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# Charles Williams's Theology of Publishing

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# Charles Williams's Theology of Publishing

Charles Williams, whom biographer Grevel Lindop has christened the “Third Inkling,” was a prolific, distinctive, and influential thinker and writer. At the time of his death in 1945, Williams was a central member of the Inklings and the author of nearly forty published books, which included novels, poetry, plays, literary criticism, theological treatises, and biographies. The literary and theological ideas explored and expressed throughout these works impacted writers such as T.S. Eliot, C.S. Lewis, W.H. Auden, and Dorothy L. Sayers. His ideas inspired one’s science fiction (Lewis’s), another’s engagement with Christianity (Auden’s), and another’s translation of Dante (Sayers’s).<sup>1</sup> In addition to being an influential author, Williams was an influential editor at the Oxford University Press (OUP), a position that provided him with access to ideas and other authors and which was part of his vocational identity.

“Poet” is the single vocation named on Williams’s tombstone in Oxford, where he died after OUP relocated there during the Second World War. But the work that filled his days and brought him to Oxford was not merely a background for or ancillary to his sense of vocation. In a trilogy of plays called *The Masques of Amen House*, which he created and performed with his colleagues at the midpoint of his life at OUP, Williams presents a theologically imaginative view of publishing by showing the workers and work involved in the birth, death, and rebirth of a book. His coworker Alice Mary Hadfield saw in these plays “statements of a theology of work” (Hadfield 68). As creative and intimate expressions, these plays do not present a fully articulated theological understanding of work. But as the dramatized work of publishing is connected with the divine initiative to transform human communication into communion with God, the *Masques* reveal a theological view of work that is historically and theologically significant.

Before analyzing these plays and offering commentary on the theology of publishing Williams presents in them, it is important to situate his thoughts within the history of theological reflection on work. In addition, to draw out a few theological principles implicit in Williams’s writing about work, some attention will be given to Dorothy L. Sayers’s theological propositions about work. Read against other theologies of work, Williams’s theological view of work emerges as distinct and robust. And when read along with his *Arthurian Commonplace Book*—a collection of notes and thoughts for his Graal poetry, recorded between 1912 and 1923 in a binder’s dummy for the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* with “Holy Grail” inscribed on the spine—it becomes clear how important his view of work was for his own sense of vocation.

In these notes, Williams defines many of his terms, outlines key points of his theology, and reflects on what vocation means—for Arthur, the Knights of the Round Table, the poet, and himself as a poet and a publisher.

### *Theologies of Work*

While Christian theological reflection on work may be found throughout the history of the church, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries more focused efforts emerged to integrate or reintegrate the increasingly specialized and compartmentalized domains of both theology and work. These efforts included: reform movements associated with the Protestant Social Gospel and the Catholic encyclical *The Condition of Labor*; new lay and clergy special-purpose groups, such as the Gideons and the Oxford Group; and popular, pragmatic views of Jesus's life inspired by such books as *In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?*. David Miller sees in these movements the "beginnings of the enlargement of the sense of Christian vocation," and classifies them as either associated with *postmillennialism* or *premillennialism*: the former, emphasizing work done to bring about the kingdom of God, focused on continual improvement and saving society; the latter, emphasizing the disruptive nature of God's eschatological establishment of the kingdom of God, focused on saving individuals (*God at Work* 24, 36).

Others, however, stood outside these movements and emphases. Dorothy L. Sayers is someone whose theological reflections on work suggest a more *amillennial* or unified view of how individual work cooperates with God's work of new creation. Sayers began to articulate a theology of work as she was thinking through the theological implications of creativeness, or what she called a doctrine of human creativity, during the Second World War. Although Sayers's theological reflections on work—which she defined as "creative activity undertaken for the love of the work itself"—were articulated later, in 1932 she applied her literary imagination to her former workplace in the detective novel *Murder Must Advertise* ("Why Work?" 63). Like Williams, as a copywriter Sayers was engaged in creative work for pay and thrived in the company of working writers, designers, publicists, and printers. Unlike Williams, who found glory in the work of creating a book, Sayers criminalized the creation of advertising copy at an agency modeled on the London firm of S.H. Benson, her employer from 1922 until 1929. One can imagine inspired conversations Williams and Sayers might have had about vocation after they met in the mid 1930s, and as she became one of his most important disciples and interpreters.<sup>2</sup>

