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Charles Bray Williams

Greek Scholar, Professor,
Writer, Pastor and Preacher
1869-1952

Translator of
The New Testament
In the Language of the People

By
Charlotte Williams Sprawls
Montreat, North Carolina



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CHARLES BRAY WILLIAMS

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Translator of *The New Testament In the Language of the People*

Charlotte Williams Sprawls

It is difficult to know where or how to begin writing a biography of Charles Bray Williams. The first part will be a chronological account of his life as chronicled by numerous letters from him to his brother Simeon (Simmie) in Shiloh during the first twenty-five years of his professional career, along with many newspaper clippings and autobiographical information he published from time to time. In addition to these primary sources I am including as well a detailed account of the evolution, publication, temporary disappearance, then the re-publication not once but three times of his major contribution to Biblical literature: his translation from the original Greek of the *New Testament in the Language of the People*. Since I was not born until his teaching career was almost over, I have relied on his own autobiographical materials as well as on extensive research in the archives at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Ft. Worth, TX, done by Dr. Richard K. Moore, an Australian theologian in preparation for his volumes on the subject of Justification (or Rectification), published in 2002. His part Three specifically dealt with Paul's *Doctrine of Rectification in English Versions of the New Testament*, and he quotes Williams's translation at length in his treatise.¹

Amazingly my nephew Noel Pace and I, along with our late cousin Charles (CBW's nephew and namesake), have been able to find a good many pictures from various periods of his life, though many of them were not dated and we have had to guess at approximate dates. [In our family as in most others we have had the universal problem of taking pictures and failing to date and caption them properly!]

My father, Charles Bray Williams, was born on January 15, 1869. [People usually tell me this couldn't be possible—he must be my grandfather!] I was his third child, part of his second family, born in 1935 just about two years before he retired the first time. His birthplace, the Simeon Walston (or Wright?)² Williams family farm, was near the small country village of Shiloh, on the road to Old Trap, in extreme northeastern North Carolina's Camden County—not too far from the Outer Banks area to the east and the Great Dismal Swamp to the north. His was a farm family of six children—four boys and two girls, named Charles Bray, Nathan Bray, Simeon (Simmie) Bray, Caleb, Mollie, and Ella. Mary Ann Bray was his mother's maiden name. In re-reading old copies of births and deaths in a family Bible it appears that at least one other girl and two boys died in infancy.

¹ Richard K. Moore, *Rectification ('Justification') in Paul, in Historical Perspective and in the English Bible: God's Gift of Right Relationship*. Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 50. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen.

² Genealogical research by CBW's nephew and namesake later questions the Walston middle name and thinks it may actually have been Wright.

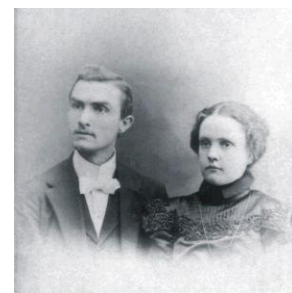
Mary Ann Bray in 1882 bought “The Bear Garden,” as the family farm was known, with her inheritance from her father’s estate. In 1866 she had married Simeon Williams and Bear Garden became home to her and her growing family. The children were taught to love work and to have a thirst for knowledge.

Charles turned out to be the scholar of the family, often recalling his habit of reading and studying Latin with his book tied to the handles of his plow as a boy and young teenager. Since these years right after the Civil War were times of hardship it was necessary for sons to work in the fields every day, but by burning the midnight oil and studying his lessons while his team rested periodically from their plowing, he was able to report to the teacher of the public school on Friday afternoons and quickly recite the whole week’s assignment. By the age of 15 he was teaching in the country school, earning \$20 a month, which he used to help pay off the mortgage on the old family homestead. At eighteen he entered Wake Forest College with \$48 in his pocket, plus \$150 borrowed from the local educational board. In addition to his studies and class work he was active in debating and literary society work. His ability and earnestness caught the interest of faculty members who found jobs for him, so that when he graduated as the class valedictorian in 1891, with a four-year average of 98 ½, he only had the original debt of \$150 to repay.

Charles was licensed to preach when he was seventeen and he held several country church revivals that year. Three years later, as a student at Wake Forest, he was ordained by the Wake Forest Baptist Church after having been called as pastor of the church at Brasfield. After graduation he became pastor of the Winton Baptist Church for five years, during which time he also was principal of the school and helped raise money for a new school building.

He liked to claim that his branch of the Williams family was distantly related to Roger Williams, the father of religious liberty in America; William Williams, signer of the Declaration of Independence; Sir George Williams, founder of the Young Men’s Christian Association; and William Williams, author of “Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah.”³

It was in Winton that he met and married Alice Julia Owen. In 1897 they moved to Pennsylvania and he began his graduate studies at Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, PA. He specialized in the original languages of the Bible—Hebrew and Greek--and graduated with a B.D. degree in 1900. His thesis was entitled *Evolution and God: The history of the Baptists in North Carolina*. One of his lecturers at Crozer was Henry C. Vedder, who wrote about him in its “Introduction”, dated June 1901:



I have been in the habit of advising my students, if they have a liking for historical investigation, to undertake a monograph on some local subject, and thus secure the preservation of much valuable material that otherwise will very likely be lost to future historians. . . As a student he showed

³ Further genealogical research by nephew Charles never could corroborate these claims, though they could be true, since the name Williams is almost as common a family name as Smith and Jones!

more than usual interest and proficiency in the work of historical research, and he has done his work *con amore*. I read the manuscript critically some months ago, and had no hesitation in cordially recommending its publication.



In addition to his divinity degree he somehow found time to take a business course in Poughkeepsie, NY. While a student he was also pastor of churches in Chester, PA and nearby New Jersey cities. In October of 1899 his first child, Charles Weston, was born.

Soon after graduating from Crozer the family started for Texas but stopped over in Locksburg, Arkansas, and he served as principal of the high school there for a year. After another year as pastor of the Olive Street Baptist Church in Texarkana, he was called to the pastorate of the First Baptist Church of Stephenville, Texas, where he served for three years, followed by a pastorate at Rockdale. During these years he became popular as a revival preacher and held revivals in Dublin, Lampasas, Brownwood and Trinity, Texas that resulted in over 300 professions of faith.⁴

In April of 1902 in Stephenville his first daughter, Eunice Lois was born. She idolized her big brother Weston all her life.

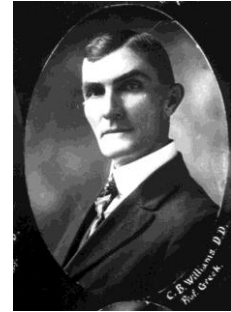


In 1905 Dr. B. H. Carroll, then Dean of the Theological School of Baylor University, contacted CBW asking him to meet him in Waco for an interview. Before the day of the interview was over Williams was elected to the position as chair of Greek New Testament and Interpretation and he began work the following week as the first professor hired from the outside for the newly formed Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Dr. Carroll and Dr. A. H. Newman were already connected with Baylor University.

While teaching at Baylor he attended summer schools at the University of Chicago, receiving his M.A. degree in 1907 and the Ph.D. in 1908. His dissertation topic was probably the seed from which the New Testament translation was to grow: *The Participle in the Book of Acts*. [Seemingly he was a bundle of energy who loved to do everything in a hurry! And can you imagine traveling 2000 miles roundtrip with a wife and two young children in the first decade of the 1900s, with roads being what they must have been and cars a new but still primitive mode of transportation!]

⁴ Charles Bray Williams, *Southwestern Men and Messages*, 1947, pp. 131-33.

During his years at Baylor he was offered the pastorate of First Baptist Church of Waco at an annual salary of \$4000, but he declined the offer and stayed with his teaching job at a \$1500 salary.⁵ After the Seminary moved to Fort Worth he was again tempted by a call to the Broadway Baptist Church there as well as one from the First Baptist Church in Wichita Falls, at salaries three times higher than he was making at the seminary. But he remained faithful to his friends at the Seminary. He was the first librarian at Southwestern Seminary and catalogued the first 5000 volumes of its library, given by Drs. A. J. Harris and A. H. Newman.⁶ From 1913 to 1919 he also served as dean of the Seminary and managing editor of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology*, in addition to his teaching. During the summers he served as dean of the Panhandle Bible Conference!⁷ In nine years in Fort Worth he raised \$75,000 for seminary expenses and endowment and also witnessed 200 professions of faith in a service at a nearby military camp as World War I was beginning. In a clipping from the Fort Worth Broadway Baptist Church, sent to his brother Simmie in 1918, his preaching was warmly commended:



Dr. C. B. Williams of the Seminary preached to a large crowd of soldiers in the First Baptist Tent at Camp Bowie last Sunday night. Several of our members were present. The unanimous report is that Dr. Williams is one of a very few men who can hold the soldiers. They are hard to preach to. He had 75 professions. It is not usually expected that a Seminary Professor knows much about practical preaching and it is refreshing to find a man of Dr. Williams' type who has a passion for lost souls and the gift of presenting a message in a live, red hot manner. Soldiers on every hand expressed a desire for him to return and we hope that he may do so.

