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The Charles Williams Society

Newsletter

No. 105 Winter 2002

The Charles Williams Society

The Society was founded in 1975, thirty years after Charles Williams's sudden death at the end of the Second World War. It exists to celebrate Charles Williams and to provide a forum for the exchange of views and information about his life and work.

Members of the Society receive a quarterly newsletter and may attend the Society's meetings which are held three times a year. Facilities for members also include a postal lending library and a reference library housed at King's College London.

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Reading groups

For information about the **Oxford** reading group please contact Brenda Boughton, tel: 01865 515589.

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From the Editor

The announcement of a new edition of *The Image of the City* is very welcome indeed. One of my favourite pastimes used to be the thorough searching through second hand book shops, but I don't remember ever seeing a copy for sale. Out of interest I checked the internet and found six copies on offer: 4 in the USA, 1 in Dublin and 1, the cheapest at £30, in Milton Keynes.

It is the internet, of course, that marvellously seductive technology, that has taken the fun out of searching for books. I recently bought a copy of Iamblichus's *Exhortation to Philosophy,* and on presenting it at the till I was greeted with some surprise on the part of the shop owner that it had still been on the shelf; usually, it seems, such a book would have sold as soon as it was entered in the on-line stock list. We got talking about Charles Williams and the Inklings in general and he told me that he was always looking for Williams's books which sold quickly regardless of what he asked for them. Prices vary of course (my search for *The Image of the City* yielded a price range of US$175 to US$48) and I've seen copies of *Taliessin* and *Region* recently at both £60 and £120.

Our thanks, then, go to Ian Blakemore for producing what will probably not be the best selling book of 2003 but may be one of the worthiest.

Edward Gauntlett

COUNCIL MEETING REPORT

The Council of The Charles Williams Society met on 2 November 2002 at St. Matthew's Church, Bayswater

Mr Gauntlett reported that Kent State University Press was offering a 30% discount on "From Serge to Michal" on orders of 20 or more copies.

The Chairman reported that there had been a delay in getting the correct stone for the Williamses' grave.

The Librarian reported that the Reference Library was now with the Centre for Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies at Oxford, and should be open by the summer of 2003. It was agreed to make a contribution of up to £500 for the cataloguing of the material.

Mrs Kornicka stood down as Membership Secretary, and Mr Carter was elected in her place. Mrs Kornicka, who would remain a member of Council, was thanked for all the work she had done.

The Secretary reported that St Silas' Church, Kentish Town, where the Williamses had worshipped, had included a section on Charles Williams on its website; this included a number of otherwise unpublished poems.

The Treasurer said we now had about £1,400 in current accounts and £9,927 on deposit.

John Heath-Stubbs' term of office as President having expired, he was unanimously re-elected for a further three-year term.

The Chairman, Librarian, Secretary and Treasurer were elected as Trustees of

the Society (an office required by the Charity Commission).

The Chairman said that Ian Blakemore was planing to republish *The Image of the City* in 2003. It was agreed that the Society could make a contribution to the cost if needed, up to £2000.

Plans were discussed for the all-day meeting in June 2003, and a possible Conference in 2004.

Richard Sturch

To Michal from Serge

As mentioned above, it may be possible to obtain copies of *To Michal from Serge* for members in Britain and Europe at a discount if there is sufficient interest.

The price per copy, including postage and packing, has been estimated to be £36.00. This, however, assumes an order of about 20 copies.

Any members who would like to take up this offer should contact the editor as soon as possible (enclosing an sae if by post). If there is sufficient interest the publisher will be contacted again and a firm price obtained based on the number to be ordered. This will then be advised with a request for payment (in £ sterling cheques payable to The Charles Williams Society).

Society News & Notes

The Image of the City

We look forward to a new edition of *The Image of the City* to be published in Spring 2003 by Society member Ian Blakemore. The book will contain Anne Ridler's original Introduction and also a Foreword by Glen Cavaliero.

This is great news. *The Image of the City*, long out of print and increasingly expensive when it can be found second hand, contains some of Williams's best writing, arranged thematically. It is a treasure trove for enthusiasts and also an excellent introduction to CW's thought for new readers.

Ian Blakemore is doing a great service in re-issuing the book and deserves our full backing. This is an opportuniy to get copies for ourselves and also as gifts for others to whom we wish to introduce Charles Williams. There will be a special price for Society members. Full details will appear in the Spring 2003 issue of the Newsletter.