In a talk called "Why Work?," delivered in 1942 (published 1947), Sayers called for "a revolution in our ideas about work" (64). She criticized "the appalling squirrel cage of economic confusion in which we have been madly turning for the last three centuries or so," and declared: "A society in which consumption has to be artificially stimulated in order to keep

production going is a society founded on trash and waste, and such a society is a house built upon sand" (64). She wondered what if we asked, as in conditions of war, about the inherent value of work rather than its economic value. Arguing that "work is the natural exercise and function of man—the creature ... made in the image of his creator," Sayers put forward three theological propositions about work: (1) humans are created for work, through which one serves God; (2) there is no truly secular vocation; and (3) a worker's first duty is to serve the work first, not the community (72–73, 76, 81).

Sayers's theology of work transcends Miller's pre and post-millennial emphases, presenting human work as a divinely ordained medium of creation leading to divine ends, yet it remains eschatological. Elsewhere, she made a distinction between *work*, a human being's "divine occupation," and *employment*, "the curse of Adam" (*Letters* 384). She also introduced qualifications such as *true needs*, "the right handling of material things," and the importance of "looking to the end of the work" ("Vocation in Work" 412). By the time her reflections on work were published, Sayers's copywriting days were far behind her—and the work of advertisers is explicitly critiqued in "Why Work?." While it is easier to see how Sayers's eschatological vision of work was more fully realized in her work as an independent and successful writer, it is not clear how relevant it would have been for her earlier work in advertising, which she presents as seemingly unredeemable.

Although she occasionally enjoyed her former job, Sayers's ethical doubts are evident in *Murder Must Advertise*. Belying an introductory authorial note about the unlikelihood that "any crime could possibly be perpetrated on Advertising premises," characters describe their work as "soul-searing," "unnatural," "immoral," and "heart-breaking" (9, 39, 54, 170). Forced to reflect on the nature of this work, Lord Peter Wimsey thinks of a "hell's-dance of spending and saving," a "Phantasmagoria—a city of dreadful day, of crude shapes and colours piled Babel-like in a heaven of harsh cobalt and rocking over a void of bankruptcy" (188). Wimsey also observes how the circumstances and "crookedness of advertising" became an "excellent hiding-place for a big crook" (251). Against this view of corrupted work, Williams's plays about publishing present a redemptive view of work—in which divine and human agency participate in new creation by transforming secular and daily employment into a sacred and eternal vocation.

### *The Masques*

After a brief, interrupted period of study at University College, London, followed by a few years of work in a Methodist Bookroom, Williams joined the London branch of OUP in 1908 as an assistant proofreader "and never left" (Hadfield 13). During his time at the press, Williams was responsible for a number of important acquisitions, editions, anthologies, series,

and other projects.<sup>3</sup> By the 1920s, he was a “responsible editor in the Press and beginning to hold his own in the London literary world” (*Masques* 37). In 1924, OUP’s London office moved into the more spacious quarters of Amen House, which included “a long, wide library” in which “All the productions of the mighty Oxford University Press from past ages still in print were on the shelves for display or consultation” (47). The dignified library was at once showroom, workroom, and common room—a place of inspiration, creativity, and fellowship.

Soon after settling into the new office, Williams turned his imagination toward a dramatization of work and life at the press, and the library became the site for a series of plays about the significant activities that converged there.<sup>4</sup> To represent the close community and high calling of the staff of Amen House, Williams blended the forms of mythical masque and earthy pastoral to establish correspondences between universal and concrete realities.<sup>5</sup> In a personal letter to OUP’s new librarian Phyllis Jones, with whom Williams had a complicated affair, he explained his three masques were a parable of the “only one work which is pursued everywhere and at all times, from which nothing is alien and to which all things are directed (otherwise they are null and void).” “And that,” he continued, “is the re-union of man and God” (*Third Inkling* 153). The first masque, “The Masque of the Manuscript,” concerned the “Way of Purgation”; the second, “The Masque of Perusal,” concerned the “Way of Illumination”; the third, “The Masque of the Termination of Copyright,” concerned the “Way of Union” (154).