The years in Texas away from his North Carolina family were regularly chronicled by weekly or bi-weekly letters written to his brother Sim (usually addressed as Simmie) back in Shiloh. Simmie's wife Lizzie saved most of those letters and after she died her son Charles (CBW's Shiloh namesake) found them in a trunk in the attic and xeroxed most of them, sending about thirty-five of them, written between 1910 and 1930, to me in a brown binder to keep. I am gleaning bits and pieces of his life from these letters and including them here as appropriate.

Apparently about 1909 CBW and Alice decided to build a house in Fort Worth. In a letter written October 23, 1910 to Simmie, he says,

I am having a time to get into my new home. Windows and doors will not come. Made to order in another state—some North and some South, according to the silly notion of my architect, who has caused me to lose \$1,500.00. But we are going to move into it in another week, by putting up some temporary windows in two rooms. This will be better than living with some one else.

...

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

If I can get out of debt in a year or two I expect to buy a touring auto and come home to see you all in it. Wont [sic] that be fine?

In another letter dated October 16, 1915, it was revealed that brother Simmie had also bought himself a car—perhaps as a result of seeing Charles’s “touring auto” on that trip home? I do not have any of the intervening letters.

In the fall of 1917 his son Charles Weston became a college student at Baylor, and about the same time Simeon Walston Williams, CBW’s father, died, leaving his second wife Mary and a young handicapped son, Caleb, who was born sometime about 1915. In a letter written by Alice Williams to Lizzie in December of 1917 she mentions that Mary might be forced to sell the homeplace, but apparently she was able to keep it, because the kitchen part of it was moved and renovated by Sim’s son Charles in about 1950 to a location back of his own home and is now a storehouse for their home.

In a letter written to his brother Simmie in 1918 he revealed his own poignant anxiety about Weston’s possibly leaving college to join the war. “Weston is crazy to go to war. I fear I can’t keep him out till he finishes at Baylor. Nearly all the Baylor boys are going and he can’t stand to appear as a ‘slacker.’ He can finish at Baylor March 1, 1920, and then will be only 20 yrs and 5 months old—young enough for war. I am willing to give him up if he has to go.”

Letters continued back and forth every week between North Carolina and Texas for several years. Alice and Charles were always delighted when Simmie would ship barrels of potatoes and apples or pears, or crates of hams and homemade sausages to them in the fall. Many of the letters contained glowing reports of how much these groceries were enjoyed and how many happy memories they brought with them. But at the same time, Charles didn’t just wait for food shipments from his dear brother Simmie. At the end of January in 1918 when a bad Texas winter was coming to an end he wrote Simmie that he had just “finished planting all my Irish potatoes this evening. Have in my onions, English pease [sic], lettuce, mustard. Will put in beets and beans a little later.” . . . “The box of meat [you sent me] cost me only \$1.79. And how we have been enjoying it these days! It has been the finest ham I have ever stuck my tooth in.” . . . [Alice] “says she is about to cry because the meat is nearly gone.”

Charles was forever grateful for his brother Simmie’s regular letters but sometimes chided him when a letter didn’t arrive on time. In one dated 3-24-18 he wrote, “You must not fail to write me at least every other Sun. and mail it Mon. so I can get it by the next Sat.”

In 1919 Charles resigned his position at Southwestern to accept the presidency of Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham, Alabama. In two years there he paid off a debt of \$60,000, raised an additional \$300,000 for endowment, and started the process of getting the college accredited by the Southern Association. However he ran into opposition from alumni when he suggested moving the location of the campus. The following section is a quotation from an article I discovered on the internet last year written by researchers writing about past presidents of Samford (Howard) University. I think this is interesting as background information on his tenure at Howard.

On paper, at least, North Carolina native Charles Bray Williams seems to have been an ideal choice for the presidency of Howard College. By 1919, Williams had made a name for himself as a pastor and as a highly respected scholar and veteran professor of Greek and New Testament. But, for all that, the Williams administration ended abruptly and bitterly [in 1921].

Like J. M. Shelburne, Williams sought to link Howard's future to Birmingham's, and his downfall was in leading a campaign to relocate the college closer to the heart of the city. As in the 1880s, supporters of moving Howard questioned the value of investing further in a campus whose isolation and aging facilities were seen to limit the college. Alumni opposed relocation, accurately pointing out that the move from Marion had bitterly divided state Baptists for decades. But faculty and trustees supported relocation, and in late summer 1920 Williams announced that the trustees had selected and purchased options on 120 acres in Woodlawn for a new campus, and had halted investment in the East Lake campus.

As the relocation debate simmered, Williams led a new endowment and debt reduction campaign, succeeding in a short time in eliminating all of Howard's outstanding debt, increasing the endowment to \$400,000 and increasing faculty salaries 20 percent. Less than one month later, Williams announced yet another campaign. He proposed to raise an additional \$500,000 to create an endowment of almost \$1 million. This, he said, would allow the college to relocate, establish a hospital and a department for the study of medicine, and create "one of the finest technological departments, including a first-class engineering school, in the South." If his vision for Howard's future was off the mark, his vision of Birmingham's was uncanny. "The city needs an engineering school and other technical schools and it needs a great medical school," he said.

Alumni opposition to relocation, combined with the vagaries of the economy, foiled the president's plans for Howard and Birmingham. In early May 1921, Williams announced that he would be away for awhile and then simply never returned to office. There is more than a trace of bitterness in his letter of resignation, published in *The Birmingham News* several weeks after his departure:

Whereas, it seems impossible, in the face of the terrific financial depression, to raise in the near future the necessary one half million dollars for the moving of Howard College to Woodlawn Heights, according to resolutions adopted by the Board of Trustees; whereas, it is my conviction that my high ideal of the Greater Howard, for the education of thousands of youths for the glory of God, could scarcely, if at all, be realized at East Lake; whereas, I am convinced that under the circumstances, I could not serve God best, or help humanity most, or do my full duty to my family; Therefore, I do hereby tender to the Board of

Trustees my resignation as president of Howard College to take effect June 1, 1921.

The letter also provides a tantalizing clue to Williams' sudden departure. "As a true sport I take my hat off to the winners of the game--the East Lake minority," Williams wrote. James F. Sulzby, Jr., on whose research and writing this series is based, noted that "the friends of Howard in East Lake concluded it would be easier to remove Dr. Williams from the presidency than to resist the removal of Howard College from their community." It isn't clear how they accomplished this. Sulzby wrote only that "personal unpleasantries and innuendos had caused Dr. Williams' tenure at the college to become complicated and ineffective." Williams' wife was ill during this period (and died shortly after), and that may have contributed to the pressures that drove him from Howard.

Charles Bray Williams brought a spirit of religious revival to Howard, presided over record enrollments and admission to the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, raised large sums of cash for the endowment and found majority support for a bold institutional vision. It simply wasn't enough, but Williams eventually won vindication for the most controversial aspect of his vision. Construction of Howard College's new campus [in Birmingham] began in 1953, the year after his death.⁸

Even though his tenure as seemingly plagued with happy events during that time. His Baylor on May 26, 1920, and study at Oxford University. December 6, 1920, "Glad you Weston. He writes us sometimes a London and other places. He is now traveling on the continent during his first six weeks vacation. He will visit France, Spain, Italy, and Switzerland. I am hoping to join him in his vacation next Summer." Lois, who had graduated from high school in May, enrolled in Bessie Tift College, a women's college near Macon in Forsyth, GA.



Howard's president was controversy, there were some son Weston graduated from received a Rhodes scholarship to Charles wrote Simmie on received a long letter from dozen pages describing his trips to

But sadly his hoped-for trip was not to be. With his sudden departure from Howard apparently Alice's health deteriorated quickly and he had to move her to Asheville, NC for treatment in a sanitarium. Charles kept busy with lecture engagements in Greenville, SC and Murfreesboro, TN during the summer of 1921, while preparing to accept the position as chair of New Testament Interpretation at Mercer University in Macon, Georgia. The first week of September 1921, Charles, Alice, and Weston rode the train from Asheville to Camden, where Simmie met them to drive on to Shiloh. They spent two weeks with the family and once more enjoyed home cooking and family hospitality.

⁸ *The Belltower*, Samford University, March 31, 2006.

Then in mid-September he and Alice moved to Macon, taking rooms in a boarding house so that Alice could regain her health and get stronger without having to “keep house and cook meals.” Her health had improved somewhat during the summer months in the sanitarium in Asheville, but it quickly became necessary for her to enter a sanitarium in Atlanta for more treatment. Charles wrote Simmie in October: “My classes are good and I am well pleased with Mercer—have nearly 500 students—will run far beyond that during year. My largest class has nearly 30—fine class.” But he went on to tell Simmie how sad he was: “So hard not to be with your loved ones at all. Weston leaves at noon today from NY for Eng.; Lois in Bessie Tift away from me; Mrs. W. in a hospital, and I alone.” After a three-week stay in the Atlanta sanitarium Alice came home to Macon, but she was much weaker physically, though she had gained a few pounds on her pure cream diet!