Membership Secretary

Following the item in the last issue we are pleased to announce that Guy Carter has agreed to take on the role of Membership Secretary.

New Members

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members of the Society:

Pawel Maciejko, St Hughes College, Oxford, OX2 6LE.

Reverend Donald Williamson, 58 Prospect Road, Andover, MA 01 810, USA.

St Silas' Church Website

St Silas' Church, Kentish Town, where Williams was a worshipper, has launched its own website and devoted a section of it to CW. This includes some 15 poems published in the parish magazine between 1920 and 1928 that do not seem to be in Glen Cavaliers's checklist or the Shideler bibliography. The address is: www.saintsilas.org.uk/section/126.

Rosley Books

Further to the note regarding *The Image of the City* members should note that

Ian Blakemore specializes in books by and about Charles Williams and The Inklings.

The details for the various methods of getting in touch are as follows:

Post: Rosley Books, Literature and Theology, Rosley Farmhouse, Wigton, Cumbria, CA7 8BZ, England.

Tel: +44 (0)16973 49924

Fax: +44 (0)16973 45149

Mobile: +44 (0)7929 671635

Email: Sales@RosleyBooks.com

Charles Williams Society Meetings

- **Saturday 22 February 2003**
  Edward Gauntlett will speak on 'Charles Williams and Magic' in the Church Room, St Matthews Church, St Petersburgh Place, Bayswater, London W2 at 2.30 pm.

- **Saturday 21 June 2003** (All-day meeting – see Notes)
  Bishop Kallistos Ware will speak on 'Heaven and Hell in Charles Williams' in Pusey House, St Giles, Oxford.

- **Saturday 25 October 2003** (Annual General Meeting – 12 noon)
  Revd. Dr. Richard Sturch will speak, title to be decided, in the Church Room, St Matthews Church, St Petersburgh Place, Bayswater, London W2 at 2.30 pm.

Charles Williams, Economics and "Bors to Elayne: On the King's Coins"

By Angelika Schneider

The following paper was given at a meeting of The Charles Williams Society on 23 February 2002.

This talk has had an over-long gestation period of almost 10 years - the impulse originally came from a talk given to the Society by John Hibbs on 7 November 1992 and published in the Autumn Newsletter of that year. The anticipation with which I open every edition of the Newsletter, knowing that there will almost always be a thought-provoking article revealing some new aspect of CW 's life or thought, was heightened when, in that Newsletter, I read the words "Charles Williams and current economic thought". I have long since learned to regret not having paid more attention to economics in my undergraduate days, realizing that economic organization is the basis of much that is both very good and very bad about the present state of the world, though mostly of the latter, I fear. Anticipation quickly gave way, however, to disappointment, to find Williams's thought presented as almost contrary to my own. One of the reasons CW has fascinated me since college days is the fact that every current of thought which has caught my attention, conveying some new insight as I matured and the world changed, was prefigured in Williams's works. Again and again I found with surprise that wherever I seemed to find a new grain of truth - in ecology, in the peace and justice movement, in the New Age movement, in Zen Buddhism or liberation theology, even in such understanding of the discoveries of nuclear physics as I could muster (almost everywhere, it seems, except, perhaps, in the feminist movement) - Williams seemed to have been there before me. Could I have totally misunderstood his thought on economics?

Whether it is still true, as Hibbs suggests, that "the typical academic specialist in literature will turn to Marx for understanding of mankind in the ordinary business of life", I agree with him that these two realms, literature and economics, are kept too far apart, and in the admiration we share for Williams's ability to bridge such

gaps in our apprehension of the world and to join what are too often perceived as dichotomies.

Hibbs bases his examination of CW's economic thought on the contention that "the doctrine of free exchange that lies at the heart of western liberal economics" lies "at the heart of CW's theology, too." With this I have no quarrel. (I would quarrel more readily with, for example, the opinion that it is fortunate that "capitalism has proved itself able to survive even such debauchery as the Bolivian inflation, ten years ago, at an annualized rate of 24000 per cent." (Charles Williams Society Newsletter No. 67, p. 11) I cannot help wondering how many Bolivians did not survive.) Hibbs goes on to compare Williams's thought to that of the Austrian economist F.A.Hayek, whose advocacy of free exchange as the basis of economics he finds echoed in CW's poem "Bors to Elayne: On the King's Coins".

