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The Image of the Library in the Life and Work of Charles Williams

Michael J. Paulus, Jr.

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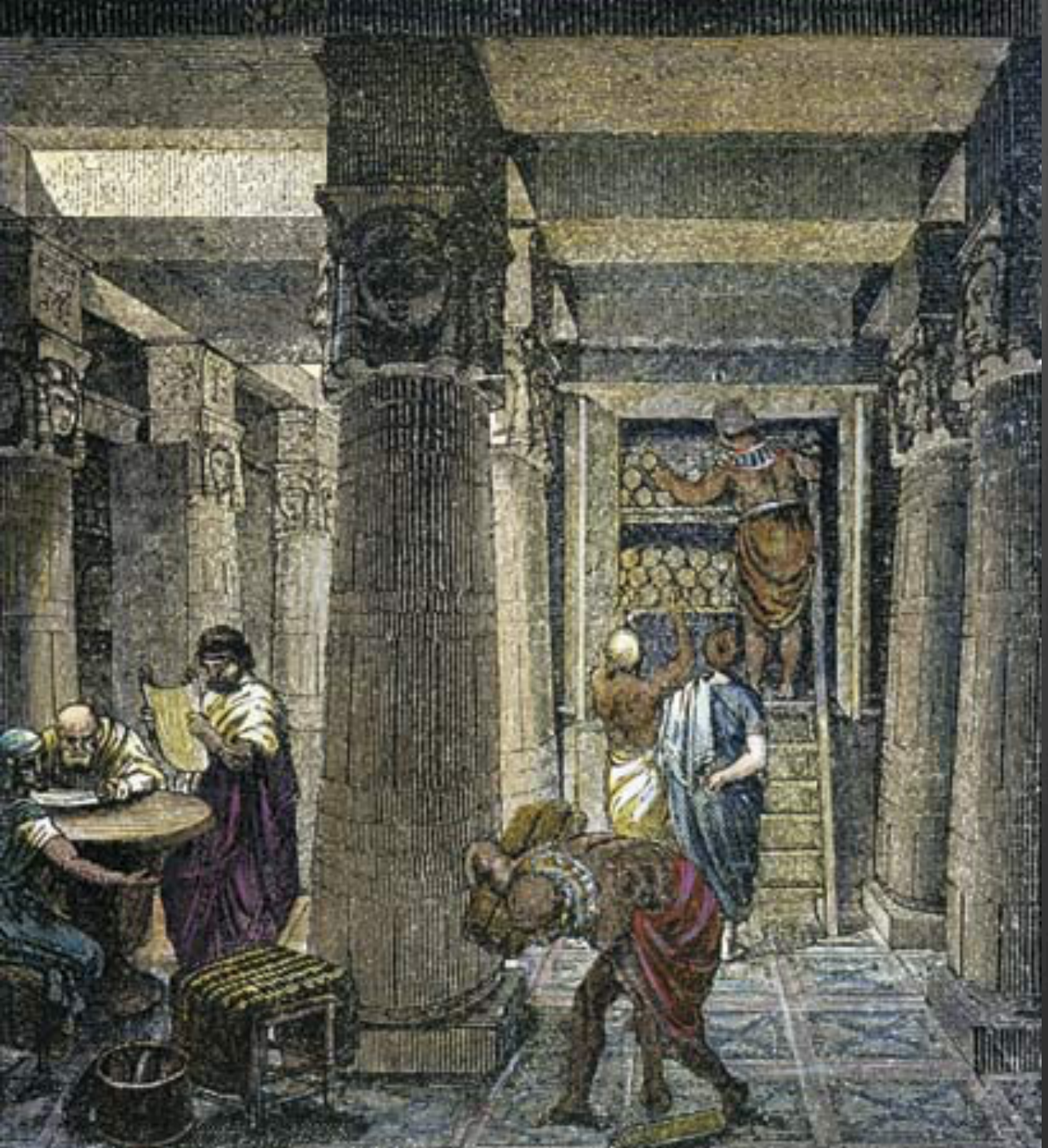
Michael J. Paulus, Jr., Seattle Pacific University
C. S. Lewis and Friends Colloquium
Taylor University, Upland, Ind., June 3, 2016