In the summer of 1922 Charles, Alice, and Lois traveled to Dubuque, Iowa, where he had been invited to teach in the graduate summer school. According to one of her letters written to Lizzie before leaving for Iowa, Alice had made plans to go, while there, to Mayo Clinic for some surgery and to get some definitive diagnosis of her illness. There is no mention in later letters of the results of this trip to Mayo. Apparently her physical condition continued to worsen over the next three years. At the end of 1925 she was at the point of death. There are no more letters in the binder between 1922 and 1927.

In a recently received group of family pictures and other clippings and letters from my nephew, Noel Pace, Lois’s son, there is a good description of Alice that Lois had saved in her files. This was included in an obituary the day she died.

Mrs. Charles Bray Williams was a favorite in the University circles because of her winsome and attractive personality. Possessed of a culture born in the North Carolina schoolgirl twenty-five years ago, Mrs. Williams had always been the leading spirit in the social life of the college campus[es] where it happened to be the lot of Dr. Williams to teach. Presiding with grace and charm over the functions of the University, she had endeared herself to a wide circle of friends over the entire South.

An invalid for all the years since her residence in Macon, nevertheless Mrs. Williams had won for herself a large place in many friendships. Always a born psychologist and a musician she added to a naturally frail body the endearing tenderness and sympathy that goes along with the understanding heart, reaching out to the distressed and troubled, whom she touched in the role of wife to college president and professor in seminary and university. A high standard of Christian character was the mark of her deep religious nature.

A touching incident occurred in the last days of Mrs. Williams’ illness when Fate coupled with circumstances enabled Dr. Williams to secure from the press the first copy of his newest book, *An Introduction to Christian Ethics*, and having dedicated the volume to his wife without her

knowledge, she was able to read and wanly smile in recognition of the inscribed dedication of the book, “to my wife, Alice Julia Williams.”⁹

In another ironic twist of Fate, Weston, who was doing further graduate study in Stockholm, Sweden in 1924-25 after finishing his studies at Oxford University, was notified of the serious condition of his mother about ten days before she died. He immediately began efforts to get back across the Atlantic, but because those were the days when passengers had to rely on the scheduled sailings of ships, he was not able to make the 4000-mile trip in time to see her before she died. He did get to Macon on Sunday night, two days after her death on Friday afternoon. He was of course able to attend her funeral on Monday morning the 26th.¹⁰

Apparently Charles in his grief and loneliness over the next few months allowed himself to become part of a rebound marriage less than a year after Alice died. This marriage to a Mrs. Lucile Adams Bruner¹¹ lasted about seven years. His nephew Charles in a letter to me in 1989 recalled that in 1932 when his Uncle Charlie and Lois visited the family in Shiloh he was in the midst of getting a divorce and was swearing off women for good! His brother Simmie had advised him not to marry so quickly after Alice’s death in 1925 and this apparently caused at least a temporary rift in their friendship, though CBW did make a quick trip back to Shiloh when Simmie and Lizzie’s oldest son Worth was killed in a motorcycle accident. After that there weren’t many letters exchanged between them.

Dr. Williams left Mercer in 1925 and began his last university teaching position at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee in the fall of 1925, where he was named professor of Greek and ethics. He taught at Union until his retirement at the age of 70 in 1939. It was during his last years at Union that his most well-known publication was produced: *The New Testament Translation In the Language of the People*, published by Bruce Humphries, a Boston publisher.

In 1933 while serving the Friendship (TN) Baptist Church as interim pastor, CBW apparently forgot his vow to swear off women for good. There was a young schoolteacher, named Edith Stallings, teaching English in the Friendship High School who caught his eye in the church. She had graduated a few years before from Union University, and perhaps had known him there. Subsequently she studied at Peabody College in Nashville and got her master’s degree. Edith Stallings was about 30 years younger than he, but in 1934 they were married. The next year, when he was 66 years old, I, Charlotte Edith Williams, was born, in Jackson, TN. I became quite a daddy’s girl. In a letter written to his brother Simmie back in Shiloh on December 15, 1937, he showed how happy he was with his new family: “. . . I have a fine faithful wife who does everything she can daily to make me comfortable and happy. . . . I have as sweet a little daughter as any daddy has. She is growing and developing and is showing herself so smart physically and mentally. She can set the table and do other house chores for mother and daddy. . . Charlotte is talking Santa Claus all the day now.” (Do you think I might have been spoiled?)

⁹ Article from *Macon Telegraph*, Jan. 26, 1925

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Biographical Article in *Who’s Who in America*, Chicago: The A. N. Marquis Company, 1938, p. 2671.

In 1939, just two years after the New Testament translation he had been working on for so many years was published, CBW retired from Union University, gave up his Bruceton Baptist Church job, and the family moved to Tampa, Florida, to retire. But in those days shortly after the country was getting back on its feet after the great depression, there was not enough money in pensions and retirement funds to suddenly quit working, so very quickly Charles found himself supplying churches all over the Tampa and West Florida coast area. For at least one year he taught at a Bible College in Tampa and he used to talk about a young student of his there named Billy Graham. (In later years after the Williams translation was being published by Moody Press the Billy Graham Association requested permission from them to use the translation from time to time in the Graham crusades and writings.

Even at the age of 70 Charles B. Williams was still a young retiree with plenty of energy. He had been still playing tennis until he retired from Union! And he still had his set of golf clubs and played occasionally when he had an invitation. Charles and Edith joined the large First Baptist Church in Tampa, but the family didn't attend services there very much because he was preaching in so many local churches almost every Sunday. I was a very shy little girl, but one of the Sunday School teachers at First Baptist Church was able to make friends with me and convince me to leave my mother and come to her class on the Sundays when we were in town. Vivian McLin became my favorite friend because of her kindness and understanding. But most Sundays Williams was preaching either as an interim or an invited guest preacher at numerous churches on Florida's west coast—in Sarasota, in Brandon, and in Plant City, to name a few. I remember enjoying the new experience of eating at a Morrison's cafeteria for Sunday lunches in Sarasota, as well as enjoying visiting church families on their strawberry farms in Brandon and Plant City and eating those delicious strawberries.

It was while we were living on Obispo Avenue in the Palma Ceia suburb of Tampa that I began to get acquainted with my father's other family—my half-sister Lois and her husband Bill Pace and their son (my nephew!) Noel, who was a year older than I, came down from Macon, Georgia, to visit us one Christmas and meet their father's new family. Another time my half-brother Weston and his wife Ruth and daughter Alice Elaine (my niece who was 4 years older than I!) visited us for several days from Kentucky, where he was teaching economics at the University of Louisville.



←Charlotte, CBW, Weston, Alice Elaine (about 1940)

In the fall of 1941 I started to first grade in the Roosevelt Grammar School that was just about two blocks from our house. By this time I had become much less timid and had made friends with some of the neighborhood children, so I announced to my mother that I didn't need her to walk me to school that first day. I really don't remember if maybe my father actually went with me or not, but mother did have one of her migraine headaches and wasn't able to go with me.

My memories of those first days in school have faded, which is just as well, because in October my parents told me we would be moving to North Carolina. Daddy's brother Simmie had persuaded the old Shiloh Baptist Church to call him as their pastor, and Daddy had accepted. He really was homesick for his old home and family, I'm sure. And this would serve as a chance to mend the break with his family that his failed marriage in 1932 had caused.

Shiloh church sent a driver with a long open farm-style truck to Tampa to load up our furniture, cover it with tarps, and move us to North Carolina. (It was the kind of truck we still see nowadays hauling watermelons or loads of corn to market!) But it got the furniture there without too much damage, and we were settled into the two-story parsonage in the middle of the small village of Shiloh, about two long blocks from the church. The house was covered with asbestos shingles (I think the church had recently remodeled and painted the interior of the house.) We did have fairly modern conveniences—no outdoor toilet!—but there was no hot running water. I remember mother had to heat kettles of water on the electric stove both to wash dishes, clothes (by hand, because there was no washing machine) and to carry upstairs to pour into the bathtub for a slightly warm bath! The house was heated by a big old parlor wood stove in the “study,” (which today we would call the family room or den). CBW did have a carpenter put a vent in the ceiling of the study to let heat from the stove rise up in the wintertime to one of the bedrooms above. I guess the rest of the rooms were heated with portable electric heaters. The kitchen and dining room were on the other side of the downstairs. Upstairs there were three bedrooms and a bathroom.