Although I must admit I was pleased to find a bona fide economist affirming my own impression of the poem, namely that "[i]t is really remarkable how much economics there is in it; one could give it to a post-graduate student to enlighten his or her own thought" (*ibid*, p. 11), it soon became clear to me that Hibbs's understanding of Williams's ideas involved a rather fundamental misreading of that poem. Happily, I found I neither needed to revamp my own convictions nor to abandon CW, only to try to set the record straight on what the poem does say - which, albeit rather belatedly, I would like to do today.

Basically, Hibbs's contention is that CW, basing his economic thought on the doctrine of exchange, saw the introduction of coinage, with which the poem "Bors to Elayne: On the King's Coins" deals as a means of furthering such exchange and therefore as a boon to Arthur's kingdom. He does admit to a certain amount of ambiguity, as the case both for and against the coins is presented, but basically, he is convinced, CW came down on the side of economic liberalism, the doctrine presented in Hayek's best known book, *The Road to Serfdom*, which is a ringing affirmation of the free market and a concomitant rejection of any socialist tendencies, particularly of Soviet communism. During the early decades of the cold war this book was an economic bible in many circles. While recognizing the dangers of speculation, Hayek's chief contention is that all economic ex-

change must be free of political control. Hibbs congratulates CW on his economic insight in recognizing, in this poem, the ambiguity of money, which becomes a danger as soon as it becomes a commodity - that is, when it can be amassed and exchanged for itself alone, rather than for goods and services.

My personal conviction, on the other hand, is that the increasing freedom of economic life from political constraint which the United States has sought to impose on the rest of the world since World War II has brought dangerous concentrations of economic - and with it political – power, while, as we know, keeping at least a third of the world's population in hopeless misery, and some 20% of the population in even the richest countries in poverty.

To make quite sure I was not, however, reading my own pet theories into Williams's poetry, I began examining CW's economic thinking a bit more systematically, looking through not only the other Taliessin poems but the novels and plays, as well as the essays contained in *The Image of the City.* Taken together I suppose they present pretty much the body of his thought. Nowhere except in "0n the King's Coins" did I find any attempt at an encompassing statement on the subject, but scattered here and there I discovered a number of instances which clearly show Williams's criticism of the economic system of Britain – industrial capitalism history. CW shared with the Bible a clear awareness of economic injustice as in fundamental contradiction to Judeo-Christian ethics. And the injustices caused by the free market system have certainly not decreased in the past 60 years.

Certainly there can be no doubt that the doctrine of exchange is central to CW's thought. The network of exchange constitutes the City - Williams's shorthand for the Kingdom of God, and a term which keeps clearly in mind the fact that economic exchange is, subject to redemption, one means of participation in that Kingdom. That the same term also refers to the City of London, the financial capital of the world (at least in CW 's day), was in his eyes no irony but a delightful affirmation of the image. This image, so central to his thought that Anne Ridler took it as the title of her early collection of Williams's essays, is explicated in the essay "The Redeemed City", originally published in the *Dublin Review* in 1941. The essay opens with a characterization of the infamy of tyranny against which the allies were at that time engaged. Williams emphasizes the fact that it is primarily the human

body that is subject to oppression under tyranny: “The concentration camps and the tortures are the Infamy; the free talk and the nourishment of the body *(all* bodies) are the City." (P. 110) This emphasis is almost an aside, and yet the implication is clear: it is above ail nourishment, the prime goal of economic endeavour, and free expression that constitute the life of the City.

In an essay on Macaulay, a contribution to a collection *of Six Short Biographies,* Williams gives an astute summary of the actual political development of England in the 18th and early 19th centuries:

> The aristocratic government of England had then on all sides allied itself with those who would have been its conquerors [namely the middle classes], were it not that both they [the middle classes] and it [the government] were, before the grand progressive advance towards freedom and comfort had properly begun, to be dominated by the extremely wealthy groups which rose within it. The advance towards comfort has, on the whole, continued; the advance towards social freedom has, on the whole, stopped.

Clearly, Williams is not uncritical of the liberal economic policy which dominated Britain in the 19th century.