Charles Williams, Author and Publisher

Charles Williams Collection at the Seattle Pacific University Library



- An intention to configure a **culture** represented by fixed expressions of knowledge
- A canonical **collection** created through selection
- A collection mediated for a **community**

"Williams, Charles Walter Stansby (1886-1945)," *Dictionary of National Biography* (OUP, 1959)

interest; in 1921 he published his life of Cecil Rhodes and as late as 1946 he brought out a little book on *Botha, Smuts and South Africa*.

In the earlier part of his career as an historian, Williams had no professional post, but lived on his private income. At one time he thought of a political career, and stood for Parliament twice unsuccessfully as a Liberal in 1910. In the war of 1914–18 he served as an education officer in the Royal Field Artillery and in 1919 was appointed O.B.E. for his services. He was Kingsford professor of history at McGill University (1921–5), and then held the chair of history at Edinburgh until 1937 when he retired under the age limit. He was elected F.B.A. in 1935. He died at Chelsea 5 January 1950.

In 1905 Williams married Dorothy (died 1948), daughter of Francis William Caulfeild, a descendant of William Caulfeild, first Viscount Charlemont [q.v.]. There were two sons of the marriage.

[Williams's unpublished 'Family Memoir' written in 1939; Richard Pares in *Proceedings* of the British Academy, vol. xxxvi, 1950; private information; personal knowledge.]

RICHARD PARES.

WILLIAMS, CHARLES WALTER STANSBY (1886–1945), author and scholar, was born in London 20 September 1886, the only son of Richard Walter Stansby Williams, clerk, of Islington, by his wife, Mary, daughter of Thomas Wall, cabinet-maker, of London. He was educated at St. Albans School and at University College, London. In 1908 Williams joined the Oxford University Press as a reader, and remained a member of the staff, increasingly valued and much beloved, until his death. His duties, however, as literary adviser in a publisher's office, although carried out with enthusiasm and wisdom, occupied a relatively small place in his life. In 1912 he published his first book of verse, *The Silver Stair*, and, for the next thirty-three years, wrote, lectured, and conversed with a tireless and brilliant energy. In that time he produced, apart from anthologies, a number of prefaces and a rarely interrupted series of reviews, over thirty volumes of poetry, plays, literary criticism, fiction, biography, and theological argument.

Williams was an unswerving and devoted member of the Church of England with a refreshing tolerance for the scepticism of others, and a firm belief in the necessity of a 'doubting Thomas' in any apostolic body. More and more in his writings he devoted himself to the propagation and elaboration of two main doctrines—romantic love, and the coinherence of all human creatures. These themes formed the substance of all his later volumes, and found their fullest expression in the novels (which he described as 'psychological thrillers'), in his Arthurian poems, and in many books of literary and theological exegesis. His early verse was written in traditional form, but this he later abandoned in favour of a stressed prosody built upon a framework of loosely organized interior rhymes.

Many of Williams's contemporaries found him difficult and obscure. Although the charge angered him, it was not altogether unjustified, for he used the word 'romantic' in a sense that was highly personal and never fully defined. Its basis in his mind was Wordsworth's 'feeling intellect', and what he chiefly meant by it was the exploratory action of the mind working on the primary impact of an emotional experience. It was his view that the romantic approach could reveal objective truth, and this conviction, at variance with the normal implication of the word, led to much misunderstanding and doubt among his readers. In order to be fully equipped for the task of following the thought of any one of his volumes, it was not only necessary to have read the majority of its fellows, but to have spent many talkative hours in his company. The art of conversation and the craft of lecturing were his two most brilliant, provocative, and fruitful methods of communication. His influence on the minds of the young was salutary and inspiring, for he set his face against all vagueness of thought and pretentiousness of expression, and insisted, in all matters of literary commentary, upon a close and first-hand study of the texts. His favourite words of tutorial criticism were—'but that's not what he *says*'. The honorary degree of M.A. bestowed upon him by the university of Oxford in 1943 was a well-deserved recognition of two successive courses of lectures which brought brilliance and a climate of intellectual excitement into the atmosphere of Oxford in wartime.