As families do today, we basically lived in the study, which had his big old black-painted oak desk and his Underwood No. 5 typewriter as the major furniture, along with a daybed and two or three chairs. The living room was in front of the study facing the road, and when I turned eight years old its main piece of furniture, at least for me, became a brand-new Lester Betsy Ross spinet piano when I began taking piano lessons from Miss Beulah Walston. Occasionally my father would sit down at the piano and play some of his favorite hymns, such as *Abide With Me* or *Rock of Ages*, or *Jesus, Lover of My Soul*. I have no idea where or when he had learned to play the piano. He had given Lois a beautiful Steinway baby grand piano on her sixteenth birthday and perhaps he learned to play while she was taking piano lessons. Both he and Alice were good musicians and he had a good tenor singing voice too.

I was quickly enrolled in the first grade of the Shiloh school, a big red brick building about two blocks south of the parsonage that housed all twelve grades. Since I had already learned to read and write before starting to first grade in Tampa, my first year in Shiloh was rather boring, so the next summer my parents asked the second grade teacher to tutor me a bit just to make sure I wouldn't miss any important second-grade work. Then I went into the third grade in the fall of 1942.

My father loved being back “home,” and the community loved him. I remember him as an excellent pastor for the 700-member Shiloh Baptist Church, which has the distinction of being the oldest Baptist church in North Carolina, having begun in 1727 as Burgess' Meeting House, with later name changes of North Meeting House and Camden Meeting

House. The present building in 1941 had been built in 1848 and 1849 at a cost of about \$2,400.¹²



On Sunday afternoon, December 7, just two months after our arrival in Shiloh, one of our neighbors came rushing to the house to tell us she had just heard a broadcast on the radio about the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the entry of the US into World War II. CBW loved history and current events, so he was a very timely person for his old home community during wartime. Shiloh was in a very vulnerable position geographically, since it is situated only about forty miles as the crow flies from Norfolk, VA, which was an important shipbuilding center during the war, and the German submarines were eager to reach it. CBW saw to it that our community took very active parts in such war activities as the aircraft watches, Red Cross bandage making, and inviting sailors from the Norfolk Naval Base to spend their leaves and Christmases with the church's families. Of course we had a good many impromptu weddings in the pastorium for young sailors and their girlfriends just before the men shipped out for overseas duty. And it was no secret anywhere that CBW was a very strong supporter of Roosevelt and his policies. I grew up listening to radio news broadcasts by people like H. V. Kaltenborn and Robert Trout and Edward R. Murrow as they reported on the progress of the war. My father never missed a news broadcast—and neither do I to this day! He also was an avid radio fan of baseball broadcasts. I guess my interest in playing softball probably came in part from listening to those old broadcasts.

CBW believed strongly in a pastor's knowing personally every member in his church, and he had a very active plan of visitation of every family in their home every few weeks. I often accompanied him on these visitations and he would sometimes let me "drive" our new 1941 Plymouth by sitting in his lap and steering on some of the country roads. By the time I was eight I was learning to back the car out of the driveway and through the gate out to the road, then driving it back into the garage! He would usually be working in his huge garden, which was alongside the driveway, probably watching me to make sure I wasn't going too fast or about to hit the fence! He was a master gardener and took great pride in his tomatoes and corn and beans and a huge Brown Turkey fig bush at the edge of the garden. A neighbor's cotton field came up to the edge of our back yard and garden and I remember earning a few pennies one summer picking cotton for him.

Since it was wartime and money as well as meat was scarce, some of the pastor's pay was in the form of chickens on the hoof! We had a small chicken house on the other back corner of the yard where these "gifts" were housed until time for eating. Most of my pets until at least the age of eight were hens and roosters that I tamed and would encourage to

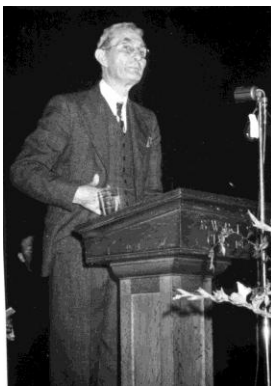
¹² *Biblical Recorder*, August 27, 1977, in an article about the church's 250th anniversary on Sunday, August 14.

sit in my lap as I knelt in the door of the chicken coop to pet them. Needless to say there were frequent tears when it came time to eat some of them and perhaps one or two escaped that fate because of my pleadings. Finally when I was eight a family of three kittens appeared in our garage and I quickly made pets of them so that the chickens weren't my only animal friends.

Other gifts that were much appreciated in the fall and winter were the sausage and hams and sweetbreads and pork chops from hog killings. In spite of the fact that we lived almost surrounded by the waters of the Pasquotank River, the Albemarle Sound and North River, I do not recall having much fish to eat during those years. Perhaps I just didn't like it and therefore don't remember having it. But one year when my cousin Charles came home on furlough from the Navy he and his uncle took me out in a boat fishing on the river for the first time and I thoroughly enjoyed it, even though I remember it rained most of the day!

CBW's namesake nephew, Charles Bray Williams II, Simmie's youngest son, and his brother Bailey finished their college degrees (just as their Uncle Charlie had constantly urged them to do back in his letters to them and their dad in the late 1920s) at Duke University just as the war broke out at the end of 1941, so they both left for officers' training at the Great Lakes Naval Training center almost immediately. When they came home on furloughs periodically, in their handsome naval 1st Lieutenants' uniforms, I thought they were the most handsome men I had ever seen. Charles was always my favorite, because he had come to visit us, hitchhiking from Shiloh to West Tennessee, when he was fifteen years old and I was just a toddler in Jackson, Tennessee. He had a small Brownie movie camera and always made lots of movies whenever he was at home on furlough. Thanks to his photographic skills I now have copies of many home movies of CBW practicing his sermons or reading from his New Testament or out in the garage chopping wood for the stove with my help.

CBW continued to be a popular speaker for commencements and graduations and various church meetings in eastern North Carolina and southeastern Virginia even during the war with limited opportunity to travel because of gasoline shortages. I still remember the coupon books we had to use for buying the limited amounts of gasoline we needed. CBW was always on the lookout for young talent to mentor and steer toward a college education, much as he had done with his own nephews when they were younger. One of the teenagers in Shiloh church, Walter Barnard, was probably his favorite young charge, and Walter spent many hours at our house talking with my father and mother about his future, borrowing books from my father's library, and playing the piano. He was an exceptional student already, so he didn't need that much tutoring, but CBW saw a great potential in him and continued to encourage him even after he retired in 1946 and moved back to Florida. Walter was encouraged to enter Wake Forest, where he became an excellent student and graduated *summa cum laude* four years later. He then went on to get his master's in library science at UNC (CBW couldn't convince him to become a minister!) and he spent an interesting career working at Columbia



University in New York City, finishing his career as their Acquisitions Librarian in the late 1990s.

Once or twice a year our church had to “borrow” the use of the baptistry in Elizabeth City’s First Baptist Church since Shiloh didn’t have a baptismal pool. In earlier years Shiloh church just baptized people in the Pasquotank River, but my father preferred to use a real baptistry! At the age of 8 I was baptized in that Elizabeth City baptistry. Since there was no grocery store in our small village we had to drive about 10 miles to Elizabeth City to shop every week for things we couldn’t raise and can from the garden. And once a year we made a trip across the scary Dismal Swamp into Norfolk to buy shoes for my mother’s and my narrow feet!

In the summer of 1945 as the war was beginning to wind down, two of my mother’s brothers and sisters and their spouses came for a visit from Western Tennessee. For the first time in my life (in spite of having lived in Tampa near the Gulf of Mexico for two years and less than 30 miles from the Atlantic Ocean all during our years in Shiloh) my uncle and aunt took me to the beach at Virginia Beach. I was ten years old and thought that was the most fun I had ever had in my life!

The next summer, 1946, when the war was over CBW decided it was time to retire again, and after a trip or two to Florida to look for a place to live, we again moved to Florida—this time to a small town just north of DeLand and not too far from Jacksonville, named Pierson. In reflecting on this apparent love of living in Florida that he once more demonstrated, I can’t help but wonder why he chose Florida as a retirement home—both in 1938 and in 1946. In letters he wrote his brother in the early 20s when he spent several summers in the mountains in Asheville, NC, he mentioned more than once his love for the mountains and his dreams of building a home there someday. He had absolutely no prior experiences in Florida or even invitations to lecture or preach there during his early teaching and preaching career.

Nevertheless, Edith was able to get a job teaching school there and became the breadwinner for the family. She actually had begun teaching again the last two years we were in Shiloh, and she was my teacher for some of my subjects in the sixth grade. I credit her with teaching me how to write properly because in English class she had us studying penmanship part of the time. Up until then my handwriting was awful! In Pierson she taught English and Social Studies in the junior-senior high school and I spent two years in junior high classes. This was in the days before girls were allowed to take “shop” classes, but I was able to absorb some of the shop class because one of my study halls was in that classroom. Perhaps that is why I have been a frustrated architect all my life. Too bad someone didn’t steer me in that direction back then! I did enter the National Spelling Bee those two years and was runner-up in the state of Florida both years, going in the 7th grade to Jacksonville for the finals and in the 8th grade to Miami.