Williams wrote “The Masque of the Manuscript” in 1926. It was privately printed and performed the next year. The masque opens with attention on the present. This is not a masque “of backward-thrusting sight,” but of Williams’s present publishing house, where “Joy hath not wholly ended ... / But makes a glad and perfect memory / Mixed with some worth of every day’s employ” (*Masques* 35). These plays, he announces—performed not on a specific Holy Day, but on any day—will celebrate the workers and their work in the present: the publicist, the head of production, the editor, the librarian, and “all the rest, here or beyond,” engaged in the “absurd and pleasant” work of publishing (36). This work is worthy of a great poem, and Williams, both poet and publisher, has written that poem to sanctify this work in a particular time and space. Williams has a singer invoke past and future glory by fixing over the publishing house a star that stands for beauty, truth, and peace. This is not only the star of the Nativity, but one that calls all glory into the New Jerusalem, “Where the world shall be made anew” (36). And this star, which “all lives shall seek,” is the same star “That workers of books desire” (36). Before Williams presents what publishing is or will be, he subordinates it to a vision that connects historical joy with eschatological joy and transforms all toil and searching into the quest for “peace and the perfect end” (36, 37).

The curtains open to reveal the office's Library and the Librarian, Phillida, working at her desk. "[T]he Library" with its books "sing[ing] sweetly by themselves," is a site of revelation where "treasures of words and lives" are preserved against "the dark of future and the void" (37). But the Librarian and keeper of this accumulated wisdom—the guardian of this "enchanted" space—is caught up in "search on search" with her authors in the movement of time and confesses that her collection is incomplete: "I learn that man only and ever strives; / Nor hath his riddle any answer fair" (37). The library, which grows with human work over time, both negates time and points to something beyond it.

A Manuscript then enters the library and asks:

Is this the place of achievement, the end of the waiting,  
The portal of freedom, the high city's final un gating?  
Am I come at the last to the house of all holy indwelling ... ? (38)

Seeking "printing and selling"—proclamation and justification—as well as admittance to the Library, which is mistaken for the New Jerusalem, the Manuscript introduces herself:

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 Master of Arts. (38–39)*

But the Manuscript, untidy with corrections, additions, and appendices, must be fixed up before she can be presented for the head publisher's—Caesar's—divine judgment. Lesser deities are called from a higher state of glory to have mercy on the Manuscript and apply their skills to transform her into an image of a book: Dorinda, to manage production; Alexis, to develop a marketing plan; and Colin, to edit the text. When the collective work of the company is complete, and the Manuscript prepared for its end, they present her to Caesar and kneel: "Regard her with favour and publish, we pray" (45). The Publisher hears the prayers of his staff and assents to publish her.

Music suggestive of a death march plays and the "great rites" begin (45). Phillida announces that "Nothing at all can live except it die" (45). A bier and two lighted candles are brought onstage, and Alexis and Colin place the Manuscript on the bier and cover her with a pall. She goes on to "printing and destruction," participating in the universal legend of purification that leads through death by way of "altar and offering" (46, 47). And she enters the communion of books in the Library. As she is shelved in the place chosen for her, the Book—no longer a manuscript—celebrates earthly glory and art:

Hail, O you most fair world! I come to you  
 As perfect as man's work can be, as new  
 As Spring in gardens or young love in minds  
 Where love's best self no rough presumption finds.  
 O glorious earth! O happiness of art!  
 O full Imagination, make my part  
 Not quite unworthy you. (48)

The Library is not quite the New Jerusalem, but the "Way of Purgation" that produces the glorious Book marks the beginning of new creation. With their present labors complete, the staff commit their work and themselves to Mnemosyne, the source of all knowledge and "knower of space and time" (49). Hers is the star that rises not only over the publishing office but "O'er temple and market and house" (50). The company sings:

Holy and happy who seek thee,  
 Thou art our inmost mind,  
 Knowing the things before us  
 And the centuries behind.  
 Goddess and mother, remember  
 Thy children here and befriend,  
 And bring us by holy learning  
 To peace and the perfect end. (50)

The curtain closes, and the death march is heard again.