About the relative importance of Williams's many books opinion must always differ. It is safe to say that the

fullest expression of his mature views is to be found in criticism in *The English Poetic Mind* (1932), *Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind* (1933), and *The Figure of Beatrice* (1943): in poetry and drama in *Taliessin through Logres* (1938), *The Region of the Summer Stars* (1944), and *Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury* (the Canterbury Festival play for 1936): and in theology in *He Came Down from Heaven* (1938) and *The Descent of the Dove* (1939). Among his biographical works the most notable are *Bacon* (1933), *James I* (1934), *Rochester* (1935), and *Queen Elizabeth* (1936); and among his novels *War in Heaven* (1930), *The Place of the Lion* (1931), *Many Dimensions* (1931), *Descent into Hell* (1937), and *All Hallows' Eve* (1945).

In 1917 Williams married Florence, youngest daughter of James Edward Worrall Conway, ironmonger, of St. Albans, and had one son. He died at Oxford 15 May 1945.

[C. S. Lewis, Preface to *Essays presented to Charles Williams*, 1947; private information; personal knowledge.]

G. W. S. HOPKINS.

WILLIAMS, SIR JOHN FISCHER (1870–1947), international lawyer, was born in London 26 February 1870, the only son of John Williams, a member of a firm trading in China, by his wife, Augusta Elizabeth, daughter of Maximilian Fischer, of Liverpool and later of Macao, China. He was educated at Harrow and, when only sixteen, was elected to a scholarship at New College, Oxford, but being too young to matriculate spent a year on the continent studying modern languages. He was placed in the first class in *literae humaniores* and elected a fellow of his college in 1892, and was awarded the Arnold essay prize in 1893. He then read for the bar in the chambers of (Sir) Henry Studdy Theobald, and was called by Lincoln's Inn in 1894. He practised for some years at the Chancery bar and took silk in 1921. He unsuccessfully contested Oxford City as a Liberal at the general election of December 1910, and, although he did not again seek to enter Parliament, he remained a staunch Liberal throughout his life. He was a strong believer in proportional representation and for many years was treasurer of the Proportional Representation Society.

During the war of 1914–18 Williams served in the aliens branch of the Home Office, and it was at this time that he began to be specially interested in inter-

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WILL
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I. St. Albins: Early Life

II. London: Middle Life

III. Oxford: Later Life

Amen House
Oxford University Press
London

"The Masque of the Manuscript"

THE MANUSCRIPT:

To fill up a certain *lacuna* is my aim.

I am called *A Short Treatise on Syrian Nouns*

As used in the Northern and Sub-Northern Towns

In Five Hundred B.C., with two maps and three charts:

By Walter Lackpenny, poor Mater of Arts.

"The Masque of Perusal"

THYRSIS:

I am an author and a publisher,
And doubly in me the great longings stir
To write, to print, and to proclaim aloud,
Here in the outer world and to the crowd,
A wisdom so far hidden …