During these two years CBW did a good many guest lectures and part-time teaching at Stetson University in DeLand. He had hopes that I might choose to go to Stetson for my college training, but that was not to be. After two years in Pierson my mother decided that we should move to another county that had a better pay scale for



teachers, so in the summer of 1948 we moved once more to Lakeland, Florida, where she got a job as a teacher in the Combee School, a new school on the eastern side of the county. The family bought a small two-bedroom house--with a large back yard for a garden—about a mile from the school. Later on Edith worked mostly as a substitute teacher in the Polk County school system, even teaching four levels of Latin in Lakeland High School part of one year when the regular teacher was ill and had to be out for six months.

Again CBW found a place to teach part time, at the Baptist Bible Institute in Lakeland. He taught there for about two years until his health began to fail about 1950. His heart began to fail and he even had to spend a few months in a local nursing home run by one of the church members at Eastside Baptist Church where we were members. After a few months he was able to come back home but with limited strength. Even so, he continued to write a few hours each day, working on his last manuscript entitled *A Commentary on the Pauline Epistles*. And he continued to enjoy sitting down at the piano and playing his favorite hymns every day.

In all the letters he wrote to his family through the years, and other articles and correspondence I have been able to collect, I have found only one reference to his work on the translation. In a quotation from a newspaper article in the Lakeland, FL *Ledger*, CBW recalled that “it took him more than 20 years to turn out the New Testament [translation] from the original Greek text, and that he started the mansized task only after one of his seminary students heard him criticize some of the accepted translations and suggested he ‘turn out a better one.’”¹³ We have always assumed he must have worked on it over a period of several years, probably beginning with his translations done for Greek classes and spurred on by the encouragement by students and colleagues to get those class translations published. I do know that he was a person of boundless energy, as evidenced in his letters recounting the activities he was involved in while holding his full-time teaching positions. He was almost constantly doing at least two jobs—teaching and preaching—and was also very popular as a speaker for commencements and conferences and other special events of all kinds. At the same time, he was constantly writing books. He lists at least nine, in addition to the New Testament translation, in an autobiography he wrote in 1947 when he retired for the second time and moved back to Florida. The titles include *A History of Baptists in North Carolina* (B.D. thesis at Crozer, 1901); *The Participle in the Book of Acts* (Ph.D. dissertation, March 1909); *The Function of Teaching in Christianity* (1913); *An Introduction to Christian Ethics* (1925); *New Testament History and Literature* (1917); *Citizens of Two Worlds* (1919); *An Introduction to New Testament Literature* (1929); *The Evolution of New Testament Christology* (1928); *New Testament Synonyms*; and *The Galilean Wins*.¹⁴ In addition he spent a good deal of time writing *An Estimate of the Greatness of Dr. B. H. Carroll* in 1947, but I am not sure that was ever published. Williams and B. H. Carroll had been close neighbors in his days at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, and he wrote affectionately of him:

¹³ Article by Betty Jo McLeod, Lakeland *Ledger*, Jan. 1, 1950.

¹⁴ *Southwestern Men and Messages*, p. 133.

But more than any other source we mention the ten years of personal contact as next-door neighbor and a colleague with him in those pioneer days of founding and starting the Southwestern Seminary. Seeing him live and move and do great things every day is the primal source of this evolution of his charming character and supernal personality. This tribute we pay him: Since we left the paternal roof we met no one who so influenced our thinking as he did in the most critical period of our public career. [Williams often wrote in the first person plural!]

At the time of Williams' death in 1952 he was working on *A Commentary on the Pauline Epistles*, which was published posthumously by Moody Press in 1953.

REBIRTH OF THE TRANSLATION

It was sometime during 1948 or 1949 that Kenneth Taylor, one of the editors at Moody Press, came to visit him with a proposal to reprint the New Testament translation that had lain unpublished ever since Bruce Humphries temporarily went out of the publishing business in about 1941. The first new edition by Moody Press was dated 1949. In an article by John Mostert, a member of the faculty of Moody Bible Institute, in the *Moody Monthly*, he stated that "the volume has been out of print for some time, but is now available once more. For accuracy and perspicuity of translation, this is one of the finest private translations produced in recent years."¹⁵ This same article includes a picture of the jacket of the "new edition of the Williams' translation of the New Testament just released by Moody Press, Chicago."¹⁶ Mostert in one of the Introduction endorsements in the New Testament 1949 edition itself, continues in his praise:

The work of translating the New Testament from the original Greek into our language is no small task. Not only does it require a detailed knowledge of the vocabulary and grammar of ancient *koine* Greek, but also the faculty of conveying ideas into good, clear English idiom. In his handling of the Greek text the translator must be fair, accurate, and although in many instances must act in the role of interpreter, he must not permit subjective opinion to have the upper hand.

Williams does what few others have done: he takes some of the finer shades of meaning found in the Greek constructions and fuses them into the English text. This he does, not in a cumbersome, overwrought manner, but in a natural, smooth-flowing style. More than any other translator he brings out the *aktionsart* (kind of action) of the verbs, an element little stressed in standard versions. Besides this there is clear evidence of the results of latest research into the fuller

¹⁵ John Mostert, *Moody Monthly*, November 1949, pp. 156-57.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

significance of certain words, cases, prepositions, connectives, and other parts of speech.¹⁷

I have a copy of that first Moody printing in my collection now, but I was not aware of it being in print until 1950, just two years before CBW's death. I guess my first years in a new high school put me in a fog that kept me from being too aware of important events in the publishing world, but I do definitely remember the men who came down to visit us from Moody Press and I still have some of the pictures they made on that visit for their publicity. My

of fate that
who handled
Moody Press,
paraphrase,
he became
Williams died
hospital, after
My mother



Norfolk, VA for his final memorial service and burial in the Hollywood Cemetery in Elizabeth City, NC.

mother and I thought it was an interesting twist years later Kenneth Taylor, the Moody editor the beginning of the transfer of translation to also was the man who published the popular *The Living Bible*, so popular in the 1970s after president of Tyndale Publishers. Charles Bray on May 4, 1952, at age 83, in the Bartow, FL a short final illness. His heart finally gave out. and I accompanied his body on the train to

The pastor of Eastside Baptist Church, M. J. Schultz, wrote a warm tribute to Dr. Williams in the week after his death that was in the following Sunday's church bulletin.

Last Sunday, our beloved Dr. Charles B. Williams breathed his last in the Bartow Hospital and took his flight to realms of glory to be with Jesus. We greatly miss him. . . .He was a world-famous scholar of the Greek New Testament, a wonderful teacher, a prince of preachers, a gracious friend, a saint indeed, and a father and husband beloved. His example in this church will be a blessing and challenge to be faithful unto death. At the age of 83 he never missed a service till he became too ill to attend. God hallow his memory! His reward in Heaven will be something great!¹⁸

I graduated from Lakeland High School about a month later, just missing the honor of being salutatorian by a few grade points. CBW had insisted that I take Latin, as well as all four years of English and all the math and science I could work in, but he also suggested that I take typing and shorthand in order to be able to make a good living no matter what field I chose to enter. The two latter subjects came in very handy when in college I was able to get a good job as secretary for Russell Bradley Jones, the chairman of the Bible department at Carson-Newman College. Charles Bray Williams was forever the academic advisor!

¹⁷ Charles B. Williams, *The New Testament: A Translation in the Language of the People*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1949. Introduction page endorsement by John Mostert.

¹⁸ From May 11, 1952 bulletin, Eastside Baptist Church, Lakeland, Florida.



But the real story of the Williams translation actually began again in 1952 after its hiatus of ten or eleven years. Apparently enough of his former students had bought copies of the original Bruce Humphries edition in 1937 and the years up to the war that they had kept the enthusiasm for it alive. In the fall of 1952 my mother and I moved back to Tennessee to be nearer her family and as I enrolled in Carson-Newman College in September for my freshman year, she became assistant manager of the Carson-Newman College bookstore, moving up to manager after a year. (Of course I disliked having my mother go to college with me! But it did have some perks: instead of living in a dorm I lived in an apartment in town with my mother and could drive a car, which no other female students were allowed to do in those years in the fifties. And as a daughter of a faculty member I did not have to pay tuition. But I did miss lots of the fun of dormitory life.)

She immediately started ordering copies of the New Testament from Moody to sell in the college bookstore and made sure that every ministerial student in that eastern Tennessee Baptist college became familiar with it and bought copies to use in their Bible classes. Then as they went on to seminary training at the various seminaries they helped to spread its popularity even further. She became a master salesman for the translation and continued to be until she was forced to retire because of ill health in 1960. Moody published several different editions of the translation, beginning with the almost 2" thick buckram bound copy with the brown and white dust cover in 1952, through a thinner paperback version in the mid-50s, to another hardback in navy blue buckram binding in 1965. Moody also produced a limited number of leather-bound copies printed on thin India paper. I still have the 1952 leather copy they presented to my father just before he died, with his name embossed in gold on the cover.