In his *Arthurian Commonplace Book* (citing "Bernard Turner") Williams wrote: "all the great professions had their base; ... in the failings of men. Law, medicine, [etc.]" (46). In "The Masque of the Manuscript," the publisher is called to fill voids in human understanding by mediating divine or "holy learning" (*Masques* 50). Whereas Sayers begins her theology of work with the doctrine of creation, Williams begins his with the doctrine of new creation. In his view, humans are created for work, but this work is both constructive and restorative—making new things and making things anew through purgation. The publisher's holy participation in new creation is a reflection of eternity in time, but the work is only a stage of the quest that looks forward to a final, apocalyptic realization of divine perfection.

Williams's narrative of the Book—and of the Press and publishing—continues in the second masque, "The Masque of Perusal," which was privately printed and performed in 1929. Williams, now titled Tityrus, introduces this masque by recalling the redemptive work revealed in the previous play and announcing the next stage in the life of the Book: to "go forth unto its sale," find its way into a "reader's mind," and participate in the creation of another book (54). The character of the Book pulls back the

curtain and the publishing staff reappear: Dorinda at a typewriter, Alexis with advertisements, Colin looking up a reference, and Phillida shelving a book. They sing, wondering about what being learns from doing "Through publishing and strewing / The books upon the shelves," and then get to work calculating, designing, marketing, editing, and organizing (55). The work is fast and frantic, but then the Book asks why—after more than a year unlooked at and unneeded—was she "slain and raised and stationed here ... why ever was [she] brought to be" (58). Phillida asks, "Why do we publish books?," admitting that the staff themselves "doubt, / If any know what it is all about!" (58–59). Does the second birth lead also to death? Is the Library just a "sepulcher," a "void" of "all that has been" (62)?

The workers demand silence from the Library, bringing speculation to an end, and they return to their frantic but ordered work of revisions, prospectuses, permissions, and fee tables until a new character, Thyrsis, appears and speaks like the bivocational Williams:

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 ... (63)

Seeking wisdom ancient enough to have been housed in the library of Ashurbanipal, Thyrsis is brought to the Librarian, the Keeper, with the promise that she will give "such information as is wanted" (64). He finds the Book, purchases it, and departs—wondering if with this "accepted knowledge" he shall find his "quest at end" (65).

The second half of "Perusal" takes place in the mind of Thyrsis, where the read Book becomes part of him as the Thought. As the destinies of Thyrsis and the Thought merge, the workers are present on the darkened stage—Alexis wandering, Colin confused, Dorinda sleeping, and Phillida bound—all speaking of publishing without meaning and without seeking "The ending and beginning of the way" (68). The Thought, who "will not go without a newer life," interrogates Alexis and Colin asking each: "Why do you publish?" (69). Their initial answers—for money, for pretense—do not adequately answer a second, ultimate question: "What serves the Graal?" (70–71). The Thought frees Phillida and asks her, "What serves the Graal?," and she answers: "labour and purity and peace." (72).

With this revelation of "true knowledge" and unity, the publishers are (re)called to their work (71). The Thought wakes Dorinda, calling her to restore "Holy order" and to "Lead the ritual and show the Graal" (72). The workers line up and process: Colin carrying an inkpot, Alexis carrying a pen, Dorinda with type, Phillida with paper, and the Thought with periodicals.

