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The fantastic story that puts ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances attracts all sorts of readers. When it includes thought-provoking philosophical ideas that make the audience stop and examine their spiritual lives, we know the book will be worthwhile. Charles Williams wrote seven such inspiring novels. In each one we discover elements unique to Williams's style; supernatural events ignite a presentation of Christianity and an explanation of humanity's necessary response to the rest of creation.

Williams places ordinary characters in everyday settings and then inserts elements of the supernatural realm to create excitement and tension. Glen Cavaliero explains, "In each novel the characters are presented with an unexpected supernatural invasion which threatens the existing elements" (61). These invasions provide the action in Williams's stories. "The underlying theme of all his novels is the quest for some symbol of supernatural power" (Heath-Stubbs 28).

Christian themes characterize Charles Williams's novels. Donna Beales notes: "That Williams was paramountly a Christian is evident in the scope of his writing, which is either directly related to the church or has strong threads of Christianity woven throughout." Williams's theology deals with the interaction between people and each other, God, and nature (Heath-Stubbs 26). He maintains that God made each part of his creation dependent on the other parts: "Each living thing derives its being from all other things, and in its turn supports the lives of others" (Filmer-Davies 105). Williams identifies these components

of interdependence as *co-inherence* and *exchange*.

In a co-inherent world, a person's every deed is related to the rest of humanity. People cannot act independently or without affecting and being affected by everyone else. "We may not live for others, but like it or not, we do live from others. It is an ultimate prerequisite for life...self-sufficiency, the absence of co-inherent exchange, is an outright impossibility for any sort of life" (Shideler 47). Exchange occurs when people communicate and interact with each other. This principle is central to Williams's theology, because it is the basis of love and purpose in life (131). All seven of his novels deal with the co-inherent exchange between characters.

In his novel *The Place of the Lion*, Williams incorporates the supernatural and theological themes characteristic of his fiction. Williams uses his characters' responses to supernatural invasions to present his theology. Here the characters face a supernatural problem—archetypal Platonic forms (Flieger 77). Plato's Ideals, immaterial perfections that he claimed were true reality, invade the earth as the result of Mr. Berringer's occultist experiment. Williams calls these invaders *Angelicals*. They are the absolute qualities of people's personalities—traits such as strength, subtlety, and beauty. Each takes the form of the animal that most resembles that quality. For example, the Lion is strength, the serpent subtlety, and the butterfly beauty.

One of Williams's characters, Mr. Foster, explains how the archetypes relate to humans:

This world is created, and all men and women are created, by the entrance of certain great principles into aboriginal matter. We call them by cold names; wisdom and courage and angels and archangels of which the Christian Church talks . . . and when That which is behind them intends to put a new soul into matter it disposes them as it will, and by a peculiar mingling of them a child is born . . . and by this gentle introduction of them, every time in a new and just proportion, mankind is maintained. (Williams 53)

With the archetypes loose in the natural world, earth is in danger of being separated into the different archetypal parts of the supernatural realm (Williams 54). The normal patterns of creation fall apart as everything turns to incoherence. “[The Angelicals] absorb into themselves all kindred types and even those human beings in whom they are the dominating element” (Cavaliero 73). Individual Angelicals pull apart the complex patterns of individuals. One principle dominates, leading people to abandon all other parts of life and seek out that one trait in the Angelicals. This loss of balance provides tension between the bad characters’ lives of separation and chaos caused by the supernatural invasion and the good characters’ attempt to uphold interaction and exchange.

The “bad” characters in *The Place of the Lion* want to follow after the idea most like themselves—to develop one part of their personalities as completely as possible (Cavaliero 61). Exchange—communication with other people—is not their goal. Mr. Foster is one such character. He follows the Lion, the archetype of strength, because he wants to possess all the strength of the universe. His desire for power is so great that he loses interest in everything else. He does not realize that giving himself to the Angeli-

cal destroys his humanness and annihilates his soul. “Immense pressure enclosed and crushed him; in a dreadful pain he ceased to be” (Williams 178).

Characters like Anthony Durrant contrast ones like Mr. Foster. Rather than striving to advance himself, Anthony wants to restore the world to its natural co-inherence. When confronted with the power of the Angelicals, “He did not fight with this awful opposition but poised himself within and above it. ‘If this is in me I reach beyond it,’ he cried to himself again, and felt a new-come freedom answer his cry” (Williams 67-68). Like the rest of humanity, Anthony possesses some of the Angelicals’ characteristics. Instead of giving himself up to them, however, he rises above and discovers his true position given to man: “to control . . . to accept that authority that had been given to Adam over all manner of beasts . . . and to exercise that authority over the giants and gods which were threatening the world. ‘Well, I am as much a child of Adam as any . . . Let’s go and walk in the garden among the beasts of the field which the Lord God hath made . . . let me take the dominion over them’” (Williams 75). When Anthony realizes that his rightful place in God’s creation is above the animals and not in subjection to them, he fulfills man’s role in the exchange among creation. The world’s balance is restored once again to co-inherency.