In 1960 when my mother had to retire because of extremely poor health, I was living in Atlanta and working in the English department at Emory University, where I had finished graduate school in 1958. It was at Emory that I met a young physicist, Perry Sprawls, in the fall of 1960 when he began his teaching career there. At the end of 1961, even though my mother was still very ill and actually in the hospital, Perry and I were married. When my mother was able to leave the hospital she lived for a few weeks at the home of my sister Lois in Decatur until she was strong enough to get an apartment and live by herself. When Perry and I finished building our first home in May she moved into an apartment we had built in it especially for her, where she began to regain her health. She actually lived 25 more years!! Perry has been closely involved through the years with the publishing of the New Testament translation and continues to be my best advisor and publishing companion.

In 1966 the Moody edition was included in a Four-Translation New Testament published by The Iversen Associates, NY, and printed by World Wide Publications, a printer in Minneapolis, MN which was distributed at some of the Billy Graham Crusades. Later on there was inclusion in a 26-Translation collection published by Zondervan, but I do not have a copy of it in my library.

Gradually during the late 1970s sales of the Moody editions declined. In about 1983 Moody ceased publication and for about 10 years the Williams translation was out of

print again. Then in 1985 in an editorial in the *Advanced Adult Quarterly* put out by the Baptist Sunday School Board, Lee Porter may have unwittingly started the ball rolling toward re-publication of the Williams New Testament when he ended the editorial with the sentence, "You may want to secure for yourself a copy of this translation as you are involved in this study [of the Gospel of John]." The Williams translation had been used throughout the Sunday School lessons for the winter quarter as the reference by that quarter's lesson writer. I wrote to Mr. Porter, thanking him for his recommendation but reminding him that there were no copies left anywhere for people to buy. Moody Press had notified my mother in 1984 that they were completely out of stock and knew of none available anywhere.

At the same time I wrote to Dr. Steve Bond, one of the editors at Broadman Press with whom I had talked many times during the time I was an administrative assistant to Dr. Peter Rhea Jones at First Baptist Church of Decatur, GA, who was writing a book on the Parables that I spent many months typing for him. Dr. Bond wrote back immediately with a recommendation that I get in touch with Holman Bible Publishers, who were the Bible-publishing arm of Broadman Press. After corresponding with editors there for a few months, Holman sent my mother a contract in 1985 proposing to publish in 1986. It actually did make it into print in 1986 just a month before my mother died, so she did get to see it in print again.

Ironically, unknown to us, Moody Press had also reconsidered and their editorial board had decided to re-issue the translation in 1986. They had sent a contract to my mother about the same time we were in talks with Holman, and we had to make the difficult decision to go with Holman, because we thought they would give the translation much better advertisement and promotion than Moody had done over the past ten or twenty years. Moody graciously agreed to Holman's request for the photographic plates, even though they were disappointed that my mother had chosen not to renew their contract. Unfortunately communication had broken down at some point in 1983-84 and they had never communicated to my mother that they probably would eventually consider re-publication, so she thought they had put an end to their involvement with the translation.

We were pleased with Holman's handling of the publication. Under the guidance of Johnnie Godwin, who was a delight to work with, they decided to call their edition the 50th anniversary edition, even though it actually came out a few months before 1987, the 50th year. The books sold well. They produced a hardback navy-colored copy as well as both wine and black leather bindings, which were very popular. My cousin Charles Williams, CBW's nephew, was still living in Shiloh and was a big supporter of his uncle's work. He was instrumental in getting one of the Elizabeth City bookstores to stock a few of the New Testaments, and in August of 1986 he sent me a clipping from the Elizabeth City paper, *The Daily Advance*, quoting an editorial published in the Capital Baptist in Washington, DC.

In the avalanche of books about the Bible, coming from modern authors and publishers, it is good news that the *Williams New Testament* translation is being re-printed by the Baptist Sunday School Board's Holman Division.

When Charles B. Williams translated the New Testament ‘in the language of the people’ nearly half a century ago while on the faculty of Southwestern Seminary, J. R. Mantey, Department of New Testament Interpretation, Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, wrote ‘Williams’ translation, considering all the factors, is the most accurate and illuminating translation in the English language.’ . . .

Warren W. Wiersbe in his 1974 book *Which Bible Can you Trust* says, ‘For accuracy in translation of the Greek verbs, [the Williams New Testament] stands head and shoulders above the others.’

In a time when the Baptists need all the healing possible, Williams himself represents a bridging symbol. Williams devoted his professional career almost wholly to Southern Baptist institutions. . . .But Williams, after graduating summa cum laude from Wake Forest, attended and graduated from two American Baptist related schools—Crozer Theological Seminary and the University of Chicago where he received the Ph.D. degree.

Williams said his objective in his New Testament was ‘not a word for word translation. . . . It is rather a translation of the thought of the writers with a reproduction of their diction and style. Greek idioms are not brought over into our translation, but are expressed in corresponding English idioms which express the same thoughts as the Greek idioms. It is the thoughts of our New Testament, not in single words, that we have tried to translate.’¹⁹

But in about 1995 when they had completely sold out their 10,000 copy printing, I found out accidentally at the Baptist Book Store in Atlanta that Holman had discontinued the publication without even telling me ahead of time and giving me a chance to buy the last few copies to keep for personal requests, as our contract had promised. Needless to say, I was very upset, but could do nothing to change the situation. I have my opinions about why Holman dropped the translation from their publications, but that is a moot subject.

In the early 90s, after the Holman printing had been selling for a few years, a Biblical researcher from Perth, Australia, Richard K. Moore, wrote me that he was beginning a major work on the subject of Justification and he was extremely impressed with the way the Williams translation helped in the understanding of this doctrine. Moore subsequently made a special study trip to the U.S. in July of 1994 and spent almost a month working in the archives of Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth doing research on Charles Bray Williams. He was able to dig up material and pictures that I had no idea even existed, and he wrote up a detailed history of research he had done and sent it to me. At the same time, when he finished his research at Southwestern, he and his wife Kathy came by Decatur, Georgia, and spent three or four days visiting in our home and discussing his interest in my father and his work. Moore worked on his volumes on Justification while he was continuing his teaching as Head of the New Testament Department at the Baptist

¹⁹ From *The Daily Advance*, Elizabeth City, NC, Sunday, August 24, 1986.

Theological College of Western Australia, and the two volumes were published in 2002.²⁰ I was impressed with Dr. Moore's scholarly interest in the Williams translation and asked him to do the foreword for the Millennium edition in 2000, which he graciously agreed to do. We continue to carry that foreword now also in the Montreat edition. Quoting from his last paragraph in the foreword:

The genius of Charles B. Williams was to incorporate this relational understanding of "justification" into his English translation in a viable way. Those who undertake the research will find he was the first to do so. Many subsequent translations have incorporated this approach, notably the very influential *Good News Bible*. It has also been borrowed for some foreign language translations. But is not this matter of how we come into right standing with God, or, more correctly, of how God brings us into right standing with himself, at the very heart of the Good News (Rom. 1.16), at the very heart of Christianity itself? Williams' pioneering work in this vital area gives his translation a unique and enduring significance among English versions of the New Testament.²¹

I spent the next four years contacting lots of Bible publishers—from Abingdon to Zondervan to Smyth & Helwys to Thomas Nelson and several others. Some of them expressed interest, but none were willing to take on a new translation for one reason or another. Finally in about 1997 in talking to Reid Crow, the printer who did all of First Baptist Decatur's printing at his Collegiate Press in Atlanta, he suggested that there were printers (as opposed to publishers) in the Atlanta area who had presses big enough to handle the giant photographic plates that Holman had returned to me. My husband and I decided there was no reason we could not become publishers of the New Testament ourselves. Holman had also returned copyright rights to me when they ceased publication and I renewed them in my name in 1995. We formed the Sprawls Educational Publishing Company, and Reid Crow put me in touch with one of his local printer friends with whom we began negotiations to publish the translation ourselves. At the end of 1999, just as we were about to move to the beautiful mountains of North Carolina to retire, the books were ready. We were close enough to the millennium that we chose to call our new edition the Millennium Edition, and sales began in January 2000. With only a few advertisements in some of the state Baptist publications and *Baptists Today*, sales took off and have remained fairly steady for the past seven years.

By 2005 the Millennium printing of 2000 copies had sold out, so we began negotiations with another printer recommended by Perry Sprawls' medical textbook printers, who could print as few as 1000 copies at a time and then reprint as necessary without having to warehouse lots of stock. They also digitized the copy so that the old photographic plates are no longer necessary. This latest printing is now called the Montreat Edition.