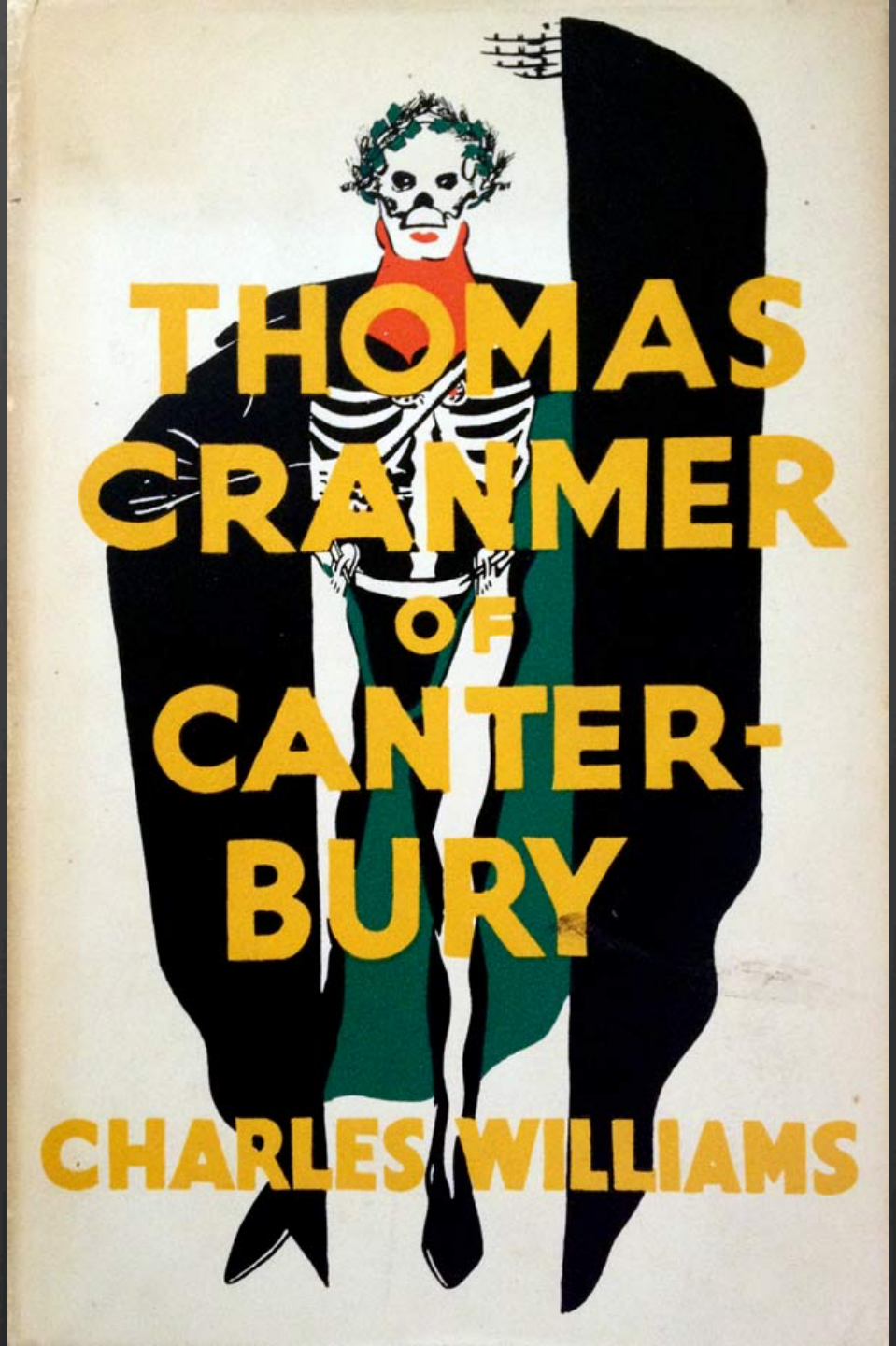
On the ancient laws of Solon,
    On mechanics and on men,
On the place of either colon,
    On the acuter abdomen,
On physic for the body and the mind
The Keeper offers help of every kind.

On the secret name of Sunday,
    On the causes of the war,
On the rise of Mrs. Grundy,
    Khalif, pope, and emperor,
And on the causes of all joy and woe,
The Keeper lets her information flow.