Through the character of Damaris Tighe, Williams shows us what happens when his ideas of co-inherence and exchange are rejected. “He who will not accept dependence cannot learn nor love, and in the end he cannot live” (Shideler 47). Damaris rejects interdependence and attempts to live self-sufficiently. She spends all of her time alone, writing her dissertation for a doctoral degree in philosophy. Preferring complete solitude, Damaris con-

siders most conversation a waste of time that could be spent researching (Williams 26-27). Co-inherence and exchange are foreign to her; thus her life is void of love.

Damaris is about to die from the corruption of her loveless soul. She has spent her life rejecting interdependence with others, and her life of self-sufficiency is killing her. "Self-sufficiency destroys the life of co-inherence and [man] with it" (Shideler 152).

Williams's theology gives a way for people like Damaris to change. "The door to love opens when the lover receives illumination and joy from another, and when he recognizes his dependence upon that other as a source of joy" (Shideler 127). When confronted with the result of her lack of co-inherence, Damaris is terrified and instinctively reaches out for others. "For the first time in her life she wanted somebody very badly, somebody...to break this awful loneliness" (Williams 130). Damaris chooses to depend on another; she is no longer self-sufficient. "All bonds of habit broken, mad and fearful of madness, she screamed out and flung herself down the stairs. 'Father!' she cried. 'Father!'" (Williams 130).

Co-inherence and exchange include what Williams calls "substitution" and "voluntary choice of necessity." Each is an important part of interdependence. Voluntary choice of necessity refers to people performing acts of love, no matter how sacrificial, simply because someone else needs them. This is the absolute form of love (Shideler 108). Bernadette Bosky explains that substitution is a demonstration of love arising out of necessity. "We are to love each other as [Christ] did, 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" (65).

Williams illustrates necessity and

substitution in *The Place of the Lion*. When Damaris chooses to deny interdependence, Anthony takes the agony of her choice upon himself. "His energy sank within, carrying her . . . agonizing for her" (Williams 106). He mentally and spiritually puts himself in her place out of the necessity of love.

Williams's most complete illustration of his philosophy is in his portrayal of salvation. Anthony becomes an image of Christ, and when he rescues Damaris from death, he portrays Christ's gift of salvation—the perfect union of co-inherence, exchange, voluntary choice of necessity, and substitution. "His eyes . . . full of love and loving laughter, rested on hers. She received with joy both love and laughter; there went out from him . . . a knowledge of safety would she but take it, and freely and humbly she let it enter her body" (Williams 134). This interaction between Anthony and Damaris illustrates the greatest interaction of Christ and those who accept his gift of salvation. The saved co-inhere with the Savior, created with Creator, just as He originally intended.

Once she chooses to be a part of exchange and co-inherence, Damaris also practices substitution for the necessity of love. Anthony's friend Quentin is trying to flee the power of the Angelicals and is in need of being saved. "If Damaris felt it to be her duty, a necessity of her new life, she had better go" (Williams 156). She chooses to go and find Quentin, and to save his life she offers her own in substitution. When Mr. Foster poises to attack Quentin and kill him, Damaris covers his body with her own to protect him. Even in danger of death, she shows love through substitution. Because of her effort, both she and Quentin survive (Williams 176).

George Scheper finds that throughout *The Place of the Lion*, naming is the way characters practice exchange and com-

municate love. Interaction with others begins with calling people by their names. The characters in *The Place of the Lion* illustrate this principle. "[Damaris] begins to be saved by the feeble and broken effort of simply calling Anthony's name: 'An . . . An . . . A . . . A . . . A . . . A . . .'—thereby to a degree at last acknowledging her interdependence with another. Later, emerged from her near-fatal self-preoccupation, Damaris calls out Quentin's name in an effort to come to his aid" (139). She "called him by both his names: 'Quentin! Quentin! Mr. Sabot! Quentin!'" Quentin hears his name, stops his terrified running, and allows her to save him" (Williams 174).

Naming provides the final solution to the supernatural problem in *The Place of the Lion*. Anthony restores the world's balance when he names the archetypes as Adam did in the Garden of Eden. "At each word that he cried, new life gathered, and still the litany of invocation and commands went on. By the names that were the Ideas he called them, and the Ideas who are the Principles of everlasting creation heard him" (Williams 202). Anthony, as a descendant of Adam, takes dominion over the beasts, and like Adam, he calls each by name. In naming them he exercises power over them. In this final act of exchanged love, the Images respond, and order is restored. Creation returns to its normal patterns (Williams 204-205).

Charles Williams's novels entertain readers with their bizarre supernatural conflicts. But beneath his fantastic tales lies the purpose behind all of his work--to present his theological ideas to his audience. Coherence, exchange, necessity and substitution form the framework of Williams's argument for mankind's intended function as a member of God's creation.

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