

# The Advance Guard in the English Church

By DOUGLAS J. J. OWEN

[Since our receipt of Mr. Owen's article, the good news has come that Dr. William Temple has been appointed the new Archbishop of Canterbury.—Ed.]

**M**ALVERN, near Worcester, the well-known English Spa, situated on the lovely Malvern Hills overlooking the Vale of Evesham, one of the beauty spots of the Old Country, is now in the limelight as the venue of an ecclesiastical conference of a new sort. In January, 1941, the Archbishop of York, Dr. Temple, called together a conference at Malvern, under the auspices of the Industrial Christian Fellowship, to study the social order at the present crisis of civilization. A report of the findings was published, and in August there met again in Malvern a committee of "industrialists and economists with theologians" to discuss certain sections on which further comments were desired by the parent conference. There has now been published (January, 1942), under the title "Malvern and After," the report of this committee.

This report stands out amongst a host of such documents in recent years because in the Introduction Dr. Temple states that "action is called for, not after the war, but NOW," and also because the findings of the committee are unique from such a source in containing a clear exposition and demand for the Taxation of Land Values. There are paragraphs on Competition, on the "Profit Motive," on Monetary System, all of which reveal a more informed approach to economics than usual. One almost feels that Henry George was somewhere about when the committee sat. The sentences on the land question are worth quoting at length. Under the heading: "5 (d) Far-reaching changes in the present system of land ownership are required," the report deals with occupying ownership and absenteeism, and after describing some of the evils in detail says:

"The owner of the sites of cities . . . absorbs a great deal of wealth communally created; this is conspicuously true of those who own land on the outskirts of growing towns. These are tempted to hold up land needed for development in hope of a rise in price. Thus private interest is directly opposed and deliberately preferred to public welfare. That is morally wicked; but it is also so pernicious politically that it ought to be prevented. For some critics, it is not ownership which is objectionable, but the power to collect economic rent, to evict, and to forbid the use of natural resources.

"Both these classes of evil would be remedied in great measure by the levy of a tax on the value of sites (as distinct from the buildings erected upon them), whether used or

unused, rural or urban. In this field the inversion of the natural order, which is characteristic of our whole modern life, is especially important. If house property is improved (a social service) the rates (local taxes) are raised and the improvement so far penalized; if it is allowed to deteriorate (an injury to society) the rateable value is reduced and the offending landlord is relieved. Taxation of the value of sites (as distinct from the buildings erected upon them) would encourage the full utilization of the land." The report then suggests an owners' valuation with the State's right to "tax or buy."

The great advance represented by these extracts from a body largely composed of churchmen will be realized by American readers when they compare the article by the present writer in *LAND AND FREEDOM* for March-April, 1941, under the title "Willing to Wound, Afraid to Strike." That was largely a review of the book by the Archbishop of York, "The Hope of a New World," in which he described with approval the Mosaic legislation of the Bible, and the Law of Jubilee, and referred to Verinder's "My Neighbor's Landmark." But when it came to practicing the theory the Archbishop then turned away to all sorts of fancy reforms, including the purchase of city land and the exemption of rural land from taxation. I said in that article: "It is certainly unusual for an Archbishop to descend into the economic arena with specific proposals," and also that those proposals deserved consideration "not only because of the eminence of the author and his wide influence, but because his approach to land reform is so typical of British tendencies, revealing as it does, the influence of Henry George's work whilst betraying a reluctance to accept his teaching." It certainly looks as though we must modify this judgment. This new report, "Malvern and After," shows a readiness to follow the path indicated by economic truth. It is also welcome evidence that the Georgeist movement in Britain counts for something, and is able to make its mark in the growth of public opinion.

The story now has another chapter. The Archbishop of Canterbury has announced his retirement at the end of March. What has this to do with the Land Question? It raises the question of his successor. The favorite in the race is undoubtedly Dr. Temple, the present Archbishop of York. His place in the public view is unrivalled amongst all other ecclesiastics. That the reversion of the Canterbury post should fall to him seemed almost certain. But, lo and behold, the wind has changed, and is veering away from York to other quarters of the compass!

On January 27 the Labor *Daily Herald* carried an article by An Ecclesiastical Correspondent under the two-column heading "Trying to Keep Dr. Temple Out," in which it was said: "A strong Tory cabal has been started to prevent the translation of Dr. Temple from York to Canterbury. Yesterday Dr. Inge, to whom class and Church are identical, tipped for the Primacy the Bishops of London, Winchester and Coventry, and the *Daily Telegraph* tipped Dr. Kirk, Bishop of Oxford. Neither mentioned Dr. Temple. In his recently published pamphlet, 'Malvern and After,' Dr. Temple calls for a Christian revolution, and he makes it quite clear what he means. No wonder he is described as the 'Red Archbishop' and that the 'Haves' are marshalling their forces to persuade the Prime Minister not to give greater authority to the champion of the 'Have Nots.' Intellectually, and in experience and force of character Dr. Temple is pre-eminent in the Church. He is a great man, but he is certainly not a safe man. . . . It may be taken that any backing that these other Ecclesiastics may have is merely due to the eager desire to keep Dr. Temple out. For the sake of Church and Nation it is reasonably to be hoped that the desire will be disappointed."