The common instruments they carry become the elements or “hallows” of the Graal, and they sing of incarnation—of being realized in doing, of inspiration manifested in labor, and of the revelation of the Holy Graal through public actions in and through time:

- DORINDA           As without, ah so within,  
                           As below, ah so above;  
 To its incarnation kin  
                           See each holy virtue move;  
 Steadfast, though the public rail,  
 Shine the hallows of the Graal.
- ALEXIS & COLIN   See the high arch once agen  
                           Flung from brink to earthly brink—  
 As the Spear is, is the pen;  
                           As the Chalice is the ink;  
 In each study, rhyme, and tale  
 Shine the hallows of the Graal.
- THE WOMEN        When the moment, rounded ripe,  
                           Speaks significance of worth,  
 As the spirit is the type  
                           And the paper as the earth;  
 Printing, publication, sale:  
 Lo, the hallows of the Graal.
- ALL                 Hark the summons to the wide  
                           Periodical reviews;  
 Hark the holy mystery cried,  
                           Through the tumult of the news;  
 Telegraph and post and mail  
 Bear the hallows of the Graal. (72–73)

Following this, Thyrasis is called by the publishing company to feel “the communicating word,” “to speak as Adam,” and to write the book his vision saw (73). He assents to create and participate in the pattern of human cooperation with the divine and manifests, Williams concludes, “The outward motion of the inward Graal” (75).

The question the Book-become-Thought asks—three times—“What serves the Graal?” Williams wrote elsewhere, “releases energies frozen by the Fall” (*The Image of the City* 170). For Williams, the Graal—the cup of the Last Supper and the cup that caught Christ’s blood as he was crucified—is an image of Incarnation and Passion, which is part of “the one act—the

Creation and Redemption and the Assumption of man" that is "an entire act of love" (*Arthurian Commonplace Book* 80-81, 112). Further, it represents "the whole advance of man and his co-operation with the Divine," which is a pattern of "birth–death–birth" (110, 112). Phillida's answer to the Graal question, "labour and purity and peace," transforms human endeavor into a "spiritual adventure," and publishing becomes unified in and with the Procession of the Graal (*Masques* 72; *Arthurian Commonplace Book* 110). By linking the material process of publishing with the spiritual quest for the Graal, Williams shows the creative and communicative work of publishing caught up in the creative, redemptive, and transformative work of salvation history.

Attainment of the Graal, Williams wrote, is found in reconciliation: in the "agreement of inner and outer," in the unity of internal love and external labor (*Arthurian Commonplace Book* 116). When the publishing staff is called to publish, and they process with the hallows of the Graal, the publishing house becomes like a church showing "the visible process of reconciliation ... the process of Atonement" (*Arthurian Commonplace Book* 71). "The Graal," Williams wrote elsewhere, "is obviously communion with God" (qtd. in Dodds 11). Its procession signifies this Sacrament, which Williams noted "is the best we can see of that imparting of the Divine" and through the elements of which are received "Love from Love" (*Arthurian Commonplace Book* 71, 80).<sup>7</sup> Publishing not only reflects a divine pattern of life and love—it also directly participates in this pattern, revealing publishing to be inspired and made sacramental by love.

"The Masque of the Termination of Copyright" concerns the full redemption and transformation of the Book. It was written in 1930 but never performed. In his introduction, Williams welcomes his companions "For the conclusion of the brave employ," which concerns the end of the Book: her "predestined" redemption from oblivion (*Masques* 77, 78). For her being, even as her workers', "Was set to serve and praise the loftier powers" (78). To see that ultimate end, Williams directs attention to the work and its workers a century into the future. He directs attention to heaven, and the publishing office is transformed into a place of final judgment. There, a divinized publishing staff decides that the Book "upon the Syrian noun" was "studied with pure desire" and is the product of "perfect will" (80). She died, rose, gave life to another, and "is in all things worthy" of a free and "future life"—of "full immortality" (81).

Then "Imagination earthward" bends as a new character, Perigot, descends to find the one copy of the "elected" Book, "pluck [it] from hell," and bring it to the publisher's "holy house" to be published again (72, 82–83). The setting shifts to a "wretched second-hand bookshop"—an infernal inversion of the heavenly publishing office—where Alexis is a gambler, Dorinda a shopkeeper, Colin is busy with crossword puzzles, and Phillida

dusts shelves (83). In this “obscurely and obscenely styled / *Emporium*,” Perigot finds the “desired and destined volume” dying in a dying world where the gods are thought dead and where shelter, warmth, and food are deemed better than truth, labor, joy, and song (93, 92). With the holy object in hand, he asks each worker what she or he desires. Only Phillida’s imagination can reach beyond present preoccupations, and she asks for “a little happiness and joy and peace” (97). Perigot invites her into a new place, “Between the worlds of godhead and of man,” which leads “from exile to Paradise” (97).