Turning to the novels, I found that effects of the economic system enter particularly into *Descent into Hell,* in the person of the suicidal workman. Early in the novel Williams describes its setting, the village of Battle Hill, from a historical perspective - prefiguring the interaction of different points in time which characterises the plot. The manor house has its own history; recently acquired by the poet Peter Stanhope, “the house of his poetry remained faintly touched by the dreadful ease that was given to it by the labour and starvation of the poor", (p. 25). Then he describes a more modern building project, the house of the historian Lawrence Wentworth, and the workman enters in: “a certain unskilled assistant had been carelessly taken on; he was hungry, he was ill, he was clumsy and

slow ... He had repeatedly been flung into the gutter in New York or Paris." Clearly the state of being hungry, ill and thrown into the gutter is common experience for those on the downside of the economic system. The labourer's wife, we are told, "made what money she could by charing, at the market price, with Christmas Day, St Stephen, and such feasts deducted." And then, "An accidental inspection by one of the directors decided his discharge. They were not unkind; they paid him, and gave him an extra shilling to get a bus some way back to London." Note the irony of the "not unkind" directors giving him an extra shilling towards (but not even covering) his bus fare. The workman, who hangs himself from the balcony of the unfinished house, is shown as the almost completely passive result of forces beyond his control; his fate is shared by countless others throughout the industrial world. It is because of this that redemption is possible to him, in spite of the fact that almost his only freely chosen act is his suicide. Again there can be no doubt of CW's intense awareness of the economic injustice of his society.

This awareness is equally evident in the play *Judgement at Chelmsford.* The play portrays the history of the diocese of Chelmsford in a series of episodes, beginning with the present time (the 1930s) and going back as far as the time of Emperor Constantine. "Modern Life", the title of the first episode, is presented in the persons of machine-workers and agricultural labourers; a dissatisfied country girl's complaint that "this isn't the kind of life I want", is echoed by the workmen: "This wasn't the kind of life we wanted". Her insistence on moving to the city is countered by her young man's doubt: "It's not easy to get a job". The chorus of workmen again echo the words, affirming that "It's not easy to keep a job", and "It's not easy to live by your job". While a well-meaning priest pointlessly preaches the ideal of quiet country life and self-denial, the young couple join the dance of the machine-workers, who gradually absorb the younger farm labourers, their movements becoming more and more mechanical.

In an episode later in the play (i.e. historically earlier), the Accuser of the See of Chelmsford summarizes his accusation with the ringing words:

> ...I accuse the Church thus -
> I accuse her that always and everywhere - now and here -
> she has been comatose to man's earthly need;

I accuse her that she has given no heed to the poor,
that she has allowed kings and rich men
to be masters of the poor and of herself, and a den
full only of foulness left for the dispossessed.

That Williams sees this not just as a lack of charity on the part of priests and bishops but as the essence of the economic system itself is shown in the following episode, which deals with Wat Tyler's Peasants' Revolt in the 14th century (a period, interestingly, that in my - no doubt somewhat dated - college history text is, significantly, characterized as follows: “By the beginning of the 14th century it was clear that the rise of a money economy was slowly breaking up the old system of economic feudalism on the manors" - taking us right into the subject of our poem.) A chorus of peasants laments their lot with the repeated, literally meant refrain “Give us this day our daily bread". To a priest who counsels patience they retort “We have been patient since the world began." (p. 116) The preacher John Ball then begins his exhortation:

To be poor, when all are poor, is a trick of the bad weather
…
But now is a new thing which is very old -
that the rich make themselves richer and not poorer,
which is the true Gospel, for the poor's sake.

…

This is how we know the Kingdom of God, that the rich make themselves poorer, not richer.
It is our business to see that his kingdom comes -
quickly, (p. 118)

Finally, let us look at the other poems of the two Arthurian cycles, to see if there are hints that might help clarify how the economic doctrine of “0n the King's Coins" is to be understood. In “The Calling of Arthur" we come upon a conspicuously anachronistic phrase:

> Bors is up; his wife Elayne behind him
> mends the farms, gets food from Gaul; the south
> is up with hammer and sickle and holds Thames mouth.

I don't believe that the phrase “hammer and sickle" is just a political catch-phrase widespread in the thirties, an indulgence of CW's delight in unexpected juxtapositions and the transcendence of normal chronology. In spite of all we know now of communism, it was a system based on the goal of satisfying the basic needs of all equally. It is to be noted that Bors's and Elayne's role, as it developed in “Coins", is already prefigured in this earlier poem: it is the provision of nourishment, the economic base of society.

In the “Prelude" to *The Region of the Summer Stars,* Williams envisages the establishment of Christendom in the early Byzantine empire:

> ...the orthodox imagination
> seized on the Roman polity; there, for a day
> beyond history, holding history at bay
> it established through the themes of the Empire
> the condition of Christendom ...
>
> and the earth flourished, hazel, corn and vine.

