain criticisms of his stories.[1079] Lewis speculates as to why Williams's characterizations may be missed, and he points out the necessity of taking the time to see what Williams is doing through the imaging.[1080] Lewis sees the incarnate theological embodiment that a particular character represents as fulfilling the role not just of a character, but also of a symbolization of living Christian dogma.[1081] The story Williams wants to tell highlights the dogma or the idea that a particular person (image) illustrates through its characterization. Williams's characters tend to become symbols or background in an elaborate theological iconography.[1082] This is thought to be one of the weaknesses of Williams's work: His central ideas are more important than the character development. But Hans Urs Von Balthasar, a serious reader of Williams's works, remarks on the importance of the imaging function of Williams's characters.[1083] Robert Holder says that 'the idea' is the hero rather than a particular character.[1084] As noted in Chapter II, the theological themes that run repeatedly throughout the novels, plays, and poetry dominate the focus and outcome of the narrative. Charles Hefling thinks that his writings are perhaps an acquired taste, but the greater issue is that reading them takes work.[1085] The work is taking the time to see the semiotic function of the characterizations. Once this taste is acquired through a thoughtful study of the

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[1077]Walsh, 'Charles Williams' Novels', 76. See also P. Schakel, 'Dance as Metaphor and Myth in Lewis, Tolkien and Williams', *Mythlore* 12, no. 3, iss. 45 (Spring 1986): 4–18.

[1078] Jones, 209–11.

[1079] Lewis, *On Stories and Other Essays on Literature*, 21.

[1080] Ibid., 25.

[1081] Ibid.

[1082] M. A. Weinig, 'Images of Affirmation: Perspectives of the Fiction of Charles Williams, C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien', *The University of Portland Review* 1968: 44.

[1083] Von Balthasar, Afterword, 664. See also for an explanation of the Tarot Cards, Hefling, 'Charles Williams: Words, Images'; Hein and Henderson, *C. S. Lewis and Friends*, 75–76.

[1084]Holder, 82.

[1085] Hefling, 'Charles Williams: Words, Images', 74.

character's actions, Williams's fiction takes on a much richer dimension. Understanding the imagization in Williams's characters is what Lewis is referring to earlier, and the fruit of this labor reveals his functional purpose in his images and narratives.

E. The Order of Coinherence

Of this Order Charles Williams says, 'Its derivation shall be from God through others, its mediation on those indirect derivations; its aim the propaganda everywhere of that sensitive and humble knowledge'. And in his poem 'The Founding of the Company', in the *Summer Stars*, he defines it further:

> … its cult was the Trinity and the Flesh-taking;…
> it exchanged the proper self
> and wherever need was drew breath daily
> in another's place, according to the grace of the Spirit
> 'dying each other's life, living each other's death'.[1086]

In the quote above, from her 'Introduction' to *IOC,* Ridler refers to a book review Williams wrote for *Time and Tide* about the Jesuits. In this review Williams includes a passage from the *Summer Stars,* where he refers to an order commissioned to actually work along the lines of what he called 'the indirect love of God'.[1087] On the one hand, central to the Jesuit mission is 'the direct love of God', which is seen in the very obvious work of education, founding of universities, and helping the poor. On the other hand, 'the indirect love of God' is not to be found in the work of the official ordained priesthood, or of a special order of the church. In stead, it is to be found in the life and work of the priesthood of every believer going about his or her daily life, not in any formalized organizational manner, yet bearing the burdens of others in their very body, mind, and soul.

In 1939 Williams founded an informal order designed to flesh out the doctrine of coinherence in its practice, he called it The Order of Co-inherence to emphasize the reality that he thought all believers could practically be involved in. He dedicated *DOD* to them. The foundation of an order and its practice is not new to the church; many orders have been founded to help the Church become all that she should be. Williams understood this order as an aid in our Christian pilgrimage. Its purpose is the orthopraxy of the love of Christ, of becoming more Christ-like in our relations with our fellow man.

[1086] Ridler, xlix–l.

[1087] Ibid., xlix; Williams IOC, 165.

Williams's desire is for Christians to participate in the reality that is spoken of in our Lord's high priestly prayer: '… that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me'.[1088]

'This also is Thou' is expressed in the imperative to love in Ephesians 5:1–2: 'Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God'.

This passage points to the priesthood of all believers, and it applies to the coinherence that Williams is trying to promote and which he calls his fellow brothers and sisters to put into practice:

1. The Order has no constitution except in its members. As it was said: *Others*
2. *He saved, himself he cannot save.*
3. It recommends nevertheless that its members shall make a formal act of union with it and of recognition of their own nature. As it was said: *Am I my brother's keeper?*
4. Its concern is the practice of the apprehension of the Co-inherence both as natural and a supernatural principle. As it was said: *Let us make man in our image.*
5. It is therefore, *per necessitatem,* Christian. As it was said: *And whoever says there was when this was not, let him be anathema.*[1]
6. It recommends therefore the study, on the contemplative side, of the Co-inherence of the Holy and blessed trinity, of the Two Natures in the Single Person, of the Mother and son, of the communicated Eucharist, and of the whole Catholic Church. As it was said: *figlia del tuo figlio.*[2] And on the active side, of methods of exchange, in the State, in all forms of love, and in all natural things, such as childbirth. As it was said: *Bear ye one another's burdens.*
7. It includes the Divine Substitution of MESSIAS, all forms of exchange and substitution, and it invokes this Act as the root of all. As it was said: *We must become, as it were, a double man.*[3]
8. The Order will associate itself primarily with four feasts: the feast of the Annunciation, the feast of the Blessed Trinity, the Feast of the Transfiguration, and the Commemoration of All Souls. As it was said: *Another will be in me and I in Him.*

[1] A condemnation of Arianism attached to the creed promulgated in 325 at the council of Nicea. "There was when he was not," as it is usually translated, was an Arian slogan referring to the Word as inferior and subsequent to the Father. (C.H.)

[2] "Daughter of thy Son" used by Dante in reference to the Virgin Mary. (C.H.)

[3] For the passage from which Williams adapted this line see "The Way of Exchange" below. (C.H.)

[1088] John17:21, NRSV. Endnotes to this piece are taken from Hefling, *Charles Williams: Essential Writings*, 150.

> [4] While she was in prison awaiting martyrdom in 203, saint Felicitas bore a child. When she screamed the jailor asked how she expected to endure the greater pain in store. "Then," she answered, "another will be in me who will suffer for me, as I shall suffer for Him." Williams tells the story in the second chapter of *The Descent of the Dove.* (C.H.)" [1089]

Although somewhat literary and intellectual, Williams's Order of Coinherence can be compared to what generally happens in a regularly held weekly prayer meeting in most churches across the world. People in these groups are literally carrying each other's burdens.

[1089] And for a further explanation of the notes see Williams's notes: MS 77–78, Wade Center. See also Hefling*Charles Williams: Essential Writings*, 149–50; *CWX*, 174.

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