Accepting the call to “Take on another past, / Expect another future”—Phillida enters the “World of redemption, [the] world of light”: the world of Caesar and his friends (97). The song of the star—“that all lives shall seek / That workers of books desire”—is sung again and Phillida finds herself in the Library (98). But the Library lacks the Book, which suddenly, after nearly a hundred years, everyone in the office seeks. Perigot, having foreseen the need, enters with the reclaimed Book and the staff “again immerse [themselves] in ordinary tasks” to prepare the Book for reissue (106). “[T]his is labour,” Phillida sings, “this is joy” (109). Williams closes the play by asking, “What star above this threshold shines to-day?” (109). The staff answer: a star of travel, wisdom, knowledge, summons, beauty, ecstasy. And what, he asks, is its name? Love, each answers—love that enters time, space, lives, and work culminating in “peace and the perfect ending” (110). As Williams concludes the masque and the cycle, he says that although the Library “tis earthly still:”

... heavenly Love once entered here,  
Which does not wholly die or disappear.  
But, being itself transmuted beyond thought  
Leaves memory with its old perfection fraught. (110)

This final masque, like Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, moves through heavenly and infernal realms that are not merely allegorical. But Williams ends on earth and in the present with the memory of a vision of internal inspiration reconciled and united with external act through love. Toward the end of his *Arthurian Commonplace Book*, Williams wrote:

Love creates (or was intended to) in a man a sense of exaltation of spirit and sense which enable and excite him to labour and delight in his particular ‘vocation’—the soldier, poet, statesman, mystic, etc. His love is himself *interiorly*, his vocation himself *exteriorly*—love his attitude towards the microcosm, vocation his attitude towards the macrocosm. (133)



*Charles Williams leaving Oxford University Press, with a book under his arm, when it was stationed at Southfield House, Oxford (c1940-1943).*

*(By kind permission of the Marion E. Wade Center).*

“What happens to the soul of man,” Williams wrote to Jones, “happens to the works of man, and it seems to me that all good things done in goodwill are part of the revelation of infinite Perfection—publishing, books, building bridges, adding up figures ... or anything else.” (*Third Inklings* 153). For Williams, an individual’s vocation is a manifestation of the love of God that unified one with God. What Sayers’s wrote about her writing, Williams could have written about his vocation as a publisher: “that pattern of being which I find in my work and in me ... directly corresponds to the actual structure of the living universe” (qtd. in *Dorothy L. Sayers* 312–13).

### **Conclusion**

Williams concluded that the third masque of *Amen House* was “ineffective” (*Third Inklings* 246). He also acknowledged that his commentary on the *Paradiso* was the weakest part of his book *The Figure of Beatrice: A Study in Dante* (374). Both works reflect Williams’s actual ambivalence about eschatology, even though he believed that full achievement of the Graal—individual and universal reconciliation—was reserved for the City of the Apocalypse.<sup>8</sup> The *Masques* reveal that Williams’s forty-year publishing vocation brought him experientially close to that City: His *Amen House* colleague Gerald Hopkins stated that their publishing house was for Williams “the moving force of his life” and “the noblest human monument” in the City of God; “all who lived and worked within it were citizens with him” (qtd. in *Masques* 17).

The masques also reveal Williams had a theological vision of work that saw it as participation in new creation.