The opposite condition prevailed in Logres, which

> ...lay
> without the form of a republic, without letters or law
> ...transport had ceased and all exchange stilled.
>
> (The Calling ofTaliessin)

Both quotations emphasize that the fruit of a proper ordering of society is economic well-being.

Finally, in “The Meditations of Mordred", the subject of coinage is once more taken up, as Mordred, King Arthur's bastard son and the cause of his downfall, gloats, “now the coined dragons stay in their pockets at home;/ Kin to kin presently, children; I too am a dragon." This statement is hardly consonant with Hibbs's view that Arthur's introduction of a money economy is a boon to his kingdom.

We have seen so far that, although nowhere made the primary subject of discourse, the economic health of society was, for Williams, a necessary consequence of his theology, and economic health meant well-being most particularly for those at the bottom of the economic scale. This vision is more fully developed in "Bors to Elayne: On the King's Coins", to which I now turn.

Bors, having “ridden all night from organization in London," rejoices at the sight of his wife, presiding over a meal with all the members of their large farm household. To him she is the centre of the simple exchange of labour in which all share equally, the basis of ordered human society as God wills it. “In your hand the bread of love, in your head the lightness of law.” Even the loving smile with which she greets him and the colour of her hair are for him mingled with the idea of fertility and nourishment. While he delights in the "southern burst of love / [that] tossed a new smile from your eyes to your mouth, shaping for that wind's while the corn of your face", he rejects the trite simile of hair "the colour of corn" - "capable only to adorn the parchments drawn in schools of Gaul". Corn is nourishment, as is the love he sees in his wife's face. Yet more important for him are her hands - the life of the community depends on “the founts and fields of your hands"; as the instruments of all work, they are as necessary as earth and water. He focuses on them more closely - it is the opposition of the thumb that makes the use of tools possible and the development of the human species from the “unthumbed apes". Her thumbs, therefore, seem “ancient saints, my heroes"; they epitomize both human strength and civilizing effort in the draining of marshes and clearing of jungles, to prepare for the “eared and seeded harvest of propinquant goodwill". Bors hymns the division of labour on which all exchange is based – “corn comes to the mill and flour to the house" - in counterpointed phrases that are in themselves an image of the reciprocity of exchange: “At the turn of the day, and none only to pay;/ at the day of the turn, and none only to earn." Such exchange, for the good of all, is a true image of the kingdom of God; in Elayne's hands, Bors concludes, “are the altars of Christ the City extended." Having

just been confronted at the king's council with the difficulties and dissatisfactions of social organization on a larger scale – "ration and rule, and the fault in ration and rule / law and the flaw in law", he returns with relief to his wife, "the sole figure of the organic salvation of our good." Significantly, the seat of power is here called London, not Camelot. Tracing the use of this name through the Arthurian poems is alone sufficient to show Williams's own condemnation of Arthur's new economic system. The name occurs altogether four times: in "Taliessin in the School of the Poets", Williams explicates the difference: "In Camelot, which is London-in-Logres", the poem begins, a mosaic on the floor shows the beams of Phoebus the sun god, enmeshing the world - "London, Rome and the underseas". In "The Calling of Arthur", London is the seat of the degenerate Roman puppet, King Cradlemas, whom Arthur drives out. It is also Mordred's term for the city, when Logres has degenerated into civil war. London is thus either the purely geographic name, or Camelot in degenerate form.

In the next part of the poem, Bors tells his wife about the council meeting, where the king's decision to introduce coinage into his realm was discussed. Stamped with his head and his heraldic device, a dragon, the coins seem to Bors to have a life of their own – "a crowded, creaturely brood ...[they] scuttle and scurry between towns and towns, ...hurry to market under the king's smile, or flat in houses squat". Bors's fear of the effect this measure will have is already clear in the negative connotations of "crowded", "scuttle and scurry", "flat ...squat", as well as the "snouts" that "cross the empire" in the following line. But he goes on to express this fear yet more emphatically: " I dreamed the head of a dead king / was carried on all, they teemed on house-roofs / where men stared and studied them as I at your thumbs' epigrams," the people fascinated by the vision of wealth as Bors was by his vision of the exchange of labour. Today it is this expectation, that money must "breed" more money, which is leading to a continually expanding gap between rich and poor and to dangerous concentrations of economic power. In fact, of course, money cannot breed: it can be increased only through speculation, always a danger to any economic system, or through labour, which alone provides the interest ostensibly "earned" by the money itself. The fact that economic exchange now no longer necessarily serves basic needs comes home to Bors as he hears "the City say *Feed my lambs"* to both Elayne and the king. He envisions the coins causing "house