Next day the *Manchester Guardian* said that the discussion is now general among Churchmen, and that the movement was not so much one of enthusiasm for any other candidate, but "because of the desire to keep out so progressive a leader of the Church as the Archbishop of York. . . . The word of the retiring Primate must carry the greatest weight, and one is surprised to find how many here (London) doubt if it is on the side of Dr. Temple."

Other quotations might be given to show that it is the new report "Malvern and After" that is specially obnoxious. The *New Statesman & Nation*, for instance, on January 31 says: "In a pamphlet, 'Malvern and After,' published a fortnight ago, Dr. Temple said that the principles that are set forth in it are 'offered as a guide and call to Christian revolution.' Socialization of certain industries is advocated and, as regards land, it is affirmed that 'absentee ownership and non-serviceable ownership are contrary to a morally sound system.'" This important weekly goes on: "It is certain that there will be strong opposition to Dr. Temple's appointment as Dr. Lang's successor." Again the *Manchester Guardian* of February 2 says: "Dr. Temple's outspoken advocacy of reform, both ecclesiastical and social, has alarmed many people, and there will be strong opposition, within as well as outside the Church, to his appointment to Canterbury. If that opposition should be successful it would give rise to something like a crisis in the Church. Large numbers of progressive Churchmen would regard it as the death-knell of reform in the Church and as a sign that it is to be muzzled in the post-war period of reconstruction." For Single Taxers the significant thing is that it is the reference in the report to the Taxation of Land Values that gives it any distinction. Apart from its demand

that one of the things that "ought to be done NOW" is this drastic dealing with land monopoly, the report is quite innocuous and does not materially differ from a hundred such amateur incursions into the field of political economy. It is this that is responsible for the "redness" of the Archbishop; apart from it the report is harmlessly colorless. We shall soon know by the new appointment, which rests with the Premier, Mr. Churchill, on the advice of the retiring Primate, whether once more interest and privilege have outweighed justice.

But the Prime Minister himself has been under fire, and although he has won his vote of confidence handsomely, the debate of three days showed how dissatisfied some people are, and why. The main source of criticism is from those who think that our forces ought to have been diverted from the West to defend our possessions in the Far East. In other words Churchill appears to have sacrificed the Tin and Rubber interests in Malaya in particular, rather than lessen the help he was giving to Soviet Russia. On January 15 the *Manchester Guardian* in its financial columns had these remarkable words: "Sometimes illusions breed greatness, at other times they foster foolishness. This is a moment when we can well afford to do away with one particular illusion that has survived the disaster of Malaya. It is not only the defense glacis of Singapore that we have lost. With it has gone, probably for ever, one of the greatest springs of wealth in the Empire. Several hundred million pounds of British capital had been invested in the development of Malayan tin and rubber production. As the United States has been by far the largest market for these two products, exports from Malaya have brought us a steady flow of dollars which were providing importing power for the sterling area. In addition large profits were remitted each year to shareholders in this country."

We are told that for thirty-eight years the Malayan Tin Smelting works have enjoyed a virtual monopoly of tin smelting through the operation of the export duty of £60 per ton on all tin ore exported to countries outside the British Empire. This was a prohibitive tax and a discriminating one, under which the United States was one of the chief sufferers. It is an example of the way in which the Protectionist system, allied to Land Monopoly, hinders the production and distribution of wealth, and puts the interests of the few over against the good of the whole. It has now been made plain that it was one of the chief causes of the entry of Japan into the war, with all the tragedy that has meant. Yet the representatives of the dividend drawers in Parliament are chiefly concerned that the Prime Minister did not make his grand strategy fit in with the continuance of their anti-social and ill-gotten gains.

The defenders of vested interests in Church and Parliament can see behind the Premier and the Archbishop the shade of Henry George. At last it is plain for all to see that Protection

trying to make us think

and Land Monopoly have brought the world to its present pass. In Great Britain the struggle to maintain these wicked systems has taken the form of two petty partisan movements, one against the Archbishop of York and the other against the Prime Minister. For the time-being the latter is secure in his office. It remains to be seen whether Dr. Temple will be given the opportunity of pressing for the ideas of "Malvern and After" from the higher office of Canterbury, and also if he does maintain his "redness" what response he will get from the Prime Minister, if he should still be the Winston Churchill who was one-time radical advocate of land values taxation and free trade. The next few months will be fascinating to watch from the point of view of this economic war behind the military war, and Georgeists in America and in England may rejoice that they can do more than look on, that their cause holds a central position and that the principles of justice which they defend can no longer be ignored with impunity by the governments of the earth.

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