Interestingly enough, even though we have chosen not to advertise for the past five years in state papers, sales have held up simply by word of mouth and by the increasing use of the internet and Google! We now have requests for orders from many western states, especially California, Arizona, Colorado, Washington, New Mexico; and many northern

²⁰ Richard K. Moore, *Ibid.*

²¹ Richard K. Moore, Foreword, *Williams New Testament in the Language of the People*, 2000, pp.7-8.

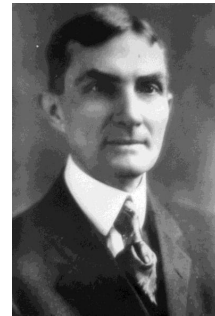
states from Minnesota to Illinois to Ohio to New York to New Jersey to Vermont to Pennsylvania. Last year we even had orders from Russia, England, and Switzerland, as well as from the Caribbean and Canada. Just this week I have received order for 5 copies from individuals in Ontario. Our website is www.sprawls.org/williams

In 2005 we decided to get a hundred copies bound in leather, and even though they turned out to be hardback leather bindings rather than the flexible leather usually used with Bibles, they have proved to be popular and we have had to order an extra batch of them. I was disappointed at first with the leather binding, since I had expected it to be the flexible kind, but now that it is selling so well I have decided it isn't going to be a problem.

The new world of electronic media has brought other opportunities for publicity. In the fall of 1997 a David Haerle, president of a Los Angeles, California company by the name of CMH Records, approached me about producing a set of CDs with a reading of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, accompanied by music, using the Williams translation. I continued to get royalty notices about these CDs for about two or three years, but the only CD that I ever received was the Gospel of Mark CD, spoken by John Daniels and accompanied by an "inspirational musical score." In checking the website of this company today I am still puzzled as to why a company that apparently has always marketed mostly country music was even interested in doing this project! I do not even see the CDs listed in their offerings now. I gave Mr. Haerle permission to produce the CDs, in hopes that they might help stimulate some interest in the printed copies of the New Testament. Whether they did or not, I do not know, but I do know that we have continued to get a good many orders for New Testaments from individuals in California and other western states these past seven years!

Another interesting inquiry came from a Dr. Stanley L. Morris, representing a group called Lingua International, in June of 2001. It was his feeling that the Williams New Testament was not getting the exposure it deserved, and he was interested in getting the translation incorporated into one or more electronic Bible libraries in the form of a CD-ROM. He had been working in the Bible software field for 15 years and suggested that he could be of help in finding an electronic publisher. He proposed that he digitize the translation, which I agreed to. Subsequently his digitized copy was assigned to a company by the name of Ellis Enterprises, Inc. of Oklahoma City. As far as I know this digital version is still available at www.BibleLibrary.com or www.ellisenterprises.com. In checking these two sites I see that the William's [sic] translation is still one of the Bibles included in both the Mega and Ultra versions of their online Bible Libraries. Again I granted permission to Dr. John Ellis to produce these digital online copies in hopes that people who bought them would also be interested in buying a copy of the translation in printed form. I spent many hours in 2001-2002 proofreading the digitized copy to make sure there were no errors in it! Yet their spelling of William's is still incorrect on their CD advertising and covers!

In the fall of 2003 I was contacted by Ray Van Neste, director of the R. C. Ryan Center for Biblical Studies at Union University in Jackson, TN, telling me of Union's plans to have a series of lectures in the spring of 2004 in honor of Charles B. Williams and his work on the New Testament translation while he was teaching at Union. I offered to have a portrait of my father painted to hang in the Ryan Center and my husband and I drove over to Jackson for the dedication in April of 2004. In a gracious tribute in a news article written after that visit, the Union president David S. Dockery said,



Charles Williams was a highly visible New Testament Scholar in the early years of the 20th Century. His translation of the New Testament remains a favorite of many even today. His relationship to Union has been memorialized in a most special way with this wonderful gift from the family members to Union's Ryan Center. The portrait serves as an inspiration for other young New Testament students to give of themselves for this generation in the same way that Dr. Williams did for his in the serious study of God's inspired Word.

So the legacy continues. The seventieth anniversary of the Williams translation finds it still a viable, widely used and appreciated translation. Because so many college and seminary students of Greek and New Testament studies were exposed to the translation through the years and have continued to use the translation and promote it in their congregations, it is still popular all over the United States and even as far away as Europe and China. A few years ago my husband and I took some copies to one of his medical physics colleagues in China on one of his teaching trips to Xian. The testaments are still being used in some of the house churches there. Likewise a colleague in Estonia whose family is Baptist has a copy of the translation to use in their church there.

Charles Bray Williams was a Baptist scholar, it is true, but he was far ahead of his time in his ecumenical ideas. Rather than limiting his education to Southern Baptist institutions he chose to do his graduate studies at northern or American Baptist seminaries where he could broaden his training. And he never hesitated to accept invitations to speak at Presbyterian or Methodist or Lutheran gatherings, as well as at Black churches in his native North Carolina—long before the days of integration.

One of the tests of great literature and of good books is whether or not they stand the test of time: are they dated to one period in which they were written by the vocabulary and idioms used, or do they sound as fresh and apropos today as they did when they were first published. I think this translation has continued to prove its timelessness through these past seventy years. The fact that ministers are still reading from it to their congregations and urging them to buy copies of it further proves to me that there must be something of great value here.

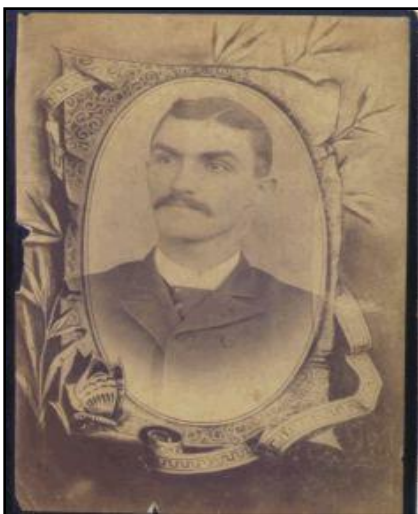
In the "foreword" of the original edition of the translation and also the Moody Press edition, Charles Bray Williams wrote:

May the face of the Christ, who is the Theme of this book and the light of the world, shine into the heart and upon the life of everyone who reads it!

Charlotte Williams Sprawls
August 20, 2007

Attached is a page of pictures of various members of the Williams family mentioned in this monograph, as well as some pictures of the old Shiloh Church.

[w.c. 12,396]



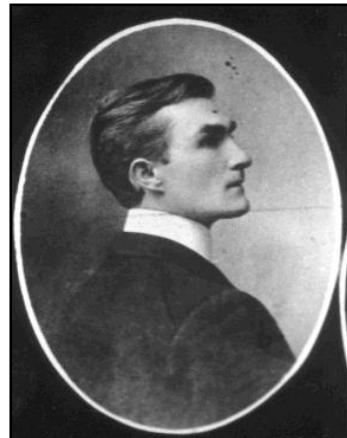
Charles Bray Williams,
Principal of Winston,
NC High School,
Winston High School
Annual 1897(?)

Charles and Alice, 1899,
Chester, PA





Charles and Alice with Baby Weston, 1900



Charles B. Williams at Southwestern Seminary, Ft. Worth, about 1912?



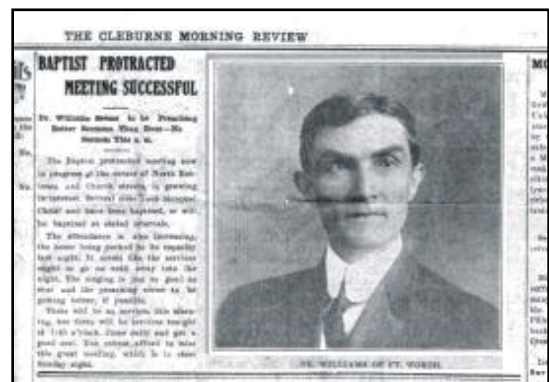
The family in Winton for a visit, about end of 1902.
Alice's father on porch.



Charles and Alice, Stephenville, TX.
Shy Weston with long curls, standing.
Baby Lois sitting, about 1904 or late
1903



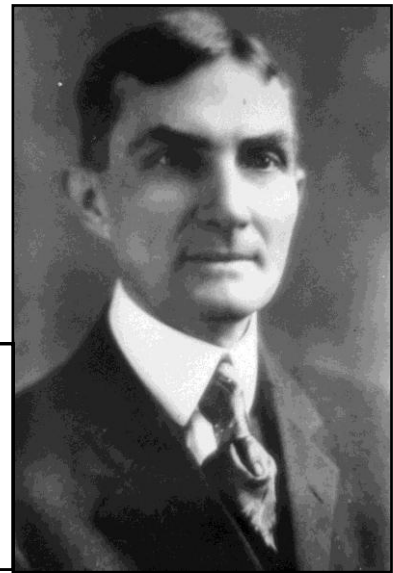
Alice Owen's Family Home in Winton;
note the horse and buggy!