roofs [to] creak and break" under the weight of the dragons as “shadows of great forms halloed them on, and followed over falling towns." Professor Hibbs finds in this line a perfect metaphor for "the recent collapse of the housing market" (*ibid*.p.12). To my mind, it is war and destruction that Bors sees as “the true end of our making". In the essay mentioned above, “The Redeemed City", Williams names the act of procreation as the most fundamental, natural and necessary of all exchanges. In Bors's eyes, therefore, Elayne, the “mother of children" upholds original, free, natural and equal exchange, and may thereby, he desperately pleads, “redeem the new law".

Bors then reports the discussion in the council in more detail. The steward Kay, “wise in economics" but no subtle thinker, expounds the advantages of the new economics:

> 'Good; these cover the years and the miles
> and talk one style's dialects in London and Omsk.
>
> [the euro has not yet got that far]
> Traffic can hold now and treasure be held,
> streams are bridged and mountains ...
> tunnelled ...and events move now in a smoother control
>
> …Money is the medium of exchange’

But even here, in spite of Kay's enthusiasm, a negative note creeps in between the lines. Bors had already seen the “little dragons" squat “flat in houses" - what Kay calls the holding of treasure. Williams, as Hibbs emphasized, recognizes the fundamental problem of a money economy as we know it - that money is not only a medium of exchange, but a commodity that can be both hoarded and subject to speculation, thereby creating wealth, which translates into power. This is made clear in the next phrase, “the poor have choice of purchase, the rich of rents". Here lies the central fallacy in Professor Hibbs's interpretation of the poem, for he does not recognize the irony of this phrase any more than Kay himself does. Kay, Hibbs states, "in words appropriate to Hayek's thought, sets out the case for money: 'the

poor have choice of purchase, the rich of rents" (*ibid*., p. 12). Earlier in his talk, Hibbs had said, "it is a basic concept of economics, that each exchange leaves the participants equally satisfied; there can be no economic exchange subject to coercion" (*ibid*. p. 10), and it is this that Kay seems to him to be asserting. (Personally, I would be interested in the existential status of that 'basic concept'). To my mind Kay's statement is the exact contrary: a clear indictment of the (so-called) free market system that money makes possible. As long as the poor must pay the rents the rich choose, little “choice of purchase" will be left them. Economic power, as Kay clearly states, will usurp political power and become the new order of the day - "events move now in a smoother control / than the swords of the lords or the orisons of the nuns."

Taliessin, king's poet and CW's protagonist and alter ego, was well aware of the irony in Kay's praise. When he starts to speak his “look darkened; his hand shook/ when he touched the dragons". As a maker of verse he understands symbols and knows that “when the means are autonomous, they are deadly;/ When

words escape from verse, they hurry to rape souls." We all know how effective propaganda and advertising can be, and how character can be changed by the sudden acquisition of wealth. In Taliessin's words, “When sensation slips from intellect, expect the tyrant." Even in our political democracies, who actually controls the opinions of the many voters who mindlessly pursue physical pleasure or 'sensation'? The mass media, that is the few inordinately wealthy individuals who control them and the advertisers on whom they depend - in other words, the holders of economic power. Taliessin foresees that the uncontrolled exchange made possible by money acquires a power of its own and so insinuates its own value system, directly counter to the teachings of Christ. “The brood of carriers levels the goods they carry. / We have taught our images to be free .../ Are we glad to have brought *convenient heresy to* Logres?" (My italics)

Now it is the Archbishop's turn to speak. His words, "went up through a slope of calm air", subduing the aroused feelings. Even if people are impelled by greed and the “folly" of treasure to turn from God (so that God who “hides himself for man's pleasure / by occasion," may, at their bidding, "hide himself essentially"), nevertheless “this abides -/ that the everlasting house the soul discovers / is always another's; we must lose our own ends." Economic exchange is indeed facilitated by money; it is also “the way of this world in the day of that other's"; that is, participation in this common and necessary exchange *can* be part of our salvation, but it depends on the ends for which we engage in it. The Archbishop quotes ancient Greek wisdom: “What says Heracleitus, and what is the City's breath? - *dying each other's life, living each other's death."* The taunt thrown at Christ on the cross, “He saved others, himself he cannot save" is, as C.S.Lewis puts it, “a *definition* of the Kingdom" (his italics). Money, the Archbishop concludes in answer to Kay, remains ambiguous - *a,* but by no means *the* medium of exchange.

