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All Hallows' Eve (Book Review)

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All Hallows' Eve by Charles Williams. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981, a reprint of the 1948 edition. 274 pages, \$5.95. Reviewed by Jack Vanden Berg, Associate Professor of English.

All Hallows' Eve is a "fantastic" novel, not in the slang use of the term but as a particular narrative mode that weds the realistic and the unrealistic to tell the truth of human experience.

In his foreword to the original novel, T.S. Eliot says accurately of Charles Williams:

To him the supernatural was perfectly natural and the natural was also supernatural. And this peculiarity gave him that profound insight into Good and Evil, into the heights of Heaven and the depths of Hell, which provides both the immediate thrill, and the permanent message of his novels.

The success of a fantasy novel depends on the creation of a realistic world; Williams creates a sufficiently realistic world to achieve the "willing suspension of disbelief" necessary for a successful fantasy novel. The central conflict in the novel is the struggle between Simon the Clerk, a modern necromancer, a thought control expert, and a representative of the power of evil, and Lester Furnival who serves as a flawed representative of good.

But the novel is not as simplistic as this brief statement seems to indicate; it is replete with images of

which Eliot surely approved. For example, Williams uses not only the images of the unreal city of Eliot but also the images of the city, the *Civitas Dei* of St. Augustine; he also suggests through the use of rose imagery both the destructive power and effect of sin and, at the same time, the redemptive power of good. In addition the novel conveys a sense of the multiple impressions of the characters as they experience the reality of good and evil.

For readers who look for a rare combination of romance and theology, the novel offers the work of a romantic theologian. However, as C.S. Lewis points out, that does not mean a theologian "who is romantic about theology, but. . . one who considers the theological implications of 'romantic experiences.'" Lester Furnival's love for her husband leads, through her experiences, to the power to love even the disagreeable Evelyn Mercer.

I recommend this novel for the reader who is looking for interesting reading, who enjoys literary and theological allusions, and for the reader who enjoys novels with conclusive endings. My first rapid reading of the novel was enjoyable; my second leisurely reading resulted in appreciation of Williams' messages and techniques. I have resolved to read more of Williams' novels.

Reformatorische Maatschappijkritiek by Hendrik Woldring and Dick Kuiper, Kampen, The Netherlands: J.H. Kok, 1980. 467 pages, \$15.00. Reviewed by McKendree R. Langley, Associate Professor of History.

The present volume is an important survey of the Christian social philosophy and sociology in both the *Gereformerd* and *Hervormd* circles in Holland since the nineteenth century. In this review, I will refer only to the contribution of the *Gereformerd* or Kuyperian tradition. Woldring and Kuiper, both of whom teach at the Free University of Amsterdam, deal with the major figures of their own heritage, including G. Groen van Prinsterer, Abraham Kuyper, Herman Dooyeweerd, Hendrik van Riessen, Johan Prins, W.C.D Hoogendijk, and Bob Goudzwaard. The development of a Reformational social philosophy during the past century has been closely related to the work of the Anti-Revolutionary Party and the Free University. These Christian thinkers and activists have made a significant contribution to a Christian pluralist philosophy. Two key themes that are traced throughout the book are antithesis and sphere sovereignty.

The authors see the Anti-Revolutionary statesman,

Groen van Prinsterer, as a representative of the classic Calvinist position which combined both theocratic (society under the Scriptural commandments) and democratic (under God all men are equal) elements. Groen's significance was that he inspired this tradition with a Christian alternative to the social philosophy of Rousseau, describing the religious antithesis, the public justice task of the state, and the necessity to limit the grasp of the state through social pluralism. Abraham Kuyper then developed a populist strategy to emancipate the Calvinist commoners, building on Groen's thought but distinguishing between the institutional church and the Kingdom of God (church as organism), between the two sides of the antithesis, between special grace and common grace, and describing the reformist character of a truly pluralist society. Furthermore, Kuyper developed a structural critique of society in order to deal with poverty, and he saw that sphere sovereignty is rooted in creation. In his reformist