"The Masque of the Termination of Copyright"

THYRSIS:

… since the Book's own being, even as ours,
Was set to serve and praise the loftier powers,
Behold, when the predestined time is come,
How she is gathered from that heathendom
Of greed, oblivion, tyranny, and sin …


THOMAS
CRANMER
OF
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BURY
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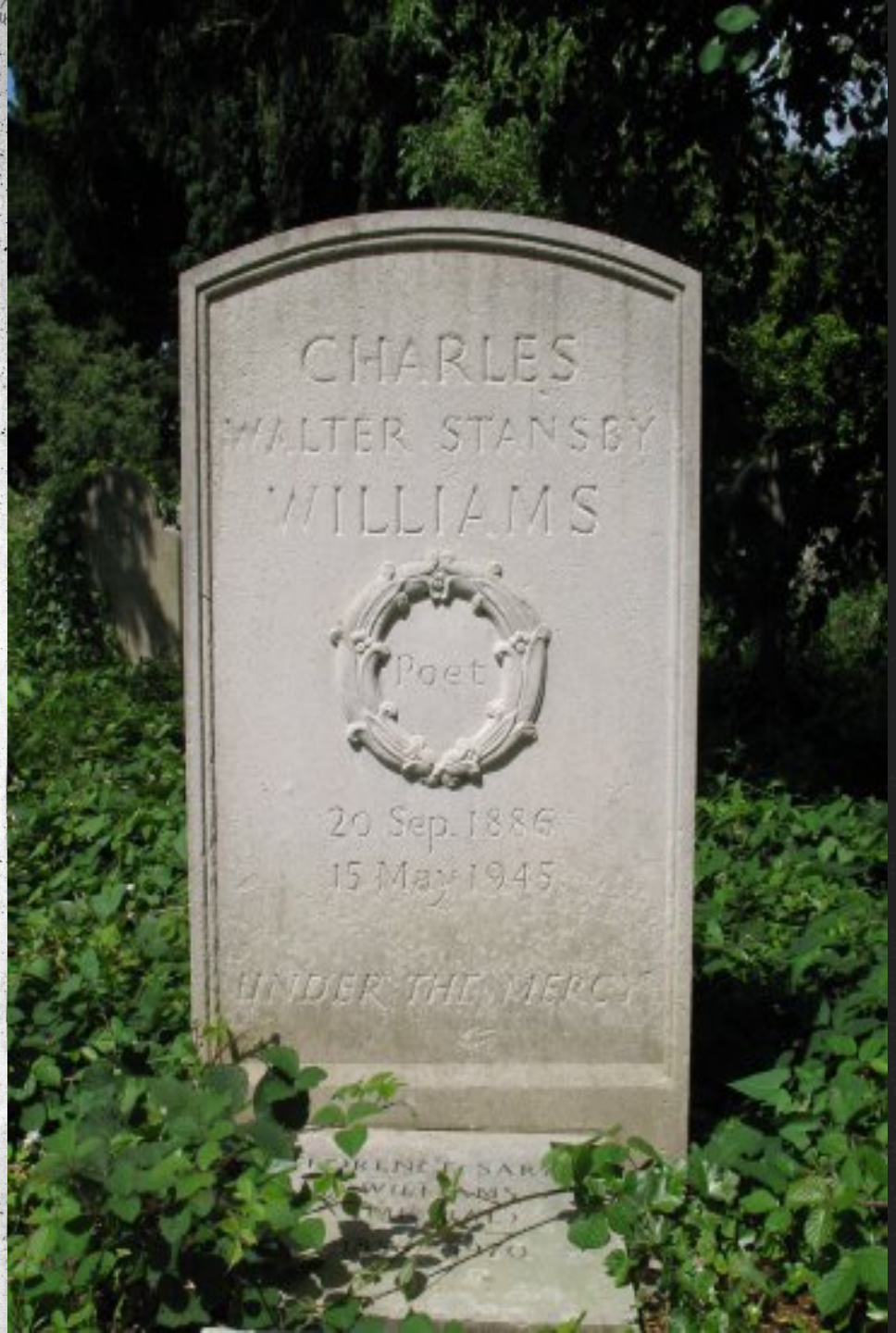
Anne Spalding


CHARLES
WALTER STANSBY
WILLIAMS
Poet
20 Sep. 1886
15 May 1945