Article about CBW in revival meeting in
Cleburne, TX, 1913



Lois, age 13 (r) playing in Ft. Worth yard with friend and family cat



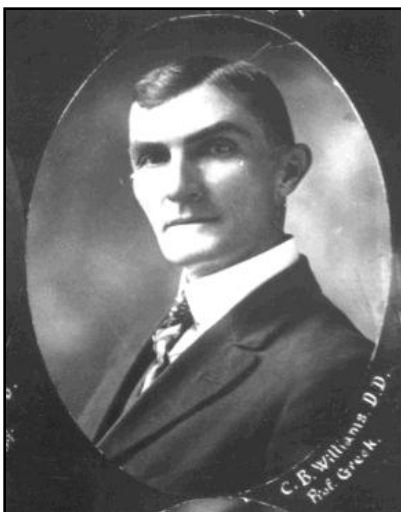
Williams at Mercer about 1922; this photograph was used by the portrait artist for the gift to Union University in 2004



Williams proudly showing off his new 1923 Model T in front of Mercer apartment



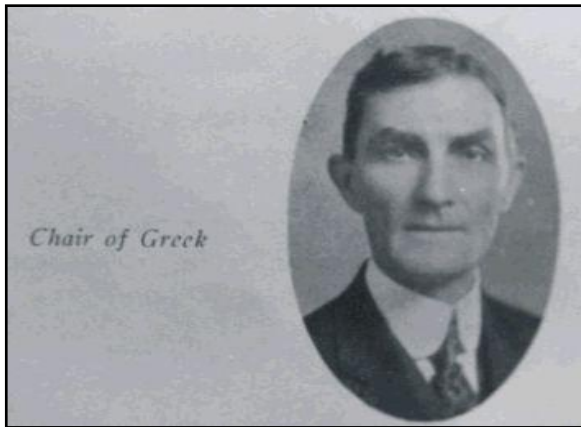
Williams as President of Howard pinning DSC on local returning WWI veteran



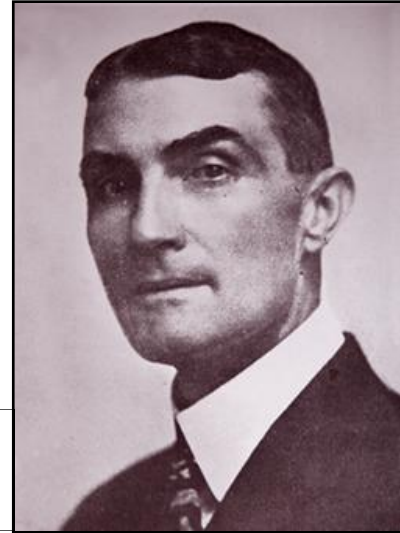
Williams at Southwestern Seminary Maybe 1918?

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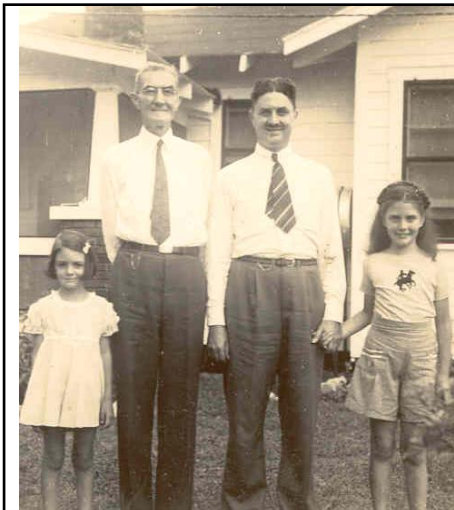
“Grover C. O'Kelly, Howard College student, receiving the Distinguished Service Cross Friday at the college. The medal is being pinned on by Dr. Charles B. Williams, president of the college, in the absence of Maj. R. S. Keyser, who was to have decorated O'Kelly. O'Kelly won the cross at Chateau-Thierry for exceptional bravery while with the Sixth Marines, Eightieth Company. He was one of few men left out of his regiment, and though wounded, ministered to his fallen comrades until he became unconscious. He was captured by the Germans and released after the war.” *The Birmingham News*



Official Union
University
portrait,
about 1926



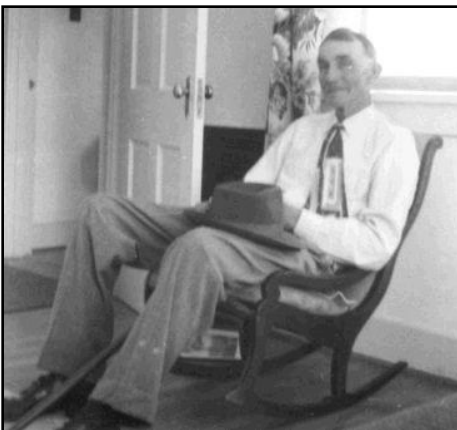
Official portrait as
President of Howard
College in 1919.



Family reunion in Tampa,
about 1940; Charlotte,
CBW, Weston (d.1961),
and Alice Elaine
(Weston's daughter) (d.
1987)



Charles and Edith in front of
their Lakeland, FL house about
1948.



Brother Simeon (Simmie). 1956



Edith and Charles B. in Lakeland,
1948



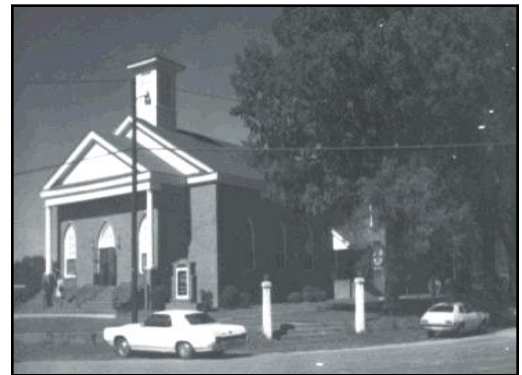
Sketch of Shiloh Church in 1824



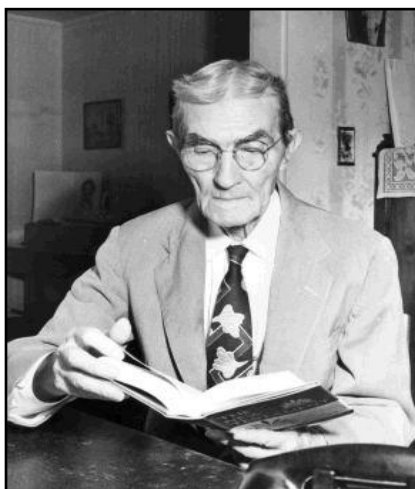
Shiloh Baptist Church about 1940



Williams and
Kenneth
Taylor, 1949

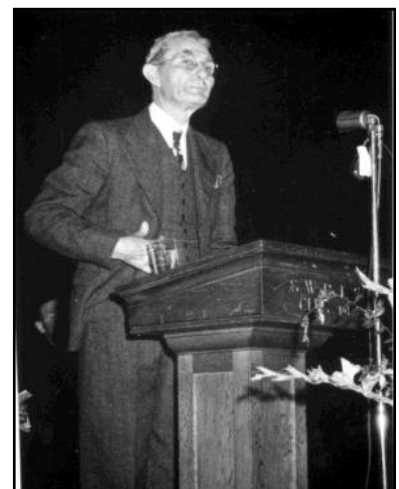


Shiloh Baptist Church about 1952



Looking over
the new Moody
edition, about
1950

Preaching in Atlanta,
late 40s





Edith Williams, about 1953

Lois Williams Pace, Christmas 1959



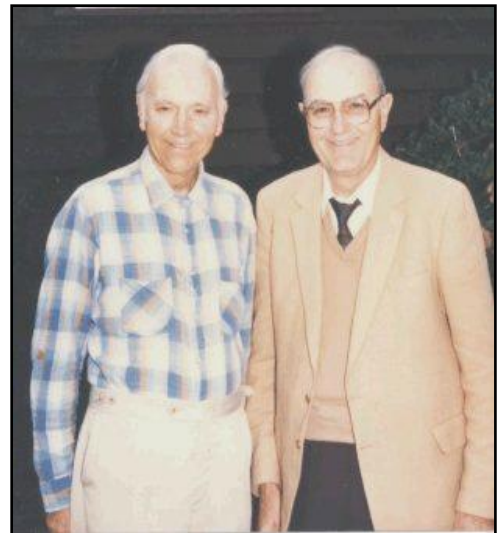
Lois Williams Pace and some of her 6th graders in Decatur, GA, 1975

Lois at home in Richmond, 1985 (She died in 1987)



Charles Williams (father Sim in background) 1956

Bailey and Charles Williams (Sim's sons) 1987





Noel Pace (Lois' son). 1986



Charlotte W., Charles P., & Perry Sprawls
2005



Williams grave in Elizabeth City, NC