Bors, telling Elayne about this discussion, is reminded of the story of King Midas, who died of his greed when his wish was granted and all he touched turned to gold. He fears that the economic innovation is already changing all sense of value. “I was afraid," he tells Elayne, “the Council had turned you into gold, / as was told of Midas who had asses' ears." He realises that order is necessary to society, yet what kind of order is possible that does not make room for unbridled power? He sees freely made and therefore changeable agreements become bind-

ing contracts in which true reciprocity is lost. As each person seeks only his own good, “man only earns and pays, / the house outside the city burns, but the house inside is enslaved" and the poor are nowhere safe. Once more Bors appeals desperately to his wife, whose “hand held the bread" - she is still living proof of the possibility of loving, nourishing exchange, even in a money economy:

> Say - can the law live?
> Can the dead king's head live?
> Pray, mother of children, pray for the coins, pray for Camelot,
> pray for the king, pray.

What conclusions then can we draw from this analysis? It would seem evident that CW, much as he recognized the value of economic exchange, deeply distrusted a "free" market economy. Hibbs lightly dismisses the "labour theory of value" with its “essential theoretical weakness" (Newsletter No. 67, p. 7), yet in this poem CW clearly states that labour is rather to be trusted than money as the basis for economic exchange. In the thirties, when these poems were written, the capitalist system was decried by a large part of intellectual Britain, many of whom saw hope in communism. The economic failure and political horror of that regime have since become evident, but would Williams have been any less dismayed by today's economy? Tremendous riches are accumulated by a small number and there is growing prosperity in the western industrialized nations (though not shared by a goodly portion of the population even here), while the third-world debt, which greatly increases the wealth of our part of the world, is estimated to be responsible for the death of 19,000 children each day in Africa alone. Although no systematic, economically oriented thinker, CW never lost sight of the fact that the purpose of all economic exchange is the provision of basic needs and economic security for all, and that no economic system that denies this to a large portion of the population can be consonant with Christian - or any - ethics.

Letters to the Editor

A Note on the Taliessin Poems

Dear Sir,

I read Stephen Barber's article on the text of the Taliessin poems (Newsletter # 104 pp 18-20) with interest. In particular, I had not realized the "slip" over Cradlemas / Cradlement. But "Cradlemas" surely ought to stand. Not only is there the grim irony of using this name in the context of the death of children, as Stephen notes; Williams also used this form in "Taliessin's Song of Logres" (*Three Plays* p 2; Dodds p 168), so the slip was an old one, presumably not recognized as such until Lewis pointed it out. And "Cradlemas" was also retained after Lewis's correction, for it appears four times in "The Taking of Camelot" (Dodds pp 283-5). It looks as if Williams decided to keep this form.

Richard Sturch

The Williams Grave

Dear Sir,

When I read the news about Charles Williams's grave - in Newsletter # 104 - I promptly decided to contact you.

When I visited the grave (in the company of Chris Mitchell from the Wade Center) it was my most moving experience of the past decade. I can scarcely begin to

make an adequate analysis of why this was, but the tranquillity of the site had much to do with it, and that in turn owes a great deal to the over-shading yew tree, the stained headstone and the absence of formal planting. It is clear from the note in Newsletter 104 that other members experience the grave differently, and I would certainly not wish to impose my own conception upon anyone. But because my experience was so unusually powerful, I feel a need to set it down.

John Docherty

Editorial Policy

The Charles Williams Society's Newsletter and Web site have two functions. Firstly, to publish material about the life and work of Charles Williams. Secondly, to publish details of the activities of the Society.

Contributions to the Newsletter are welcome. If you wish to submit a contribution, please take note of the following:

- Submissions should be sent to the Editor, preferably on floppy disc; otherwise by email attachment to: Edward.Gauntlett@down21.freeuk.com.
- Submissions on paper should be typed double spaced and single-sided.
- All quotations should be clearly referenced, and a list of sources included.
- Submissions of just a few hundred words may be hand written.
- The Editor reserves the right to decide whether to publish a submission. Usually the main article in any issue will be a paper previously read before the Society; in most cases such papers will be published as received, with little or no editorial input. Other submissions may be edited.

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