

TO YOUNG COMMUNICANTS

By Rev Mervyn J. Stewart

NOTHING CAN be more surprising and embarrassing to a young Communicant of either sex than to emerge from the shelter of a Christian home into what is called the world—there to find that he or she is not wanted, except on terms involving frank exploitation for the profit of some older person. It is not that it is "the world" but rather (in the phrase of that greatly misunderstood clergyman, the Rev Thomas Malthus) it is "an owned world"; into which like surplus kittens or cockerels, it was a grave error to have been born at all.

There is no Communion in anything, except the sacraments; and success in an "owned world" is seen to be largely dependent on loss of the scruples which a consistent Church life imposes in daily affairs. There are two schools of theological thought with some sort of answer to this problem. There are those who say the world is Satanic; that Christians are to do all they can to save brands from the burning; but no matter what they do they will not mitigate the essential sinfulness of business, of politics, and of municipal life.

There is another view, its opposite, which sees in this world a place of preparation for the life to be; with bracing shocks, chills and temptations as keen as that of eclairs to a young athlete in training for a big event; and therefore that a life beyond the grave should be expected as carrying on some large proportion of the external forces we aim at.

We earnestly hope, do we not, to be judged at the last day with entire justice and insight? That mercy will be extended to us not in a slack letting off for wrong deliberately or negligently done; but rather with appreciation of the better side in us, which with encouragement might in the end overcome the lower. *Therefore*, in our law courts, from Parliament down, we may use our votes and express our will that Judges will be fearless, impartial, chosen from the best men available; and that in ordering punishment for faults, in the Psalmist's phrase, they will aim to punish or even kill the fault, sparing and cherishing all that is worth fostering in the complex personality of the prisoner in the dock.

We think of Paradise as sweet with flowers and trees and cool with streams—or some of us do, and *therefore* we wish our towns and homes to be planned for refreshment when we walk abroad, and our houses to be all that the sanitary authority can make, or it may be, force them to be.

This may not pay in the short run, but devastating selfishness as a rule wishes neighbours to be clean, honourable, and far-sighted, and would wish to live in place like heaven even as a business proposition. For instance, the complete expropriation and exploitation of the West Indian coloured population, heirs of slaves, makes their trade value to be negligible for merchants and their production of wages very small to employers, while their low wages prevents any introduction of modern outfit.

We should do what we can in the hope to make our daily surroundings what we would desire in Heaven. "An owned world"! Would you desire an owned heaven in which every opportunity to enjoy limitless Divine bounty was owned by the Christians who first lived, and your presence was only tolerated so far as they could find pleasure or profit in your service? That is what you are up against in your daily life—and you can remedy it.

Even during the brutal feudal age nearly all England

was common land where anyone could maintain himself on condition of civil and military feus. After the 100 years' War, England was Merrie, with no increase of taxes, no debasement of coinage and no public debt, with a householder franchise for Parliament, in which women sat sometimes. During these ages the crop lands were yearly given out by lot, and any lord great or small who dared to refuse a holding on nominal terms to a would-be worker and possible warrior had to forfeit a year's wages of that man to his own immediate superior—a most adequate check on land speculation!

With the Restoration came in suspension of the landed rights of the Crown as trustee for you younger folk in particular, also Customs, Excise, a public debt, and a standing army.

How then is this ideal of making room for all God's children at his table of physical gifts to be carried out in practice? Obviously the first thing to be done is to ascertain what is the social value which is no person's product, but the embodied result of the shadows of all who live or work in any given area. This can be done, for example, by finding the value of each piece of land and deducting the value of houses, fences, etc.

Not only should destruction of "forestalling and regrating" allow young people to develop their economic personality without any injury to others, but the most important sex aspect of life has a solution for those with no vocation to celibacy. Not only could lovers marry in a state of Social Justice, but children would be a source of wealth and not as now a ruinous magnet for taxes. The mollifying influence of such a condition in daily morality is hardly to be estimated except by young victims of our present code, which if persisted in must in a very few years result in the utter extinction of any community which values debasing greed and legalized injustice as more important than loyalty to the Lord and giver of life, spiritual and bodily.

On behalf of the members of the Land Values Group of the Parliamentary Labour Party a telegram was sent on the eve of the Budget statement to Sir John Simon, urging him "return to your old faith and include in this year's Budget provision for a tax on land values."

Publishing a new leaflet *Why Not Rate Land Values?* the Group has sent a copy with a letter to every Divisional Labour Party throughout the country. The letter urged that the matter should be brought to the notice of the executive of the local party and of the Trades Council with the object of getting the local Borough or Town Council to pass resolution and forward it to the Government. Specimen resolution was enclosed with list of the more important of the 250 local authorities that have already taken that action. As we go to press we learn that the following divisional Labour Parties have replied approvingly: Buckingham, Colne Valley, Rossendale, Dumbarton, Melton and Richmond and Barnes, Surrey.

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Miss Nancy Reed, writing for the Henry George Fellowship, 106 Bishopsgate, E.C.2, had a letter on vacant land and why it should be taxed on its true value, which we are glad to see from the clippings of our Press agency has appeared in numerous papers.

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The Henry George School in Ipswich started a new study class in the beginning of April which is being well continued. It meets every Tuesday evening at 7.30 p.m. at the Senior Boys' School, Tower Ramparts, and is conducted by Mr A. C. Mayell.