

CHRISTIANS AND PLANNING

By ARTHUR H. WELLER

In a booklet, entitled "Christians and the City Plan," published by the Dean and Canons of Manchester, the Rev. Ronald Allen deals with the contribution which Christians should make towards the rebuilding of an industrial town. Quoting the author of "The City of Manchester Plan," Mr. Allen says its main object is "to enable every inhabitant of the city to enjoy real health of body and health of mind." The booklet is mainly a review of the Manchester Plan and the Church's function in a planned society.

Unfortunately, Mr. Allen gives little attention to the underlying economic causes of the poverty which for generations has deprived the masses of health of body and mind, and which the Manchester Plan is intended to correct or alleviate. Leaving out of consideration the effects of two great wars—dreadful but transient—and the resulting shortages and austerities, Church leaders should face the fact that while human ingenuity constantly makes the satisfaction of material needs easier, something at the same time makes it increasingly difficult for the majority of people to get a living and to enjoy their earnings. Why is this? God's bounty does not diminish.

The Creator's material gifts to man reach him in the form of opportunities, not wealth. Food and homes do not drop like manna from above, but opportunities for their production are provided in unlimited numbers.

Earning a living by producing things or rendering services is as natural to human beings as is breathing, and in free conditions it is performed without help or encouragement. The only condition necessary for its healthy exercise is opportunity, and this means access to the natural resources for all men on equal terms. But equality of opportunity is denied by a system which treats the natural resources (land) as the private possession of only some of God's children. That this is contrary to the Divine order is obvious and undeniable, but its connection with the problems of unemployment, poverty, slums and human degradation is not as easily recognised. In *Progress and Poverty* Henry George answers "the riddle of the Sphinx": Why, in spite of the increase of productive power do wages tend to the minimum of a bare living? Careful reading of this book will remove doubts.

If justice is not the highest quality in the moral code, it is at least the first. Tolstoy rightly denounced the impious monopolisation of the Divine bounty as The Great Iniquity. To fulminate against human nature, or endeavour to abolish the effects of social injustice without removing their cause is as foolish as it is ineffective. Land Monopoly is the most powerful of all vested interests, but having become accustomed to it, many of us take it for granted. To persist in this attitude is to court disaster. The city in which health of body and mind may be enjoyed by all, must be built on foundations of justice.

But whatever its merits or defects, the Manchester Plan is threatened, as Mr. Allen points out, by strongly entrenched vested interests. "Dominating everything," he says, "is the problem of inflated urban land values," but this threat is not to be averted by compromise or running away from it. Land Monopoly is so old as to be regarded as respectable, and the treatment suggested (quoted by Mr. Allen) is "honestly to persuade the creditors (land-owners) to take a fraction of the original land values." If ever burglary becomes a vested interest, someone will want to persuade the creditors (burglars) to take only a fraction of their accustomed hauls!

Judging it to be wrong, we can end it, unconditionally, and without inflicting injustice. It can be done with the minimum of disturbance by using the taxation and rating of land values to turn the rent of land into the public treasuries correspondingly remitting taxation on homes and industry.

When the Church gives critical consideration to plans for rebuilding our cities, it can no longer be argued that the economics and politics of communal life are outside the realms of organised religion. The great obstacle to the brotherhood of men is the injustice of involuntary poverty, and when that has been removed, the ideal city will develop wherever men congregate for business and social intercourse. Only on the basis of economic justice can a Christian civilisation grow and flourish.

BOOKS RECEIVED

- Free Trade—Free World.* By Oswald Garrison Villard. A famous editor's stirring challenge. \$3. Published by the Robert Shalkenbach Foundation, New York.
- Retts-Liberalisme: Liberalism and the Just Order.* Nils Sund. Nils Sund, Publishers, Haugesund, Norway.
- A Tax Programme for Free Enterprise.* Stanley Sapiro. 25c. Reprinted from the *Apartment Industry News* and obtainable from S. Sapiro, 629 South Hill Street, Los Angeles, Cal.
- Campo, June, 1947.* Revista Mensual Agropecuaria. Article "Antes Numancia Que Jauja." By Emilio Lemos Ortega. Published at Trajano, 2, Apartado 487, Sevilla.
- Management and Human Relations in Industry.* Industrial Relations Publishing Co., New York and Washington. Notable article on the "Incentive System" in the *Lincoln Electric Co.*, Cleveland, Ohio. Articles also by Prof. H. Gunnison Brown, E. O. Kooser, J. R. Fuchs, J. Rupert Mason, G. H. Ingersoll, etc.
- Raiz y Razon de Zapata.* Life and Work of Emiliano Zapato, by Prof. J. Sotol Inclan. With much information on the Mexican land question. Editorial Etnos, Mexico. (Sent by M. A. Robles.)
- Taxation is Robbery.* By Frank Chodorov. 25c. Human Events Associates, Chicago.
- Purchasing Powers.* By Judge E. O. Kooser. Chapter from the Book, *Freedom Denied*.
- Freedom Denied.* By Judge E. O. Kooser. \$2. Berlin Publishing Co., Berlin, Penn.
- For the Good of All.* By Gilbert M. Tucker. War, Taxes and Politics in the Light. \$1.50. Fleming H. Revell Co., New York.
- Hawaii.* A Pageant of the Soil. By Jean Hobbs. Stanford University Press, Cal.
- Nusantara.* A History of the East Indian Archipelago. By Bernard H. Vlekke. Harvard University Press, Mass. \$5.
- Dictatur of Democratie? Dictatorship or Democracy?* By (the late) H. Kolthek. 5 cents. Republished by Recht en Vrijheid, 24 Cedarlaan, Wilrijk, Antwerp.
- Christianity and Henry Georgeism.* By F. T. Hodgkiss. Henry George League, George Parade, Melbourne.
- How Civilised Man Makes a Living.* By LeBaron Goeller. 25c. Introduction to the New Political Economy. Published by the Author, Endwell, N.Y.
- Why Rating on Unimproved Value Should be Made Mandatory.* By R. O'Regan. 1s. New Zealand League for the Taxation of Land Values, P.O. Box 951, Wellington, N.Z.
- Rating on the Unimproved Value.* Common Objections and their Answers. 18pp. New Zealand League, Wellington.
- The Land Question and Christian Justice.* By Rev. W. H. Howard. 4d. Austral Publishing Co., 528 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne.
- Constructive Criticism of Christian Leadership.* By George Dana Linn. 28pp. booklet. 25c. Seattle, Washington.
- Report on Social Effects of Municipal Rating.* Study, with many facts, tabular matter and photographs, applied to Footscray, Victoria. Valuable guide to Town Councillors and others. By the Land Values Research Group, Melbourne, in co-operation with the Footscray City Council. 2s. 6d.