Like Sayers's, Williams's viewed work as providentially justified and sanctified, and his theological view of publishing is consistent with her three theological propositions: Humans are created for work and work serves God; there is no secular vocation; and commitment to work serves others. Three other propositions, at least, about publishing are suggested by the *Masques of Amen House*: Publishing is a creative medium that serves the ends of God; publishing can manifest the creative, redemptive, and transformative work of God; and publishing's participation in the process of communication can lead to communion with God and others. More generally, Williams's view of vocation as the consequence of one's experience of the love of God broadens the relevance of these statements for other forms of labor that participate in the "only one work which is pursued everywhere and at all times" of purgation, illumination, and union with God (*Third Inkling* 153).

Writing forty-five years after Williams's death in 1945, Miroslav Volf critiqued the dominant paradigm of work within Protestant theology, which focused on questions about "how one should or should not work, and what one should produce"—questions that need to be situated "in the larger context of reflection on the meaning of work in the history of God with the world" (*Work in the Spirit* 74). "Christian faith is eschatological," and a Christian theology of work should begin with the doctrine of new creation and lead the present world of work toward—as Jürgen Moltmann stated—"the promised and the hoped-for transformation" in new creation (79, 83). Volf's theology of work, beyond postmillennial optimism about "the permanence of human moral progress" or premillennial subordination of work to one's "vertical relation to God," resonates with Williams's view of work (84, 90).

In *The Masques of Amen House*, which are shaped by a teleological Christian eschatology, a book functions as a metaphor for a human being who dies to be reborn, begins a new life to generate more new life, and is saved from oblivion to be unified with God. The ultimate agency is divine, but proximate human work accompanies it throughout. And the correspondence between universal and individual transformation links internal experiences and external expressions of love. More than a metaphorical exploration of a human life, these plays represent Williams's view of the coinherence of divinity and humanity he experienced as a publisher: a radical integration of spirit and matter, eternity and time, vocation and work. The special vocation of publishing, which both precedes and succeeds the human author, was for Williams one of the divine Author's greatest callings.

MICHAEL J. PAULUS, JR.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Jacobs, Alan. *The Narnian: The Life and Imagination of C.S. Lewis*. (San Francisco: 2005) 196–201.

<sup>2</sup> See Bray, Suzanne. "Dorothy L. Sayers: Disciple and Interpreter of Charles Williams." in *Charles Williams and His Contemporaries*, 93–116.

<sup>3</sup> Among Williams's most significant projects was the publication of the works of Søren Kierkegaard in English. This project, along with the relationship between Williams's work as an author and his work as an editor, is explored by Michael J. Paulus, Jr., in "From a Publisher's Point of View: Charles Williams's Role in Publishing Kierkegaard in English." in *Charles Williams and His Contemporaries*, 20–41.

<sup>4</sup> See Hadfield, Alice Mary. *An Introduction to Charles Williams*. (London: 1959), especially 67–68. On the importance of the library in Williams's life, imagination, and work, see Paulus, Jr., Michael J. "The Figure of the Library in the Life and Work of Charles Williams." *Inklings Forever, Volume X*. Ed. Joe Ricke and Rick Hill. (Hamden: 2017) 444–53.

<sup>5</sup> See Bosky, Bernadette Lynn. "Introduction." *The Masques of Amen House*. 1–30.

<sup>6</sup> See Dodds, David Llewellyn. "General Introduction." *Arthurian Poets: Charles Williams*. 1–13.

<sup>7</sup> While Williams's imaginative world was influenced by the Christian mysticism of A. E. Waite, he developed his own Christian mythical framework and language. According to Gavin Ashenden, Williams developed historical and hermetic treatments of the Holy Grail into a distinctive vision of the Graal "acting as an eschatological focus and catalyst" for the integration of "time and space, spirit and matter ... the drawing together of all things into union with the godhead. See Gavin Ashenden, *Charles Williams: Alchemy and Integration* (Kent: 2008) viii-ix and 112–13. In Williams's novel *War in Heaven*, which is contemporaneous with the masques—and opens with someone found dead in a publishing office—the guardian of the Graal Prestor John speaks like John of the Apocalypse and reveals to those "who have sought the centre of the Graal" what they seek and who they are (*War in Heaven* 245).

<sup>8</sup> See Williams's *He Came Down From Heaven*. (Grand Rapids: 1984), 143–44.

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